

Revision Summaries for AS and A Level Year 1

Component 2: Ethics

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Teacher's Introduction

The revision summaries in this series are designed to support your students as they study the OCR AS and A Level Religious Studies specification, and have been designed to cover the major themes and concepts of each topic point accordingly. This revision summary supports the AS / A Level Year 1 OCR Component 2: Ethics part of the specification.

All students, whether they are academically strong, average or weak, can benefit from a concise and clearly explained set of notes to revise from, both as they work through the OCR course and also when preparing for their end-of-course exams. It is recommended, therefore, that students be given each relevant summary after learning a topic so that they can clearly understand the summaries and refer back to them when needed. However, the summaries can also function well as a pack given to students in the run-up to their exams.

Each topic follows a set structure detailed below:

- ✓ **Glossary:** A clear list of important terminology students need to know when studying the topic
- ✓ **Overview:** A look at the major themes of the topic, with a brief introduction to the major points of discussion and disagreement
- ✓ **Key Points:** The main body of the summaries for each topic – a clear and concise set of notes that help students support their own knowledge and understanding of the topic
- ✓ **Key Figures:** An important overview of any major philosophical or theological figures students are required to know
- ✓ **Key Texts:** A set of notes around any important theological or biblical texts students may require background information and understanding of
- ✓ **Student Checklist:** A helpful guide to what students need to know by the end of the revision summary and a way to check their understanding and progress through a particular topic
 - ! **Note:** The checklist is presented in question format and these questions would be ideal to set for homework or revision so that students can build the skills they need in order to progress to longer exam-style questions.
- ✓ **Exam-style Questions:** A practice essay questions with helpful assessment objectives, complete with levelled mark schemes and indicative content at the end of the resource. These are useful for students approaching their end-of-year exams or wishing to improve their essay technique on a particular topic.

NB Depending on the figures studied and the required reading, not all topics will have a Key Figures or Key Texts section.

This structure clearly ensures students have not only a grasp of the key themes of each topic, but also a way to understand their place within the specification as a whole. Students who may have missed lessons or not made detailed notes may benefit greatly from these revision summaries, especially in helping their recollection of key topics closer to their end-of-course exams.

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Introduction to Ethics

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Absolutism	The ethical view that something is right or wrong regardless of the circumstances
Relativism	The ethical view that moral actions can vary depending on the circumstances
Deontological	The ethical view based on the idea that moral principles should be followed regardless of the consequences or outcomes of the action
Teleological	The ethical view based on the idea that moral principles should be followed based on the consequences or outcomes of the action
Objective	Something which can be considered to be factual regardless of individual opinions
Subjective	Something which can be viewed differently depending on individual opinions
Act	A moral choice resulting in a consequence
Consequence	The outcome of a situation
Ethics	The area of philosophy concerned with what behaviour is right or wrong, good or bad
Means	The action performed to achieve a particular purpose
Ends	The purpose of an action
Moral	Actions, behaviour or intentions that are considered good or right
Immoral	Actions, behaviour or intentions that are considered bad or wrong
Maxim	A moral rule
Normative ethics	The branch of ethics which discusses what individuals ought to do. It includes questions about what moral rules should people follow? (This is a major topic in this course).
Application	The application of ethical thinking to real-world issues, e.g. trolley problem, capital punishment, etc.
Meta-ethics	The branch of ethics which discusses what ethical language means. It includes questions like, 'What does it mean to say something is good?' and 'Is there anything in objective reality?' (This is a minor topic in this course).

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Overview

Ethics is an important area of philosophical study and everyday individual human beings and collective groups make decisions on micro and macro levels strongly by the ethical code the individual person or collective subscribes to. Ethics walks of life and, therefore, the understanding of ethics is paramount to successful living in the present in all areas of ideology, including religious and non-religious viewpoints, and tradition, e.g. not all secularists are utilitarian, although many are, and not all Christians accept natural moral law.

Key Points

What is Ethics?

- Ethics is the area of philosophy concerned with what behaviour is morally right or wrong. Different people have different concepts of what constitutes a morally right or wrong action.
- There is a plethora of different kinds of ethics, coming from both religious and secular sources. Scholars have over the centuries developed a large number of different ethical theories, but however, unifying these ideas is the end which they wish to achieve – they all aim to find ideas which, if lived by, will achieve morality.

Absolutism and Relativism

- In ethics, absolutism and relativism make claims about the *nature of morality*.
 - **Absolutists** hold that the nature of morality is such that it admits of no exceptions. Actions are right or wrong, for example – are *always* wrong. This is true in all cultures, at all times and in all situations. Natural law theory, which will be discussed later in the revision, is an absolutist theory.
 - **Relativists** hold that the nature of morality is relative to each individual or culture (cultural relativism). What is right for me may be wrong for you. For example, what is acceptable in Britain is morally unacceptable in Saudi Arabia.
- Crucially, **relativists** maintain that *all perspectives are equally valid*: if my perspective is that the highest good is severing the feet from live rabbits, and yours is that animals should be treated with respect, we can never establish that our own position is superior, or the other's inferior. Relativism is often openly identified as relativism; in fact, it is more often used as a term to describe a position which critics say, is to be self-defeating: if we can never say one position is better than another, why bother with philosophy at all? The existence of human rights enshrined in international law, such as sexual, racial and gender equality, is often pointed to as clear evidence that relativism is not, but is, in fact, desirable. Meanwhile, defending the claim that a country with slavery is a challenge for even the most radical of thinkers.
- Furthermore, the two are, for the majority of the time, opposite ends of a spectrum. Absolutist thoughts, ideas and ethical methodologies sit at one end, and relativist at the other.

Absolutism



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Deontological and Teleological Truth

- These two forms of ethics differ on the basis of what should drive an ethical choice.
- Forms of deontological ethics hold that ethics is based on a moral duty, usually based on a set of rules. Deontological ethics are ethics such as Kantian ethics, developed by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century. There are certain maxims which are considered to be moral duties. So, then it does not matter what the outcome of the situation is: the action itself is right or wrong, and, therefore, the choice made is considered moral or immoral.
- Teleological ethics is a form of ethics which is dictated based on the outcome of an action. An example of this being that the goodness of an action is measured in the consequences it produces.

Objective Truth and Subjective Truth

- Truth is a tricky thing, and within ethics and philosophical discussion it is an interesting one to tackle.
- Something which is objective is something which does not change depending on who is looking at or addressing the idea. For example, you might consider the statement 'the sun is hot' to be an objective good. However, it is actually a subjective statement, as for some people the sun is too hot to touch.
- Subjectivity is the understanding of a statement or idea from an individual perspective. It is based on the situation, viewpoints, etc. of an individual when understanding an idea.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is meant by the term 'ethics'?			
How important is ethics?			
How is ethics developed?			
What is absolutism?			
What is relativism?			
What is meant by 'deontological'?			
What is meant by 'teleological'?			
What is an objective statement?			
What is a subjective statement?			

