



RMPS (Advanced Higher)

Candidate evidence – Question paper

Source question 1

Source Question 1

AH RMPS Understanding Standards

“We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer.” Aquinas’ Summa Theologica

1. Describe what is meant by the Teleological Argument (5)
 2. Analyse this source (5)
 3. Evaluate this source. (5)
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1. Teleological means that there is purpose or design in the universe. The teleological argument is an a posteriori argument, which means it comes from experience. Thomas Aquinas' fifth proof of God was a teleological argument which claimed that God directs everything which cannot think for itself. Aquinas believed that everything in the natural world follows natural laws and because humans can think for ourselves we need a reason for our existence.
 2. Aquinas implies that since the perception of the world and its complexity appear to give the concept of a design then the universe in its entirety must have been subject to intelligent design. This has the indirect implications that if there is an intelligent design found within our universe then this must mean in turn there is a designer, an architect behind the creation of everything in the natural world and this Aquinas believes to be God. Aquinas explained his point by using the example of an arrow, saying that for an arrow to reach its destination it must be directed first of all by the archer. In the same way, 'natural bodies' seem to act in a regular fashion to reach a specific purpose. As they, like the arrow, are not able to direct themselves, there must be a God doing the directing.
 3. I agree to an extent with Aquinas' proposition because the functional complexity of living organisms presents strong evidence for the role of a designer. For example, the complexity of the human brain. I also agree with Aquinas' argument because the design argument in an inductive argument, as it begins with something we can observe. A result, it is difficult to deny the presence of order and complexity in the universe. However, there are some weaknesses to the argument. I agree with Hume when he says just because things in the world have designers, it doesn't mean that the world has a design because we do not have experience of worlds being designed and built. I also agree with Kant when he suggests that design is a trap that we fall into – we see design and a designer because it is easy and more acceptable than the alternative, that we have come about by chance.

Source question 2

Source Question 2

"I think the question...we should ask is not, is the embryo or foetus a living human being, because I think the answer is undoubtedly yes, it is. The question is, what characteristics or capacities does a being have to have in order to make it a case that that being has a serious right to life?"

Peter Singer

1. Describe what is meant by beginning of life (5)
2. Analyse this source (5)
3. Evaluate this source. (5)

1. Human development begins after the union of male and female gametes or germ cells. This happens during a process known as fertilization (conception). This fertilized ovum, known as a zygote, is a large diploid cell that is the beginning, or primordium, of a human being. Many religious people, such as Christians, would regard human life to be sacred from the point of conception, and as such, afforded human rights. However, humanists would argue that while the embryo should be respected, its value should not take precedence over the rights of the mother.
2. Singer implies that we should not be questioning the personhood of the embryo or foetus, in that even in its earliest form, it is still a human being. However, Singer is differentiating between the biological status of an embryo as a human life and the characteristics we associate with people, such as sentience. In this respect, an embryo must be regarded as a human life, but this does not mean that it has the same rights to life that a sentient human being would have. Singer uses a similar argument when discussing the right to life of someone in a PVS – there is no question that the individual is a living human being, but there is a question over personhood and right to life.
3. I agree with Peter Singer to some extent. At the very earliest stages of life, embryos lack the capacity to experience pleasure or pain, a fundamental aspect of the human condition. Embryos cannot, then, be classed as 'people' - they are simply 'potential people', and therefore they are separate and distinct from human beings. Furthermore, the potential benefit to "actual" people by using embryos, either through IVF or stem cell research, should be taken into account, especially as it is only 'actual' humans who can experience pleasure and pain. From a utilitarian perspective this is what is important in determining whether an action is right or wrong – embryos cannot experience either, and so it does not make sense to try to apply a moral code to them.

Essay question 1

How convincing is the Teleological argument in proving the existence of God?

Teleological means that there is purpose or design in our universe. This argument was used by philosopher and theologian, Thomas Aquinas, as his fifth proof or way of God's existence. Developed in the thirteenth century in his book 'Summa Theologica', Aquinas denoted that everything in the natural world follows natural laws and tends to do well and have some goal or purpose however if something cannot think for itself it cannot have a purpose unless directed by something which can think. He believed that everything in the natural world which cannot think for itself must be directed by God. This follows the idea that the universe is very complex, and it is unlikely that something so complex in which each part works in perfect unison came into existence by accident, implying that there must be a designer of some sort. Aquinas based most of this theory on his studies of the works of Greek philosopher Aristotle and from common observation of our experience of the universe. This means that the core argument is based on empirical observation of natural laws in the world and is therefore an a posteriori argument, and the conclusion is not claimed to follow with certainty. However, Dawkins points out that 99% of species that have ever existed are now extinct. This does not suggest that they are being guided to a purpose. If there is a designer, then there appears to be a flawed design.

