Edexcel Religious Studies

Revision guide

Paper 2: Religion and Ethics

Your exam will be on the following topics:

Issues in religion and ethics	Environmental issues Equality
Ethical theories	Utilitarianism Situation Ethics* Natural Moral Law
Applied ethics	War and peace Sexual ethics
Ethical language	Meta-ethics Relationship between religion and morality
Works of scholars	Kant's Deontology* Aristotle's Virtue Ethics*
Medical ethics	Beginning of life debates End of life debates*

*Your question 3(a) and 3(b) are on the following anthology extracts:

Barclay W, *Ethics in a Permissive Society*, Chapter 4 Situation Ethics, pp. 69–91 (HarperCollins Distribution Services, 1972) ISBN 9780002152044

Kant I, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Text, second section, pp. 29–53 (Yale University Press, 2002) ISBN 9780300094879

Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, Moral Virtue, pp. 23–37 (Oxford World's Classics edition, 1980) ISBN 9780192815187

Wilcockson M, *Issues of Life and Death*, Chapter 4 Euthanasia and Doctors' Ethics, pp. 56–69 (Hodder Education, 1999) ISBN 9780340724880

Unit 1: Significant concepts in issues or debates in religion and ethics

1.1 Environmental issues

a) Concepts of stewardship and conservation from the point of view of at least one religion and at least one secular ethical perspective; animal welfare and protection, sustainability, waste management and climate change.

b) Strengths and weaknesses of significant areas of disagreement and debate, assessment of relevant examples, legal changes and social attitudes, appropriateness and value of employing religious perspectives in these debates.

With reference to the ideas of J Lovelock and A Næss.

Animal welfare and protection	Western philosophical tradition has given little consideration to the welfare and protection of animals. Humans are superior due to their rational capacities. Biblical passages support this: "rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky" (Genesis 1). 21st century: many organisations working for animal rights, e.g. PETA. As world's population increases, producing dairy and meat becomes unsustainable. Uses up 70% of the world's freshwater supply, uses up land, produces greenhouse gases. The solution: eating bugs, in vitro or synthetic meat, veganism?
Sustainability	Sustainability is the earth's capacity to continue supporting life. The use of fossil fuels for transportation and energy, and the destruction of natural habitats for agriculture takes a heavy toll on the natural world. Solutions: wind and solar power, sustainable development.
Waste management	Incineration – burning waste – produces harmful chemical by-products which can cause air pollution or health issues for animals and humans. They are expensive, energy-intensive operations. Using landfills to dispose of waste is unsustainable: there is a limit to the amount of space available. Landfill sites can contaminate the soil and groundwater, while the methane produced contributes to global warming. Solution: Zero-waste policies; waste-prevention and recycling initiatives
Climate change	Climate change is defined by the Met Office as the 'large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns or average temperatures'. Shrinking ice caps, rising sea levels, increases in rainfall, drought, freak weather. The human and environmental impact is immense.

Christian perspectives on the environment

<u>Dominion</u>

The traditional Christian approach to the environment is drawn from Genesis. These passages set out the idea of dominion – that humans were instated by God to rule over the Earth and use its resources for their own purpose.

<u>Stewardship</u>

Stewardship is a theological idea which holds that God has given the earth to human beings and he expects us to look after it. We are stewards of the earth.

Many Christians consider environment issues to be important because of the impact it has on people's lives.

Christians consider Jesus's teaching to love thy neighbour as providing a clear reason to act on environmental issues.

Pope Francis has also spoken out about climate change.

<u>Questions to consider</u>

- Does the Christian view of the Day of Judgement make care of the Earth irrelevant?
- Should caring for the environment take precedent over other religious duties?
- Destruction of the world may be seen as foreshadowing the welcomed apocalypse and the second coming of Christ. What does this mean for the environment?
- Does the world have intrinsic value? Or only instrumental in that it is only important for humans and for humans' relationship with God? Do Christians value the earth purely in itself?
- Do humans really have greater moral worth than animals?
- Do Christians view conservation as an instrumental or intrinsic good?

Strengths of stewardship	Weaknesses of stewardship
Christian organisations are able to mobilise large numbers of people and amass significant funds for their conservation efforts. The Christian poor and underprivileged means there is a significant focus on the developing world, where the effects of climate change are often felt most severely.	By viewing conservation as an instrumental rather than intrinsic good, Christians are unable to appreciate the true worth of nature. Focused on the consequences for humanity, rather than on other living species or the natural world itself – anthropocentric. Peter Singer criticises for putting humans at the centre of the moral universe – therefore disregarding animal rights. Lynn White has argued that the historical roots of our ecological crisis are in Christianity and this is a major factor in environmental destruction.

Secular perspectives on the environment

Shallow Ecology

Also an **instrumental** and **anthropocentric** view of the environment.

Conservation and protection of the environment should take place because it is in our interest to do so.

Environmental issues stand to cost us money, our health, safety, well-being etc.

Utilitarian: more people will be happy if we protect the environment

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Highly pragmatic - Does not rely on claims about existence of God - Action now will reap financial reward in the future – e.g. Thames barrier - Appeals to countries' self-interest - Appealing to self-interest means the environment is better cared for; motivates people to act	- Does not accord any intrinsic value to the earth - Animals in themselves do not have moral value - Only care for animals because of the impact on humans

Deep Ecology

Against anthropocentrism (human-centred attitudes). The world has **intrinsic rather than instrumental value**.

Aldo Leopold: 'land ethic'. Land is a community; should be respected and loved. Needs to be maintained in its natural state.

Aarne Naess: Came up with the term deep ecology. Argued in favour of deep ecology and that the environment has intrinsic value. Humans do not have any superiority over any other natural beings; they are just one part of an integrated and mutually dependent ecological structure.

Richard Routley argued that the prejudicial favouring of humans over other animals is 'human chauvinism'.

Paul Taylor argued for the moral significance of non-sentient beings, since every living thing is 'pursuing its own good in its own unique way'. This is the same as how we see ourselves and therefore we should place 'the same value on their existence as we do on our own'.

James Lovelock – Gaia Hypothesis: Argues that the Earth is a self-regulating system and, by itself, regulated the environment so that it is perfectly suited to life on earth. All organisms unconsciously help to regulate conditions of earth so they remain constant and stable.

Strengths of Gaia	Weaknesses of Gaia
- Challenges anthropocentric understandings of the earth because it suggests humans are not the most important but just one species of a living whole - Secular, not religious theory. Opposed to Darwinism and evolution because it creates a role for Gaia in the development of organisms - Sees the environment as valuable in itself - Shows humans are dependent on the world, not the world dependent on us	- Lovelock was more pessimistic about the ability of the planet to respond to climate change and self-regulate in the face of the damage being done to it by humans - Singer critiques: argues it's wrong to attribute the idea of intrinsic value to a non-sentient being and meaningless to talk about such things having desires or consciousness

Singer's Utilitarianism: all sentient beings (beings capable of feeling) have an *interest* in avoiding pain. Humans do not respect this and have no ethical justification for doing so. Advocates a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle. Although does concede it is only the inflicting of pain that is wrong, not the killing itself. Thus it is the way we raise, treat and kill meat that is morally wrong.

1.2 Equality

a) Ethical and religious concepts of equality, including issues of gender, race and disability, the work of one significant figure in campaigns for equality in any of these areas, significant events in the progress of equality in these areas, perspectives on equality from at least one religion and one secular ethical perspective.

b) Strengths and weaknesses of significant areas of disagreement and debate, assessment of relevant examples, legal changes and social attitudes, appropriateness and value of employing religious perspectives into these debates.

With reference to the ideas of Martin Luther King and Joni Eareckson Tada.

Secular concepts of equality

There are three concepts of equality:

1. **Strict (or simple) equality**: everyone has the same amount of goods (money, resources)

2. **Equality of need**: Summed up by Marx's proclamation that goods should be distributed 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his need'. The idea is that equality is best achieved by satisfying people's needs

3. **Equality of Desert**: Goods should be distributed to the extent that people *deserve* them. Those who do the most (e.g. put in the most effect, produce the most, have the greatest talents), deserve the most resources. This is a form of meritocracy

Religious concepts of equality

Scriptures such as the Bible and the Qur'an stress equality as being essential to the faith.

However historically, both the UK and US have been dominated by the ethics of Christianity, yet the societies of both have been riven by inequality.

In India, the Hindu caste system remains in place.

In America, Conservative Christians continue to oppose the basic tenets of feminism. Quiverfull movement – restore very traditional gender roles.

Christian arguments in favour of equal rights for women	Christian arguments against equal rights for women
Women travelled with Jesus Figures like Mary Magdalene play a key part in the Gospels God created everyone in His image	**Genesis 2:18** – God creates Eve as a helper for Adam **Genesis 2:22** – God creates woman from the rib of man **Genesis 3:6** – Eve is responsible for eating the forbidden fruit

Christian arguments in favour of racial equality	Christian arguments against racial equality
• Biblical verses emphasise that all races are of equal value to God • Parable of the Good Samaritan – a critique of racist attitudes. Jews and Samaritans hated one another, yet Jesus tells his Jewish audience it was the Samaritan who helped the injured man • The message of Christ is at the heart of Martin Luther King's thinking about equality	• Old Testament – slavery was commonplace • Some elements of the Church historically supported slavery, although this would have little modern support amongst Christians

Christian attitude to disability: Many of Jesus's miracles involve him curing people who are deaf, blind or unable to walk. Christ was a great healer and emphasised love as the most important teaching.

However, modern campaigners for disability equality are not seeking pity or healing, but respect. The demand is for autonomy and equal rights, not a miraculous cure.

On the other hand, many charities have been spearheaded by members of the Church.

Gender equality

Simone de Beauvoir: sex and gender are different things. Gender is defined and created by society. The idea of a 'woman' is rooted in society – a society made and controlled by men. Expectations of behaviour are set by men who see themselves to represent the norm for human behaviour.

Waves of feminism:

1. First wave feminism (late 19th to early 20th century): the Suffragette movement – the focus was on ensuring equal voting rights for women.
2. Second wave feminism (1960s – 80s): Emerged alongside the civil rights movement – expanded on the legal demands made by the first wave to include wider social issues such as reproductive rights and domestic violence. Sought to liberate women from the oppressive gender roles discussed by de Beauvoir.

3. Third wave feminism (1990s – present): Influenced by post-modern theorists such as Judith Butler, who sought to deconstruct fixed concepts of sexuality and gender. Sought empowerment, freedom and choice for women.
4. Fourth wave feminism (2010s - ?): In recent years, it has been suggested by some feminist thinkers that a new wave of feminism has begun in the age of social media. Concepts such as intersectionality and social privilege are discussed.

Social and legal changes:

- 1918: Women over 30 get the right to vote
- 1920: Sex discrimination act
- 1928: Women get the same voting right as men
- 1967: Abortion is decriminalised
- 1970: Equal Pay Act
- 1994: Rape becomes a criminal offence

Racial equality

Martin Luther King came to national fame after the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He was instrumental in the civil rights movement in America.

King was known for his **pacifism**, but there is evidence to suggest that his actual views were much more **nuanced**.

King's campaigns for non-violent resistance had a **profound effect on the civil rights** movement and the broader struggle for racial equality.

In 1964, the US government passed the **Civil Rights Act**, effectively bringing to a close the era of legally-sanctioned racial segregation.

Malcolm X rejected King's philosophy of non-violent resistance and argued that armed struggle may be required if black Americans were ever to be truly liberated from racism.

The injustices carried out against black people in America at the time, Malcolm X thought, should be **fought against 'by any means necessary'.**

Intersectionality is the idea that different forms of discrimination and prejudice (gender, race, ability etc.) are socially interlinked. As a result, depending on the exact nature of their identity, individuals may not all have the same experience of inequality (e.g. a black woman with a physical disability may face different issues to a black able-bodied male).

Social and legal changes:

- 1964: Civil Rights Act signed by the US president, ending legally-sanctioned segregation
- 1965: Voting Rights act removes measures designed to prevent black people from voting
- 1976: UK parliament passes the Race Relations Act, making it illegal to deny an individual access to education and employment due to their race

Disability equality

Following a terrible accident, Joni Eareckson Tada was paralysed from the neck down at the age of 17; she has since devoted her life to charity.

In her books, Tada confronts an age-old problem for religious believers: suffering. **How can an all-loving, all-powerful God allow innocent people to suffer?**

Tada argues that God permits suffering because **it draws us closer to God**. Only by **facing hardship do we have a need for Christ in our lives**.

She states that disabled people are **'audio-visual aids'** for the Church which **'sustain those of us who face lesser conflict'.** In other words, they demonstrate to the rest of the congregation how **the wretchedness of suffering can be overcome by faith**. Hence it is vital for disabled people to be an integral part of the Church.

Medical need: Advances in medical technology led to the development of the medical model of disability, which understands disability as an illness to be treated. Ethically, the suggestion is that equality for disabled people is best achieved by directing resources to healthcare. Critics argue that the medical model looks at what is "wrong" with the person, not what the person needs.

Social need: a social model of disability which viewed society, rather than the individual, as being responsible for disability. The core idea is that what actually *disables* a person is society not having the facilities that individuals need. Proponents argue that a social model is required if disabled people are to have independence and dignity.

Disability and equality in the UK today: Following the 2010 Equality Act, the social model of disability is endorsed – employers must make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled workers.

Social and legal changes:

- 1944: a 'disabled person' is legally defined for the first time in the Disabled Persons Employment Act
- 1995: Disability Discrimination Act – greater employment rights to disabled persons
- 2010: UN convention of the rights of people with disabilities signed by the UK govt

Points of debate / evaluation

- Feminism is a very broad movement – no unity
- Most radical activists are often the most divisive
- There are many different views about equality within religion – not all religious people have the same beliefs, they should not be tarred with the same brush
- Should we view religious texts as reflective of social and cultural norms of the time – can their teachings on gender inequality be ignored?
- It may be offensive to view disability as part of God's 'divine plan'
- Does the Bible support racial equality? Jesus may be viewed as a good example to follow when it comes to racial equality. However there are also many passages advocating slavery in the Old Testament

Unit 2: A study of three ethical theories

2.1 Utilitarianism

a) Concepts of utility, pleasure, hedonism and happiness, influences on the emergence of the theory, including social, political and cultural influences, the significant contribution of Bentham and Mill to a recognised theory. Act and Rule Utilitarianism, the development of the theory, including Preference, Negative and Ideal Utilitarianism, the application of the theory in historical and contemporary ethical situations, including political and social reform, the concept of relativism in ethics.

b) Strengths and weaknesses of the theory and its developments, appropriateness of its continuing application and use, assessment of relevant examples, change in the law and social attitudes vis a vis the theory, compatibility or otherwise with religious approaches.

With reference to the ideas of J Bentham and J S Mill.