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Natural Law

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Aristotle	Greek philosopher who first posited the idea of natural law
Thomas Aquinas	Theologian who developed natural moral law
Telos	The idea of 'end' or 'purpose'
Four tiers	Aquinas's idea that there are four different levels of law
Precepts	A set of ideas posited by Aquinas regarding natural law
Eternal law	The idea of the principles and rules made by God for the universe. These are only known by God
Divine law	The idea of the principles and rules made by God to humanity through the Bible
Natural law	The idea of laws made by God which are not revealed; humans are able to discover through their use of reason
Human law	The idea of the laws made by humans which are derived from natural law; laws which govern a country
Divine law theory	The idea that ethical theories are taken from the Bible
Summa Theologica	The text written by Aquinas in which his ideas on natural law are written
Catechism of the Catholic Church	A document which contains all the major teachings of the Catholic Church
The Bible	A collection of texts which make up Scripture
Reason	The human ability to use logic. Aquinas believed that natural law can be discovered through reason
Doctrine of double effect	A theory that an action with one intention has two consequences – it has more than one effect
Abortion	The intentional ending of a pregnancy via medical means
Euthanasia	The intentional ending of a life due to suffering or to their wishes or because it is considered wrong
Naturalistic fallacy	A criticism of the natural law argument; that it is a fallacy to move from 'is' statements about God with 'ought' ideas about God
Absolutism	The ethical view that something is right or wrong regardless of the circumstances
Legalistic	Specifying certain rules or criteria for moral behaviour

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Telos: Aristotle and Aquinas

Overview

Natural moral law is a traditionally held religious theory of law and precepts based on biblical principles which was originally conceived of and written down by the Catholic Church. Natural moral law theory is both legalistic (it specifies certain rules for moral behaviour) and teleological (it specifies that these rules are universal).

The principles on which this natural moral law was developed were influenced heavily by Aristotle's philosophy – specifically his thoughts on telos.

Key Points

Telos in Aristotle

- **Telos** is a Greek term which means 'end' or 'purpose'.
- It was from the works of Greek philosopher Aristotle. Aquinas borrowed two concepts from Aristotle, eudemonia and telos, but for the sake of this summary will focus on **telos**.
- The concept of **telos** has its origins in Aristotle's metaphysics, the arm of philosophy which seeks to understand the ultimate nature of reality. One of Aristotle's most significant contributions to philosophy is that for anything to exist it must have four causes:
 1. a material cause, e.g. the bronze of a statue
 2. a formal cause, e.g. the shape of a statue
 3. an efficient cause, e.g. the artist who makes the statue
 4. a final cause, e.g. for the statue to be beautiful
- It is the 'final cause' which is of the most importance. This is the purpose for which an object was created and the purpose which it should rightly fulfil. This purpose, when fully fulfilled clearly can be seen as an influencing factor in the world.
- One of the reasons Aristotle was so attractive to Aquinas was the former's belief in a harmonious universe, where nature has a clear logic and – crucially – a created order. In the Philosophy of Religion, you will encounter Aquinas's version of the cosmological argument. In his natural law theory, in this argument Aquinas was developing ideas from the writings of Aristotle.

St Thomas Aquinas

- Natural moral law theory is most closely associated with the medieval Catholic theologian St Thomas Aquinas.
- Natural moral law, as it is understood today, is built upon the twin pillars of Aristotle and the Bible, heavily influenced by the work and ideas of St Thomas Aquinas. His work is even referenced by the Catechism of the Catholic Church in teachings on natural law.
- He reasoned that all things have a natural purpose towards which God wants them to move. This purpose, or **telos**, will bring humans into unity and fellowship with God and enable the reaching of the highest human potential.

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- There were two sources Aquinas believed that humans could use to understand humanity:
 1. **The Bible and the world**
The Bible is considered revelation, so it reveals or shows something about God's moral law because it was designed by God and, therefore, has significance.
 2. **Reason**
Aquinas believed very strongly in the ability of human reason to gain knowledge. He argued that through reason we could know what actions would fulfil our purpose.
- On reason, he wrote: 'To disregard the dictate of reason is equivalent to committing suicide' (II:ii, 19, 4)
- Aquinas believed that humanity was given reason and freedom by God so that they could fulfil their natural purpose. All humans had the ability to reason, which meant they could follow natural moral law if they chose to.
- Aquinas believed that everyone has a specific purpose unique to them that depends on the skills and talents given to them by God.
- In arguing this, Aquinas was something of a revolutionary. Earlier theologians believed that the Fall had corrupted mankind's nature and the inherent order in the world. Humanity could not use reason to know anything about God. Humanity had become too corrupted to have the ability to learn about God's will. Aquinas, by accepting the radical implications of the Fall, did not interpret it this drastically. He believed that reason was still intact enough to be used for the purpose of understanding and acting in the world.
- Ideas about morality, or moral rules, therefore, come from inside human beings. However, these ideas in turn come from God, according to Aquinas, because God made humans.

Telos in Natural Law

- The telos of human beings influenced Aquinas's thinking regarding the precepts of natural law. This is discussed in the next section of this summary.
- The way in which Aquinas believed human beings naturally have purpose, or telos, and observe as the correct purpose for human life, informs Aquinas's concepts of natural moral law.
- Practical example: If we take the example of euthanasia, the telos of human beings is to live life in accordance with Aquinas's thoughts on the primary precepts, which would be to preserve life. If we accept that euthanasia is ending a human life (regardless of our views on whether it is justified), it can be said to be in violation of natural moral law as it is going against one of the human telos of preservation of life.
- Furthermore, if we take the example of the issue of abortion, the telos of human beings is to promote life on the basis of Aquinas's primary precept. Another telos would be to reproduce. Therefore, abortion, in natural law, would go against the primary precept as it ends a pregnancy. There are other ways in which the issue of abortion conflicts with natural law beyond the specification but is worth investigating if you are interested.

The Four Tiers of Law

In the writings of Aquinas, there are four different tiers of laws which govern human behaviour, with certain laws which are above others. They are as follows:

1. **Eternal law** – the principles and rules made by God which control the entire universe. Only known by God.
2. **Divine law** – The principles and rules made by God which he has chosen to reveal in the Bible. Examples of this include the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.
3. **Natural law** – laws made by God which are not revealed in Scripture, but which humans can discover through their use of reason.
4. **Human law** – the laws made by humans which govern humans – for example, traffic laws. The US constitution is an example of human law.

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Key Figures

Aristotle

- The influential and famous Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE) posited eudemonia in his own works.
- Both of these ideas proved hugely influential for St Thomas Aquinas in the work *Theologia*, in which he posited his form of natural law.
- His work included the ideas of telos and eudemonia, both of which influenced Aquinas on natural law.

St Thomas Aquinas

- The reason Aquinas is considered such an important figure in the history of the thought of the pre-Christian Aristotle with biblical teaching.
- Aquinas used the teachings of Aristotle in order to formally write what is now known as natural law. He is remembered as an extremely important theologian.
- His influential works include *Summa Theologica*, in which he posited his 'five proofs' of God's existence, including the cosmological and teleological arguments, two of which continue to be debated among philosophers and theologians to this day.
- After the collapse of the Ancient Greek and Roman civilisations (the 'Classical Age'), Aristotle's works had, for a long time, been almost entirely lost to European civilisation.
- Fortunately, some of his writing had been preserved by Arabic scholars in the Middle Ages and, by the twelfth century, these works had gradually begun to spread back into Europe.
- Due to his keen interest in these traditions, Aquinas became a leading figure in the development of scholasticism. This was a particular way of doing theology that developed because it was motivated by the need to systematise all Christian theology and philosophy. The belief that the use of reason was a defining feature of scholasticism and that the decision of the Church was what exactly what Church doctrine should be.

