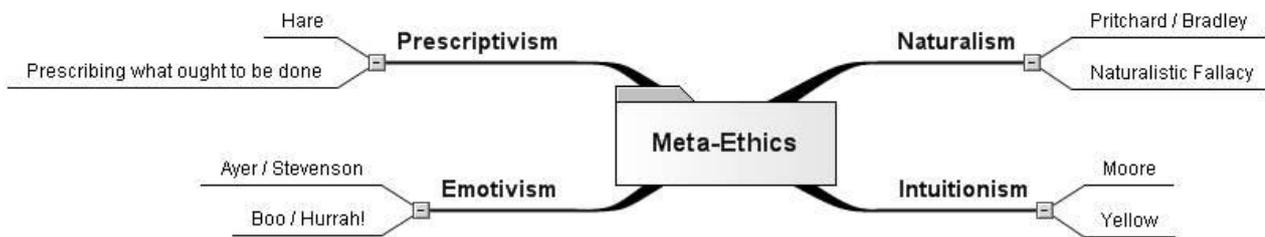


RELIGIOUS ETHICS G582



"Meta" in Greek means "above" or "beyond." It looks at the ethical terms that are used and what they mean. This approach differs from Normative Ethics. Normative Ethics looks at the moral principles that people follow whereas Meta Ethics looks at the language used and what meaning is being attached to the terms. Meta- Ethics is trying to answer the question, "Can ethical statements have meaning?"

Moral realists take the approach that moral facts are objective and things are good or bad independently of us. Moral values such as kind and wicked, are real properties of people in the same way that rough and smooth are properties of physical objects.

Cognitive language - cognitivists believe that moral statements describe the world. Statements are objectively true or false.

Non-Cognitivists believe that when someone makes a moral statement, they are not describing the world, but expressing their feelings or telling people what to do. They believe that moral statements cannot be described true or false - they are subjective.

Meta- Ethics is not concerned with what the right or wrong action is in a particular circumstance, but with what it means to be moral.

Cognitive theories about Meta-Ethics

Cognitivism is the view that we can have moral knowledge. Cognitivists believe that ethical statements are about facts and can be proved true or false.

ETHICAL NATURALISM

- Believes that all ethical statements are the same as non-ethical ones.
- All ethical statements are fact and can be verified or falsified.
- "Mrs. Blackburn teaches RE" = Fact
- "Mrs. Blackburn is a good person" This statement for Naturalists would also be considered as factual.

Criticisms of Ethical Naturalism

- Principia Ethica (1903) G.E.Moore argued against ethical naturalism.
- He called the attempt to identify goodness with a natural quality a mistake.
- To claim that moral statements can be verified or falsified using evidence is to commit the Naturalistic Fallacy.
- Moore based his argument on David Hume who thinks that to derive an "ought" from an "is" is logically invalid.

"I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation, which may, perhaps, be found of some importance. In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning...when of a sudden I am surprised to find that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought to. This change is imperceptible, but is however, of the last consequence.
(Hume, Treatise of Human Nature)

- We cannot move from a description of how the world is to how the world ought to be.
- Moore used the "Open question argument."
- "Was Mother Teresa a good person?" - We will have to find this out and see what acts Mother Teresa did.
- Any statement where we can ask "Is it good" means that it cannot be factual but must need verification.

INTUITIONISM

- Moore said that good is a simple, unanalysable property just as a primary colour is.
- The right acts are those that produce the most good but goodness cannot be identified with some natural property such as pleasure.
- Goodness cannot be defined.

"If I am asked, "What is good?" my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. Or if I am asked "How is good to be defined?" my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is all I have to say about it."
Moore, Principia Ethica

- For Moore, we cannot use our senses to tell whether something is good, but we can use our "moral intuition" and so we can still say whether a moral statement is true or false.
- We recognise goodness when we see it - we just know if it is good.
- Moore called this a "simple notion."
- His example was the colour yellow. We cannot define yellow but can recognise the colour.
- So, we cannot define goodness but only recognise acts of goodness.

PRITCHARD

- Pritchard thought there were two types of thinking - Reason and Intuition.
- Reason looks at the facts of a situation and Intuition would show which particular action was right and where our moral obligation lay.
- If there is a conflict of obligations, Pritchard says we must look at the situation and decide which obligation is greater.

W.D.ROSS

- Prima Facie duties - at first glance
- Duties of fidelity
- Duties of reparation
- Duties of gratitude
- Duties of justice
- Duties of beneficence
- Duties of self improvement

- Duties of non-maleficence
- When these duties conflict we must follow the one we think is right in the situation.
- Ross does not tell us what a prima facie duty is or how to decide which one to obey in cases of conflict.

Criticisms of Intuitionism

- Not conclusively proven.
- Moore says you either agree with him or not, but if you do not agree with him then you do not understand the idea properly.
- How can we be sure that our intuition is correct?
- How do we decide if we have a contradiction?
- We do not all recognise goodness intuitively in the same way.
- Can our intuitions really be reliable guides to objective ethical truths?

NON - COGNITIVE THEORIES OF META-ETHICS

EMOTIVISM

- A.J. Ayer
- Ethical statements are action guiding and convey particular emotions.
- Ayer said, "Ethical terms do not serve only to express feelings. They are calculated also to arouse feelings, and so stimulate action."
- Emotivism has its roots in the Vienna Circle who developed "logical positivism" in the 1920's.
- Ayer believed that there were only two types of meaningful statements - Analytic and Synthetic. (Analytical statements are either mathematics or logic and synthetic statements are based on science, history and ordinary life)
- Ethical statements are not verifiable so they are meaningless.
- Emotivism is sometimes known as the "Boo-Hurrah" theory
- James Rachels argues that this approach can lead to the idea that where morality is concerned there are no facts and no one is right.
- Ayer argues that although statements may have no factual content they still perform a function.
- How do we decide who is right? How do we take into account everybody's feelings?

C.L. Stevenson

- Stevenson did not use the verification principle but instead looked the emotive meaning of words.
- Words are emotive and express what we feel about something.
- When someone makes a moral judgement they are not only venting their feelings but also trying to influence the attitudes of others.
- Statements are therefore based on our experiences and how we want the world to be.

Criticisms

- It is not an ethical theory but an analysis of the nature and content of ethical language.
- It does not discuss ethical facts.
- Why should one person's feelings be any more important than someone else's?
- Stimulating people to act can have consequences.