Key info

Utilitarianism is presented in the Trolley Problem (Philippa Foot) – should you switch the tracks in order to save five people at the expense of one?

Devised by **Jeremy Bentham** (1758-1832) – known as **act** utilitarianism.

Developed by **John Stuart Mill** – known as **rule** utilitarianism.

Is a **teleological**, **consequential** (outcomes, not will or intention), **relativist** (dependent on the situation) ethical theory. What is good / bad depends solely on the consequences of our actions. Actions have no intrinsic value.

A **principle of utility** is a measure of usefulness, fittingness for purpose of a particular action. The principle of utility for utilitarianism is 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number'.

Hedonistic ethical theory: pleasure or happiness should be equated with good. Pleasure is the ultimate good in life.

Social and intellectual background

Great scientific and social change happening during the late 1700s / early 1800s.

The Enlightenment was a cultural and intellectual movement in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Some of its key thinkers, John Locke and David Hume, influence Bentham. Both were empiricists which meant they focused on information that was available from the world, rather than what we can know through logic alone to divine revelation. This is reflected in Bentham's focus on empirical human experience and deducing from human behaviour that humans work to achieve happiness. Locke also influenced Bentham on his view that reason was more important than custom and tradition. This can be seen in Bentham's rejection of Christian ethics and traditions.

Political revolutions in France and America = demand for democracy and human rights.

Industrial revolution in Britain led to poor working and living conditions for many – homelessness, child labour, slum prisons etc. The industrial revolution created great economic development but caused many social problems, e.g. bad working conditions, long hours. There were also problems with alcoholism and prostitution.

Bentham's utilitarianism met the needs of **working people** and improved their lives.

Impact of Utilitarianism on political and social reform

1800s: prison reform (better conditions, rehabilitation), Factory Acts (banning children from working), medical practice, abolition of slavery 1833.

20th / 21st centuries: abortion, euthanasia, smoking in public places, death penalty.

Utilitarianism provided an important philosophy behind many changes in society that helped address the pain and suffering that was brought about by the Industrial Revolution.

It brought in social change through its emphasis on the importance of the majority of the people – people living in urban slums and working in factories – rather than the wealthy minority who were landowners and factory owners.

Change also came about through utilitarianism's focus on making life more pleasurable and enjoyable – slaves, prisoners, the poor were recognised as needing to be happing if society were to be moral.

This went against the dominant Christian view of the time that poverty was the will of God and therefore shouldn't be changed. Denied that suffering was for a greater purpose.

Bentham's hedonic calculus

Bentham argues that we are ruled by pleasure and pain: *Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.*

From this **descriptive** claim, he makes his **normative** claim (how things *ought* to be). This is the principle of **utility**: When faced with an ethical decision, we should choose the course of action which maximises pleasure and minimises pain for the greatest number of people.

The **Hedonic calculus** can work out quantitatively the best course of action by subtracting the amount of pain from the amount of pleasure.

Happiness = **pleasure minus pain**.

Seven factors which must be taken into account when calculating the actual amount of pleasure an act will produce: **duration** (how long will the happiness last), **remoteness** (how near or far in time it is), **purity** (how free from pain is the happiness), **richness** (how likely the happiness is to reoccur), **intensity** (how intense or weak the happiness is), **certainty** (how likely is the happiness), **extent** (how far will the happiness reach).

Referred to as **act utilitarianism** as the moral judgement is based on the acts of individuals.

Strengths of Bentham's Act Utilitarianism	Weaknesses of Bentham's Act Utilitarianism
Intuitively correct. Takes into account **cultural diversity**. Seeks to maximise a human goal – grounded in **humanity**. Maximises happiness and minimising pain is how most people live their lives. Hedonic calculus is clear and **practical**.	**Impractical** – we don't have time to deliberate and apply the calculus every time. Does not treat everyone **equally** – only equal in that their vote matters. **Quantitative** rather than qualitative – happiness cannot be quantified. Happiness is far more complex than this. Too **simplistic** – one principle isn't sufficient for all the complex ethical decisions out there. **Denies other virtues**, e.g. justice, charity, compassion, humility. Doesn't consider **motives** or intentions. Happiness is **subjective** (e.g. Vardy says some would be willing to suffer to lose weight, whereas others wouldn't). Cannot predict the **future**. No **protection of justice** for minority groups – Rawls argues happiness could be unfairly distributed between minorities and majorities.

Mill's rule utilitarianism

Higher / lower pleasures:

Many criticised Bentham's utilitarianism for being impractical and too quantitative (cannot reduce human emotion to a calculus).

Mill criticised Bentham by saying his definition of "pleasure" failed to recognise higher levels of human experience. Said happiness was much more complex than what Bentham was making out (we have "more than animal desires").

Mill distinguished between higher and lower pleasures. Higher pleasures are pleasures which help people reach their full intellectual potential, such as art, literature and philosophy. Lower pleasures are pleasures which help people fulfil their basic needs and urges, e.g. sex and drink.

Mill states the test for determining whether a pleasure is of a higher quality than another as follow:

Pleasure P1 is more desirable than pleasure P2 if: all or almost all people who have had experience of both give a decided preference to P1, irrespective of any feeling that they ought to prefer it.

Criticisms of Mill's higher / lower pleasures:

- Idealistic to suppose that people will always choose going to the opera over a bucket of chicken
- Lower pleasures are far easier to satisfy
- Those who are intellectually refined and possess an idealistic temperament are often always the ones who are most likely to succumb to depression
- Is it not better to have only those desires which are most easily fulfilled?

Mill responds to these criticisms by saying there is a difference between contentment and happiness. They may be less content but they're still happier because they know of a *greater* happiness which is *unavailable* to those who are only satisfied by the lower pleasures: *It is better being a human being unsatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool or the pig think otherwise, that is because they know only their own side of the question.*

Rule Utilitarianism:

Mill said that humans have worked out through trial and error the actions that lead best to human happiness, which are promoted through moral rules. He rejected Bentham's utility calculus. E.g. lying or hitting others nearly always causes unhappiness, therefore we develop the rules 'do not lie' and 'do not hit'.

Therefore our actions should be guided by rules that, if everyone followed, would lead to the greatest overall happiness.

Strong (rules can never be changed) vs. **weak** (rules can sometimes be ignored) rule utilitarianism.

To ensure those making up the rules did not exercise undue power over the minority, Mill came up with the **harm principle**.

Strengths of Rule Utilitarianism	Weaknesses of Rule Utilitarianism
- Recognises that we have a strong internal conviction that principles other than happiness must be considered - Easier to apply than act; clear rules - Still allows some flexibility with strong and weak	- Henry Sidgwick: how are we supposed to distinguish between higher and lower pleasures? Any categorisation would be subjective - Focus on rules removes the benefit of situationalism - Difficult to know when rules can be broken to achieve greatest happiness

Further developments

Preference utilitarianism
Developed by **R. M. Hare** and **Peter Singer**. Based on Robert Nozick's thought experience 'Experience Machines' – would people choose to abandon reality for a life of pure pleasure? He argues no – people place value on being connected to reality. Therefore hedonism is defeated – things other than pleasure are valuable too. 'Pleasure' or 'happiness' should be replaced by **'best interests'** or **'preferences'.** Pleasure is difficult to calculate, but people can express preferences – sometimes these have nothing to do with happiness but are still very important to them. E.g. an athlete will put themselves through physical pain in order to train and become a better athlete. This is their preference. **Strengths:** easier to take into account preferences because people can clearly state them; easier to satisfy preferences **Weaknesses:** difficulty making decisions between conflicting preferences; sometimes preferences are not recognised on moral grounds, e.g. euthanasia; some people might not be able to express true preference, e.g. mentally ill

Negative utilitarianism
The right action is to promote the **least amount of evil or harm**. The least amount of pain for the greatest number. Developed by **David Pearce**. **Strengths:** there are more ways to do harm than good so the focus should be on avoiding harm; all would ensure against pain before pursuing happiness **Weaknesses**: Wouldn't it be better to euthanize huge sections of society as quickly and painlessly as possible? This would remove suffering really quickly for a great number of people. Or surely it would be morally better if the world just didn't exist! Some suffering may be valuable, e.g. to encourage greater compassion.

Ideal utilitarianism
Advocated by G. E. Moore. Good is a **non-definable** property. Pleasure, friendship and aesthetic appreciation are intrinsically good, therefore good actions are those which include these in the world for the most people. The right action is one that maximises certain intrinsically good qualities.

Historical and contemporary application of utilitarianism

USA's use of nuclear weapons in WWII:

- Truman's choice was between dropping the atomic bomb and killing tens of thousands or beginning a lengthy invasion that could see millions on both sides die
- Hoped to minimise loss of life and end the war with the minimum amount of pain
- Others criticise (e.g. Anscombe), saying it's mass murder – ends don't justify the means

Triage:

- During major emergencies, e.g. natural disasters, casualties are assessed and priority is given to those who are most severely injured, while assistance is delayed for those with minor injuries or those with injuries so severe that even with treatment they will die.

Effective altruism (Singer):

- The best off are morally obliged to give up as much as they can to charitable causes until such a point that giving would cause more harm than to not give

General strengths	General weaknesses
Good to focus on human **wellbeing**. It encourages **democracy** and the interests of the majority. Important to consider the **consequences** of our actions.	Must be able to **predict** long-term consequences. Is it only consequences that matter? What if I have been intentions but good consequences? **Happiness changes** from person to person. The theory cannot be used to decide **what is truly good.** Happiness of **minorities** is often overlooked. People are not always motivated by pleasure and happiness. Insists we must be impartial – cannot show preference to friends and family. Inconsistent with religious approaches to morality because it does not interpret God to be the source of moral knowledge.

Is it relevant today?

YES	NO

- Compatible with today's secular views - Happiness and pleasure are important values today - Teachings on the importance of the majority in making decisions is shared in democratic values - Shaped political attitudes, e.g. towards the poor, that remain today	- Society now believes strongly in the principles of justice, rights and protection of minorities which is not reflected in utilitarianism

2.1 Situation Ethics

(a) The 'new morality' of the mid-20th century: social, political and cultural influences on the development of Situation Ethics, concepts of agape and situationalism in ethics, the application of the theory to specific case studies, biblical examples of situationist thinking, such as illustrated in the ministry of Jesus.

b) Strengths and weaknesses of the theory and its developments, appropriateness of its continuing application and use, assessment of relevant examples, change in the law and social attitudes vis a vis the theory, compatibility or otherwise with religious approaches.

With reference to the ideas of J A T Robinson and J Fletcher.

Key info

Developed by J. A. T. **Robinson** (1919-1983) and Joseph **Fletcher** (1905-1991).

A **relativist**, **consequentialist** and **teleological** ethical theory.

Moral decisions are based on **what best serves love** (the most loving thing to do).

Situationalism: The view that particular circumstances deserve to be weighted more heavily in ethical decision-making than general or universal principles.

Based on **agape**: pure, selfless, unconditional love for other human beings. As shown by **Jesus** in the Bible (e.g. showing mercy for the woman caught in adultery, healing on a Sunday). Love that should be shown regardless of whether you like the other person or not. It is having the **right attitude** to others. Expecting **nothing in return** for your actions but doing it because your faith leads you to know showing love to them is right.

Social and intellectual background

SE emerged at a time (1960s) when society was drastically **changing**. Traditional Christian ethics (Divine Command Ethics) was no longer relevant to many Christians. Young people especially were **challenging traditional sources of authority** such as the Church.

Examples: women more equal, women in the workforce post-WWII, Vietnam War = distrust of government and loss of patriotism, Kennedy's assassination = feeling unsafe, worried for future of the country, civil rights, sexual revolution = time of individualism and freedom, mixed-race relationships, drugs, music, student movement = more liberal attitudes and freedom of expression.

J.A.T. Robinson – 'Honest to God'

Tried to develop a Christian ethic that was both true to Christianity and accessible and relevant to his time – radically different and controversial. New morality of the 20th century.

Must base Christian ethics on the law of love because man has **'come of age'** (reached intellectual maturity). The moral agent is mature enough to make decisions for themselves using reason and judgement, and take responsibility for the outcome of their actions.

God is not transcendental, inaccessible and far removed from us. He is **'the ground of our being'** – defined as **pure love** and something which guides our morality.

Legalistic approach of divine command ethics is a misconception of the ethics of Jesus. Instead, individuals should act to show what will best demonstrate love to others: *Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself (Matthew 22:38)*.

Biblical support

Jesus rejected the legalistic approach to ethics that Jews at the time followed, e.g.:

- "The Sabbath was made for man, not the man for Sabbath" – therefore strict rules should only be followed where it will best serve others
- Jesus' healing of people with leprosy instead of following rules about lepers being unclean and sinful
- Saving of the woman being stoned to death – "Whoever hasn't sinned should throw the first stone"

Fletcher: 'The New Morality'

Use moral rules and principles of the community or tradition to help you make ethical decisions **BUT set these aside** is love is better served by doing so.

Considered situationalism a middle way between antinomianism (no moral rules at all) and legalism (morality should always be based on rules). People must have some principles to appeal to when making an ethical decision but these principles cannot be absolute and unflexible.

Four presuppositions: <u>pragmatism</u> (moral demands should be practical), <u>relativism</u> (each situation must be assessed on how best to demonstrate love), <u>positivism</u> (moral agent has to decide, through their faith in God, that love is the most important thing), <u>personalism</u> (demands of people are considered first).

Six fundamental principles: Fletcher also developed six fundamental principles which explain how agape should be understood and applied in ethical situations.

	Fundamental Principle	Explanation
1.	'Only one thing is intrinsically good; namely love: nothing else at all'	The only intrinsically good things – that is good in itself – is love. Love is not instrumentally good.
2.	'The ruling norm of Christian decision is love: nothing else'	The Jewish laws have been replaced by Jesus command to show love to one's neighbour. It is not more important to love than to follow the law.
3.	'Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed, nothing else'	Love and justice are the same thing because justice is giving a man what he owed and man is owed love (agape). Justice helps us to decide how to distribute and apply love between different people.
4.	'Love wills the neighbour's good, whether we like him or not'	Love should be shown regardless of whether you like the other person or not. It is not about developing a personal relationship or love in the personal sense. It is about showing agape and having the right attitude towards others.
5.	'Only the end justifies the means, nothing else'	If love is the outcome of one's actions, then the means or actions taken to achieve this are not morally significant. It is only the outcome that matters.
6.	'Love's decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively'	Decisions must be made then and there in the situation so that specific factors can be taken into account. Decisions should not be made on the basis of laws that prescribe how to behave.

Unique situations: For the betterment of all (atomic bomb); cloak and dagger (sleeping with the enemy); wartime sacrifice (not picking up soldiers); sacrificial adultery (getting pregnant to be released).

More case study examples: A women who kills her crying baby in order to protect a group of people from being attacked by Indians on the Wilderness trial in the USA during the early settlements.