The most well-known version of the teleological argument was actually put forward by William Paley in 1802. This argument is based on the watch analogy. This is the idea that if you saw a watch you would automatically assume that the watch has a designer. Due to its complexity in the way it is put together you would never assume that the watch could just 'happen' by accident. Paley believed that since the complexity of a watch is nothing compared to that of the universe and if the complexity of a watch proves that it was designed, there must be a designer of the universe which can only be God. However, this analogy is based on the similarity between two things and you cannot argue with certainty that although two things are similar, they must be the same.

David Hume was a key critic of Paley's argument. He argued that the analogy provides a very weak argument as it is really based on guesswork that the universe must have a cause when in reality this is not certain. In addition to this, how do we know the universe and a watch are similar, there are other things which are complex but have differing causes so you could just as easily argue that the universe is similar to that of an onion which does not have a designer. Hume also pointed out that even if we accept the design argument, it can't prove that the cause of the universe is infinite or perfect. The universe is big, but it is not infinite and is certainly not perfect, so how is it rational to assume that God, a seemingly infinite and perfect being is the creator.

However, the anthropic principle would refute Hume's views. This is the idea that the universe is actually perfect, perfectly suited to the development of human life. For example, if the earth was even just a little bit closer to the sun it would be too hot for human life. This along with many other examples of ways nature seems designed perfectly for life, make it seem unlikely that the universe was a coincidence. Furthermore, Leibniz' 'principle of sufficient reason' would refute Hume's views, and argue that it makes sense to assert that the universe and life could have come into existence without a cause. Leibniz asked, "Why is there any world at all, and why is it the way that it is?" What he means here is that there must be some explanation of why there is a world at all. This is because, for any feature we observe in the world, if that feature could have been different then there must be an explanation for why it is the way it is. Leibniz argued that any contingent fact about the world must have an explanation, and therefore the fact that the world exists must have an explanation – and this explanation must be something out with the world. This is, in my view, a sensible approach to take. Everything in the world fulfils a purpose, and if things were different from how they are then they may not be able to fulfil their purpose. This indicates that everything was caused with specific

purpose in mind. Applying this same logic to the existence of the world itself follows the principle of Ockham's Razor - the simplest coherent solution is the correct one to adopt.

Paley says that the nature of God proves that it was designed by a powerful intelligence. Many Christians would argue that this must be God and that God's nature is to be wise, loving and all-powerful. However, when you look at the world, you see many events that do not align with the traits of a wise, loving, intelligent designer. Wars claim thousands of lives yearly; diseases cause immense suffering and pain and natural disasters cause vast amount of suffering and loss of life. This is backed up by Richard Dawkins who highlights that evolution comes about by mutations and natural selection, making it entirely random. In addition to this, he argues that evolution challenges the nature of God. The strong survive at the expense of the weak which challenges the all-loving, 'good' nature of God and 99% of species have become extinct challenging the idea of omniscience. This questions the omnipotence of God as if God is all-powerful and all-loving why was a perfect world not created to begin with in which there is limited pain and suffering. This limits the overall need for a designer but most of all the idea that even if there is a designer this is an all-powerful, loving God. However, it could be argued that the anthropic principle provides reason to believe that there is actually order in evolution and our universe. For example, fossil fuels which drove the development of modern technology were only possible because of organisms which existed millions of years ago. If we accept Genesis one, all humans were created last as they were Gods greatest creation, then it could be argued that the creation and demise of ancient organisms was part of God's plan and was intended for our current benefit.

Furthermore, some believe science can support the teleological argument. For example, physicist John Polkinghorne believes that quantum physics shows that evolution has come about by a combination of 'chance' and 'necessity'. By necessity he implies that there needed to have been a pre-existing set of natural laws within which evolution is able to occur. A link can be made to Aquinas' argument from contingency. In order to evolve, an organism is contingent on the organisms it has evolved from and on its environment, which permits evolution. He points out that opposing arguments tend to focus on the idea of 'chance' within evolution but miss the fact that the means for evolution to take place already existed in the universe. He believed that the universe could only have been designed by God.