PRESCRIPTIVISM

- R.M Hare
- Ethical statements are prescriptive and do not state facts
- They are neither true or false but express our will or wishes
- The word "good" always has a descriptive meaning
- If we use the word "good" in a moral sense, we are using a set of standards that apply to a person or an action and we commend that person or that action.
- Hare highlights that there is a difference between descriptive and prescriptive.
- When we use words with an ethical meaning we are using them prescriptively.
- "Stealing is wrong" means "you ought not to steal and neither shall I."
- We are not just saying that we dislike stealing but that we would not prescribe the action for ourselves.

Criticisms

- Why should we follow one person's prescriptions over someone else's?
- People have different preferences and so the ideas may not be universal.

- Hare recognised this problem and his example was a fanatic who prescribed that all people of a certain race be exterminated could be making a moral judgement according to his theory.
- Only constraint is that we should put ourselves in the other person's shoes before making the choice.
- Prescriptivism says that "ought" judgements are universalisable prescriptives and are not truth claims.

Tips for A2 exam questions

"Ethical language is meaningless." Discuss (35 marks)

- ▣ Consider what is meant by the word meaningless according to the approaches of cognitivists and non-cognitivist, realist and anti-realists.
- ▣ Consider whether moral statements can be described as true or false and whether they are objective or subjective.
- ▣ Analyse the views of different scholars on this question and whether "meaning" means the same to all of them.
- ▣ Question could be argued either way, and you may wish to compare ethical language with other forms of language.

Virtue Ethics

- This focuses on how to be a good person
- It is agent centered morality rather than act centered
- It asks, "What sort of person should I be?"
- Greek word for "Virtue" is "arête" meaning excellence

Plato and Virtue

- This centers around the achievement of man's highest good which involves the cultivation of his soul.
- It looks at Eudaimonia (happiness) which must be pursued through virtue and actions are good when they help to achieve this.
- Plato had temperance, courage, prudence and justice as central (Cardinal virtues)

Aristotle and virtue

- Aristotle said, " For we are enquiring not in order to know what virtue is but in order to become good since otherwise our enquiry would be of no use." (Nichomachean Ethics)
- Aristotle makes the distinction between what are good as ends and what are good as means.

- Aristotle believes that there is one overriding end of human activity = Eudaimonia.
- This theory is called Virtue ethics or Aretaic ethics
- Human well being and human flourishing is a life characterized by the virtues
- The good human life is lived in harmony and co-operation with others.
- Aristotle saw two types of virtues : Intellectual developed by training and education and Moral Virtues developed by habit.
- Reason was the supreme human virtue. Reason is practical and involves both understanding and responding.
- The Golden Mean
- Virtue can be found in finding a balance between two means.
- Virtue is to be found between two vices - excess and a deficiency

Excess	Virtue	Deficiency
Rashness	Courage	Cowardice
Shyness	Modesty	Shamelessness

- *Phronesis* (practical wisdom) needs to be applied to decide on the right course of action in each situation.
- Examples of virtuous people are Socrates, Nelson Mandela and Jesus. All of these give us examples of moral excellence.

Modern Virtue Ethics

- In the 20th century there was a revival of interest in Virtue Ethics by philosophers who were unhappy with act-centered ethical theories. Modern versions of Virtue Ethics argue that the assessment of a person's character is an important aspect of ethical thought and needs to be included in any ethical theory.

G.E.M. Anscombe

- In 1958 Anscombe published a paper called "Modern Moral philosophy" and put forward the idea that modern moral philosophy is misguided.
- The question "can there be any moral laws if there is no God?" was asked.
- What do right and wrong mean if there is no law-giver?
- The suggestion was to look at the idea of Eudaimonia, human flourishing, which does not depend upon God.

Philippa Foot

- Attempted to modernize Aristotle's virtue ethics while retaining the Aristotelian understanding of character and virtue.
- Virtues benefit the individual as they lead to flourishing and stress that the virtuous person does far more than conform to the conventions of society.
- Foot argues that a virtue does not operate as a virtue when turned to a bad end.
- Virtues are good for us and also help us to correct harmful human passions and temptations.

Alasdair MacIntyre

- In his book "After Virtue" he claims that ethical theories have simply resulted in ethical disagreements.
- People do not think there are any moral truths and consider one opinion to be as good as any other opinion.
- He argues that most people's attitudes today are based on emotivism.
- People often speak as if emotivism was true.
- He concluded that the Age of Enlightenment, which gave rise to such theories as Utilitarianism and Kantianism, had lost sight of the idea of morality achieving a purpose.
- MacIntyre wants to restore the idea that morality would be seen in terms of human purpose.
- It is the shared practices of a community which help cultivate virtues.
- The virtues improve through time.
- For MacIntyre, virtues are "any virtues which sustain the households and communities in which men and women seek for good together."
- MacIntyre opposes much of the individualism of today.

Michael Slote

- Virtue Ethics is mostly based on our common sense ideas and intuitions.
- Prefers to use the term "admirable" to describe an action rather than "good" or "excellent" which need qualifying and explaining.
- A virtue is "an inner trait or disposition of the individual", so a virtue is a kind of balance caring between those who are close to us (family and friends) and people in general.

- Identifies a difference between agent focused and agent based theories.
- Agent focused theories understand the moral life in terms of what it is to be a virtuous person, where virtues are inner dispositions.
- Agent based theories evaluate actions, according to the inner life and motive of people who do such actions.
- Slote focuses on care and concern for others and empathy - he looks at the motives more than the community aspect of virtues.

Strengths of Virtue Ethics

- Avoids having to use a formula.
- Understands the need to distinguish good people from legalists.
- Stresses the importance of motivating people to want to be good.
- Tells us how to learn moral principles and involves our entire life.
- Enables us to integrate many aspects of life.
- It sees it as good to be biased in favour of friends and family unlike Utilitarianism or Kant who see impartiality as important.
- Does not pretend to be able to tell us what a good person would do in every possible situation but encourages us to be more like such a person so that we will not need an ethical theory to make our decisions for us.

Weaknesses of Virtue Ethics

- How do we identify virtues?
- How can virtues be applied to moral dilemmas? Robert Louden raised the problem that Virtue Ethics does not help people facing a crisis because it does not give any clear rules for action.
- Virtue Ethics seems to praise some virtues that we may see as immoral.
- Louden points out that it is difficult to decide who is virtuous as acts which appear virtuous may not necessarily have good motives and vice versa.
- Does not have room for basic concepts such as rights and obligations, so as a theory of ethics it seems incapable of dealing with big issues.
- It does not always have a view about what makes an act right or wrong.
- Virtue Ethics depends on some final end which gives shape to our lives - there may not be one and being virtuous may not affect it anyway.

Tips for A2 exam questions

"Virtue Ethics is of little use when dealing with practical ethics."