Impact: Divorce law

- Move away from pre-packaged moral Christian judgement that divorce is always wrong.
- Allow past experience to guide us but leave behind restrictions of old moral law if love was best served by doing so.
- Situationally for *some* families, love is better served by allowing them the freedom to divorce.
- **Matrimonial causes act 1973**: divorce allowed if the marriage had broken down.

Barclay's criticisms (anthology)

Fletcher's cases are **extreme** ones; humans are **not truly free** to make choices without the control of the law; no guarantee that agape will be fairly distributed; the law is needed for **public morality**; we need laws to avoid **moral chaos**; permits **inconsistency** and unreliability – we have **different opinions** of what best serves love.

Christian responses

Situation Ethics had a negative reaction from the Catholic Church. It was thought that S.E. treated conscience as the source of moral knowledge – instead the source of moral knowledge should be NML.

Unpopular today as a Christian ethic – thought to give too much emphasis to human moral freedom and subjectivity, rather than God as the source of moral goodness.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Decisions are **compassionate**, reasonable and appropriate. It is good to seek the wellbeing of others. Makes a genuine attempt to model the ethics of **Jesus**. Responds to the character and **needs of the time**; helped Christianity adapt to modernity. We make judgements situationally everyday anyway. Gives man responsibility, recognising that man has 'come of age'.	Too idealistic. A**mbiguous** – lack of clear guidance. Depends too much on an individual's view point. Cannot accurately guess the **consequences.** Could **justify heinous acts** in the interest of love. How do we **measure love?** Does love justify the suffering of others? Peter Vardy argues that it ignores the first of Jesus' two main commands – the love of God – because Fletcher is trying to appeal to a secular audience.

2.3. Natural Moral Law

a) Concepts of absolutism and legalism in ethics, early development of natural moral law, biblical and classical foundations of the approach, concepts of purpose, telos, primary and secondary precepts, contemporary applications and adaptations, including proportionalism.

With reference to the ideas of Aquinas and B Hoose.

Key info

Deontological, **absolutist** and **legalist** ethical theory. Actions themselves are intrinsically right or wrong. Morality is about rules and duties.

Absolutism: one version of morality holds in all places at all times for all people – it's universal.

Legalism: we should make our decisions based on previously established laws.

Rooted in human nature and our search for genuine happiness. We have an **inherent sense of what's right or wrong**. Moral laws are known by all men and women who have the use of reason.

Can be traced back to **Aristotle**, the **Stoics** and **Cicero**.

Best known as a Christian system of ethics developed by **Thomas Aquinas**.

Classical foundations: Aristotle's influence

All things have a **purpose** to which they work. The 'telos' or final cause is the purpose for which a thing was created and the purpose for which it should rightly fulfil.

That purpose can be understood through examining the Bible and the natural world, which reveals the **purpose for which God created man**.

Humans are free but not lawless because they live in an **ordered universe** and the rules for human conduct are **laid down within human nature itself**. Aristotle's belief in a well-ordered, harmonious universe, where nature has clear logic and a creator was attractive to Aquinas.

NML is a deontological ethical theory influenced by Aristotle's teleological worldview.

Biblical foundation: St. Paul

Biblical passages:

- *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse (Romans 1:20)*

St Paul appeals to the belief that everyone knows the natural moral law because God instilled it in everyone: *When Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law (Romans 2:14-16).*

Aquinas' Natural Law Theory

For Aquinas, human telos or purpose is to come into unity and fellowship with God and enable the reaching of the highest human potential.

There are two sources that humans could use to understand this purpose God had given humanity:

1. The **Bible** and the **world** – revelation has God's rules, the world reveals God's moral law because it was designed by God
2. **Reason** – through reason we could know what actions would fulfil our natural purpose

Humanity was given reason and freedom by God so that we would be able to discover and fulfil our natural purpose. This was quite radical at the time. Earlier theologians like St Augustine had stressed the corruptness of human nature due to the Fall.

His starting point: "**do good and avoid evil**". This is known as **synderesis**: the innate principle in the moral consciousness of every person which directs him to good and restrains him from evil.

Four steps to his argument:

1. The universe was created by God so everything has a design and purpose
2. This could be understood through an examination of the natural world and the Bible
3. It is the destiny of humans to achieve union with God – NML helps us achieve that
4. Humanity is given reason and freedom to follow the good, which fulfils God's purpose for them

This is NML: the **rational understanding and following of God's final purpose**.

The ultimate aim is to **flourish and reach God**; we therefore use our **God-given reason** to derive and interpret the design **imprinted naturally by God**.

Aquinas believed that through reason, the Bible and the world, it became clear that there were a number of **PRIMARY PRECEPTS** which help to identify our God-given purpose in life:

1. Live / preserve life
2. Reproduce

3. Learn and educate children
4. Worship God
5. Order society and create harmony

Whether acts lead towards God depends on whether the action fits the purpose that humans were made for. Does the action glorify God and therefore fulfil our purpose? If so, it is *morally right*.

Secondary precepts: rules which direct people towards actions which uphold the primary precepts. E.g. do not abort a foetus – upholds primary precepts to live and to reproduce. Another example is that homosexual acts are immoral because they cannot reproduce (a primary precept). Many of the Catholic Church's teachings are based on NML.

Aquinas does see some flexibility in how secondary precepts could be applied. Primary precepts could never be broken, but how they were applied could vary according to situational factors.

A moral error involves choosing an **apparent good** – mistakenly supposing that it is really good.

Proportionalism – Bernard Hoose

NML was criticised for being too static and inflexible.

Bernard Hoose developed NML with **proportionalism**. He writes: *It is never right to go against a principle unless there is a proportionate reason which would justify it.*

He worked within the framework of NML but did not insist on an absolutist interpretation if a **greater good is served by laying the law aside**.

What is important is to bring about a **proportionate** amount of good and evil.

We cannot become perfect because we live in a **fallen world** and we are all affected by **original sin**. The best we can hope for is **moral compromise**, not moral perfection.

Doctrine of Double Effect: Aquinas recognised that there were sometimes situations where it is not possible to do good without also doing bad. E.g. killing an attacker in self-defence. Aquinas said this was morally acceptable as long as the individual's intention was to preserve their own life rather than take away another's. Bad consequences do not make an act morally wrong as long as that bad consequence is not intended.

Strengths: Does not permit suffering simply in the cause of upholding NML. Acknowledges some non-moral evils have to be permitted to bring about a greater good. Must be allowed to **adapt** moral laws in some circumstances. Middle way between absolutism and other situational ethics.

Weaknesses: Does this allow for too much freedom? Is this not just utilitarianism under another guise? Problems arise in deciding what constitutes a proportionate reason to abandon moral laws – there's no method for doing this.

Strengths of NML	Weaknesses of NML
Provides clear and fixed rules – no **confusion**.	There is no such thing as essential human nature.
Objective laws apply to **everyone**.	The world is full of **different moralities.**
Common human nature = establish **universal human rights.**	Not understanding of individual circumstances.
Avoids the relativist fallacy (that truth is relative, not absolute; when by its nature, truth is analytically absolute)	Can permit **evil consequences.**
	Counter-intuitive (e.g. not allowing condoms in countries with high prevalence of HIV).
	There is **no common human purpose.**
	If God does not exist, NML fails.
Has an empirical basis (in the actual nature of things) and therefore can be verified.	Commits the **naturalistic fallacy** – can't move from an is to an ought.
	There are **many human purposes** (e.g. the purpose of sex is pleasure as well as procreation).
Does not rely on a consideration of the consequences, therefore avoids calculations and quantities of good / happiness.	Aquinas' underlying assumptions (**God's existence**/soul etc) may be challenged, removing the ethical motivation and basis for duty. **Atheists** won't follow it.
	JL Mackie challenges the existence of objective laws.
	James Rachels is critical: guilty of the **is-ought gap** – what is the case and what ought to be the case are logically distinct. Morals are **not present in nature**.
Takes account of reason not functioning properly.	**Nature isn't always good** – e.g. hurricanes – raises questions about to what extent it reveals God's plan.
Proportionalism and the doctrine and double effect give a degree of flexibility.	Reproduction as a primary precept causes problems – what about **infertile couples**.
	Sartre: "existence precedes essence' – humanity doesn't have a purpose before it's existence.

Application (Catholic Church)

Abortion:

- Two primary precepts are broken: preserve life and reproduce

- Therefore abortion is wrong in the Catholic tradition
- Some have used doctrine of double effect to allow it in some very exceptional circumstances, e.g. mother's life at risk

Euthanasia:

- Catholic Church believe it's wrong because it breaks: preservation of life
- May also break: harmonious society – slippery slope argument

Unit 3: Applied Ethics

3.1. War and Peace

a) The contribution of at least one religion to issues of war and peace, including the teaching of sacred text(s), the Just War Theory, including principles jus ad bellum, jus in bello and jus post bellum, reasons for and influences on the development of the theory, examples of wars, including contemporary conflicts that may be evaluated against the theory, special issues arising from nuclear war.

b) Concepts of pacifism, including absolute, relative/selective and nuclear pacifism, the role of pacifist movements and pressure groups. The success of the Just War Theory as a theory and in practice, the practicality of pacifism in its different forms, perceived advantages of war such as technological development, relevance of religious contributions, success of named wars in achieving their goal.

With reference to the ideas of Augustine and Aquinas.

Key info

War can be defined as **armed hostilities** between peoples. It is a state of violence and fighting between two or more groups.

It is usually between different nations, but can sometimes be between people of the same nation (**civil** war) or between a small group and the state (**guerrilla** war).

War is a very serious ethical issue because there has hardly been a day in modern history when there has not been a war somewhere in the world. It is also important because of the amount of death, destruction and suffering that comes with it.

Nature of war

Our understanding of war is **changing**. War is no longer fought between two large armies and only those nations.

Now, there are wars on ideas and **ideologies**, e.g. the war on terror. More civilians suffer. Can anyone win such wars? Can you defeat an ideology?

There are five main explanations for why wars happen: economic (money and resources), Marxist (inequality), behaviour (human instinct), leadership (government) and grievances (ethnicity and culture) theory.

The Old Testament

There are a number of examples of warfare in the **Old Testament**.

- **God engaging in conflict** with those opposed to his **covenant people** (Deuteronomy)
- War was **brutal and cruel** and the armies of Israel would slaughter their enemies (Joshua)

God's ultimate aim is to bring about a **holy people** who can carry out his purposes. God's people can engage in war if it is **guided by God**.

The New Testament

The New Testament is a **spiritual battle** against evil that will culminate in a final spiritual battle at the end of time, which will be led by the Messiah and his heavenly armies.

Jesus and **St Paul** both teach peace and forgiveness.

Both Old and New Testaments offer reassurance that anyone may through **repentance** find mercy and **redemption**. Hatred and greed must be punished.

Just War Theory

Just War Theory is based on the belief that, while life is sacred, it may, at times, be taken in order to maintain justice and to protect or defend the lives of others.

If a war fits the criteria of just war theory then it is considered morally right. If the war does not fit the criteria then it is considered to be unjust and morally wrong.

St Augustine developed the first two conditions under which a war could be justifiable waged: legitimate authority; just case.

Aquinas added a further cause: right intention.

Jus ad bellum: when it's right to go to war

1. War must be in a **just cause** – one that is in response to 'some fault' on the part of those who will be attacked.
   Analysis:
   Vardy says the idea of 'just cause' is vague and open – surely it should just be for severe injustices.
   It could also lead to the assumption that the defender is always right and the aggressor wrong, which may not be the case.
   Jeff McMahan says wars are too complex for the idea of just cause to be practical – there are often many causes.

2. War must be declared by a **competent authority** – must be waged by the accepted government or ruler, not individuals
   Analysis:
   Who constitutes a just authority? In Islam, religious leaders are accepted, but this is not accepted in the West.
3. There must be **just intention** – advancing good or avoiding evil, should not be to seek revenge.
   Analysis:
   Vardy highlights the issues of this with an example – when Italy invaded Ethiopia to convert its population. Just intention is culturally relative.
4. **Proportionality** – War must be proportionate to the original injustice
   Analysis: Important because it stops unnecessary violence. However some might say sometimes a disproportionate response is justified, e.g. US use of the nuclear bomb
5. War must be a **last resort** – it should only be waged after all other efforts to solve the crisis have failed
   Analysis: If a population in in grave danger, time should not be wasted with talks. CAJ Coady argues there is a degree of subjectivity as to when all other alternatives are considered to have failed.
6. There should be a reasonable **chance of success** – the intended outcomes need to be achieved
   Analysis: Vardy argues that this could lead to the build-up of forces before a war to increase the likelihood of success. It's difficult to predict the likelihood of success. There also may be desperate circumstances which require a country to act, e.g. genocide, despite the low chance of success.
7. **Comparative justice** – both sides of the conflict must be fairly considered, both sides must see the dispute from the other's point of view.
   Analysis: Countries can rarely see the point of view of the other, which is why wars occur.

Jus in bello: conduct required in war in order for the war to be considered just.

1. There should be a reasonable **proportion** between the injustice being fought and the suffering inflicted by war
2. **Proportionality** must be exercised – use of **weapons** must be in proportion to the treat posed
3. Warfare must be **discriminate** – those waging war should discriminate between civilians and non-civilians and try to ensure no innocent people are harmed. **But** is this impractical? Also, if they support a war that is provoked then are they guiltier than those soldiers fighting in an unprovoked war?

Case studies: Kuwait (first Gulf War), WWII

Real-life Warfare and Just War Theory: A Case Study

UK Involvement in the 2003 Iraq War	
Outline of the Conflict	A coalition of nations, led by the United States, invaded Iraq in 2003. It was argued the country's dictatorial leader, Saddam Hussein, was in possession of weapons of mass destruction and posed an immediate danger to the US and its allies. Hussein was removed from power, but no weapons of mass destruction were ever found. A new, democratic government was put in place. However, civil war, between Shia and Sunni insurgents, broke out in the country. The US, UK, Australia and the new Iraqi government attempted to quell the conflict. US troops withdrew in 2011, although fighting continues.
Jus ad bellum	The Chilcot Report[61] on the 2003 Iraq War, seven years in the making, was released on 6th July 2016. It found that 'the UK chose to join the invasion of Iraq before the peaceful options for disarmament had been exhausted. Military action at that time was not a last resort.' Hence, the war clearly contravened at least one of the key conditions of *jus ad bellum*. Notoriously, the UN Security Council did not sanction the United States or the United Kingdom to invade. Hence, it is questionable whether the 2003 Iraq War was declared by a lawful authority. It is also questionable whether, prior to the war, the architects of the invasion had given enough consideration to whether it would be successful. The Chilcot Report makes clear that Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, ignored warnings that the country could descend into civil war, and also lacked any clear plan for what would happen after Hussein had been removed from power. So, we might conclude that the Iraq War failed Hugo Grotius' 'likelihood of success' condition.
Jus in bello	It is estimated that at least 150,000 Iraqi civilians died during the Iraq War. Although just war theorists accept that some civilian deaths are inevitable in any armed conflict, the key question hinges on whether the warring parties discriminate between combatants and non-combatants. The use of 'precision bombing' by the coalition might suggest this discrimination was made, although the acceptance of 'collateral damage' raises questions as to how concerned the invading forces really were about preserving civilian lives.
Jus post bellum	The Chilcot Report also makes states that by the time UK forces left Iraq in 2009, they had 'failed to achieve [their] stated objectives.'[62] Although more time will need to pass before conclusive judgement can be made as to whether the 2003 Iraq War ultimately did more harm than good, at the present moment in time it seems highly unlikely. The war destabilised the entire region, creating a power vacuum where militant sectarian groups, such as ISIS, were able to thrive. Hundreds of thousands died, and many more were displaced.