Key Texts

Aristotle *Physics* 113

- In this work, Aristotle posited his idea of telos as being one of the four causes of the world, telos being the end or purpose he believed one could observe things in the world. He believed that reason behind why things exist in life, e.g. a table exists in order to have things on it, the purpose of individuals using it to eat dinner.

Summa Theologica, 1-11, St Thomas Aquinas

- This is the text in which Aquinas famously posited his 'five proofs' of God's existence. It is also the text that contains his ideas on natural law.
- It is in this text that he puts forward his idea of primary precepts, primary precepts and secondary precepts.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a document in which all of the teachings of the Catholic Church are traditionally contained.

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- Below are two quotes which highlight the ideas and teachings regarding natural law in the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

The natural law is a participation in God's wisdom and goodness by man formed by reason. It expresses the dignity of the human person and forms the basis of his freedom.

The natural law is immutable, permanent throughout history. The rules that it contains are valid. It is a necessary foundation for the erection of moral law and civil law.

Romans 1:20

- In this passage St Paul, the author of the Book of Romans, is describing how God created the world and, therefore, people have no excuse not to follow God's law.

For since 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 2:14–16

- In this passage, St Paul is describing how Gentiles (non-Jews) know the law from their own hearts or conscience. Paul is appealing to the fact that everyone knows the natural moral law because God instilled it in everyone. This latter point is what Aquinas says about ethics.

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (Romans 2:14–16)

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	Not at all (frowny face)	Some Idea (neutral face)	Good Idea (smiley face)
What is the meaning of the Greek word 'telos'?			
How do Aristotle's ideas link to natural moral law?			
Who first formally put forward the idea of natural moral law?			
What two qualities does Aquinas believe that God has given human beings?			
How does natural law impact the Catholic Church's view on abortion?			
How does natural law impact the Catholic Church's view on euthanasia?			
Which official church document was heavily influenced by the idea of natural law?			
How does Romans 1:20 reflect the idea of natural law?			
How does Romans 2:14–16 reflect the idea of natural law?			

¹ The Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part Three (Life In Christ) Article One: Natural Moral Law
http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c3a1.htm

The Precepts

Overview

Aquinas's use of Aristotle to develop natural moral law resulted in sets of precepts. These are important, key ideas to natural moral law.

The key precept underpins all of the following precepts, while the primary precept is absolute. The secondary precepts were then derived from the basis of the absolute primary precepts as being correct and moral.

Key Points

Within his natural law theory, Aquinas put forward three different sets of precept to show his understanding of the ideas of natural law. A precept is a rule or instruction on how to behave. Aquinas developed by Aquinas in order to enable Christians to make moral choices on dilemmas which are not directly addressed within the Bible, as time and development have created different moral issues on which there is no direct teaching in Scripture as these did not exist at the time at which Christ was teaching.

Key Precept

- At the heart of natural law theory is a single, uncontroversial moral principle from which all else is derived:

that we should aim to do good and to avoid doing evil

Virtue
power
constituted
But the
power
at
Thom

Primary Precepts

- Aquinas believed that through the Bible and the world, it became clear that 'primary precepts' that were the basis of natural moral law. Although Aquinas himself is unclear, he thought the following five rules were the most significant:
 - ◆ to preserve life
 - ◆ to reproduce
 - ◆ to educate children
 - ◆ to worship God
 - ◆ to create an orderly, harmonious society
- These rules are **absolute** and to disobey them is always to do wrong.

Secondary Precepts

- From these primary precepts, Aquinas argued that moral rules could be deduced for decision-making so that humans can fulfil their natural purpose.
- Vardy describes these secondary precepts as 'unpacking' the primary precepts to show what they involve and mean for daily decision-making.²
- The secondary precepts also show the **pragmatic** character of Aquinas's ethics, as in the case of deciding which rule to apply to a given situation.
- For example, from the primary precept of 'preserve life', the Catholic Church, on natural moral law, has argued for the immorality of abortion based on the fact that it fits the command in the Ten Commandments, 'You shall not murder'.
- Similarly, the Catholic Church argues that homosexual sexual acts are immoral because they do not lead to reproduction, another primary precept.

² Vardy, P and Grosch, P, *The Puzzle of Ethics* (London: Harper Collins), p. 38.

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Legalism and Absolutism

- **Absolutism:** Absolutist theories of ethics state that one version of morality holds for all people; it is universal. If it is a moral law that persons 'should not steal'; whether they are starving, avenging some wrong or desperate for a drink, just *is* wrong.
- It is the opposite of *relativism*, which claims that whether something is good or bad depends on place, when it happens, and who is involved. *Contrary* to relativism, in absolutism, right and wrongness are determined by the norms of a particular culture (e.g. 'the West') and are universal.
- At the simplest level, legalism can be understood as saying that when it comes to morality, our decisions should be based on previously established laws. Adherence to the laws of the state and Muslim observance of sharia law constitute a legalistic approach to morality.
- However, in the context of Christian theology, of which natural moral law is a part, legalism has a different meaning.
- Often used pejoratively, it refers to an approach to morality where 'not just the law reigns'.³ In practice, this may mean strictly obeying biblical laws or rules out of a belief that by doing so, one is behaving morally.
- Some thinkers, among them Joseph Fletcher, argue that legalistic ethics do not align with Christ's teachings. He subscribed to a system known as Christian situation ethics.
- The two ideas are intertwined: a legalistic code of ethics is often an absolute one.
- Natural moral law theory is both **legalistic** (it specifies certain rules for moral behaviour) and **absolute** (it holds that these rules are universal).

Interpretation in the Church

- Natural moral law can clearly be seen as a theory which has heavily influenced the Catholic Church.
- The writings of Aquinas are referenced within the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which draws justification for its ideas and viewpoints.
- The primary precepts, for example, have specifically influenced the teachings on issues such as abortion and euthanasia. Both of these are controversial and complex issues on which there is no direct teaching within the Bible; therefore, many Christians have interpreted traditional texts as well as other sources, such as Aquinas's teachings, to arrive at their conclusions.
- Therefore, we can see that on the aforementioned medical ethics issues the Church's teachings on the preservation of life are being challenged; therefore, the Church has applied its teachings to these issues.

Key Figures

St Thomas Aquinas

- St Thomas Aquinas, as previously mentioned, put forward the idea of natural moral law, which he presented as a set of precepts as a way for Christians to navigate moral dilemmas which might not have a clear answer in the Bible.
- His text, *Summa Theologiae*, has been hugely influential in the development of natural moral law, ethics and conscience.

³ Fletcher, J, *Situation Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1966)

Key Texts

Summa Theologica

- This was one of the most famous works by philosopher and theologian St Thomas Aquinas.
- This text dates from approximately 1265–1274.
- In this text he posited not only his famous five ways of God's existence, but also his idea of natural moral law.
- This is the text which is referenced in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is a precept?			
Why were the precepts developed?			
What is the key precept?			
What are the primary precepts?			
What are the secondary precepts?			
Who is the theologian who first posited natural moral law?			
What is meant by the term 'legalistic'?			
What is meant by the term 'absolutist'?			
In which document were the precepts put forward?			
Are the primary precepts absolutist or relativist?			
What is the relationship between the primary and secondary precepts?			
What is an example of how natural law has influenced church teaching?			