Discuss (35 marks)

- ▣ Include the main tenets of Virtue Ethics e.g. being not doing, the golden mean, what virtues are etc.
- ▣ You could include modern forms of Virtue Ethics such as Anscombe, MacIntyre etc.
- ▣ Explain what is meant by practical ethics and consider how easy it is to apply Virtue Ethics to practical ethics.
- ▣ You could discuss what makes Virtue Ethics so different from other theories e.g. the fact that it is not rule based or consequence based but looks at the virtuous person.
- ▣ Assess whether other ethical theories are in fact more useful and compare Virtue Ethics to, for example, Kantian ethics or Utilitarianism.

Freewill and Determinism

Hard Determinism

- Hard determinism maintains that we are not free and cannot be held morally responsible for our actions: 'All our choices, decisions, intentions, other mental events, and our actions are no more than effects of other equally necessitated events.' (Honderich)
- Predestination is a Christian view held by some Protestants that God has already decided who will be saved and who will not, suggesting that humans are not free to secure salvation. John Calvin (1506–64) described it as 'the eternal decree of God, by which God determined what God wished to make of every man. For God does not create everyone in the same condition, but ordains eternal life for some and eternal damnation for others.' (Institutes, 1559)



- Augustine (Divine Election, 4th-5th century) implied that God has some role in our formation as good or bad people:

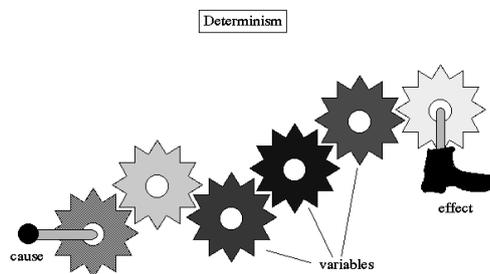
'The potter has authority over the clay from the same lump to make one vessel for honour and another for contempt.'

- All actions have a prior cause. This challenges the notion of moral responsibility as people do not have freedom to deliberate or make a free choice.
- The sense of deliberation is an illusion. Spinoza wrote:



'Men think themselves free on account of this alone, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes of them' (Ethica Online Geometrico Demonstrata, 1674).

- Traditional understandings of the scientific world and modern understandings of genetic engineering suggests there may be causal relationships or strong influences between one action and another action.
- Determinism means that we are mistaken to praise some people for being good or for blaming others for being bad as determinism calls the idea of moral responsibility into question.
- Determinism has been used in criminal cases as a justification for a lesser punishment when it demonstrated that the accused was not in full control of themselves (such as diminished responsibility when an abused wife murders her abuser husband).



- The upbringing of a person (nurture) can affect their ability to make moral decisions, though this does not necessarily mean they should not be punished.
- Some argue that determinism undermines

moral responsibility and the possibility for using words like 'moral' or 'immoral'. Kant said, 'ought implies can,' defining moral actions as freely undertaken actions. If we are not free to act, we are not morally responsible for the act.

Soft determinism

- Some acts are determined, but we have some moral responsibility for our actions.
- Determinism does not rule out free will — the two are compatible and so moral decisions and moral debate remains possible.
- Some of our actions are conditioned, while others have so complex a collection of causes that they may properly be described as freely decided or willed.
- Soft determinists are criticised by hard determinists for failing to realise the extent to which human freedom is limited, and by libertarians for failing to realise the degree of human freedom that exists.
- Soft determinism offers an agreeable account of moral freedom as moral responsibility and judgement is possible.
- S

Critical comments

Benedict Spinoza (*Ethica Ordine Geometrico Demonstrata*, 1674) notes that people are aware of their free action: 'An infant thinks it freely seeks milk, an angry child thinks that it freely desires vengeance, or a timid child thinks it freely chooses flight. Again, a drunken man thinks that he speaks by the free decision of the mind those things which, if he were sober, he would keep to himself. . . So experience teaches as clearly as reason that men think themselves free on account of this alone, that they are conscious of their actions and ignorant of the causes of them.'

A.J. Ayer (*Philosophical Essays*, 1959) argues that actions are either determined or not: 'Either it is an accident that I choose to act as I do or it is not. If it is an accident, then it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise; and if it is merely a matter of chance that I did not choose otherwise, it is surely irrational to hold me morally responsible for choosing as I did. But if it is not an accident that I choose to do one thing rather than another, then presumably there is some causal explanation of my choice: and in that case we are led back to determinism.'

- Soft determinists have not agreed on precisely what is and what is not a determining factor in human action.



Libertarianism

- According to libertarianism, we are free and morally responsible for our actions.
- Human beings believe that they have self-determination or freedom to act: 'By liberty then, we can only mean a power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will; that is, if we choose to remain at rest, we may; if we choose to move, we also may' (David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 1748)
- 'Man chooses not of necessity but freely' (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1273)
- Moral actions are not chance or random events but result from the values and character of the moral agent.
- Humans have a sense of decision-making or deliberation and some give in to temptation, while others hold out.
- Libertarianism rejects cause and effect as a reason for human action but does not offer an alternative explanation for human action. It does not account for a human motive, which has cause of some sort.

Tips for A2 exam questions

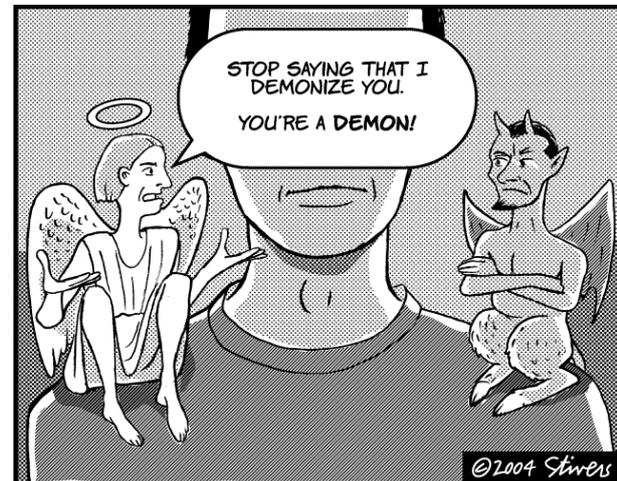
'Unless we assume that everyone is free to make moral choices, we have no right to punish criminals.' Discuss.

- ▣ You could explore the implications of the idea of freedom of moral choice for moral responsibility; with reference to libertarianism and possibly Kant.
- ▣ You might explain how determinism implies a lack of moral freedom as criminals might be predetermined to offend because of nurture or nature (genetic disposition or upbringing). Examples should be given to illustrate this idea.
- ▣ If behaviour is inevitable and beyond the control of the criminal, should they be blamed or punished? Should good behaviour be praised or rewarded?
- ▣ The arguments of soft determinists could be included to contrast with hard determinists.
- ▣ Would it be possible for society to operate without a legal system and the presumption of some degree of moral freedom, even if it is only apparent and not actual?