In conclusion, I believe that Aquinas' and Paley's teleological argument is convincing, although is unsuccessful in proving the existence of God. The argument is logical and can be understood and realised through our experiences and perceptions of the universe. It is likely that something as great as the universe came about because of something else, as in our experience everything is contingent on something and everything is caused by something else. In addition to this, the theory can be applied to scientific discoveries as well as everyday occurrences, making it more believable. However, I would argue that the contradictions contained within the argument leave it open to many criticisms. There is no evidence that if there is a designer behind our universe that this is God. In addition to this, surely if the universe needs a designer based on its complexity, God is more complex by nature and would therefore need a cause or designer. How can we logically say that there is no way our universe could occur by chance or come from nothing and then argue that God does? Overall, the teleological argument brings up interesting points, but we cannot say for certain it is true due to the many contingencies and disputes surrounding the argument.

Essay question 2

“The Cosmological argument does not prove the existence of God.” Discuss.

The Cosmological argument is based around the observation that we live in an orderly universe. It is deduced that within an orderly universe everything must have a cause which in time creates a chain in which every creation can be traced back. Based on this, the argument states that only something which did not have a beginning could cause the universe and this something can only be God.

The Cosmological argument dates back to 1323, with one of the earliest and most notable theorists Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas proposed three arguments based on our perception and experience of the world which he believed proved the existence of God. Aquinas proposed the arguments of motion, causation and contingency. This is the idea that, from our experience, nothing can move or create itself, everything must first be moved or created. For this reason, he argued that since everything must first be moved or created, the first thing to move/ be created must have had a mover/ creator. He also stated that everything which has been created is contingent on the thing which is responsible for its creation e.g. every person exists only because of their parents who only exist because of theirs etc. He concluded that the being responsible had to be all powerful and transcendent so that it itself does not need a reason to exist. He believed that this necessary being must be God. This theory is supported by traditional theistic perceptions of God. God is traditionally believed to be an eternal, all-powerful creator who would have the ability to create the universe. It is also believed that God created the universe out of nothing- ex nihilo. The fact that these traditional beliefs line up with Aquinas' argument strengthens it.

Aquinas' argument is based on our knowledge and observation, making it appear more likely. However, it is deductive, this means it bases itself on a group of statements and reaches a logical conclusion based only on these statements. Aquinas' argument is based around the principles of contingency and infinite regression. However, this theory was based on the principle that infinite regression was impossible which we are now not clear is true. We now know that numbers can be stretched infinitely so there is no beginning or end. For this reason, it can be argued that the Universe has always been there. It also questions whether there had to be a first cause, if the universe is also infinite or perhaps if multiple causes resulted in the gradual creation of the universe. Despite this, although it has been shown infinite regression is possible in a mathematical setting this has never been proven in a 'real life' situation. Furthermore, Aquinas' argument is quite contradictory. It seems dubious that everything including the universe needed a creator and a starting point but God does not. This massively weakens Aquinas' argument as although it seems logical for the universe to need a cause, it seems like a massive, illogical leap for this to have to be God. This emphasises that Aquinas already had a strong belief in God and therefore instead of proving God's existence, he only enhanced his already established belief in God.

Aquinas' argument is also presently supported by William Lane Craig who proposed a modern version of the Arabic Kalam argument. Craig argued that if the universe were truly infinite, the present could not exist because you cannot add to an infinite. As the present does exist due to a series of past events, the universe must be finite. He argued anything finite must have a beginning because nothing can cause itself. However, as the laws of nature could not exist before the universe did, only God could have chosen to bring the universe into existence. This theory also has many criticisms. It could be questioned why natural laws could not exist before the creation of the universe or why the universe's creation has to follow set laws. Quentin Smith uses quantum theory to demonstrate that objects do not necessarily obey fixed laws. He argues that even if the universe did have a beginning it could be random therefore putting into the doubt the existence of God being proved through this argument.

Scottish philosopher, David Hume, argued that we can only verify something if we have experienced it. As we have no experience of the universe, Hume argued we have no way of verifying whether there was reason behind its existence. He believed that just because in our experience everything has a cause this does not necessarily mean this is true as we could have just not discovered an uncaused thing. Hume proposed that there is no need for a necessary being such as God as the existence of the universe itself could in fact be the necessary source of everything within it. This theory again strengthens the idea that the cosmological argument does not necessarily point to God and possibly just a cause. This theory has many criticisms. Anscombe, for example, argued that it seems completely illogical to totally contradict our experience of life, which is that everything needs a cause. Furthermore, many religious believers would argue that based on understanding the laws of the universe, we understand God and could argue that God is in fact contingent on the universe, and the two exist simultaneously. Hume's theory is supported by German philosopher, Immanuel Kant. Kant rejected that our experience infers that God must have created the universe. Kant argued that God would need to be a transcendent being, beyond space and time. However, he stated that in our experience it is impossible to know if this is true or to understand anything about God. Many religious people would disagree with this and they would argue that in our experience God has revealed himself through forms of revelation e.g. religious scriptures, dreams etc.