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Discussion of Issues Raised by Natural Law

Overview

As established, natural law was first posited by St Thomas Aquinas. It remains to this day an influential theory in Christian thought, especially within Catholicism. It is important to evaluate this theory as a method of ethics, examining the extent to which it is useful in assessing its strengths and weaknesses.

Natural law is also influential in debates of modern origin, such as issues of medical ethics (e.g. euthanasia).

Key Points



Is Natural Law Useful?

- In evaluating any ethical theory, the main question that must be posed is whether the theory is useful in making decisions. It is legalistic and absolutist; therefore, it makes large and sweeping claims on issues, with little to no wriggle room.
- Natural law must have some value as it has stood the test of time – it is still used by the Catholic Church) in their teachings in order to navigate moral decisions. It has also seen modern philosophers such as John Finnis and Germain Grisez who posited new natural law theories.

The Doctrine of Double Effect

- While Aquinas held that the primary precepts were **absolute** – they are rules that apply at all times and in all places – he also recognised that sometimes life throws up situations where one has to do good without also doing bad.
- A classic example is the case of killing a bomber in self-defence. Aquinas held that it is morally acceptable for an individual to kill in self-defence if the *intention* was to protect their own life rather than take away another's.
- This can be known as the **doctrine of double effect**, which holds that a bad action can be morally acceptable if the bad consequence is not intended.

Strengths

- Aquinas's approach to human nature and its purposes is compatible and commensurate with reason, which all humans have and can exercise to make moral decisions. It is applicable to all.
- It is an **objective** theory, which holds that certain actions are inherently and objectively right or wrong.
- The **doctrine of double effect**, and other adaptations such as **proportionalism**, provide a degree of flexibility when it comes to dealing with some of life's more perplexing situations.
- Evolutionary neuroscientists, such as Steven Pinker, may argue that some aspects of human nature are determined genetically. Aquinas might well have used this to support his idea of natural law for humankind.

Weaknesses

- Natural law has no way of being imbued with goodness, e.g. natural disasters and diseases, which question what extent it reveals God's plan or desire.
- Atheists are unlikely to follow this supposedly universal ethic because it is based on the premise that God created the universe and the moral law within it. It is also based on the premise that the purpose of life is to find union with God and his purpose for us.

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- Aquinas's focus on reproduction as one of the five primary purposes of human couples who cannot reproduce, such as because they are infertile.
- Aquinas commits the **naturalistic fallacy**. This is also known as the is-ought fallacy because something is, it implies it ought to impact other spheres. In this case 'is' (God's will) to an 'ought' (that God's will ought to be followed). For example, it contains the verse 'go forth and multiply', but Aquinas commits the naturalistic fallacy as humans ought to then go and reproduce.
- It is based on Aquinas's assumptions of a hierarchy in God, which he saw as natural order, which he saw as based on kings and barons, etc. Both these points hold despite his claims to be objective, they could in fact be **culturally relative**.
- Christians who believe that Jesus taught a less **legalistic** ethical theory and a love for one's neighbour. They may, therefore, choose to follow situation ethics.
- **Feminist** critics may argue that Aquinas is no more than a medieval misogynist in the modern world. For instance, the primary precept which commands that men and women should produce children implicitly assumes that women have a God-given duty to produce children; and it may be seen as old-fashioned, if not outright offensive.
- The French existentialist philosopher J P Sartre famously claimed that 'existence precedes essence' regarding the idea that humanity had a purpose (an 'essence') before it existed. This is an assumption in the face of our experience as radically free beings.

Ethical Issues of Conflict regarding Natural Moral Law

Abortion

- Pro-life (i.e. anti-abortion) stances can be justified by appeal to the tenets of natural law.
- Two **primary precepts**, 'to preserve life' and 'to reproduce', can be brought to bear on the issue. If it is held that an embryo or foetus is a life (or has the *potential to be a life*) then abortion contradicts the precept 'to preserve life'.
- Similarly, if it is held that it ends a pregnancy, also directly contradicts the precept 'to reproduce'. This reasoning that the use of contraception is also considered wrong by Catholics.
- That said, the **doctrine of double effect** has often been invoked by the Catholic Church in special circumstances, usually if, by giving birth, the mother's life is put at risk.
- At such times, although performing an abortion results in a bad consequence (the death of the foetus), the intention (to save the mother's life) is good.

Euthanasia

- Euthanasia always involves *ending* a life, hence it breaks the primary precept 'to preserve life'. On this basis we might conclude that natural law theory holds euthanasia is *always* wrong.
- Another primary precept which a natural law theorist may bring to bear on the issue is the notion that we should strive to create an orderly, harmonious society. It might be argued that doctors and their purpose (to preserve and sustain life) also gives them a new obligation to care for the takers of life.
- However, it is worth pausing a moment and considering the **doctrine of double effect**. It might be argued that certain actions with bad consequences are admissible so long as they were intended to achieve good consequences. It is possible that some forms of euthanasia would satisfy this. However, it is important to note that sometimes, when faced with a patient who is in severe pain, doctors have been known to administer a fatal dose of painkillers. The doctrine of double effect says that to kill the patient (a bad consequence), it is rather simply to put an end to their

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Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹️	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea ☺️	
What are the strengths of natural law?				
What are the weaknesses of natural law?				
What is the naturalistic fallacy?				
Why is Aquinas sometimes termed a misogynist?				
What is proportionalism?				
What is the doctrine of double effect?				
How might natural law theory impact discussions of abortion?				
How might natural Law theory impact discussions of euthanasia?				

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Practice Exam-style Question

- ◆ If you are sitting the AS qualification, please answer the following question.

1. 'Natural law is the best approach to modern ethical issues.' Discuss. (40)

- ◆ If you are sitting the A Level qualification, please answer the following question.

2. Assess the view that natural law is the best approach to navigating modern day. (40)



In your answer you should:

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of relevant beliefs, including:
 - ◆ the key ideas of natural law and the person of Aquinas
 - ◆ the idea of telos
 - ◆ absolutism
 - ◆ key, primary and secondary precepts
- Assess and evaluate facets of religious approaches and differing ideas and their impact, such as:
 - ◆ the naturalistic fallacy
 - ◆ issues when natural law does not seem consistent with nature's reality
 - ◆ the clear and concise nature of natural law
 - ◆ compatibility
 - ◆ reason



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Situation Ethics

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Situation ethics

An ethical system which is flexible to allow for individual differences regarding moral ideas and standards

Agape

Unconditional love. It is argued to be at the heart of all situations

Divine command ethics

The moral theory that argues that what is good and right is commanded by God

Justice



For Fletcher, justice is love distributed. Where there is love, therefore, there is justice.

Act-based consequentialism

Where what is good is judged by the consequences of the actions undertaken

Rule-based consequentialism

Where what is good is judged by the following of rules that maximise good

Joseph Fletcher

Important philosopher regarding situation ethics and his four principles.