Conscience

Conscience and Aquinas

- Aquinas believed conscience is the power of reason, a device or faculty for distinguishing right from wrong actions rather than an inner knowledge of right and wrong.
- People basically tend towards good and away from evil. Conscience is 'reason making right decisions'. (Summa Theologica, 1273)
- When making a moral decision, synderesis is right reason, an awareness of the moral principle to do good and avoid evil, and conscientia distinguishes between right and wrong and makes the moral decision.



Conscience and Joseph Butler (1692–1752)



- Butler stated that conscience is intuitive and a powerful moral authority, the final decision-maker.

- 'There is a principle of reflection in men by which they distinguish between approval and disapproval of their own actions.. this principle in man.. is conscience.' (Butler, Fifteen Sermons, 1726)
- Humans are influenced by two basic principles: self-love and the love of others. Conscience directs us towards focusing on the happiness of others and away from focusing on ourselves.
- Conscience determines and judges the right/wrongness of actions without introspection.
- Butler said, 'Had it strength as it had right, had it power as it had manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.' Conscience is 'our natural guide, the guide assigned us by the Author of our nature.'



Conscience and Freud

- Sigmund Freud saw conscience as guilt (The Outline of Psychoanalysis, 1938). The human psyche is inspired by powerful instinctive desires that have to be satisfied.
- Children learn that the world restricts these desires. Humans create the ego, which takes account of the realities of the world and society. A 'superego' internalises and reflects anger and disapproval of others.
- A guilty conscience is created, which grows into a life and power of its own, irrespective of the rational thought and reflection of the individual.
- The mature and healthy conscience is the ego's reflection on the best way of achieving integrity. The immature conscience (the superego) is a mass of feelings of guilt.
- The psychological account of conscience can undermine both Aquinas and Butler.
-



Newman and Piaget



- Cardinal Newman wrote: 'Conscience is a law of the mind.. a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives.'
- Following conscience was following divine law. Conscience is God speaking to us and has ultimate authority: 'I toast the Pope, but I

toast conscience first.'

- You must do what you sincerely believe to be right and are justified in doing so even if you are mistaken.
- However, tensions between individual conscience and moral absolutes can occur.
- Piaget argues in *The Awakening* (1974) that there is a distinction between the conscience's deliberation of a moral rule and the practice of that rule. In effect, the practice is the effective moral behaviour and it is difficult to know at what point conscience coincides with practice.



Issues

- Conscience may be a moral source found within the human being, like the soul, which is distinctively human and provides a source for guilt and sense of moral obligation. Such an approach is challenged by Freud who argues that the external world forms the internal.
- Conscience could be a capacity that may be developed through moral education, but, on the other hand, may be left underdeveloped, leaving a person amoral and insensitive towards moral factors in life. This might be compatible with Freudian interpretations of conscience.
- Conscience could be a divine faculty that connects the person to the divine laws intuitively or through reason, though atheists would naturally dispute this possibility
- Conscience may not be useful in ethics as we cannot measure what someone else's conscience is telling them, so conscience is difficult to evaluate.
- We may manipulate our conscience to justify our actions. Aquinas notes that it may be misled or misinformed, which could explain this.
- If conscience is the voice of God, how do we account for situations where conscience conflicts? Butler gives conscience ultimate authority, but some people commit horrific crimes which they justify by their conscience.
- People may not listen to their conscience correctly and may not inform their conscience, and so make mistakes.
- Conscience may not provide clear-cut moral guidance where there are conflicting obligations or duties, but instead may be more of a process or reasoned judgement.
- It is reasonable to consider conscience as part of the moral decision-making process. People can act with integrity and in accordance to ethical principles important to them.
- The judgement of those who break the law because of conscience must be moderated between those who seem to act for accepted ethical principles, while nevertheless breaking the law and those who break

"Conscience is the inner voice that warns us somebody may be looking"

Henry Louis Mencken

fundamental ethical principles.

Tips for A2 exam questions

To what extent is conscience a reliable guide in sexual ethics?

- ▣ You should choose a particular topic from sexual ethics, such as homosexuality, to discuss.
- ▣ The tension between trusting conscience to act with integrity against the difficulty of acting impartially in matters of a sexual nature.
- ▣ There should be a discussion of Aquinas' comments about the possible weaknesses of conscience and the danger of ignorance as perhaps illustrated when conscience advises people to go against established moral laws.
- ▣ Consideration should be given to whether other moral sources should be used, such as moral laws/teachings, of the situation, and consequences of actions.
- ▣ There could be some discussion of the term 'reliable' how can we tell whether we are really being driven by our conscience or whether that 'voice' is coming from our parents' teaching, or our own will, or an outmoded religious stance, and so on?

Assess critically the nature and role of the conscience in ethical decision-making.

- ▣ Explore the different views of conscience, as well as psychological views.
- ▣ You could make an evaluation of ethical decision-making in relation to conscience, perhaps with an example.
- ▣ You could consider the limitations of conscience when informed by ignorance, as could the possibility of developing or refining it, and the dangers of guilt or the desire to satisfy others overriding reason.
- ▣ You might like to consider whether conscience alone is a satisfactory moral authority — what about the law, religious teachings?
- ▣ You could look at the reliability of conscience and factors that could undermine it.
- ▣ Give examples in your discussion illustrating the different moral dimension of action, including consequences, situations, and intentions, as well as psychological, cultural and scientific influences.

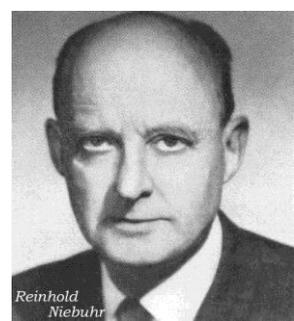
Critical comments

Henry David Thoreau (1817–62) (*On the Duty of Civil Disobedience*, 1849) argued for the ultimate supremacy of conscience over the law: After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period to continue, to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority but because they are physically the strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases can not be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which the majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience? Which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterwards. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right.'