Niels Bohr, Nobel Prize winning physicist, showed that at a subatomic level particle can appear to come out of nothing. This indicates that the universe could also have come from nothing. This is supported by Bertrand Russell who argued that 'the universe is just there'. He believed that we should simply accept its existence as a fact and not question whether it needs a cause as just because some things need a creator it does not mean the universe does. Stephen Hawking also argues that the laws which govern the universe provide a complete system, in which a creator is not needed. Hawking is a strong supporter of the multiverse theory which is the idea there is an infinite number of universes, each beginning with its own singularity and none requiring a God. However, there are also weaknesses of this theory. With regards to Bohr's theory it could be possible that we have not yet discovered the technology to detect where some particles come from. Furthermore, Russell's theory does not actually provide reasoning behind why we shouldn't enquire into the cause of the universe.

A further opposition of the cosmological argument comes with the discovery of the Big Bang theory. This states that the universe was caused by an exploding singularity, in which all space, time and matter came into existence. However, this theory could actually be considered to support the Cosmological argument and Aquinas as it strengthens the idea that there was a beginning/ first cause of the universe. However, this is with the exception of God being the creator. This theory has a wealth of evidence to support it, for example, redshift which shows that the universe is expanding from a certain point and possible beginning/ first cause. It could be argued that this theory does not support the idea of a creator god. However, some may argue that God was the 'guiding hand' and cause behind the big bang.

In conclusion, there are a variety of theories which support a first cause and the existence of god such as Aquinas' three arguments and the Arabic kalam argument. However, there are many weaknesses within these arguments which cause many to question whether there is really evidence to support a creator God. However, many opposing arguments also leave many unanswered questions as to the reason behind why these events happened. Many related theories to the cosmological argument are based on empirical evidence and appear to provide very logical viewpoints. For this reason, the idea of a first cause seems very believable. However, there is a lack of evidence proving that the beginning of the universe was caused by God. For this reason, I believe that Aquinas' cosmological argument provides a very strong, logical explanation which points to a first cause however I do not believe there is enough adequate reasoning to prove the existence of God.

Essay question 3

"Of all the issues relating to abortion, the sanctity of life is the most significant." How far do you agree?

An abortion is the medical process of ending a pregnancy so it does not result in the birth of a baby, and is often referred to as a termination. The pregnancy is ended either by taking medications or having a minor surgical procedure. Abortion is legal in the UK, and can only be carried out in an NHS hospital or licensed clinic. Most abortions can only be carried out before 24 weeks of pregnancy, but can take place after 24 weeks in certain circumstances, such as if the mother's life is at risk or the child would be born with a severe disability. There are many different moral issues relating to abortion, however many religious people would argue that the sanctity of life is the most significant.

Sanctity means 'the quality of being sacred or holy', and Christians often talk of human life as being sacred. This means that they believe there is something special or holy about human life, as every human is special to God. They refer to the sanctity of life when considering issues such as abortion, euthanasia, embryo research, the care of disabled or the elderly. Belief in the sanctity of life originates in the Bible:

'So God created people in his own image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them.'

This quotation, from Genesis 1:27, describes the creation of the first humans. This is significant because humans are the only part of God's creation described as being in the "image" of God – having something of God's nature within us. Christians also believe that God uniquely created every human:

'You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb... You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. ... Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.'

This passage from Psalm 139:13-16 describes God intimately creating us in our mother's womb, and reinforces the idea that human beings are all intrinsically valuable because God has lovingly made each one and given them that value. Furthermore, Christians believe all human life is sacred because God is the giver of life. According to Ecclesiastes 3: 1-3, 'There is a time for everything. A time to be born and a time to die ...' This implies that God gives and takes away life as he pleases and that all matters of life and death are and should ultimately be left in his hands. An implication of this is that human life is therefore a gift – nothing is more important than the life God has given and it should be preserved and enhanced, rather than destroyed. Furthermore, every life has a God-given purpose. God destined (or meant) for each of us to be born, as the passage from Psalm 139 suggests.