Propositions

Six ideas posited by Fletcher to give a pragmatic basis to situation ethics

Principles

Four working principles put forward in order to help apply situation ethics in a practical way

Antinomianism

The view that there are no moral laws or rules. People should act spontaneously in each situation to decide what is right

Legalism

The view that morality should be based on laws or rules that must be followed

Pragmatism



One of Fletcher's four principles – that moral decisions should achieve the intended outcome or result, which is the greatest good

Relativism

One of Fletcher's four principles – that all situations are different and the best way to demonstrate love, rather than through following the words 'never' or 'always'

Positivism

One of Fletcher's four principles – the idea that through their faith in God, that love is the most important

Personalism

One of Fletcher's four principles – the demands of individual people are considered first, not the demands of moral rules

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Joseph Fletcher's Situation Ethics

Overview

Joseph Fletcher (1905–1991) developed a form of Christian ethics of the time. It was a new Christian ethical approach which was more flexible and within society. Fletcher believed that the existing form of Christian ethics was far too rigid. He believed that Jesus himself stood opposed to it in his lifetime. He believed there was no need for the development of the 'Man come of age' ethics by J A T Robinson, Fletcher's Christian situationalism. He posed his teaching as holding a midway point between

It is centred around the concept of **agape**, which is unconditional love, which Fletcher viewed as being at the heart of the gospels and Jesus's teaching due to teachings



Key Points

General Points

- Joseph Fletcher's ideas about agape and Christian situation ethics built upon the teachings of Jesus.
- Fletcher's ethics was developed as a result of an ethical shift in values within society. Events such as the Second World War, the sexual revolution and the civil rights movement were among the important changes in society which influenced his thinking.
- In his book *Situation Ethics* (1966), Fletcher puts forward his new form of naturalistic Christian ethics, taking a differing view to the traditional absolutist natural law. Unlike the elements of the Church, Fletcher believed that Bible-thumping and moral condemnation were inappropriate responses to these dramatic shifts in social attitudes.
- Equally, however, he did not think a life unconstrained by any moral norms whatsoever was desirable. What was needed, he felt, was a marriage of the old and the new, a re-evaluation of Christian ethics that would make it fit for a world different to the one Aquinas and the Gospel writers had lived in. What was needed was a **situational** approach.
- In the end, he argued, situationalism, as long as the interests of agape, unconditional love, were served, any action can be said to be moral. From agape, maxims are derived.
- Fletcher considered situationalism a middle way between two equally unattractive extremes (much as Aristotle considered each virtue to lie between two vices). One extreme is an ethic that is completely lacking in any guiding moral principles, a position which many people should be free to do whatever they see fit in any given situation.
- Fletcher termed this approach **antinomianism**, which literally translates from the Greek as 'without law'.
- At the opposite end of the spectrum are those moral philosophies which hold that actions should always be made in accordance with a set of strict rules or commands. Fletcher termed this **legalism**, because, like the legal system, it is concerned with the proper application of rules.

Moral extreme

Middle ground

Antinomianism

The view that there are no moral laws or principles which should be followed. Instead, individuals should decide what is right in each situation.



Situationalism

Fletcher argues that situation ethics is not antinomianism because individuals have 'the ethical maxims of his community and its heritage' to draw on. It does not become legalism because these maxims can be abandoned if agape love is better shown another way.

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Agape: One of the Greek words for love. It is an attitude of generosity and expects nothing in return. It is the love Jesus showed humanity.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself
Matthew 22:39 (NRSV)

The Historical Background

- The foundation of situation ethics developed in a time of change worldwide
- People began to feel they could decide for themselves the right way to behave, and the rules of **divine command ethics**, which they saw as outdated.
- Many social and political events meant that there was an ethical shift occurring to view the traditional Christian approach to ethics (natural moral law) as being outdated. This time saw a shift towards liberal social values in the place of conservative values.
- As a result, when situation ethics was developed, it proved to be hugely popular.
- The aforementioned historical events include:
 - ◆ the introduction of women in the workforce
 - ◆ the USA/Vietnam war
 - ◆ Kennedy's assassination
 - ◆ civil rights movement
 - ◆ the invention of the contraceptive pill
 - ◆ the Sexual Revolution
 - ◆ hippy and student culture
 - ◆ an ethical shift away from Christian morals – new morality of the twentieth century

Agape in the New Testament

- The concept of agape underpins both Fletcher's and Robinson's arguments on situation ethics.
- Agape is argued by Robinson to have its basis in the following biblical passages:
 - ◆ When Jesus declared that the 'the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath'. This meant that strict rules regarding what should not be done on the Sabbath could be broken if it will best serve others.
 - ◆ When Jesus heals individuals with leprosy, instead of considering followers as unclean and sinners, and, therefore, should not be touched (**Luke 17:14**).
 - ◆ When Jesus saved a woman from being stoned to death by declaring, 'Who throw the first stone' (**John 8:7**). Jesus is showing a situationalist approach. If stoning the woman would be following the law, it would be hypocritical.
- Throughout the Bible, numerous references are made to the importance of love. In the ministry, it persists as a central theme and guiding force behind moral action. The tradition of the Jewish elders and Pharisees is depicted in the gospels.
 - ◆ In Matthew 5:43–46, Jesus, in contrast to the Old Testament instruction to love your enemies. This passage emphasises the sacrificial nature of Christianity.
 - ◆ In 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, one of the most well-known passages in the New Testament, Paul describes the Christian ideal of love, while comparing it as eternal to the temporal nature of knowledge.

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You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He sends his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not think highly of itself, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not rejoice with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be abolished; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

Practical Situation Ethics

- So how does the situationist determine the correct moral decision in these cases? The answer is that there is only one thing that is intrinsically good: agape.
- This is important as it defines two important points about situation ethics.
- The first is that love is the end of all actions. Love is an intrinsic, not an instrumental value. It is not used in the pursuit of another idea or concept.
- It simply is the sole guiding principle behind all actions a person makes.
- The second point is that identifying this form of love as an end in itself allows love to stand against their own ethical principles or sensibilities.
- Therefore, while someone might intensely dislike and disagree with another person, they still show agape love for them when considering their choices in any ethically difficult situation.

Key Figures

J A T Robinson

- Robinson's works on 'Man come of age' ethics preceded Fletcher's work and introduced themes of the importance of agape and the need for a more flexible approach to ethics.
- He introduced the idea of applying the idea of Agape in order to enable Christianity to be more flexible.
- His ideas centred around the Bible verse Matthew 22:39.

Joseph Fletcher

- Joseph Fletcher developed Robinson's ideas as he too felt that Christian ethics needed a more flexible approach.
- In his works, he developed the idea of agape which was first discussed by J A T Robinson.
- Fletcher's approach towards Christian situation ethics is posed as a midway point between legalistic ethics and antinominalism.

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Key Texts

Matthew 22:39

- The context of this verse was Jesus teaching those asking about what is the greatest commandment. He posits that the greatest commandment is to love God; however, the second is to love other people.
- The following verse gives a teaching that would be incredibly important to the approach to Christian ethics – ‘On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets’ (Matthew 22:40). By arguing that it is through the concept of agape that all of the more specific commandments of the Bible need to be viewed, it becomes clear how the most loving thing in a situation can sometimes go against some biblical teachings. If loving other people is the greatest commandment, its other than loving God, then it seems logical that it should take precedence.

Matthew 19:16

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, ‘Teacher, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus replied, ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honour your father and mother, and love your neighbour as yourself.’