Christian ethics

Sources of Roman Catholic ethics

- There are diverse approaches to Christian ethics according to the denomination.
- Roman Catholic ethics are based in part on Aquinas' Natural Law and in part on Virtue Ethics.
- Natural Law is a key ethical theory underpinning Roman Catholic Christianity with its emphasis on reason as a tool to perceive Natural Law and its deontological emphasis in the application of the primary precepts. Some acts are intrinsically right or wrong, good or evil in themselves.
- Conscience also plays a role for Roman Catholic ethics with Aquinas' view that conscience is reason, making moral decisions that must be informed by prayer and worship, the teaching of the Church, experience, and the inner voice of the Holy Spirit.
- The Roman Catholic Church also refers to Virtue Ethics: Aristotle's idea that our moral actions determine the nature of our character and Aquinas' idea that we must practise the virtues to make good behaviour habitual.
- Sacred scripture is an important source of ethical guidance in Roman Catholic Christianity which cannot be changed. The Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and other key texts about Christian discipleship and behaviour form what is known as 'divine positive law', which no human can change.
- The role of the person is important as well as the acts themselves.



Protestant Christian ethics

- There are different approaches to ethics amongst Protestant churches.
- Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) applies the Gospel to social issues through love: 'The primary issue is to derive a social ethics from the absolute ethic of the Gospel.. social ethics must be concerned with the establishment of tolerable harmonies of life, tolerable forms of justice.'
- Paul Ramsey (Basic Christian Ethics, 1950) sees Christian ethics as 'obedient love' or 'love fulfilling the law'. Analysing ethical problems from the viewpoint of Christian love simply means that Jesus Christ is the centre.
- Joseph Fletcher (Situation Ethics, 1966) sees ethics as depending on the situation rather than any deontological basis, and argues that the person should seek the most loving outcome.
- More conservative Protestants offer an absolutist interpretation of Christian ethics. Robertson McQuilkin (An Introduction to Biblical Ethics, 1995) sees the Bible as a revelation by God of God's will for human nature and that universal Bible norms are absolute.
- Lewis B. Smedes (Mere Mortality, 1987) focuses on the commandments, fulfilled by the coming of Jesus, as embodying an enduring human law.
- There is a sharp divide between those who take a deontological approach to moral norms espoused in the Bible and those who focus on Jesus' love as a power that overcomes the constraints of laws.
- Protestant Christians have different views on current issues such as abortion and homosexuality. Evangelical Christians prohibit abortion and homosexual sex as acts that contravene biblical laws, while more liberal Christians have exceptions through the application of love.

The purpose of ethical behaviour

- For most Christian Churches, ethical behaviour comes from a sense of obedience to God and a desire to live life in the way that God advocates.
- Christian discipleship is the attempt to live in a way that imitates Christ and in doing so helps to bring about the Kingdom of God.
- Many Christians also see moral behaviour as behaving in a way that suits the human being. God has made humans and gives advice on how they can live life to the full.
- There is also a fundamental sense in which moral behaviour enables the Christian to enter into God's kingdom or Heaven, though in itself good acts are not the critical factor. More important are acts of repentance and a desire to do good.



Christian ethics: deontological or teleological?

- Most Christian ethics are deontological with Catholics often seeing acts as intrinsically right or wrong according to their compatibility with Natural Law, and, along with many other Christians, a sense of obedience to the divine law reflected in the biblical ethical teachings.
- More radical is the Situationist approach, which is both teleological, as it pursues a most loving outcome, and relative, as it considers each situation separately with no idea that actions are right or wrong in themselves.
- Some liberal strands of Roman Catholic ethics are personalist with an emphasis on putting the person at the centre of the moral equation rather than the act or the consequence.
- There is also the Virtue Ethics dimension, based on Aristotle, which sees the improvement of human character in terms of living a more Christ-like life. Here, the focus is on becoming more fully human.
- Virtue Ethics is a source of Roman Catholic ethics — our moral actions determine the nature of our character and there are desirable virtues to cultivate within.

Tips for A2 exam questions

To what extent is the religion you have studied consistent with a Utilitarian approach to ethics?

- ▣ You could start by outlining the general situation that religious ethics tends to be focused on acts, while Utilitarianism is focused on ends.
- ▣ You might consider how religious ethics (with examples from Natural Law or divine command sources, perhaps) contrasts with Utilitarianism, which applies a principle that evaluates the options, looking for the best possible results.
- ▣ You could explore the consequences of these differences: that Utilitarianism might be prepared to break commonly agreed rules, sacrificing an individual for a greater good, while many religious ethical systems would not allow rules to be abandoned in this way.
- ▣ You might consider the exception of Situationism, which seems to cross the barriers, and Fletcher's justification that Situationism is a religious ethic.
- ▣ While happiness or pleasure is a core idea of Utilitarianism, love or compassion is a far more important idea in some religious ethics. Consider the case that love can be sought in the way Situationism claims.

Critical comments

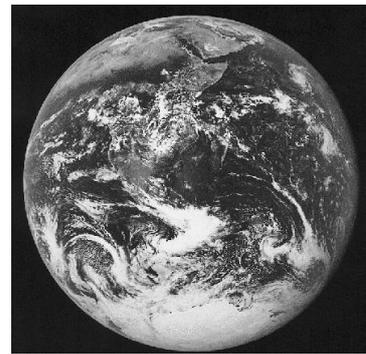
Reinhold Niebuhr (*An Interpretation of christian Ethics*, 1935) writes: 'I still believe, as I have believed then, that love may be the motive of social action but that justice must be the instrument of love in the world in which self interest is bound to defy the canons of love at every level. . . The primary issue is to derive a social ethics from the absolute ethic of the Gospel. The Gospel ethic is absolute because it merely presents the final law of human freedom: the love of God and the neighbour. A social ethics must be concerned with the establishment of tolerable harmonies of life, tolerable forms of justice.'

Robertson McQuilkin (*An Introduction to Biblical Ethics*, 1995) sees the Bible as 'a revelation by God of his will for human nature.. Those laws or other teachings that derive from, interpret, or reinforce one of the Ten Commandments should thus be recognised as having enduring authority'

Environmental ethics

What is environmental ethics?

- 'Environmental ethics' includes the preservation of species, the conservation of habitats, the depletion of biodiversity and natural resources, the ozone layer, and the effects of pollution.
- It is concerned with our attitudes towards and impact on the biological and geological dimensions of the planet, how that affects humanity, and the well-being and diversity of other forms of life on earth and geological systems.
- There are concerns among many scientists that human activity is unsustainable and will harm the future well-being of human life, that of other forms of life on earth, and will damage permanently the earth's geological systems.
- A few challenge this view arguing that development protects us from the environment and enables us to counter the extremes of weather and failures of crops.



Criticism of religious approaches to environmental ethics

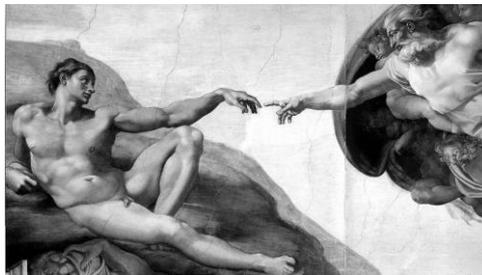
- The Judaeo-Christian Bible is accused of encouraging human domination and exploitation of the world: 'Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air.' (*Genesis 1.26*) Thomas Aquinas maintained that 'all animals are naturally subject to man'.