Jus post bellum: restoring peace in a controlled manner – human rights, fair trials, financial compensation. The conditions for ensuring justice after the war is over.

Canadian philosopher Brian Orend has suggested several principles for jus post bellum:

1. Punishment – those responsible should face trial, e.g. Nuremberg trials.

2. Proportionality – peace settlements should be fair
3. Discrimination – military and political elements should be treated different to civilians
4. Compensation – economic and humanitarian
5. Rights vindication – human rights should be restored

Analysis:

- Modernises just war theory, just war theory should be about establishing long-lasting peace
- However, some would say that even this approach is outdated – war is rarely waged between nations anymore. Many of the principles detailed in just war theory simply do not apply to groups who lack sovereignty or government (e.g. Islamic State)

Strengths of Just War	Weaknesses of Just War
Fits with justice. Realistic and practical, recognises that war is sometimes necessary. Provides checks on a state's use of force. Attempts to introduce ethics into an area where it is perhaps most needed because of the potential suffering and harm. Takes into account the Christian idea of justice. Clear principles that are applicable in nearly all situations.	Contradicts teachings of Jesus Aquinas contradicts himself (NML-first precept) Encourages war. Criteria can be manipulated for evil purposes Who is actually to blame for an unjust war? Is the idea of 'just war' an oxymoron? Practical weakness: nations will not follow it because some opponents, e.g. terrorists, won't follow it. Theory is too open – can be used by anyone to justify their war. Too idealistic. Is political realism a better stance (countries should act to maximise their power over other countries)?

Pacifism

A pacifist is someone who is **opposed to war and violence** and believes that it is wrong to harm or kill other people. For them, **killing is wrong** and therefore war is wrong.

Several **types** of pacifism: **absolute** pacifism (all war and violence is wrong); **relative** pacifism (war can sometimes be justified if it is the lesser of two evils); **selective / nuclear** pacifism (nuclear war cannot be justified); **active** pacifism (encouraging peace through campaigning etc.).

Non-religious reasons for pacifism: environmental impact of war, huge potential for destruction through nuclear weapons, humanitarian effect of war.

A **conscientious objector** is someone who refuses to fight or be part of the armed service due to their moral or religious beliefs.

The early Church held pacifist views, but these were abandoned when Christianity became part of the Roman Empire and violence was necessary to maintain the empire.

Many see **Jesus** as the ultimate pacifist: Sermon on the Mount, refused to fight at his trial, forgave those who crucified him. Martin Luther King Jr and Mahatma Gandhi are both examples of non-violent protest.

Quakers believe that war and conflict are against God's wishes and Jesus's teachings. Force always creates more problems than it solves. There is something of God in everyone, so harming another human is like harming God.

Problems with pacifism
Pacifists could be guilty of **accepting tyranny** and oppression rather than fighting evil – does pacifism work in the face of extreme evil? The Bible emphasises justice as much as it does peace and reconciliation. Pacifism wouldn't work as a **national policy**. Would not have protected innocent people during the holocaust. Christian realism – war

Reimhold Niebuhr argued that absolute pacifists were forgetting the equally important biblical principle of justice and over-emphasised peace and reconciliation. He argued that pacifists were sometimes guilty of accepting tyranny and oppression rather than fighting evil.

Modern issues to do with war – can war ever be just now?

- **WMDs**: nuclear weapons threaten the annihilation of everything. Mutually assured destruction supposedly keeps the peace. Should countries be stockpiling weapons?
- **The arms trade**: selling of weapons by one country to another.
- How do we decide what a **'just' cause** is? One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter.
- Warfare has change – **economic aggression** keeps poor countries in poverty.
- Destroying **infrastructure** is morally questionable; aiming to destroy society is disproportionate.
- **Holy war**: one in which religion is the driving force. Jihad – Islam.
- **War crimes**: individuals being held responsible for their actions.
- **Genocide**: the deliberate attempt to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

3.2 Sexual Ethics

a) The contribution of at least one world religion on issues in sexual ethics, including the teaching of sacred text(s) and understanding of the diversity of religious approaches, sexual relationships in and outside of marriage, including pre-marital sex, adultery, promiscuity, same-sex relationships, including marriage and civil partnership, contraception and childlessness, secular ethical approaches to these issues and social and cultural influences on them.

b) The continuing relevance and application of religious teachings and beliefs on sexual ethics, strengths and weaknesses of changing social attitudes, the success or otherwise of contributions from ethical theory in making decisions in matters of sexual ethics.

With reference to the ideas of P Vardy and J Dominian.

Sexual ethics is the discussion of what constitutes moral sexual practice.

This may include: pre- and extra-marital sex, contraception, homosexuality, pornography, divorce, marriage.

Contraception
•   Arguments for: family planning, prevents unwanted pregnancy, sex not just for procreation, reduces STIs
•   Arguments against: religious beliefs, encourages promiscuity, purpose of sex is procreation
•   No explicit mention of contraception in the Bible. There is an emphasis on procreation – "be fruitful and multiply".
•   Catholic Church condemns, but allows rhythm method. CoE allows – situation ethics.

Pre-marital sex and promiscuity
•   Arguments for: individual's choice, marriage less importance, stable relationship, not illegal, irrelevant religious teachings
•   Arguments against: increases risk of STIs, immoral for scriptural reasons, child rearing within marriage, risks pregnancy in unstable relationships
•   Christian view: avoid sexual immorality, against the will of God, need for self-control, sex is part of the binding contract of marriage
•   The Catholic Church emphasises sex exclusively within a marriage, which cannot be dissolved through divorce.
•   Liberal Christians more accepting of sex within long-term, stable relationships.

Homosexuality
•   Decriminalised in the UK in 1967, 2004 civil partnerships, 2014 gay marriage.
•   AGAINST: Bible: Leviticus – lying with another man is detestable. Punishable by death.
•   FOR: Jesus said nothing about it.
•   Catholic Church influenced by Aquinas – natural moral law, cannot reproduce.
•   CofE: should not be discriminated against, faithfulness more important, must be what God wills.

Liberalism: John Stuart Mill

Society has no right to interfere with any action that takes place between consenting adults – harm principle.

Dominant modern view of sexuality.

Religious teachings suppress individual freedom and expression.

BUT: some sexual acts may affect others / society, not just the individual.

Peter Vardy

Sexuality is now **transactional** – love only lasts as long as needs are met – **utilitarian** relationships which last only as long as the pleasure outweighs the pain.

Contraception hasn't liberated women but has actually encouraged a new form of slavery and male dominance – undermining loving relationships. Sex toys, pornography etc. have undermined liberation and loving relationships, leading to a breakdown of social cohesion and personal mental health.

Leads to 'rape, paedophilia… masturbation outside a context of love, internet sex and one-night stands'. Turns us away from our true potential as human beings.

CONVINCING BECAUSE: A return to Christian values on sex and relationships would be positive. Cannot deny the influence of pornography on young people's views of sex.

BUT: Vardy ignores feminist viewpoints and non-Western attitudes.

Jack Dominion (Catholic theologian)

Church needs to rethink its attitude.

Should accept all non-traditional forms of loving relationships.

Sex is a gift from God and should be celebrated.

Natural law view of sex is too narrow.

Church should permit same-sex marriage.

If sex is a part of love, and love a part of spirituality, then the Church must revise its views. For many groups this has been beneficial.

But Dominion's ideas where developed within a psychoanalytical framework (e.g. Freud) – outdated, rejected today.

Are religious views still relevant?

Biblical teachings on promiscuity, divorce and homosexuality are largely outdated.

Vardy and Dominion are trying to make Christian understanding of love relevant. Embrace the central place of sex in modern society yet stress the importance of love as the most important consideration. But there are still criticisms.

Dominion's theories of love and sexuality were developed in a psychoanalytic framework (e.g. Freud), which are largely rejected today as unverifiable and unscientific.

Some of their claims lack evidence – e.g. casual sex causes psychological problems.

Religious teachings on pornography and adultery could still be relevant – e.g. Catholic catechisms, should not degrade women.

The debate continues…

Old ideal of love replaced by the utilitarian-transactional model – for many groups, e.g. homosexuals, this has been beneficial.

However some feminists may argue that growth in pornography etc. has led to the objectification of women and development of negative self-image. Feminist sex wars of the 1970s – anti-porn vs pro-sex.

Current debate about rape and consent suggests a 'fourth wave' of feminism. What does this mean for changing sexual relationships?

Analysis

Is love just a social construct within scripture and art? Are relationships simply a reflection of the norm at the time?

Love may be seen as just a mutually beneficial transaction – economic arrangement?

Men and women now have equal rights, so marriage no longer relevant – individuals free to make and break relationships however and whenever they like, in the pursuit of happiness.

Unit 4: Ethical Language

4.1. Meta-ethics

a) Cognitive and non-cognitive uses of language, realism and anti-realism, language as factual or symbolic, the nature of ethical assertions as absolutist or relative, ethical naturalism, the naturalistic fallacy, the is–ought gap, the problem of the open question, ethical non-naturalism, intuitionism, prescriptivism.

b) Emotivism, the influence of the logical positivism on emotivist theories of ethics, ethical language as functional and persuasive. Developments of the emotivist approach and criticism of it.

With reference to the ideas of G E Moore and A J Ayer.

Meta-ethics is the study of ethical language. What do we mean when we say something is good, bad, right or wrong? What is the meaning of moral judgements? How can we discuss what actions are right and wrong if you cannot define the word wrong?

Cognitivists believe that that ethical language can have a true meaning. The words we use can be meaningful because they have a factual basis. Morality is objective (deals with facts). There are objective moral values which do not depend on our beliefs (moral realism). Absolutist: moral statements can be established a priori.

Non-cognitivists believe that ethical language cannot have a true meaning. Words cannot be meaningful because they are not subject to being true or false. Morality is subjective (judgements are just feelings or responses to situations). There are no objective moral values (moral anti-realism). Relativist: what determines good or bad are grounded in social custom.

Analysis of Meta-Ethics

Cognitivist approaches – ethical language CAN have true meaning

Naturalism (Bradley)

Ethical statements and non-ethical statement (facts about the world) are the same. E.g. 'Hitler was a bad man' is verifiable as much as 'Hitler was the leader of the Nazis'.

Morals can be defined or explained in natural terms, through observation. Non-moral evidence such as pleasure and pain, or evidence of God's purpose in the natural world. Provable through empirical evidence. Subject to being true or false. E.g. euthanasia is right because it ends suffering of an individual (we can test its veracity (truth)).

Advocated by F. H. **Bradley** – ethical sentences express propositions; some such propositions are true; those propositions are made true by objective features of the world, independent of human opinion.

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Based on what is natural so we can all experience it. - Nature is universal so supports idea that morals can be universally known. - Presents a solid guideline that ethics are the same for each situation.	**Criticised by Moore:** naturalism associates goodness with varying and contradictory properties. Defining goodness in terms of facts is mistaken (naturalistic fallacy). **Is-ought gap (Hume)** – can't move from an is to an ought. E.g. just because homosexuals can't reproduce doesn't mean homosexuality is inherently wrong. **Naturalistic Fallacy:** can't move from way things are in nature to making a moral judgement. G. E. Moore stated that a naturalistic fallacy is committed whenever a philosopher attempts to prove a claim about ethics through appealing to a definition of the word 'good' by using a natural property such as pleasing or desirable. **Hume's Fork**: all statements are matters of fact or analytically true. Moral statements are neither. Right and wrong are **subjective not objective** – we need humans to exist to determine how we should live.

Intuitionism (GE Moore)

Goodness is not a natural feature of the world. We cannot use our senses to tell whether something is good, so we must use our moral intuition. Good is not a matter of opinion, but something that we can all ascertain through reason. An inner sense directs humans to know what is good. Ethical statements don't need defining because they are self-evident.

Statements are **cognitivist** because they can be true or false. Therefore language can have true meaning. It's just not given meaning through empirical evidence. Our evidence for the true or false has to come from intuition – we just know.
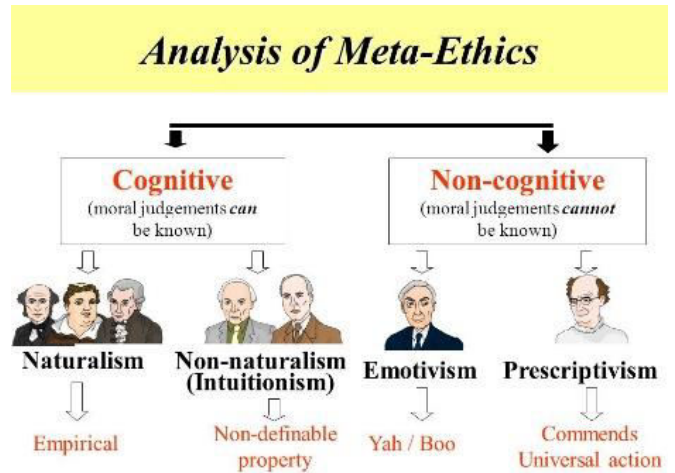
Goodness is an indefinable property of an action. When I say 'stealing is wrong', I have a moral intuition that stealing is wrong. Moore argues that "good is good, and that is the end of the matter". It is an indefinable and completely simple idea. Moore compares this to the colour yellow – 'yellow' can only be known directly through *intuition*. Yellow is just yellow, and that's all there is to it. Moore did *not* think that we can prove an intuition, and it may be that our intuitions are wrong.

Prichard's Intuitionism
Moral obligations form immediate apprehensions, a bit like mathematics. We can see directly that 1+1=2 for example, without needing further explanation. Also includes a sense of obligation – moral dilemmas involves weighing up contrasting obligations. 'Ought to do' has no definition (like yellowness) yet everyone recognises what we ought to do in a certain situation. **Strength of Prichard:** positive view of human nature, people have genuine obligations and duties to fulfil. **Weakness of Prichard:** idea of duty is very subjective, not clear if there is a right way to solve dilemmas.
WD Ross' Intuitionism
Moral principles are not absolute or defined in natural terms. Ross is a deontologist – thought that certain types of actions were always right. Ross developed the idea of *prima facie* duties (meaning, the duties we have at first sight). In any situation, we have duties which are apparent. We are bound by an important *prima facie* obligation unless there is some other compelling reason. E.g. justice, beneficence, self-improvement. Ross thought that we would choose between these on the basis of judgement; we do not have a logical system for working it out. In this sense, his theory is truly intuitive. What is right is always unique, depending on what is "morally suitable" for the situation. **Weakness:** what happens when intuitions conflict?