Mark 12:28–31

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had answered them well, he asked him, ‘Of all the commandments, which is the most important?’ ‘The first,’ Jesus answered, ‘is... “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.” The second is this: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” All the rest of the law hangs on these two.’

Luke 10:27

Jesus answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

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Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea 😞	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😄	
Whose work on situation ethics preceded Joseph Fletcher's?				
What is the concept which states that the interests of which are served is at the centre of situation ethics?				
What is meant by 'agape'?				
What is the importance of agape in situation ethics?				
What did Fletcher mean by 'legalism'?				
What did Fletcher think was the view of legalistic teachings within the gospels?				
What Bible passages did he point to in order to justify this idea?				
What historical factors were involved in the development of situation ethics?				
How did these factors influence the development of situation ethics?				
What is the main difference between situation ethics and traditional legalistic teachings, such as natural moral law?				
What are the two key principles ruling the practical choices of a situationist?				

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Propositions and Principles

Overview

In order to put forward his ideas, Fletcher developed six propositions and four principles to sum up his ideas and allow a pragmatic code of sorts for those who. Indeed, while perhaps more palatable for Christians who struggled with traditional ethics had its own challenges in being almost too vague.

Therefore, on a practical level there was the necessity for the development of some – guidance for those wishing to practice this method of ethical theory. Therefore, propositions and four working principles in order to demonstrate how the principles

Key Points

Six Propositions

- Fletcher put forward six propositions in order to give a pragmatic basis for situation ethics. He intended to show how **agape** should be understood and applied to different situations.
- The propositions reveal a lot about situation ethics; for example, proposition 5 justified the means.
- Therefore, this is a form of consequentialist ethics, also known as teleological ethics, where the outcome of a moral action rather than the intent behind the action itself is what matters.
- Furthermore, these are intentionally directed towards the concept of agape love. Agape love should be applied to moral choices – those are the four principles.
- These six propositions are as follows:

	Fundamental Proposition	Explanation
1.	'Only one thing is intrinsically good, namely love: nothing else at all'	The only intrinsically good thing – love. Love is not instrumentally good.
2.	'The moral principle of a Christian decision is love, not anything else'	The Jewish laws have been replaced by love to one's neighbour. It is now love that we should follow, not the law.
3.	'Love and justice are the same thing, for justice is love distributed, nothing else'	Love and justice are the same thing. Justice is what man what he is owed, and man is what he owes. Justice helps us to decide how to distribute love to different people.
4.	'Love wills the neighbour's good, whether we like him or not'	Love should be shown regardless of whether we like the person or not. It is not about revenge or love in the personal sense. It is about 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 actions taken to achieve this are not morally wrong. The outcome that matters.
6.	'Love's decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively'	Decisions should be made then and there, taking into account specific factors. They can be taken into account and not made on the basis of laws that are prescriptive.

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Four Working Principles

- In order to help those who wished to put Christian situation ethics into practice, he put forward four working principles in order to aid its implementation.
- These are things which moral choices theoretically should involve and are intended to be practical and applicable principles against which individuals wishing to practice situation ethics can measure their moral choices in a given situation.
- They are central to his discussion of situation ethics.
- They are as follows:

	Fletcher's Working Principles	Explanation
1.	Pragmatism	Moral demands should be practical and achieve the good which is love.
2.	Relativism	All situations should be assessed on how best to determine the good through following moral laws which use the words of Jesus.
3.	Positivism	Being able to say that 'God is love' on the basis of faith and experience. The moral agent has to decide, through the use of reason, the most important thing of all. ⁴
4.	Personalism	Demands that the needs and importance of people are taken into account in the demands of moral laws.

Conscience

- One key thing to be aware of in terms of situation ethics and the teachings of Jesus is the idea that conscience is not a noun in the view of Fletcher – it is a verb, a doing. It is individuals intentionally choosing to do.
- In traditional Christian thought, as in situation ethics, the conscience is viewed as an innate human being. It is our innate sense of right and wrong and sense of what our intuition tells us are wrong.
- Within situation ethics, this moral sense informs our ideas of agape and our understanding of the good.
- However, different people will interpret their conscience differently depending on their background, hence the pragmatic need for guiding principles, such as the four working principles, in order to give guidance to those who wish to follow situation ethics.

Key Figures

Joseph Fletcher

- Joseph Fletcher was one of the most important theologians regarding the development of situation ethics.
- He put forward in his book both his ideas regarding the six propositions on the working principles designed to make situation ethics workable and accessible in practice.

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⁴ Vardy, C and Vardy P, *Ethics Matters* (London: SCM Press, 2012), p. 126.

Key Texts

Situation Ethics: The New Morality, Joseph Fletcher

- This is the text in which Joseph Fletcher posited his ideas regarding situation propositions about agape and the four working principles regarding agape.
- This text was released in 1966 and proved hugely popular, being published in

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
Why did Fletcher develop both the propositions and the principles?			
What were the propositions directed towards achieving?			
What is the first proposition?			
What is the second proposition?			
What is the third proposition?			
What is the fourth proposition?			
What is the fifth proposition?			
What is the sixth proposition?			
What is the meaning of pragmatism for Fletcher?			
What is the meaning of positivity for Fletcher?			
What is the meaning of relativity for Fletcher?			
What is the meaning of personalism for Fletcher?			

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Discussions of Issues Raised by Situation Ethics

Overview

Like all other methods of ethics, there are points for discussion on any particular system of ethics. As of yet, there has not been any ethical theory which has no conundrums for its adherents and situation ethics is no different.

Therefore, the strengths and weaknesses need to be discussed and situations in which it is applied need to also be addressed, as these discussions will be useful to illustrate your knowledge.

Key Points

General Points

- Situation ethics, as the name would suggest, means that the way in which the moral principle varies depending on the individual situation. Therefore, on issues of ethical dilemmas and religions such as Christianity (which situation ethics is based upon), how situations are examined.
- One of the main discussions raised by situation ethics is the issue of divorce, which was discussed by J A T Robinson, put forward in his original positing of the theory by Fletcher.
- The traditional attitude of the Church, and within natural moral law, towards divorce is wrong and immoral; however, situation ethics allowed these teachings to be challenged.
- One of the main issues with situation ethics is that it is so difficult to navigate the idea of always upholding the principle of agape (love), flexibility, but little to no guidance on how to navigate situations and interpretation is left up to the individual.
- This situation, among others discussed below, is a good example of how to use situation ethics.
- It is by examining issues such as divorce, as well as examining the strengths and weaknesses of that we can examine and discuss the ethical system.

Key Weaknesses

- Situation ethics has received some negative responses from the Church.
- In 1952, Pope Pius XII heavily criticised it, and in 1956 the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office declared that it was from being taught in places of Catholic teaching and learning.⁵
- It was argued that, although the conscience could be used to interpret what situation ethics treated conscience as the source of moral knowledge.
- Instead, the source of moral knowledge should be **natural moral law**, which provides laws from God to follow:

... the Church throughout her history has always considered a certain number of principles as having an absolute and immutable [unchanging] value, and in their light the conscience is to be formed in conformity with the teaching and spirit of the Church.

- Situation ethics has also been rejected by Anglicans and other Protestants.
- It is too subjective and popular as a Christian ethic and often seen to unfairly represent and condemn certain actions as always wrong and contrary to the will of God.