- Some philosophers criticise the Judaeo-Christian tradition for placing humans at the moral centre and leaving the environment as morally insignificant (an anthropocentric view).
- *Genesis* makes humans dominant over the world and humans are encouraged to multiply over it and subdue it —the natural world exists for the benefit of humans and nature has no intrinsic value.
- Revised beliefs and values could be proposed that emphasise the responsibility humans have for the earth, prioritise the improvement in the quality of life over material production, and to use material resources carefully and protect the quality of the environment.

Defence of religious approaches to environmental ethics

- Religious ethics are often theocentric (God-centred) as God is the underlying reason for moral behaviour. This includes environmental ethics. They are also anthropocentric in that Christian/agape love of neighbour is the fundamental principle for human relations as the environment affects the quality and ease of human life, and geo/biocentric in that creation is 'God-made' and good and therefore must be preserved because it is a good in itself.
- The environment is God's sacred creation. Humans are stewards, responsible to God for their use of the world God has made. Humans are



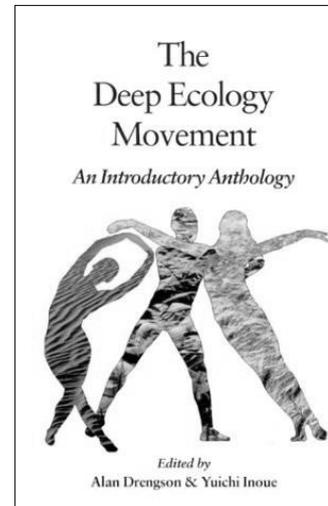
created and their activity has worth as part of God's creative process. Technology and science are not intrinsically bad. God works in and through nature and it is important to God (see Psalm 19).

- Pope John Paul II writes that environmental damage has come about because humans have set themselves in place of God and tyrannised nature, ignoring God's purpose for it.
- Christians can be called to reject lifestyles that disregard and damage God's creation, that force the poor into greater poverty, and that threaten the right of future generations to a healthy environment.
- Creation has value in itself and reveals God. Christianity teaches that human acts should reflect God's own love for creation as human life depends on it. Sin distorts the human relationship with the natural world, damaging the balance of nature. A Christian's relationship with God is affected by how he or she uses creation's gifts.
- 'What is wrong is a style of life which is presumed to be better when it is directed towards having rather than being and which wants to have more, not in order to be more but in order to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself.' (Pope John Paul II)
- Humans must observe environmental justice, which means the impact of

their lifestyles on others and the world. The desire for affluence and greater wealth can dominate.

Deep ecology and some criticism

- Deep ecology is an attempt to define a secular environmental ethic that recognises value in all life forms, the natural systems and diversity of earth, and rejects anthropocentric ethics.
- Leopold (Round River, 1949) called for a new ethic dealing with humans' relation to land and the animals and plants that grow upon it. He sought to enlarge the boundary of the moral community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively the land.
- Leopold says: 'A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.'
- Arne Naess and George Sessions ('Basic Principles of Deep Ecology,' *Ecophilosophy*, Vol. 6, 1984) proposed that all life was intrinsically valuable, irrespective of its usefulness. They argued that deep ecology sought to 'preserve the integrity of the biosphere for its own sake', not for any possible human benefits.
- Some extend this to include natural objects or systems, arguing that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic worth.
- J. Lovelock's hypothesis sees the ecosystem as an entity that must be considered in any moral deliberation (*Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, 1979).
- Singer (*Practical Ethics*, 1993) maintains that while life forms can have value as part of the diverse interrelated geophysiological structure of the planet, only sentient life has intrinsic value. Other organisms cannot truly be said to desire to flourish or have experiences.
- Singer believes **Lovelock's** use of the Greek Goddess **Gaia** to describe the world confers on the earth a consciousness which is not there.



Critical comments

Kakadu National Park, in Australia's Northern Territory contains rugged woodlands, swamps and waterways, supporting a rich variety of life. It contains species found nowhere else, such as the hooded parrot and the pig-nosed turtle, which are endangered. Kakadu affords aesthetic enjoyment and recreational and research opportunities. Many think it is a place of immense beauty and ecological significance. It is of spiritual significance to the Jawoyn aborigines. Kakadu is also rich in gold, platinum, palladium and uranium, which some think should be mined. If this happens, then, environmentalists claim, aesthetic, recreational and research opportunities will be reduced, the beauty of Kakadu will be lessened, species will disappear, ecological richness will decrease, the naturalness of the place will be compromised and the spiritual values of the Jawoyn discounted. Mining already goes on in the Kakadu area and there is pressure to allow more. Should more mining be allowed? Should any mining at all be allowed? (Robert Elliot, 'Environmental Ethics,' in *A Companion to Ethics*, 1997)

Tips for A2 exam questions

How far would you agree that environmental issues are more of a concern to a religious believer than to a Utilitarian?

- ▣ You could consider the potentially destructive ends that misuse of the environment might lead to and how a Utilitarian should react, as Utilitarians should consider the greater good.
- ▣ You may also consider that a religious believer may feel very protective of what s/he sees as a divinely created world, which must be protected as it is.
- ▣ Alternatively, you could explore the idea that the believer sees the world as created for him/her to use, with no concern to allow the natural world to be protected for any other reason than service to humanity.
- ▣ You might also explore the idea that a Utilitarian would only see the world as a resource for humankind and not consider any natural feature as anything other than a resource.
- ▣ These different arguments could be considered in relation to the arguments from religious environmentalists, deep ecologists and the other arguments discussed above.

BUSINESS ETHICS

What is Business Ethics?

- Ethical relationship between businesses and consumers.
- Ethical relationship between businesses and their employees.
- Impact on globalisation, the environment and society as a whole.

Purpose of businesses

- 1) Maximise profits
- 2) Moral responsibilities to stakeholders e.g. employees, shareholders, consumers, community BUT businesses are property and not there to distribute justice!

TODAY

- Accountable
- Consumers will demonstrate, boycott etc.
- Vocalising unrest means that businesses have to change.
- BUT

- Not one agreed code for all businesses.
- Different parts of the world operate differently to each other.

Modern Technology

- Methods used have to be ethical
- Modifying foods
- Using animals
- Child labour
- Creating children to specification
- Cost

Pressure Groups

- Businesses need to protect themselves.
- Ethical committees
- If they are caught acting unethically it can be expensive!