Strengths of Intuitionism	Weaknesses of Intuitionism
• Intuition has given a clear account of the meaning of 'good' in ethics – it is **simple** and known directly. • Intuitionism does **not prescribe a rigid morality**, since it allows that our intuitive judgements may be wrong. • Key ethicists Moore, Pritchard, and Ross are broadly in **agreement**. • Moore's **'naturalistic fallacy'** seems persuasive: we can always criticise those who associate the good with something else. • Pritchard and Ross' view that duties are self-evident gives a **positive** outlook on human nature.	• Intuitionists have **failed to agree on what the moral good is** which supposedly is self-evident. Moore had a teleological view, emphasising the promotion of happiness and the appreciation of beauty. Ross, however, emphasised duty. • It is a **highly individualist approach** to ethics does not give us concrete justifications for ethical behaviour – all it claims is that goodness is indefinable. • Intuitionism does **not help us to resolve moral disputes** and does not set out a clear decision making process. Contrast this with Utilitarianism, for example, which gives us the utility principle: the greatest good for the greatest number. • What if one is 'ethically colour blind'? • What happens when intuitions conflict? • Moore doesn't explain or prove how we know good through intuition alone • Moral intuitions seem to come from social conditioning and differ between cultures – are they really objective truths?

Non-cognitivist approaches – ethical language CANNOT have true meaning

Emotivism (Ayer and Stevenson)

Ethical statements cannot be proven true or false so they are non-cognitive.

Stems from logical positivists: all metaphysical language is **meaningless**. Ethical statements cannot be tested using sense experience – they are not genuine truths but feelings.

Hume argued ethics amounts to 'sentiments'. Taken up by Ayer.

Morals are purely **emotional responses**.

Ayer: verification principle - language is only meaningful if it can be verified either analytically or synthetically. Moral statements cannot.

Ethical language is simply expressing our **disproval at something.** It's just **subjective feelings**. 'Boo, Hooray' theory: when we say 'lying is wrong', we are just saying 'boo to lying'.

However, in this theory it is not the case that all emotive statements are equal. Moral statements arouse feelings, but with three different strengths of command.

So, implying a duty is the strongest form of statement. Saying that one 'ought' to do something is less strong. Finally, merely stating that something is good/bad is very weak.

This is all emotion, but it functions with different intensity.

A J Ayer, Critique of Ethics and Theology:

The presence of an ethical symbol in a proposition adds nothing to its factual content. Thus if I say to someone, 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money,' I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, 'You stole that money.'

In adding that this action is wrong I am not making any further statement about it. I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, 'You stole that money,' in a peculiar tone of horror, or written it with the addition of some special exclamation marks.

The tone, or the exclamation marks, adds nothing to the literal meaning of the sentence. It merely serves to show that the expression of it is attended by certain feelings in the speaker. **(Chapter 6 of Language Truth and Logic)**

The influence of logical positivism on emotivism:

In the 1930s, a school of philosophy arose called logical positivism. Logical positivism considered science and logic to be the only legitimate sources of knowledge. For something to be called knowledge, it must be *meaningful*.

The cornerstone of their beliefs was the principle of verification. This claims that a statement only has meaning if it is either analytic or empirically verifiable. It entails that statements about right and wrong are meaningless. They are neither true nor false, because they do not actually state anything. If I say 'murder is wrong', this is not analytic, nor can any empirical investigation show this. We can show that murder causes grief and pain, or that it is often done out of anger. But we cannot demonstrate, in the same way, that it is wrong.

Influenced by Wittgenstein's work, the "Vienna Circle" campaigned for a systematic reduction of human knowledge to logical and scientific foundations. Because the resulting logical positivism (or "logical empiricism") allowed only for the use of logical tautologies and first-person observations from experience, it dismissed as nonsense the metaphysical and normative pretensions of the philosophical tradition.

Ethical language as functional and persuasive:

Ayer developed emotivism with the verification principle in mind. If we put ethical language to the test, it is clearly not tautological (e.g. the concepts of murder and wrongness are not synonymous). Therefore ethical language cannot be analytically true or false. It is also not possible to prove empirically whether a statement such as 'murder is wrong' is true or false. Any attempt to do so would commit the naturalistic fallacy. Therefore ethical language cannot be synthetically true or false. Therefore, if the statement is neither analytically nor synthetically true, it is meaningless.

Ayer holds that ethical language, although not logically meaningful, does have a purpose. An emotivist view gets round the logical positivist rules about what is meaningful, by claiming that moral statements are not factual, but express the feelings of the person who makes them. If you like something then you call it 'good', if you dislike it, 'bad'. Thus two people can consider exactly the same facts and come to quite different moral conclusions. One cannot say that one is right or the other is wrong, because there are no facts that separate them, one can only accept that each is using moral judgements to express his or her emotional response to that set of facts.

This approach was taken by C L Stevenson in his Ethics and Language (1944). He was particularly concerned about how moral statements are used, and what results they are intended to produce. He claimed that the word 'good' was a persuasive definition; it was there to express your emotions. On the other hand, if you tried to go on from there to give some reason why you felt that way, that is more than emotivism will allow.

One key question to ask in considering this theory is: How do emotions expressed in 'moral' statements differ (if at all) from other emotions? Otherwise, moral statements are simply a listing of how we feel, and that does not seem to do justice to the way in which moral statements are actually used. I may sense that, when I say of something that it is right or good, I am doing more than simply describing my emotions at the time. What more am I doing when I make moral statements? Let us move to consider a second theory.

> Developed by **CL Stevenson**: there are such thing as real disagreements in attitudes, rather than just differing emotions. Attitudes are based on beliefs, shaped by underlying convictions. Disagreements are not just different emotions, but also issues of different underlying convictions – what is life, its value etc.
>
> **Strength of Stevenson:** gives more meaning to moral disagreement, whereas Ayer only sees theses as conflicts of feelings

Strengths of emotivism	Weaknesses of Emotivism
• It highlights the reason why moral disputes are impossible to resolve decisively • It acknowledges the existence of moral diversity • It is true that moral opinions are often formed on the basis of gaining other's approval or avoiding their disapproval • History reveals many examples of emotivist methods of expressing moral views, e.g. Hitler's condemnation of the Jewish people • Ayer's approach to ethics lacks the problem of speculative and metaphysical ideas – it is based on the observation of behaviour, rather than God or timeless forms. • It is easy to think of ideas which link with Emotivism – people making moral claims with great emotional conviction and less 'proof'.	• Ethical statements are not usually judged according to the response of the listener but on the claims themselves • If ethical claims were contingent on emotions, they would change as emotions changed • Even when moral statements are carried by a weight of public emotion, that does not make them right or mean they should be adopted • Emotivism effectively prescribes complete freedom of action • How can we judge between two people's moral opinion? What makes one more valid than another? • **James Rachels** criticises Emotivism for removing reason from moral judgements; in our morality we appeal to reason, as in any other aspect of life.

• Stevenson is able to explain the complex meaning of ethical terms and gives some hope for resolving ethical disputes, because he emphasises underlying beliefs and definitions • Everyone's opinions are equally valid	• In the case of terrible crimes, it seems inadequate to say that condemnation of these is 'just emotion'. Surely something like genocide is intrinsically wrong. • **Peter Vardy** criticises Ayer's Emotivism for being an 'ethical non-theory' because it only discusses emotion and does not really deal with the idea of actions being ethical at all. • Ayer's approach may be largely discredited since it proposed a method of analysing the meaningfulness of language which it was itself unable to satisfy

Impact of emotivism:

Emotivism has become unpopular with philosophers because the theory that led the Emotivists to think that moral statements were meaningless has fallen from favour.

Less technically, if expressing moral judgements is really no more than expressing one's personal opinion there doesn't seem any useful basis for arguing about moral judgements.

In practical terms, Emotivism falls down because it isn't very satisfying. Even (most) philosophers think moral statements are more than just expressions of feeling.

And it's perfectly possible to imagine an ethical debate in which neither party has an emotion to express.

Prescriptivism (Richard Hare)

Ethical language prescribes what ought to be done. This is universal and everyone in the same position would be advised to take the same course of action. Like imperatives that are orders and requests to be followed.

Moral statements doesn't deal with facts, and is not true or false (therefore non-cognitivist) but they express our wills or wishes – imperatives.

Moral issues move beyond our individual viewpoint in order to universalise a view.

E.g. murder is wrong – emotivists would say this is just our disapproval at murder, prescriptivists would say this means you shouldn't murder and neither will I. By using the word 'good' in an ethical way, is to use it prescriptively – what you 'ought' to do.

Mackie criticises: morals are not universal, we want different things done to us, e.g. suicide bomber. Why should we follow one person's prescriptions more than another's?

Implications / impact

The idea that ethical language is non-factual is extremely radical. Are there *no* moral truths?

The idea that we 'just know' right or wrong intuitively is really intriguing, but can we agree? Do we have to learn our morals through discussion and reason instead?

Are these debates ultimately meaningless?

For the emotivist, all we can do is recognise the power to persuade that lies behind moral statements, but we should not be deceived into thinking they have factual value.

Should we all be allowed to make our own subjective, relativist moral values? Is it a good or bad thing that there are no moral absolutes?

4.2. The relationship between religion and morality

a) Dependence, independence, autonomy, theonomy, heteronomy, divine command ethics, challenges from atheist and anti-theist perspectives, moral arguments for the existence and nonexistence of God

b) Contemporary focuses, including the Westboro Baptist Church, religion and terror, conservative movements, including Quiverfull, biblical parenting.

With reference to the ideas of R Dawkins and R A Sharpe.

Three views:

1. Morality is **dependent** on God – one cannot exist without the other

2. Morality is **independent** of religion – they can both exist separately
3. Morality is **opposed** to religion – religion leads to immorality

Morality depends on God

Aquinas argued that the good found in things pointed to the existence of God.

Based on Plato's forms – the contingent realities of which the human being is aware are only copies of a greater, unseen reality, which is eternal. The goodness in humans is a reflection of the supreme or perfect goodness of God.

Divine Command Ethics

Moral rules found in holy books, e.g. the Decalogue. Morality cannot exist without religion and a God.

God's will decides what's right and wrong, human reason has no part to play. Moral agents should follow whatever God commands. God's commands are absolute and objectively true. God decides what is good and will judge humanity, sending them to heaven or hell according to whether they have followed his commandments.

Morality and religion are dependent because without God, there would be no authority behind moral commands.

Strengths: AC Grayling says punishment is the chief incentive. DCE encourages people to be good because they fear hell and want to go to heaven.

Weaknesses: what happens if there's no God? Might we be *more* moral without a God / the afterlife? Is acting morally because of the hope of reward true morality? Kant argues that heaven and hell should never motivate a person's actions.

James Rachels argues that being moral out of obedience to God is inappropriate because 'to be a moral agent is to be an autonomous or self-direct agent'. God is wrong to ask humans to abandon autonomy – therefore he is not worthy of worship.

Criticism: underwear bomber / religious terrorism – following God's command. Cyclical argument (morally good = what God commands, then what God commands is what God commands).

Theonomy

A small number of conservative Christians in the USA argue that all elements of society should be brought under the control of Old Testament Law. Those who adopt this position, known as theonomy or Christian Reconstructionism, argue that morality is wholly dependent on the rules ordained by God.

In practice, instituting a government and legal system rooted entirely in the teachings of the OT could require the execution of homosexuals, blasphemers and adulterers, and even the reinstatement of slavery. E.g. Handmaid's Tale!

Quiverfull: Branch of evangelical Christians who advocate large families, no contraception, biblical patriarchy and biblical parenting. They take their name from Psalm 127 *Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of [children]*. They believe God is the rightful gatekeeper of the woman's womb, opening and closing it as he sees fit. It is believed the 'woman was created as a helper to her husband, as the bearer of children'.

Westboro Baptist Church: use a range of shock tactics many find deeply offensive (e.g. God hates fags) to spread what they believe to be the word of God. Based on John Calvin's idea of predestination – that God has already decided who will be saved and who will be damned. Much of humanity are unrepented sinners.

Analysis: Theonomy is not acceptable to most Christians. Most find the view of the Westboro Baptist Church extremely offensive. Must accept the literal interpretation of the Bible.

Morality depends on God: criticisms

Euthyphro Dilemma

Plato's Dialogue: Socrates asks Euthyphro: Does God command it because it is right or is it right because God commands it?

Both cause problems:

- If God wills it because it's right, this means morality is independent of God, so God is not omnipotent.
- If it's morally right because God wills it, then God could technically cause anything to be right, e.g. murdering babies. There's no rationality to this.

Socrates' response: Morality is therefore **independent of God**: "What is morally right is not necessarily always pious". Biblical moral dilemmas seem to support this: Abraham and Isaac, story of Job, Jephthah and his daughter.

Responses to the Euthyphro Dilemma

Robert Adams: it is logically possible that God could command cruelty, but unthinkable that he would. God is good / kind, therefore cruel actions are not a genuine possibility.

William Lane Craig: Alternative option in the dilemma – God wills something because *He* is good. God's commandments to us reflect his good nature.

Kierkegaard: duties cannot be explained in terms of social norms, ultimately they depend on faith / God.

John Habgood: God will provide eventually – have faith. E.g. Abraham and Isaac.

Morality is independent of God

Socrates came to this conclusion because of the Euthyphro dilemma.

Kant also things that morality is independent of God.

-   Assumes that God exists for the universe to be just and balanced
-   God exists so that humans can achieve summon bonum
-   But morality is in line with our reason and duty, it doesn't come from God

Kant's moral argument for the existence of God

Moral arguments for the existence of God want to establish three things:

i)   Morality exists
ii)   God exists
iii)   That the existence of God explains the existence of morality

Kant thinks you can postulate (suggest it is the best possible explanation) the existence of God from the way rational, moral beings act.

Kant held that morality requires **autonomy**: if we are to act morally, we must be able to choose for ourselves what to do. We can't be said to have acted autonomously if someone has forced us to behave that way (this is the opposite of autonomy, **heteronomy**).

Kant argues it is reason that distinguishes good from bad. When we employ reason in our moral decision-making, we find that it demands we do our duty.

You should always do your duty because it is for the greater good: the summum bonum. For Kant, summum bonum must exist, otherwise it would not make sense for reason to direct our actions towards it. So Kant thinks the best possible way to resolve the problem is to postulate that God exists – to ensure the universe is ultimately fair.