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⁵ Vardy, C and Vardy, P, *Ethics Matters* (London: SCM Press, 2012), p. 130

⁶ Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, 4, 29th December 1975

- Situation ethics is seen as placing too much emphasis on human moral freedom on God as the source of moral goodness.
- William Barclay (1907–1978), a theologian, argues that ethics 'on the whole... to make life easy... It means that we have got... rules and law and principles which saves us from the difficult and the often dangerous task of making our own judgments for ourselves'.⁷ Situation ethics, however, does not do this. It does not give us a moral compass by which to make important moral decisions – which creates certain dangers because we have to make important moral decisions by ourselves.
- In response to the idea of the 'Moral Responsibility of the Individual', J. A. T. Robinson, Barclay says this is 'a very high degree of freedom'.⁸
- He says: 'it may be that neither I nor any other person is at this stage ready for the freedom which the Christianist offers us'.⁹
- We are not ready for this degree of freedom because humans are not perfect beings, we make judgements and so need principles to guide us. Barclay says that 'if all men were perfect, the perfect ethics would be the perfect ethics'.
- Charlotte and Peter Vardy argue that situation ethics 'confuses the concept of love' because 'Christian love always sees love at the centre of a person's life and love is the centre of Fletcher's theory'. Fletcher plays the latter down in the interests of making his theory as widely applicable as possible.
- Therefore, the importance of loving God, the first of Jesus's two main commandments, is lost because he was trying to appeal to an increasingly secular audience (see Mark 12:29–31).

Key Strengths:

- It responded to the changing social and moral climate of the time and provided a practical alternative to an increasingly rejected Christian legalistic ethic.
- It is in keeping with Jesus's teaching and his rejection of legalism, so it is suitable for the modern world.
- It provides the flexibility to respond to individual situations on their own merits rather than applying moral laws that can result in terrible moral consequences, or inappropriate moral decisions.
- It gives individuals moral responsibility, recognising that man has 'come of age'.
- This responsibility might be difficult and challenging but it is important we take responsibility for our actions and make decisions for ourselves.
- Most people agree that agape is a desirable and laudable attitude to have towards others.

Examples of Situations:

- Divorce is one of the main illustrations of situation ethics, posited originally by J. A. T. Robinson in his work on situation ethics, which influenced Joseph Fletcher.
- Divorce was traditionally within the Church considered to be immoral due to the teachings of Jesus which state that marriage is for life.
- These include ideas in Genesis, which described marriage as two becoming 'one' and that what God had joined together, man could not separate.
- However, the issue arises when the ideal of marriage meets the reality of bad marriages. In such cases, the Church has provided somewhat of an ethical dilemma.

⁷ William Barclay, Chapter Four *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (1971).

⁸ William Barclay, Chapter Four *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (1971).

⁹ William Barclay, Chapter Four *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (1971).

¹⁰ Vardy, C and Vardy, P, *Ethics Matters* (London: SCM Press, 2012), p. 128.

- Robinson argued that divorce in this instance would best serve the ends of an abused spouse and any children who might have been involved.
- Therefore, in terms of situation ethics, they would consider it to be moral and just in this situation, even though it breaks with the biblical teaching on the importance of marriage.
- Other situations bleed into the jurisdiction of medical ethics, including euthanasia.

Key Figures

Charlotte and Peter Vardy

- Married theologians Charlotte and Peter Vardy worked together to posit their ideas on situation ethics.
- They posited their ideas in their book *Ethics Matters* in 2012, part of a series of books on philosophical issues.
- Peter Vardy is a theologian who has authored 18 works to date. He has links to the Church of England.
- He has worked with his wife Charlotte to collectively produce various works on ethics.

William Barclay

- Barclay was the author of *Ethics in a Permissive Society*, in which he criticised the Church of England's stance on divorce.
- He was a theologian and Church of Scotland minister who wrote many books on biblical criticism (both New Testament and the Bible as a whole) and, of course, on the ethics of the Bible.
- He was also a professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow.

Key Texts

Ethics Matters, Charlotte and Peter Vardy

- This was written by theologian Peter Vardy and his wife Charlotte, a Religious Studies teacher.
- This is a text in which the basics of the ideas of ethics are used to approach life's dilemmas. It guides readers through the thought process of how to make moral choices and apply them to real-life situations.

The Four Loves, C S Lewis, William Collins, Chapter 6

- This is a text by famous author and Christian C S Lewis.
- In terms of situation ethics, the relevance of this text to the topic is the exploration in chapter 6, of the Christian idea of agape, which is central to the idea of situation ethics.

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Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹️	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😊
What is the ruling concept of situation ethics?			
What are the strengths of situation ethics?			
What are the weaknesses of situation ethics?			
How did the Church respond to situation ethics as a whole?			
What is meant by the term 'Man come of age', and how does this apply to situation ethics?			
What is the biblical command which is argued to be largely ignored by Joseph Fletcher?			
How does situation ethics apply to real-life situations such as divorce?			
What are the views of Charlotte and Peter Vardy on situation ethics?			
What is the view of William Barclay on situation ethics?			

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Practice Exam-style Question

- ◆ If you are sitting the AS qualification, please answer the following question.
- 3. 'Situation ethics is the best interpretation of Christian Scripture.'
- ◆ If you are sitting the A Level qualification, please answer the following question.
- 4. Assess the view that situation ethics is the best approach to ethics in relation to Christian Scripture. (40)

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
 - ◆ key ideas of situation ethics and the idea of agape
 - ◆ the person of Joseph Fletcher
 - ◆ the four principles
 - ◆ the six propositions
- Assess and evaluate facets of religious approaches and differing ideas and their impact, such as:
 - ◆ legalism
 - ◆ the teachings of Jesus as support
 - ◆ the first and second Commandment
 - ◆ 'Man come of age'
 - ◆ Church opposition
 - ◆ biblical teaching

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Kantian Ethics

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Duty	The obligation of an individual to do something
Deontology	The study of duty-based ethical systems that are based on inherent duty to do something
Immanuel Kant	The famous philosopher of Kantian/deontological ethics
Hypothetical imperative	The idea that if you want something, then you ought to do it, but it is not immoral if you choose not to
Categorical imperative	The idea of moral maxims that everyone has a duty to follow
Universalisability	The concept of being able to apply a maxim on a universal scale
Humanity formula	The concept of a maxim ensuring that human beings are treated as ends in themselves rather than being used as a means to an end
Kingdom of ends	The concept of a hypothetical idyllic kingdom where everyone acts according to moral laws and treat each other as means in themselves rather than as ends
Summum bonum	The place where happiness is given as a reward for good actions in the afterlife
Axe murderer dilemma	An example of a situation in which Kantian ethics causes a conflict
Intention	The reason or will behind why an action was taken. In Kantian ethics, the intention is what matters
Reason	The human ability to think logically in order to make a decision
Consequentialist	A form of ethics which is concerned with the results of actions, as opposed to being concerned with the consequences of the actions themselves

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Duty-based Ethics

Overview

Duty-based ethics, also known as deontological ethics, is a system that there are certain moral duties held by every individual that, if adhered to, will benefit society. It is also termed Kantian ethics because of the most famous philosopher of thinking – Immanuel Kant. He posited a moral system which is based on duty – so moral. He developed the hypothetical imperatives and the categorical imperative duties you should do if you want to achieve a certain goal, and moral duties we

Key Points

Immanuel Kant

- Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was a philosopher who first put forward what is known as Kantian ethics.
- What sets Kant apart from other key figures such as Voltaire (now known primarily for his satirical novel *Candide*), Rousseau (the French political philosopher) and Adam Smith (generally regarded as the founder of modern economics), was his unwavering commitment to understanding what reason *could* tell us and what it *could not*.
- He famously talked of instituting a 'Copernican revolution' in the way philosophy was done, as radical in its consequences as the astronomer Copernicus's discovery that the earth revolved around the sun (not, as previously thought, the other way round).
- Kant was a devout Christian, but he largely tried to work from what might today be called an *agnostic* basis. We just can't be *sure* whether God exists, but good reasons to *believe* in him are not enough to ever be certain.
- As a result, when he did write about God, Kant mostly liked to talk about how through 'rational' thought alone. (If you are studying the Philosophy of Religion, you are sure to have encountered his critiques of the ontological and cosmological arguments.)