Business and consumers

Customer rights:

- Quality
- Safety
- Price
- Customer service

Customers expect:

- Ethical responsibility.
- Treatment of employees
- Community
- Environment
- Working conditions

Employers and Employees

- Working together.
- 1978 - Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. (ACAS)
- Harmonious working relations.
- Negotiates in disputes and offers guidelines.
- Balance of interests:
 - Employer = profits, future and keep team motivated.
 - Employee = good working conditions and balance of work / life.

If none of these happen then problems:

- High turnover of staff
- Unrest
- Lack of motivation

- Poor work
- Deadlines missed

Whistleblowers

- Is it ethical?
- Loyalty?
- Dismissal
- Finding new job problematic

Business and the environment

- Essential to consider the environment:
- Helps the planet
- Wins trust
- Gains respect of companies and other countries

Businesses need to...

- Have an environmental policy
- Pressure from WWF for Nature.
- Business want to operate within the law and there are minimum standards that have to be met according to UK law and UN Global Compact.

Anglo - American Mining company

- 1 of the 20 largest UK based companies involved in mining / quarrying.
- When it does its work it wants to have a positive affect in 3 areas:
 - i) Area the mine is located operations are carried out with care to improve the lives of local people. E.g. noise / pollution.
 - ii) Area immediately surrounding the mine, it is active in conservation and improvement.
 - iii) Wider region - financial contributions to local communities and helps to generate new businesses.
- Environmental conservation projects:
 - Reed beds in streams and ponds around the quarry.



Supermarkets

- "Food miles" and Packaging.
- Helping the environment, profitability and social responsibility work together.

Globalisation

- Reduction of the difference between one economy and another, so trade all over the world, both within and between different countries becomes similar.
- Can be a slow process but recent times it has speeded up.

Reasons for the increase in the pace of globalisation

- Technological change
- Transport
- Deregulation - increase in privatisation and countries can own companies in other countries.
- Removal of capital exchange controls - money can be moved from one country to another.
- Free-trade - barriers removed e.g. EU
- Consumer tastes have changed.
- Emerging markets in developing countries.

Benefits of speed of globalisation

- Businesses are freer to choose their place of operation.
- Can move to countries where labour is cheap.
- E.g. telephone call centres have moved to India.

Problems

- Trade between countries is not fair.
- Interests of the shareholders are more important than the interests of the employees / consumers.
- Poorest people have only 1.4 % of the global income.
- Bhopal - toxic waste pollutes the environment.

Anti - globalisation

- Amnesty International campaigns for a global human rights framework for business based on the UN norms of business.
- Ecological farming practices.

Peter Singer - One World: The Ethics of Globalisation

- Challenges us to develop a system of ethics and justice that can be accepted by all people, regardless of their race, culture or religion.

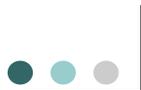
Benefits of ethics for businesses

- Better image
- Greater profit
- Embarrassing events / public relations are avoided.
- Able to recruit more highly qualified employees.

- Will be proud of work and produce profit.

Problems for business

- Increase costs for the business.
- Changing of suppliers.
- Operating in a society which may not have clear guidelines. E.g. animal testing.
- Ultimate goal of a business is to provide jobs, generate money not only for itself for also for the community. May ignore anything else that prevents this from being reached.



1942 - 2007



- ***“If business comes with no moral sympathy or honourable code of behaviours, then God help us all.”*** Dame Anita Roddick. Human Rights Activist. Founder of The Body Shop



The Body Shop

- ***“I just want The Body Shop to be the best, most breathlessly exciting company – and one that changes the way business is carried out. That is my vision.”***
- **Anita Roddick. Human Rights Activist. Founder of The Body Shop.**
- The beauty behind our business. What we do. Why we do it. How we do it. And what makes us different.
- We believe there is only one way to beautiful, nature’s way. We’ve believed this for years and still do. We constantly seek out wonderful natural ingredients from all four corners of the globe, and we bring you products bursting with effectiveness to enhance your natural beauty and express your unique personality. And whilst we’re doing this, we always strive to protect this beautiful planet and the people who depend on it. We don’t do it this way because it’s fashionable. We do it because, to us, it’s the only way.

Religious approach to Business Ethics

Leviticus 19:13

"You are not to oppress your neighbour or rob him. Do not keep back a hired man's wages till next morning."

Deuteronomy 25:13-15

"You must not have unequal weights in your bag, one heavy, the other light. You must not have unequal measures in your house, one large, the other small. You must have true and correct weights and true and correct measures, so that you may enjoy long life in the land, which the Lord your God is giving you."

Tips for A2 exam questions

Kantian Ethics is the best approach to the issues surrounding business." Discuss (35 marks)

- Explain the main principles of Kantian Ethics e.g Duty, Goodwill, the Categorical Imperative and Hypothetical imperatives and how they might be applied to business.
- Concentrate on one or two business issues such as relations between business and shareholders or the question of profit and what business methods could be universalized.
- You need to ask if it is the "best" approach and this means contrasting it with other approaches e.g religious ethics, Utilitarianism or Virtue Ethics.

Sex and relationships

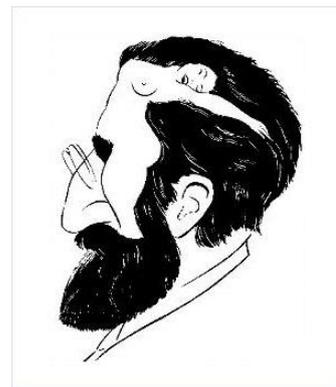
Christian approaches to sexuality

- Early Christians saw celibacy as a holy state. Jesus' second coming was believed to be imminent, bringing with it the end of the world, so marriage and reproduction were no longer thought necessary. Also, Jesus did not marry and St Paul recommended celibacy for all who could withstand the temptations of the flesh. The Roman Catholic Church requires celibacy for its priests. Most other Christian denominations do not.
- Most Christian Churches envisage sex as a practice exclusively for those committed in permanent loving relationships. Sex outside marriage, adultery, masturbation, and homosexual sex may be seen as sinful either because of biblical statements or Natural Law ethics.
- Genesis relates sex to having children. Natural Law sees reproduction as the only purpose of sex and contraception is forbidden for preventing God's purpose.

- Christianity traditionally identified the purpose of marriage as fidelity to one another, procreation and union of the parties. Recently, a greater emphasis has been given to the uniting element of marriage. The Anglican Church has said that 'the commitment is made in love for love'.
- Jack Dominion (*Passionate and Compassionate Love*, 1991) believes that a new definition or description of sex is needed; one that sees sex as a personal expression that communicates recognition and appreciation, confirms sexual identity, brings reconciliation and healing, celebrates life, and is a profound way of thanking each other for the loving partnership that they have.