For Kant, God and immortality explain why morality exists. Morality doesn't come from God, but God is required in order to make summum bonum achievable in reality.

Morality is opposed to religion

Atheism is a philosophical position that holds that God does not exist. **Anti-theism** not only denies that existence of God, but also claims that belief in God should be actively opposed.

Flew: if God even makes us question his existence, surely he doesn't exist

Some religious beliefs have led to immoral actions: e.g. condemnation of homosexuality, discrimination of women, protests at abortion clinics, Westboro Baptist Church

RA Sharpe – the moral case against religious belief

Sharpe is an anti-theist who challenges the idea that there would be less morality without God. He argues that the commands of Christianity are immoral. He argues that 'one fact about religious commitment is that it leads its adherents to set aside such ordinary reactions as compassion for the suffering' – e.g. Abraham's reaction to God's command.

Sharpe argues that this can be seen in current Christian behaviour as well. For example, the Catholic Church arguably gives the impression that it is more important to follow God's command against contraception than not to bring a child into the world that may suffer mistreated and neglect because it is unwanted. Surely God doesn't care about petty issues such as contraception.

Nietzsche – master and slave morality

Thanks to Christianity, there had been a slave revolt in morality. Made the beliefs from the weak in society the dominant morality. Questions values of masters (self-autonomy, brave, strong-willed) and makes slave morals (forgiveness, charity, pity, humility) dominant morality. Universalised the plight of the slaves onto all of humanity, thus enslaving masters too.

Democratic society influenced by these morals – the "collective degeneration of man". Making all equal means no progress, no self-autonomy. Subversion to all rules rather than challenging.

Nietzsche wanted to return to master morality – revaluation of morals.

Richard Dawkins

In *The God Delusion* Dawkins argues that religion is an enemy of science and condemns the immoralities faith has sanctioned over the centuries. Dawkins seeks a scientific explanation for religion, speculating that belief in deities was in some way advantageous for survival in early societies. Dawkins argues that ethical behaviour must have an evolutionary basis.

First argument: Religion is immoral – God is a petty, unjust, unforgiving, control-freak. Indoctrination of children is unacceptable, e.g. Colorado Hell House.

Objections**:**

- Most religious people are peaceful and kind.
- Religious morality has developed over time, Bible can be adapted.

Second argument: Being good without God would be true morality. Replace religious absolutism with secular, relativist and consequentialist ethics. Moral choices are motivated by evolution – e.g. selfless activity has helped organisms to survive. We are moral because it helps us to be successful.

Objections**:**

- Many people are obedient to God because of love and respect, not just because they want to go to heaven.
- Evolution might explain morality but doesn't justify it. Religious morality can tell people why they should not murder, but evolution only explains why people *tend* not to murder.

Bertrand Russell

People believe in God so the injustices of this life are compensated for. But if there's injustice in this part of the universe, there probably will be everywhere. The Christian Church has slowed social progress.

James Rachels

It's immoral to get worshippers to give up their moral autonomy. Therefore God cannot logically exist:

i) If any being is God, he must be a fitting object of worship.
ii) No being could possibly be a fitting object of worship, since worship requires the abandonment of one's role as an autonomous moral agent.
iii) Therefore, there cannot be any being who is God.

Unit 5: Works of Scholars

5.1. A comparison of the work of Immanuel Kant and Aristotle with regard to Deontology and Virtue Ethics respectively

A) Kantian deontology – social, political and cultural influences on Kant's ethical theory, duty-based ethics, the categorical imperative in its different formulations, prima facie duties, and contemporary applications of rule and duty-based ethics.

(2) Anthology: Kant I, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals

With reference to the ideas of W D Ross and T Nagel.

B) Aristotelian virtue ethics – historical and cultural influences on Virtue Ethics from its beginnings to modern developments of the theory, concepts of eudaemonia and living well, the golden mean, development of virtuous character, virtuous role models, vices, contemporary applications of virtue theories. (3)

(3) Anthology: Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics

With reference to the ideas of P Foot and A MacIntyre.

C) Strengths and weaknesses of the theories and their developments, appropriateness of their continuing application and use, assessment of relevant examples, changes in the law and social attitudes vis a vis the theories, compatibility or otherwise with religious approaches.

Kantian Deontology

Deontology: ethics based on duty. Intrinsic property of actions – they are right and wrong in their own right. Moral absolutism based on fundamental sources of morality, e.g. human nature, reason, a divine lawgiver.

<u>Social, political and cultural influences</u>

Newton – rational revolution in ethics like science.

Rousseau – equality, dignity and respect for humans. Western democracies – revolutions to take control from monarchies to new republics.

The **Enlightenment** – age of reason, "dare to think". Central to Kant was his belief that the human capacity for reason could be used to make the world a better place. Intellectuals increasingly turning to their own rationality, rather than religious doctrine, to solve the pressing problems of the day.

Human **mind** as active originator of experience, rather than just a passive recipient of perception.

<u>Key concepts</u>

Good will: good intention based on duty. Only thing we can control is the will behind the action. Good will is the only intrinsic, unconditional good.

Rationalism: reason alone can provide the answers to questions, unaided by experience.

Summum bonum: the supreme good – when the highest virtue and the highest good are combined. God must exist in order to reach the highest good. God is necessary for a just universe.

Synthetic a priori: You **know** something is moral *without* experience / through reason (the categorical imperative), then you check its **truth** *with* experience.

E.g. lying is wrong – you can figure out that lying is wrong through reason (a priori). But you can't verify it's true analytically (the predicate is not contained within the subject). You check it's true with experience (synthetic).

Moral statements are categorical: they are not dependent on any *if*. They are absolute and unconditional, binding for their own sake.

<u>Duty-based ethics</u>

For Kant, reason governs morality. Knowing what's right or wrong to do in a given situation is a little bit like solving a sum: there is only one correct answer, and we simply need to apply the right method to find it.

Doing the right thing is our *duty* as rational beings. If we do the wrong thing then we are not just acting immorally, we are acting irrationally too.

Duty must only be done for the sake of duty alone. Otherwise the imperative becomes hypothetical. Divine reward cannot be an incentive. Personal preferences cannot be trusted.

Kant distinguishes between hypothetical and categorical imperatives.

Hypothetical imperative: 'You ought to do X if you want to get Y'

- Conditional commands
- Command us to do something if we want something else

Categorical imperative: 'You ought to do X'.

- Command us to just do it
- Unconditional commands
- Absolute

The Categorical Imperative

Kant thinks we can only do something good if it is done unconditionally – with no strings attached. It is our duty to do good.

The only thing that is good in itself is 'good will'. Good will is life lived in accordance with reason. Therefore ethics must be deontological. Good will helps us to act dutifully, especially when faced with a situation in which there might be negative consequences.

When we act we act on a maxim / rule. The Categorical Imperative is the fundamental test of maxims.

There are three parts (formulations) to the CI:

1. The formula of the universal law of Nature. Universalisation: for any maxim to be true, it must be able to become a law for everyone. When we make a moral decision we are making a maxim (rule) and working out whether it could become a universal law.

2. The humanity formula. Some actions are *never* permissible. Always see people are valuable ends in themselves, not means to an end. E.g. torturing someone to save hundreds of other people could never be justified for Kant because it is using someone as a *tool* for some other purpose. People are rational beings and deserve dignity and respect.

3. The kingdom of ends formula. Kant envisions a utopian kingdom of ends where all people share the same moral vision, desiring the same good s and sharing the same ends. He is trying to tell us how society would be governed if everyone were to accept his theory. When acting individually, we should try to imagine whether our action would be acceptable in the 'kingdom of ends' and we should act as though you assume everyone else is doing the same.

W D Ross – Prima Facie duties

Ross argued that in all ethical situations, all moral agents have a certain type of duty – prima facie duties. This translates as 'at first appearance'. They are duties that we can instantly recognise and which become apparent through our intuition. However further consideration is needed to know how to act on them – we need to make our own judgements about how to act upon our duties.

Seven prima facie duties: fidelity, justice, gratitude, self-improvement, reparation, beneficence, non-maleficence.

What we actually do will be affected by various things which have previously occurred.

Clashes between duties help decide what's moral in each situation. No duty should be ignored but the moral agent should decide which one is more important.

We can only gain knowledge through moral experience.

Strengths: middle way between teleological and deontological ethics – we have duties but we must work out morality situationally (axe murderer – duty to tell the truth is overruled by the duty to protect your children). More practical – we treat friends differently to strangers.

Weaknesses: duties open to subjective evaluation – insufficient acknowledgement of the importance of rights because it does not recognise there are objective rights in certain situations. Today many people believe in individualism and reject the notion of duties.

A modern approach: Thomas Nagel

Nagel distinguishes between agent-relative reasons (reasons for someone to do or not do something) for moral action and agent-neutral reasons (general reasons for anyone to do or not do something).

In daily life we generally assume that there are some fixed duties and expect others to comply with them. We expect fairness, loyalty etc.

There is a deontological requirement of these things.

We have a *personal deontological duty* to do things, based on other people's claims on us – Nagel disagrees with Kantian idea of universalisation.

Deontology actually requires that there be obligations for some people that do not apply to others. This captures the personal character of much ethical decision making and also avoids some of the difficulties with Kant's deontology. Agent-relative reasons are not grounded in our subjective emotions but in the claims of others on us. E.g. parents have a duty to look after their children, not because they feel they must, but because children have a claim on their parents to look after them.

A modern critique: Singer

Criticises Kant for removing the element of sympathy and emotion from ethics.

The idea of 'duty for its own sake' leads to a 'closed system' in which people do not inquire into the reasons for our actions. This he regards as dangerous.

The idea of duty can lead to 'moral fanaticism' – the elevation of a perceived duty above all consideration of humanity.

<u>Application</u>

- Kant's theories have helped shape our legal system and sense of moral law.
- His ethics requires individual liberty and that all are members of the moral community with equal rights and responsibilities.
- Focuses on ability to choose for yourself.
- People are not objects to be manipulated.
- Led to development of human rights.
- Ultimately sought world peace.

<u>Contemporary application of deontology: treatment of animals</u>

Since animals are not rational beings there is no requirement not to treat them as means to an end. Kant even remarks that there is nothing *morally wrong* with torturing animals, although he states that such behaviour would lead to a harshness of character. The Kantian perspective disregards animals entirely; they are not part of the moral landscape.

However, a contemporary deontologist Tom Regan argues that animals, as living beings, have a right to life. Treating them as a means to an ends is morally wrong.

<u>Contemporary application of deontology: war and peace</u>

Kant ultimately sought universal peace. War involves killing which is *always* wrong. However, he was aware that political reality meant that wars sometimes do take place and when they do, they need to be carried out according to deontological, as opposed to consequentialist, principles. Kant supported the right of a nation to defend itself.

<u>Analysis</u>

Strengths of Kant	Weaknesses
- Distinguishing between duty and inclination is right – sometimes what is right is not what we want. - Justice for individuals – all men considered equal. Recognises the intrinsic value of humans. - Appeal to reason is constructive. - Motive valued over consequence – a good motive is worthy of value. - Don't need to calculate possible outcomes. - Impossible to know the future or what the consequences of an action may be so it seems more just to judge someone on what they have control over. - Moral decision making is simple and straightforward – clear. - Relevant and practical today – creates moral rules that are consistent with today's society.	- Surely it's important to consider some consequences, e.g. axe murderer – Kant would say you would have to tell him where your children are because you cannot lie in any circumstance. - No flexibility to make exceptions. - Can we really universalise moral maxims? - Which duties should take precedent? - Absurd when taken to it's extreme – not all things if universalised become moral. - Naturalistic fallacy – turns an is into an ought. - Subjective – 'commit suicide' would be a reasonable maxim for a depressed person. - No authority for the moral obligations, unless you accept God. - Not practical to act on duty alone – the human psyche is much more complex than this. - Does not allow compassion or sympathy to motivate moral actions. - There needs to be an actual reason to act according to one's duty – not simply because it's one's duty.

Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

<u>What is virtue ethics?</u>

Virtue ethics: looks at the person and asked whether they are good. Aristotle gave a naturalistic account of good (as opposed to Plato) – it's part of our human disposition. The emphasis is not on what people do but what kind of person they are. Aristotle disagreed with Plato's metaphysical account of goodness.

Purpose is important – all human beings have a function or a purpose, a telos. Ethical life means living in tune with our natural purpose of rational and virtuous behaviour. For humans, the ultimate goal is human flourishing and developing those characteristics best suited to the realisation of a virtuous human being.

<u>Historical and cultural context</u>

Both Aristotle and Plato belonged to their Athenian upper class, and their descriptions of the virtuous individual are likely tied very closely to their conception of the ideal gentleman. Aristotle rejected Plato's theory of forms, which held there was an abstract ideal of justice, good etc. to which specific virtues corresponded. Instead, he grounded the goodness of the virtues in which he considered to be human nature.

Society at the time: Slavery, inequality, philosophers, hedonism, Plato's four cardinal virtues.

Intellectual and moral virtues

The end or purpose of man is rational thought and his highest good is to be found in **intellectual virtue:** intelligence, science, theoretical wisdom.

However, despite man's intellectual pursuit, he does still have to live practically in the world, and therefore he must also pursue **moral virtues:** courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, proper ambition, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness, modesty, righteous indignation.

Eudaimonia

The purpose of life is to become happy by practicing the skill of virtuous behaviour.

Eudaimonia = ultimate flourishing, being happy and living well. The person practicing virtues feels fulfilled and content.

Intrinsic value, desired not for its own sake but for the betterment of society.

Our ultimate good, or telos, is to exercise our rational capacities in the pursuit of Eudaimonia.

The purpose of life, and the end towards which cultivating virtues aims, is the achievement of Eudaimonia.

A person who has developed the virtues will be able to act in an integrated way, getting satisfaction from doing the right thing because it is the right thing, and not for any external reasons or goals.

Slote: It is an individual state, but also involves social interaction – living in harmony and cooperation with others.

The doctrine of the mean / the golden mean: virtues and vices

For Aristotle, the good life meant following the **doctrine of the mean**, the **middle path** between extremes. Being virtuous means being neither deficient nor excessive, but properly balanced.

One learns to pick up the right balance of behaviour through practice and habit. The Golden Mean is discovered by intellect and leads to genuine practical wisdom and moral virtue.

EXAMPLE: Modesty is a virtue. Those deficient in modesty are shameless, but those excessive in modesty are bashful. Wittiness is a virtue. Those deficient in wit are boorish, but those excessive in wit are guilty of buffoonery.

Aristotle describes 11 virtues, each with a vice of excess and a vice of deficiency. Following these will help develop virtuous character.