The belief in the sanctity of life makes it hard for some Christians to agree in that as humans we can control the beginning or end of life, especially through abortion. Historically, the Roman Catholic Church in particular have been extremely vocal in their condemnation of abortion, with Pope John Paul II stating, "I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being". This viewpoint stems from the beliefs, set out in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, that "Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life ... from the moment of conception until death." For these Christians, there can be no doubt that a new biological human life is created at conception, and that every single human life bears the image of God and has special, intrinsic value, which the act of abortion completely disregards.

However, there are some within the Roman Catholic Church who would disagree with this 'hard-line' stance on abortion. While they would not argue that abortion is morally good, these pro-choice Catholics would argue that the belief in the sanctity of life is not always central in the debate about

abortion. This is because, although Church teaching has for a long time stated that a foetus becomes a person when the egg is fertilised, distinguished theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas said this didn't happen until between 40 and 80 days after conception. Therefore, this could be grounds for arguing that abortion, if only allowed to take place up to 12 weeks after conception, could be morally permissible as it does not directly disregard the sanctity of life. Pope Francis has recently made clear that:

“Our defence of the innocent unborn...needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred...Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.”

This implies that while arguments about the sanctity of life are significant in relation to abortion, Catholics should not focus on this one issue alone. Valuing the sanctity of life should mean valuing the lives of everyone, including those who may be seeking abortion as a result of dire situations they have found themselves in.

Humanism is a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasises the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers critical thinking and evidence over acceptance of dogma or superstition. Humanists would argue that the law should not be influenced by religious beliefs as this excludes the many people who hold other beliefs. This would include beliefs about the sanctity of life, and so they would reject this as the most significant issue relating to abortion. Mary Warnock, philosopher of morality and education, argued:

“We ought to pay less attention to the destruction of life by abortion than to the quality of life of those who are allowed to live. Life, after all, is not an abstract shared by everyone who is alive - there is no human life that is not lived by somebody. And it is these living people to whom we should attach value and whom we should, if necessary, protect.”

This implies that the sanctity of life is not the most significant issue regarding abortion – and that we should uphold the quality of life of those who are actually living. This reflects a humanist perspective, that life is valuable, but that the quality of life must be taken into account when making decisions about life and death. This is a valid and valuable stance to take with regards to abortion, as beliefs about the sanctity of life do not help us in cases where the pregnant woman's life is at risk. If both lives are sacred, which should we choose? The woman or the foetus? How do we determine which life is 'more' sacred? In cases where the woman's life is not at risk, I believe that we should prioritise questions about the quality of life – for both the woman and the foetus, as well as wider family members. In my view, it is clear that the interests of the woman, who would have to complete the pregnancy and likely care for the baby, whose happiness would largely depend on hers, should be prioritised in this case.

In conclusion, I do not agree that the sanctity of life is the most significant issue relating to abortion. This is a religious belief, and as such should not feature in arguments about medical ethical issues, or laws relating to these. The belief that God is the creator of all life, and only God decides when life begins and ends is problematic for a whole range of issues relating to medical science – such as whether couples can be helped to conceive through fertility treatments, or whether doctors can take measures to save lives, such as through organ donation and transplantation. I would, instead, regard quality of life as being the most significant issue relating to abortion, and in my view allowing women the choice of a safe abortion, should they wish one, is in the best interests of everyone.

Essay question 4

To what extent can religious experience be defined?

A religious experience is connected and relates to do something with God. A religious experience can take the form of a feeling, a sighting, a voice – they are different from person to person and vary in impact. An example is a vision experience which can happen when a person is awake or in a dream. The Prophet Muhammad is said to have had a religious experience when he received the Qur'an from the Angel Jibril. There are two main people who have tried to define the term religious experience and what it means to those who claim they have had one. William James and Rudolph Otto are best known for their work in this field. James saw religious experience as being based essentially on experience whereas Otto had a more generic view on what a religious experience was. A religious experience, at its most powerful, can lead a person to convert to that religion.

William James, in his book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, described a general theory of religious experience by drawing examples from various religions. He speaks of the 'sick soul' which refers to people who seem to be suffering from a sense of joylessness, dreariness and unhappiness. This refers to people who we would understand as being mentally depressed or someone who is miserable in their life. This type of feeling can lead to self-destruction, anxiety, depression and eventually results in the loss of any sense or meaning of life. James claimed that the sick soul lead to a person having a religious experience. They were ultimately crying out for help and at that point, they experience what is known as a form of religious intervention. This form of RE as described by James tells us that only a certain person with a certain mental state appears to experience this. I struggle to accept this definition as it seems to show that people who are seemingly unhappy and have nothing else in their life are the ones who will experience some form of religious intervention. Surely there are those of sound mind who are able to experience God and have a religious experience, therefore bringing doubt that religious experience can actually be defined and understood.