Other approaches to sexuality

- Contemporary presentations of sex emphasise a libertarian and contractarian ethic — sex is morally permissible if there is mutual agreement or consent between the participating parties. Sex is not linked with marriage or reproduction. Freedom and autonomy preside.
- Libertarians may adopt the harm principle and observe that no harm is done to either party or other third parties: 'My freedom must not restrict another's or harm them.'
- Adulterous sex harms the betrayed spouse, so the act is wrong.
- This view celebrates sexual liberation embracing freedom and endorses a more tolerant and permissive attitude towards women, homosexuals and sex outside marriage generally
- Feminists criticise both the traditional Christian approaches to sexuality and the liberal ones. Christian approaches rest on a defined cultural role for women, that of the child bearer, wife and submissive. This disempowers women, restricting their status in society and socialising them to meet the desires of men.
- The Hebrew and Greek view of women has meant that for centuries they have had little access to politics, wealth and very little free choice. Sexual behaviour assumes male dominance and female submission — most sexual crimes are committed against women.
- Liberal approaches to sexuality are criticised by feminists because these approaches assume a level playing field between the sexes. Feminists argue that women may not be as free as men to enter sexual relationships due to their oppression by men.
- The feminist Catharine Mackinnon (*Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*, 1987) argues that sexuality must be re-imagined and remade before moral sexual relationships are possible. Until this is done, sexual activity is immoral.



Christianity and homosexuality

- There is a growing belief that there is no moral issue about same-sex relationships beyond the issues that apply to heterosexual relationships, and yet prejudice against homosexuals exists, as seen in the nail bombing of a gay bar in London's Soho district.
- Homosexual acts were once crimes in the UK and homosexuality was considered a mental illness. In medieval times, homosexuals were burnt at the stake.



- Christianity has traditionally seen homosexuality as wrong because there is no possibility of life from the act (Natural Law), because it is outside marriage (only sex in marriage is permissible), and because of specific Bible passages, which imply a divine prohibition.
- Biblical texts are used as a basis for the condemnation of homosexuality: 'You shall not lie with a man as with a

woman: that is an abomination' (Leviticus 18.22), and it is punishable by death (Leviticus 20.13). St Paul describes people engaging in same-sex sexual acts as 'dishonouring their bodies', and his statement is often cited to justify condemnation of gay relationships.

- The worldwide Anglican community stated that the ordinations of 'practising homosexuals and the blessing of same-sex unions call into question the authority of holy scripture'.
- Critics of this approach do not accept that scripture can be interpreted and applied in this way Other rules from similar texts are not enforced in the same way So Gareth Moore (The Body in Context: Sex and Catholicism, 1992), for example, writes that if some Christians arbitrarily follow the law in Leviticus, which says it is immoral for a man to lie with a man, they are still unlikely to follow the passage later on that advocates beheading as punishment or Leviticus 19.19, which forbids the wearing of garments made of two kinds of material.
- The Roman Catholic Church maintains there is no sin involved in an inclination towards a member of the same sex. The homosexual person should be treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity, and not discriminated against. They are called to chastity. Homosexual acts themselves are sinful, depraved and intrinsically disordered.

- Critics of the Natural Law approach to homosexuality argue that sex has a non-reproductive purpose, the uniting act between a loving couple. Most sexual acts cannot lead to pregnancy, such as sex in the non-fertile part of the monthly cycle, sex after the menopause, sex when one or both partners are infertile, or sex when the woman is already pregnant. If the reproductive imperative in sex is rejected, then Natural Law no longer opposes homosexual sex.



- Sexual organs are suited for reproduction and the production of intense pleasure in oneself and others. To condemn people for using their sexual organs for their own pleasure reveals the prejudices and taboos of our society.
- Liberal Christian writers maintain that the quality of the relationship, be it heterosexual or homosexual, is what determines its moral value. They dispute the interpretation of biblical passages and draw on the teaching that all are made 'in the image and likeness of God'. God created homosexual men and women, so they must be good. A good God could not intentionally create disordered human beings.
- Gareth Moore argues that there is a Christian basis for an inclusive attitude towards homosexuals because it is a religion that positively seeks to make room for the marginalised, outcasts and failures in society.

Critical comments

'We are convinced that homosexuality and lesbianism are clearly a deviation from the natural norm and divine order and those who practise homosexuality and lesbianism are in sin (Romans 1.24–7).. Some Westerners have introduced homosexual practices in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, but we, as Africans, repudiate the practice and do not wish it to be seen in our Province. We want to promote stable, monogamous marriage between a man and a woman within the love of God.' (Statement on homosexuality by the Anglican Province of Rwanda, 31 January 1998, <http://newark.rutgers.edu/lcrew/rwanda.html>)

Desmond Tutu, the Anglican Archbishop of South Africa, wrote on homophobia: 'We reject them [homosexuals], treat them as pariahs, and push them outside our church communities, and thereby we negate the consequences of their baptism and ours. We make them doubt that they are the children of God, and this must be nearly the ultimate blasphemy. We blame them for something that is becoming increasingly clear they can do little about.' (February 1996, www.religioustolerance.org/horn_ang2.htm)

Tips for A2 exam questions

'Absolute moral rules have no place in personal relationships.' Discuss.

- ▣ Are personal relationships so individual that general universal principles cannot be applied?

- ▣ Does the application of deontological absolutist rules cause harm to people's unique relationships?
- ▣ Consider whether there are any principles or some categorical imperatives that are binding in every relationship. For example, is adultery wrong if no one involved is hurt or concerned about it?
- ▣ Should homosexual relationships be condemned if no one is harmed and some people find fulfilment through them?
- ▣ Ethical theory and its point of view should be applied, be it Utilitarian, Natural Law, Kantian, Situation Ethics or Virtue Ethics, to support your discussion.

How effective is Natural Law when applied to an issue of sexual ethics?

- ▣ You could explain that Natural Law ethics is deontological and expresses primary precepts, which all actions must be measured against.
- ▣ The priority of reproduction in sexual matters could be explained and you could give the examples of how that is interpreted by the Roman Catholic Church in relation to contraception, homosexuality, and masturbation.
- ▣ You could consider whether there is a single human nature with regard to sexuality.
- ▣ You could look at the idea of a purpose for human sexual organs and the impact that it has on sexual ethics issues such as masturbation and homosexuality
- ▣ You could discuss whether matters of sexual ethics can have deontological laws applied and, if so, which these might be and whether they might be incompatible with certain lifestyles.
- ▣ You could explore whether the precepts that Natural Law traditionally outlines need to be refined or rejected or whether the theory in itself provides a corrective to modern-day excesses.