The Virtues in Full

Vice of Excess	Mean	Vice of Deficiency
Rashness	Courage	Cowardice
Licentiousness/Self-indulgence [recklessness; libertinism; a waster]	Temperance [self-restraint]	Insensibility [unable to enjoy anything; 'insensibility is not human.' NE, Bk. 3, Ch. 11]
Prodigality [reckless spending]	Generosity	Miserliness
Vulgarity	Magnificence	Pedantry
Vanity	Magnanimity [being a 'good sort']	Spinelessness
Arrogance	Pride	Unambitiousness / Undue humility [a lack of self-respect]
Irascibility [short-tempered]	Patience / Good temper	Lack of spirit [disinterested; bland]
Boastfulness	Truthfulness	Bashfulness / False modesty
Buffoonery [a clown]	Wittiness	Humourlessness
Obsequiousness [a door mat]	Friendliness	Moodiness
Shyness	Modesty	Shamelessness
Envy	Righteous indignation	Malicious enjoyment / Spitefulness [Schadenfreude]

Based on p. 104 of J A K Thomson's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*; bracketed items are my explanatory comments.

Prudence

To work the Golden Mean out, individuals need to use practical wisdom (phronesis). There are no rules or maxims about how to act – individuals use their autonomy and intellect to work it out then put it into practice.

Aristotle calls this "prudence" (phronesis) – a person must not only desire to do good, **they must know when and how to do it.** It requires constant practice. This process is called habituation.

Virtuous role models

Aristotle said that the good person should learn from virtuous role models. Examples are useful and practical ways to know how to virtuous. That said, examples are not to be worshipped or idealised in any way, as nobody is perfect and everyone has flaws.

However there are problems with this, e.g. how should we follow their example? Also we disagree about who is virtuous – who should we use as a role model? How can we translate their example to our own life?

We should train and exercise our virtues until they become automatic ways of living and behaving and part of our character which we can exercise without conscious effort or will.

<u>Modern development</u>

Historical context

- 20th century = revival of virtue ethics.
- Response to the prominence of deontological and consequentialist ethics and the need for a new ethic that moves away from these traditions.

Anscombe

- First revived virtue ethics. Said deontology outdated.
- Society has abandoned God – must return to morality based on human flourishing.
- Ethics too obsessed with rules and laws. Must return to virtue ethics.

Philippa Foot

- Rejected non-cognitivism that had become popular after horrors of WWII.
- Ethical concepts non-cognitivists attacked ('good', 'bad') were too narrow and arguments didn't work when applied to weightier moral virtues.
- Foot said humans are naturally good, but can only be so when they employ phronesis (a rational deliberation about what needs to be done in a given situation).
- Virtues can correct deviant behaviour. "Third Way" between deontology and utilitarianism.

Alastair MacIntyre

- Bemoans lack any sense of moral value in the contemporary world.
- We don't have any shared moral principles so words such as 'good' 'bad' have lost their meaning.
- Virtues need modernising. Work towards having a set of agreed virtues for a society to help give life meaning and purpose.
- Return to participatory democracy of Aristotle's day where members of society have a shared set of virtues and work towards individual and collective goodness. Ethical disputes can be resolved because everyone has an understanding of the good life and can contribute meaningfully to the debate.

<u>Contemporary application of virtue ethics: treatment of animals</u>

Would treating animals well foster certain virtues?

For Aristotle, Eudaimonia is restricted to human beings. Living well requires us to be virtuous, but the virtues only really apply to how we deal with other human beings. Animals are simply not in the picture.

However a modern take on virtue ethics might have it that the kind of character who is cruel to animals is unlikely to be an example of a flourishing human being.

A defender of animal rights from a utilitarian or deontological grounds would still find something missing in this account however. The treatment of animals only matters because of what they show about a person's character, not because of the animal itself.

<u>Contemporary application of virtue ethics: war and peace</u>

Aristotle lived in an age where war was commonplace. Can war ever be considered to contribute to Eudaimonia? Some would say it allows virtues of courage, rightful pride, rightful indignation etc. However on the other hand it is often the occasion for many vices.

<u>Analysis</u>

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Realistic – can learn ethics over time.	- Doesn't give clear moral rules. Not useful for modern issues, e.g. abortion
- Broad - both secular and religious.	- Grotius: truth and justice are not middle ways, but ethical absolutes.
- Flexible – doesn't prescribe absolute duties.	- Doesn't forbid moral evils.
- Relative – allows that ideas of virtue will vary among cultures.	- How do we decide which virtues should be cultivated most?
- Nussbaum: compassionate and caring, takes whole person into account.	- Are virtuous people really desirable role models?
- Allows us to show preference to friends and family.	- Selfish theory? Doesn't consider effects of our actions.
- Encourages people to transform themselves into good people.	- Masculine virtues rather than feminine ones?
- Recognises human intellectual ability and autonomy.	- Golden mean doesn't incorporate human rights and obligations.
	- Is there really just one type of virtuous person?
	- Circular argument: how can we know that a person is virtuous if we don't already know what the virtuous acts are? How can we know what the virtuous acts are if we don't already know who the virtuous people are?

Evaluation: comparison of Kant and Aristotle

Whilst Kant's moral philosophy can be said to hold considerable merit, in that it advocates that human beings should be treated as ends in themselves rather than means to ends, as an ethical theory, it fails in that it looks on people, not as sentient beings, but as duty automatons. Thus, of the two theories, by virtue of its rejection of closure in relation to what it is that determines right action, and its view that it is one's natural disposition to seek to lead a life of excellence, Aristotle's ethical theory is the closest we have come to identifying an ethical theory that requires the least alteration to allow us to lead an ethical life.

The modern developments of virtue ethics have successfully argued that deontological ethical theories are outdated and no longer applicable to modern society. Perhaps virtue ethics' greatest strength is its adaptability to various social and historical contexts – does this mean it will prevail as an ethical theory?

Unit 6: Medical Ethics

a) The status of the embryo, concepts of sanctity and value of life from religious and secular perspectives, embryo research, pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), stem cells and cord blood, fertilisation in vitro and destruction of embryos, abortion.

b) Assisted dying, euthanasia, palliative care. Religious and secular contributions to all these issues, legal position, concepts of rights and responsibilities, personhood and human nature, options and choices.

c) Strengths and weaknesses of significant areas of disagreement and debate, assessment of relevant examples, legal changes and social attitudes, appropriateness and value of employing religious perspectives into these debates, assessment and comparison of contrasting positions.

With reference to the ideas of P Singer and J Glover.

*Anthology 4) Wilcockson M, Issues of Life and Death, Chapter 4 Euthanasia and Doctors' Ethics, pp. 56–69 (Hodder Education, 1999) ISBN 9780340724880

Key terms

Sanctity of life: The idea that each and every life has intrinsic and absolute value. Those who uphold the sanctity of life often do so for religious reasons, in the belief that, since life is God-given, it is sacred and so it is always wrong to end it.

Quality of life: The idea that the value of life depends on how satisfying it is to the person living it. An individual who has a very low quality of life may not have a life worth living. Hence, not all lives have value.

Autonomy: The ability for a being to make its own decisions. Having options and choices when it comes to how one ends one's life.

Rights: The entitlement a person has to choose when their life should end.

Responsibilities: Responsibilities can be considered to go hand in hand with rights; rights entail responsibilities. If I have a right to die, then somebody else has the responsibility to ensure that my right is respected.

Ensoulment: when the soul enters the body

Personhood: what a being must have if it is to be considered a person. Common requirements include self-consciousness, sentience (the capacity to feel pain or pleasure) or a soul

Beginning of Life debates

The status of an embryo

When does human life begin? Where one draws the line is crucial to determining whether certain types of treatment and research are permissible.

The major areas of medicine in contention are:

Embryo Research	Any research which uses embryos to further scientific or medical knowledge (e.g. to understand hereditary diseases)
In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF)	Fertility treatment used by couples unable to naturally conceive children. Sperm, either taken from a donor or the couple, is used to fertilise eggs, also taken from either a donor or the couple, inside the laboratory. The resulting embryo is implanted into the woman's womb.
Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis (PDG)	Technique, often used in conjunction with IVF, which checks embryos for inheritable genetic conditions before it is implanted into the womb.
Stem Cells	Stem cells are a unique form of 'undifferentiated' biological material which can be found in embryos. This means they have the capacity to develop into any of the highly specialised cells which perform vital functions in the human body (e.g. liver cells, brain cells). Researches hope that stem cells could be used to treat a wide variety of currently incurable diseases.
Cord Blood	The blood contained in the umbilical cord and placenta has high concentrations of stem cells. Rather than disposing of these materials after birth, it is now possible to donate them to a blood bank. The hope is that these stem cells could be used to treat illnesses the child or its immediate family develop in later life.

Abortion

An abortion is the termination of a pregnancy.

Law in the UK:

- Before 1967 abortion was illegal in the UK (not Northern Island)
- The Abortion Act made abortion legal if 2 doctors agree and it is carried out
- Up to 28 weeks in 1967

- The 1990 Act lowered the time of viability to 24 weeks.
- The father has no say in abortion.
- Exceptions apply to these women
    - The mother's life is at risk
    - The mother's physical or mental health would suffer
    - The child was likely to be born severely physically/mentally disabled
    - There would be a serious bad effect on other children in the family
- In 2008, an amendment to the act is proposed, further reducing the cut-off point to the 22nd or 20th week of pregnancy. Both are defeated in parliament.

Religious perspectives on abortion

Religious groups usually oppose abortion on the grounds that it violates sanctity of life. Biblical passages suggest that life has been granted by God and is therefore intrinsically valuable:

- Genesis 1:27 - So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- Genesis 2:7 - Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.
- Jeremiah 1:5 - Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

Sanctity of life arguments take the following form:

a) **It is wrong to kill innocent persons**
b) **An embryo (or foetus) is an innocent person**
c) **It is wrong to kill an embryo (or foetus)**

An alternative way of putting it is that the embryos and foetus have a right to life.

The debate remains about what constitutes life. When does personhood begin?

Natural law / The Catholic Church

Aristotle's ideas about natural law heavily influenced Aquinas. He believed that there must be a natural law, and as well as being revealed in scripture, all of nature had a purpose and a design. To ignore this would be to ignore God's creation and law.

Many Christians and specifically Catholics have used Thomas Aquinas' ideas about natural theology and natural law as a way to oppose abortion. The first primary precept is to live. From this, we can conclude that a secondary precept is to not take a life. Thus, abortion is wrong.

The Roman Catholic Church embrace the doctrine of ensoulment, which Aquinas held happens 40 days into the pregnancy. Today the Church believes this happens from the moment of conception.

It is, as a result, opposed to the various medical technologies and procedures which require the destruction of embryos. IVF comes under fire because it allows for the conception of children out of marriage and separates the 'unitive' and 'procreative' aspects of human sexuality.

Liberal Christians: Situation Ethics

- Liberal Christians tend to favour situation ethics
- Agape is central (selfless Christian love) and what best serves it
- Abortion should not be considered wrong in all circumstances – reject absolutism, favour situationalism
- E.g. if the pregnancy was a result of rape, if the child was to be born severely disabled, if the woman is incapable of looking after the child
- Liberal Christians would be much more flexible on the issue of medical technology
- IVF would be acceptable, PGD and stem cell research may also be acceptable
- Research leading to the development of designer babies will still be opposed, on the grounds that: a) love should not be conditional upon a child being clever or beautiful, and b) using such technologies could lead to dystopian levels of inequality

Analysis

Ensoulment is problematic:

- It presumes dualism (body and soul being separate), a position which has little modern support
- Impossible to tell empirically when a soul enters the body (even if it does exist)
- Alternative ideas about when personhood begins (e.g. sentience or self-consciousness) are much more persuasive

Situation Ethics is problematic:

- Can love be measured (same criticisms as of situation ethics)
- Could keeping a child create more love in the long run?
- Doesn't go far enough – should abortion always be morally permissible?

Non-religious views about sanctity of life

- Do we value life simply because it is a vehicle for consciousness?
- Can we value a 'life' even if it is unconscious?
- Are their higher forms of consciousness? E.g. a foetus or a chimpanzee. Which has a greater right to life?

  What makes a 'life worth living'?

- Lives should be preserved if they are worth living, according to Glover
- Jonathan Glover spoke about the desire for a person to continue living. Self-awareness and the desire for life are important considerations.
- A longer worth-while life is more important than one which will be short.
- To end worth-while lives is wrong, but killing itself is not wrong.

The ethical debate surrounding cord blood

Storing cord blood does not destroy embryos, so it is not open to the sanctity of life objections brought against practices such as IVF, PGD and embryo research.

Two other issues have been raised by ethicists:

1. Ensuring that cord blood is stored correctly could compromise the mother's treatment during the final stages of labour. Focusing on preserving the cord blood could **increase the chances of the mother haemorrhaging**
2. Parents have an option of donating cord blood to either a public NHS cord blood bank or, for a fee, to one of a number of private providers. The NGS donation can go to any patient who needs it, whereas private providers store the blood in case it's needed by the donor (i.e. the child) in later life. The chances that the child needs it in the first 20 years are slim, after which the blood sample may deteriorate. **Parents can be charged up to £1500 for the serve.**

Secular perspectives on beginning of life debates

Singer's utilitarian defence of abortion

- Defines right and wrong in terms of the *satisfaction of preferences*
- A **preference is an *interest*** in certain things happening
- Singer weds this to the utility principle – use the principle of 'equal consideration of interests', which holds that '**we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the interests of all those affected by our actions**'
- All sentient beings (including animals) have **an interest in avoiding pain**, and our decisions should take that interest into account
- People don't just have interest in avoiding pain, but also an interest in being happy, to practice their religion, or to start a family
- When faced with an ethical dilemma, the right decision is **going to be the one which satisfies the greatest number of interests**

   How does this apply to abortion?

- **Embryos are not sentient beings** (they do not feel pleasure or pain) so they have no interest in feeling pain or not
- Yet the foetus may have developed a central nervous system, so what value does its life have?
- Singer writes: "My suggestion, then is that we accord the life of a foetus no greater value than the life of a nonhuman animal at a similar level of rationality, self-consciousness, awareness, capacity to feel, etc. Since **no foetus is a human, no foetus has the same claim to life as a person**"
- The foetus is not a person because it **lacks the features of personhood**: self-consciousness, memory, hope and desire etc.
- Therefore the sanctity of life argument does not work, and there is nothing to stop the second premise of the sanctity of life argument against abortion (a foetus is an innocent person), which is untrue according to Singer

Analysis

- Since new born babies lack many features of personhood, like the foetus, they should also not be considered people
- Singer recognises this, however he stresses that this does not mean abortion is morally on a par with killing babies, just that it is not *intrinsically wrong*
- Medical technologies would also be morally permissible

Judith Jarvis Thomson – defence of abortion

Women's Rights

Judith Jarvis Thomson, 'A Defence of Abortion' (1971)

"You wake up in the morning and find yourself back to back in bed with an unconscious violinist. A famous unconscious violinist. He has been found to have a fatal kidney ailment, and the Society of Music Lovers has canvassed all the available medical records and found that you alone have the right blood type to help. They have therefore kidnapped you, and last night the violinist's circulatory system was plugged into yours, so that your kidneys can be used to extract poisons from his blood as well as your own. The director of the hospital now tells you, "Look, we're sorry the Society of Music Lovers did this to you - we would never have permitted it if we had known. But still, they did it, and the violinist is now plugged into you. To unplug you would be to kill him. But never mind, it's only for nine months. By then he will have recovered from his ailment, and can safely be unplugged from you." Is it morally incumbent on you to accede to this situation? No doubt it would be very nice of you if you did, a great kindness. But do you have to accede to it?"
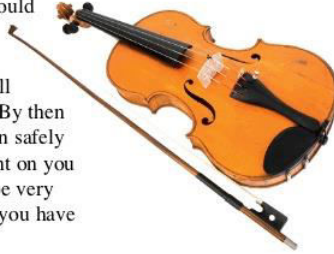
The suggestion is that if it is wrong to demand someone put up with the violin player for nine months, then it is also wrong to demand women carry a pregnancy full term.