James also spoke of conversion in terms of religious experience. He claimed that conversion after a religious experience can lead to a changed and solid life. These conversions can either take place gradually or suddenly. Whilst most conversions lead to happiness, there are those conversions who turn people in a negative direction. James also claims that those people who could be described as intellectually cold or barren cannot be converted. This suggests that mental health and personality is related to whether someone is able to have a religious experience. This is also a negative explanation of defining a religious experience as it claims that a person who may have one will not do anything about it if they are not intelligent enough to understand it. This is very closed minded of James as he cannot begin to understand how a religious experience will affect everyone.

James suggests that a religious experience is one way to prove the existence of God. He said that God is real because he produces real effects. This means that an experience of God then will make a difference to a person and when they convert, they become a pure and saintly person.

Rudolph Otto in his text, *The Idea of the Holy*, spoke of the numinous consciousness. This is the feeling of being in the presence of something greater. Many people who claim to have had a religious experience refer to a sense of being in the presence of an awesome power yet feeling distinctly separate from it. This suggests a clear understanding that the feeling of God remains unique and distant from us as that is the way God is meant to be. Otto suggested that this feeling is where religion derives from as a result of this experience of the unknown. This tells us that religious experience is happening everywhere as we have so many people who are religious and this sets them apart from those who are not religious as they have had the feeling of the numinous. Otto speaks of *mysterium (mystery) tremendum* and *mysterium fascinans*. *Mysterium (mystery) tremendum*, in terms of defining religious experience, that is, a mystery before which man both trembles and is fascinated, is both repelled and attracted. *Mysterium fascinans* relates to an object of desire. What both of these terms mean is that a religious experience will either scare and fascinate a person when they have one or it will make them desire more. Otto says that a religious experience through his understanding, is a personal one and cannot be taught to another. Every experience is different and unique as well as the reaction that a person has to it. This explanation doesn't give an adequate picture of a religious experience, we have to remember that these explanations are over 100 years old and in that time, so much has happened in terms of science and study that both Otto and James may have given a solid understanding of religious experience in the early 19th century but in today's society, the language and the explanation appears out of date.

Much later on in the debate, the Alistair Hardy Research Centre was founded in 1969 with a goal of studying the nature and frequency of religious experiences. This centre attempted to research first hand religious experiences within and out with religion. At the beginning, there was no answers to their questions but it soon built up more than 5000 cases. The surveys indicated that those people who reported a form of religious experience were most likely to be, well educated, happy, mentally well balanced, not suffering from any form of deprivation and derived from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The centre also said that the experiences that people had they were often alone. This clearly shows a different picture from that of James and Otto who both suggested that those people who were experiencing a form of divine intervention were not of sound mind and were suffering from unhappiness and depression. This presents a difficulty across this study to define a religious experience as there are differing accounts in who they happen to. Hardy suggests the opposite to James and Otto thus making it more difficult for religious experience to be defined.

Finally, Richard Swinburne in his book, *The Existence of God*, suggests that theism (belief in one God) is more probable than not. This means that it is easier and more acceptable to believe in God than not believe in God. He defines religious experience as an experience of God or of some other supernatural being. This is a very important definition as many people have rejected testimony or claims of a religious experience that haven't actually involved God but Swinburne says that any religious figure, e.g. angels are enough to have a religious experience. He also talks about the principle of credulity which means that we should accept a person's explanation of their own religious experience unless it can be proven

otherwise. Swinburne offers the most comprehensive approach to defining religious experience as he is saying that they can be in any form of experiencing the supernatural, it doesn't have to involve God and regardless of who it is, you need to accept it as truth unless you can prove otherwise.

Religious experience today is possibly much easier to define and to witness, e.g. the terror attacks that have taken place are done in the name of God and have been instructed to do so by God. This could be described as a form of religious experience. Otto and James were defining an undefinable concept which was made evident by Swinburne as he said that we have to believe these experiences happen to the individual unless we can prove otherwise. Accepting that they are unique to the person and that they will always be different means that a religious experience cannot be defined other than by saying that it is something that will involve a religious figure and will either have a huge effect on the person or no effect at all and that effect can be a positive or negative one.