Therefore, Thomson argues, a woman is entirely within her rights to request an abortion

End of Life debates

Euthanasia

Euthanasia literally translates from the Ancient Greek as 'good death'. It refers to the practice of intentionally ending a life because it believes to be the morally correct course of action.

Voluntary euthanasia: Where a person chooses to *end their own life* and requests that another person do it *for* them

Non-voluntary euthanasia: Where another person chooses to end *another person's life for them* because they are *unable to decide for themselves.*

Involuntary euthanasia: Where a person *does not wish to die* but a decision is taken to end their life regardless

Another distinction is sometimes made between active and passive euthanasia.

- **Active euthanasia:** where something is done that *directly* causes a person to die (such as the administration of a lethal injection)
- **Passive euthanasia:** where something is done (or not done) that *indirectly* brings about death (such as withholding or withdrawing treatment)

Assisted Dying

- Some think a further distinction should be made between assisted dying and the various forms of euthanasia

- *Assisted dying only applies to terminally ill, mentally competent adults and requires the dying patient, after meeting strict legal safeguards, to self-administer life-ending medication* (Campaign for Dying in Dignity)

- This is different from voluntary euthanasia, which allows for a doctor to administer the life-ending medication, and assisted suicide, which allows non-terminally ill individuals to self-administer life-ending medication provided by another person

Palliative Care

Palliative care is the branch of medicine which offers assistance to those with terminal illnesses

It involves drugs and therapies designed to alleviate the physical pain caused by terminal illnesses

The approach is holistic, so is concerned with the entirety of an individual's wellbeing, rather than just their physical symptoms

Evaluation: Palliative care often finds support among religious groups, who consider it more respectful to the sanctity of life than euthanasia or assisted dying.

UK law

Suicide Act 1961: decriminalised suicide. Previously, those who survived were liable to prosecution. Still illegal to assist a person to take their own life.

Assisted Dying Bill 2006: would have allowed terminally-ill individuals to seek medical assistance to end their lives. Rejected by the House of Lords.

2009: Debbie Purdy, an MS sufferer, brought a case to the high court. She wanted to travel to Dignitas in Switzerland to end her life but wanted to know if her husband would face prosecution. At the time, the law stated that he could face up to 14 years in jail. After a lengthy legal battle, the law was not changed, but factors such as the victim's illness would have to be taken into account before prosecution. Hailed by pro-euthanasia campaigners as a victory, seemed to imply that people would not be prosecuted. Since then, no British citizens have been prosecuted for helping their relatives travel to Dignitas to die.

Religious perspectives on end of life debates

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church bases its views on euthanasia on the Natural Law tradition founded by Thomas Aquinas.

'To preserve life' is a primary precept – one of a number of God-give rules which govern human beings that Aquinas argues should never be broken.

Euthanasia always involves ending a life, hence it breaks this rule. Natural Law theory holds that euthanasia is always wrong.

Another precept that some argue is broken through euthanasia is the notion that we should strive to create an orderly, harmonious society.

Opponents of euthanasia often appeal to the slippery slope argument, which suggests that legalising the practice could have terrible consequences for the population as a whole.

The slippery slope argument claims that making one change to the law may inadvertently lead to catastrophic circumstances. Victims may feel pressure to end their lives, feeling they are a burden on family and friends. Relatives may have an eye on their will.

A natural law theorist may maintain that euthanasia can have no place in a civilised society, since it has the potential to cause unrest.

This argument rules out voluntary euthanasia, involuntary euthanasia and assisted dying.

But is there an argument that non-voluntary euthanasia may be acceptable in the Catholic tradition?

- Remember the theory of **Proportionalism**? Work within framework of NML but don't have to be absolutist if a greater good is served by lawing the law aside. Must bring about a proportionate amount of good and evil
- **Wilcockson writes**: *Proportionalism enables each situation to be seen individually so that what might be considered **proportionate to achieve good ends** is contingent on the needs of the patient and even the resources of the doctor… For instance, a very handicapped baby might be considered so ill that no amount of surgery would improve their condition significantly. In this case a doctor might then prescribe 'nursing care only' (the baby should be kept warm and fed) as proportionate to their needs knowing the baby will die shortly*
- This suggests that there may be some room within the Catholic tradition for **non-voluntary euthanasia**, but only in very specific circumstances

The Catholic Church and the doctrine of double effect

The doctrine of double effect states that 'there is a difference between foreseeing an event and directly intending or *willing* it to happen'.

As a result, certain actions with bad consequences are admissible so long as the direct intention was to bring about good consequences.

Could euthanasia satisfy this criteria?

- E.g. sometimes, when faced with a patient who is in severe pain and has no hope of recovery, doctors have been known to administer a fatal dose of painkillers. The doctor's intention is not to kill the patient (a bad consequence), it is rather simply to put an end to their suffering (a good consequence). This would be categorised as a form of passive euthanasia.

Liberal Christian perspective

In an article called 'The Right to Die', Fletcher writes:

The Sanctity (what makes it precious) is not in life itself, intrinsically; it is only extrinsic… according to the situation. Compared to some things, the taking of life is a small evil and compared to some things, the loss of life is a small evil. Death is not always an enemy; it can sometimes be a friend and servant.

Life is sometimes good and death is sometimes good, because of circumstances, because of the context. When it is not good, it deserves neither protection nor preservation… Let the law favour living, not mere life.

This suggests that **medically-assisted suicide** and **voluntary euthanasia** would be accepted by a situation ethicist.

But what about non-voluntary euthanasia? With non-voluntary euthanasia, Fletcher is much more controversial.

In Fletcher's letter to the father of a child with Down syndrome, the father thinks it would be preferable for the baby to have been euthanised shortly after birth. Fletcher agrees, and believes this would be the more loving action.

His reasoning turns on his definition of **personhood**: *"To be a human is to be self-aware, capable of rationality in a measure at least sufficient to support some initiative.. To be a person is a lot more than just to be alive".*

An individual with severely diminished mental faculties, according to this definition, is not a person. They are also unable to decide for themselves whether or not they wish to die. The decision must instead be taken by the people who are most affected by their living or dying – the parents.

The medical understanding and the treatment of children with Down's Syndrome has developed in the decades since Fletcher's article was written, and so too have cultural values.

Analysis

- Natural law theory maintains that the sanctity of life is the central issue in the euthanasia debate. As a result, considerations about autonomy, the right to die and individuals' quality of life are neglected. Advocates of euthanasia regard these as more important than sanctity of life
- Proportionalism is a practically-minded, intuitively appealing idea that can be used in ethical decision-making regardless of one's religious beliefs
- Situation ethics holds that quality of life is a more important consideration than the sanctity of life
- As a consequentialist ethic with agape at its heart, Fletcher's theory is far more flexible than Aquinas'
- Fletcher's advocacy of euthanasia for the mentally disabled is controversial and brings us back to the slippery slope argument: would allowing euthanasia unintentionally open the door for some far more heinous practices?

Secular perspectives on end of life debates

Peter Singer

"The desire among the citizens of modern democracies for control over how they die is growing. This marks a sharp turning away from the sanctity of life ethic". In its place, we are turning towards an ethic based on considerations about quality of life and autonomy.

Jonathan Glover

Voluntary euthanasia is explicitly ruled out by natural law and sanctity of life arguments.

Yet if we place quality of life and autonomy at the heart of medical decision-making, where does this leave us?

Jonathan Glover argues, 'voluntary euthanasia is justified in those cases where we know that the person would commit suicide if he could, and where we believe that the conditions that would make it right to allow or assist a suicide are satisfied'

There are three parts to this argument:

1. **We must understand why someone would wish to end their life**

   - The belief that death is preferable to life
   - Negative quality of life: life is worse than death

2. **We must consider when, if ever, it is morally permissible to allow suicide**

   - Depression may pass, cannot allow suicide if there is a possibility they may change their mind
   - Individual's will must be resistant to all attempts to change it
   - If there are times when it would be wrong to *stop* someone killing themselves because to do so would be to deny them their autonomy, then sometimes suicide must be morally permissible

3. **We must consider the circumstances when it would be right to *assist* a suicide**

   - For people in a situation where they want to take their own lives, but are unable, improving their quality of life is not a possibility
   - If this is a rational decision then we must respect their right to die
   - For somebody to have a right, then there needs to be a corresponding responsibility from others to respect it
   - Respecting their right to die may require helping others to end their life if they are unable to do so – if we don't help them we are denying them their autonomy

For Glover, there is no difference between assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia: 'it is hard to see why it matters in principle who actually puts the pill in the man's mouth'.

So if assisted suicide is morally permissible, so too is voluntary euthanasia.

Therefore, as long as certain conditions are met, a secular ethic based on the concepts of quality of life and autonomy gives us good grounds for permitting voluntary euthanasia.

Slippery slope argument – Singer's criticisms

- Opponents argue that legalising euthanasia may lead to a rise in involuntary euthanasia
- Singer examined claims made by opponents of liberalising euthanasia laws that 1000 deaths have been caused by involuntary euthanasia in the Netherlands

- Singer argues that these cases were only a small fraction – 2% - of all the deaths relating to medical decision-making
- There are limited examples of non-voluntary euthanasia, but no cases of involuntary euthanasia
- Therefore, for Singer, the slippery slope effect has not occurred and so it is not a good argument against euthanasia

Singer's utilitarian defence of voluntary euthanasia

1. Only persons have rights (and only persons can generate the principle of respect for autonomy). To have a right: "**One must have the ability to desire that to which one has a right**."

2. First key principle of the argument: **Persons can waive their rights** "if one so chooses."

3. Second key principle of the argument: If we endorse the principle of respect for autonomy, **we will assist others to do as they choose**.

4. Given these two key principles, a **rational person** with "an irreversible condition causing protracted physical or mental suffering" **who chooses to waive the right to life should be assisted in ending his or her life**.

5. It is **worse to deny voluntary euthanasia than to provide it**. To prohibit voluntary euthanasia is to **promote less happiness**, for it promotes the continued suffering of a self-conscious being who desires to end that suffering but knows that it will continue.

Problem with permitting voluntary euthanasia	Singer's response to the problem
We can't be sure that it was voluntary	Put safeguards in place, as we do with virtually every other policy we adopt
There will be a small number of cases where it would have been better (more happiness) NOT to permit euthanasia.	If we are concerned with the small number of harms that will occur in our pursuit of a large number of goods, then we must also reduce the speed limit etc. With the speed limit we accept the small number of harms for the greater good.
Are we giving too much weight to individual freedom? What next, legalise heroin use? Slippery slope argument.	We must respect autonomy when the choice can be rationally based. Drug addiction is not taken through rational choice.

Analysis

- The concept of autonomy and rationality are problematic – are these ideas culturally relative or reflect only the experience of a dominant social group? If this is true, much work in medical ethics is undermined?

- Assessing whether someone has made a 'rational' decision to die is very difficult. How do you assess the extent to which other factors (e.g. pressure from family) have, perhaps unconsciously, impacted on the decision

- Just because the slippery slope argument has been disproved in the Netherlands, that's not to say it wouldn't happen in other countries. American health care system is very different – would patients ask for euthanasia because they cannot afford good health care?

PEQs

Question 1: Explore…
Explore the concept of dominion
Explore the concept of stewardship
Explore the concept of deep ecology
Explore the concept of conservation
Explore the principle of utility
Explore preference utilitarianism
Explore the historical context of situation ethics
Explore the concept of agape
Explore the concept of deontology
Explore the concept of purpose within Natural Moral Law
Explore the concept of pacifism
Explore the nature of war in the Bible
Explore Just War theory
Explore the Christian view of homosexuality
Explore the concept of non-cognitivism
Explore the concept of moral absolutism
Explore the theory of Prescriptivism
Explore the concept of summon bonum
Explore the concept of Eudaimonia
Explore the doctrine of the golden mean

Question 2: Assess…
Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Gaia Hypothesis
Assess Singer's defence of animal rights
Assess the idea that the world has intrinsic rather than instrumental value
Assess the strengths of stewardship
Assess the claim that rule utilitarianism adequately overcomes the criticisms of act utilitarianism
Assess the weaknesses of utilitarianism
Assess the strengths of situation ethics
Assess the claim that situation ethics is outdated
Assess the claim that situation ethics successfully impacted on UK law
Assess the claim that Proportionalism adequately overcomes the challenges to Natural Moral Law
Assess the strengths and weaknesses of Natural Moral Law
Assess the idea that war can never be just
Assess the strengths and weaknesses of pacifism
Assess the non-religious arguments in favour of pre-marital sex
Assess the claim that religious teachings on sexual ethics are outdated
Assess Moore's theory of Intuitionism
Assess the strengths of Ayer's Emotivism
Assess the development of Emotivism by CL Stevenson
Assess Nietzsche's master and slave morality
Assess the strengths of the Euthyphro Dilemma
Assess Richard Dawkins' view that religion is opposed to morality
Assess the weaknesses of the Categorical Imperative
Assess Ross' Prima Facie duties
Assess the modern revival of virtue ethics

Q4: Evaluate…
Evaluate the view that secular teachings on the environment are the most succesful
Evaluate the view that religious teachings on equality are the most influential
Evaluate the view that Utilitarianism is no longer a useful way of making moral decisions
Evaluate the view that Situation Ethics serves as a valid ethical theory
Evaluate the view that Natural Moral Law is not a useful ethical theory
Evaluate the view that war can be just
Evaluate the view that sexual ethics should no longer be guided by religious principles
Evaluate the view that ethical language cannot have true meaning
Evaluate the view that religion and morality are opposed to one another
Evaluate the view that Kant's categorical imperative is a useful way of making moral decisions
Evaluate the view that Aristotle's virtue ethics is not a helpful way of making moral decisions
Evaluate the view that virtue ethics is a more successful ethical theory that deontology
Evaluate the view that medical ethics should no longer be guided by religious principles