Kantian Reason and Ethics

- For Kant, reason governs morality.
- Religion and morality were, for Kant, not a marriage made in heaven and hell; morality should be rooted more in reason.
- Knowing what is right or wrong to do in a given situation is a little bit like solving a problem with a 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, we are acting immorally, we are acting irrationally too.
- To understand why Kant believes this, we must first turn to his important distinction between **categorical** and **hypothetical** imperatives.
- Imperatives are just commands - instructions which tell us what to do. There are two kinds of commands with different work because he believed it was important to distinguish between them.
- Descriptions of both of these kinds of imperatives can be found in the next section.
- So, why is the distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives so important?
- Because he thinks that one can only do something good if it is done *unconditionally* with no strings attached.
- As a result, it is our *duty* to do good.

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- Analogously, it is a soldier's duty to protect the nation – even if they wake up or march much like fighting or marching, still they *must* do it.
- In the first chapter of his most significant ethical work, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant writes:
Nothing in the world – or out of it! – can possibly be conceived that could be called good except a GOOD WILL... It isn't what it brings about, its usefulness in promoting something or other. Rather, good will is good because of how it wills –, i.e. it is good in itself.
- He goes on to say that all other things, which might be considered good, such as 'wisdom, power, riches, honour, even health' and, crucially, happiness, can be bad. This good will is said to 'sparkle like a jewel all by itself'; its value depends on how useful or fruitless it [is]. It is 'the condition of all [other goods]'. Happiness is life lived in accordance with **reason**. It just doesn't make sense because rationality requires a good that is absolute – whereas, any other thing could, in some circumstances, turn out to be bad. From this standpoint, Kantian ethics is **deontological** ethics.

Duty

- Kant's ideas about ethics revolve around the idea of duty specifically, and this is the core of Kantian ethics.
- One important thing to emphasise is that Kant's ideas are deontological, not teleological.
- That is to say, if someone was to follow a Kantian ethic and the consequences of the action are still moral – regardless of the consequences.
- This is markedly different to teleological approaches, such as utilitarianism, in which the consequences of the action in the amount of happiness it is believed to have are what matters.
- This appeals to those who might struggle with the idea that consequentialists navigate as you cannot know the results of an action.
- However, deontological ethics has its issues also insofar as the outcomes of the action are not considered. As long as you have acted morally, then the outcome, even if it is bad, is not to be the fault of the individual who acted because they acted in accordance with moral duty.
- A famous example of this is the 'Axe murderer dilemma' – you are having dinner and an axe murderer arrives at your door, proclaiming he is there to kill that friend. Suppose he asks you to tell him where your friend currently is so that he can kill them.
- According to Kantian ethics, you are duty-bound to tell the truth, even if you know that an axe murderer kills your dinner guest. The logic followed is that at that moment – for all you know, your dinner guest could have overheard the conversation from the window of your back door. Therefore, if you lie and send the axe murderer on his way, you are causing their two paths to cross. If you told the truth, and your dinner guest was there, they would successfully evade the murderer.

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¹¹ Kant, Immanuel, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1785.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- It is impossible to know the future or what the consequences of actions will be, so it is difficult to judge someone on what they do based on secondary impacts. It therefore seems more just to judge someone on what they do in itself good or bad.
- It treats everyone equally and justly in much the same way as the justice system does, by being indiscriminate.
- It creates core, absolute moral principles which cannot be dismissed because they are based on reason.
- Moral decision-making is simple and straightforward because what is right and wrong is clear.
- The categorical imperative creates moral rules which are consistent with those of the major religions, as that which is good for all is right. This helps to make it relevant and practical.
- Following one's duty is more important than doing what one thinks is right, but this is often influenced by our own biases and selfish preferences.
- It recognises the intrinsic value of humans. It protects them from being used as a means to an end, as in utilitarianism, where the minority could rightly be made to suffer for the benefit of the majority.

Weaknesses

- There seems little justification or authority for the moral obligations in deontology, unless one is willing to accept that there is a divine lawgiver (God).
- It is not practical or even possible to act according to duty alone – human decisions are arguably more complex than this.
- Following absolute moral commands or one's duty could result in awful consequences in situations where certain disastrous consequences could be avoided. There are no exceptions to respond to complicated or extreme situations. Similarly, good consequences can be achieved by actions that are actually good because what matters is the intention, e.g. an action that results in a good consequence but is done with bad intentions.
- It does not allow for compassion or sympathy to motivate moral actions.
- It does not provide us with a solution for the situation in which there are two equally good choices; we would have to make a choice; however, if they are opposed choices, then we have to decide as to how to make that decision.
- Kant was a Christian and saw his ethics as consistent with Christianity, but G.E. Moore argued that 'Kant largely reduced religion to ethics – to be holy is to be moral'. This is not relevant to Christians.
- Kant's principle of universalisation allows for the universalisation of amoral actions because a principle can be universalised, does not mean it is right or even sensible.
- Kant commits the naturalistic fallacy because he turns an 'is' into an 'ought'. If he suggests something 'is' (e.g. ice cream is delicious), he also suggests a simultaneous 'ought' (everyone must like ice cream as everyone likes delicious things). This type of error is known as the naturalistic fallacy.
- There needs to be an actual reason to act according to one's duty – not simply because it is one's duty.

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Key Texts

Immanuel Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (*Practical Reason*) (1788)

- These were the works of Immanuel Kant in which he put forward his ideas about duty-based ethics.
- Within the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant was wishing to put forward the idea of ethics viewed as a purified moral philosophy. In this text he put forward his ideas on categorical imperatives including their various forms.
- In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant develops these ideas further by criticising reason rather than a priori reasoning.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺	
Who was Immanuel Kant?				
What is the base concept of Kantian ethics?				
Why is duty important in Kantian ethics?				
What two imperatives did he put forward?				
Is Kantian ethics teleological or deontological?				
What, in the thoughts of Kant, governed morality?				
What were Kant's religious beliefs, and how did these influence his ethics?				
What are the weaknesses of duty-based ethics?				
What are the strengths of duty-based ethics?				

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Kant's Hypothetical and Categorical

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Overview

In order to communicate his ideas about duty-based ethics, Kant distinguished between two different types of imperatives – hypothetical imperatives. Hypothetical imperatives apply in only some cases and should be phrased as 'if X then you must do Y'. Categorical imperatives are different – they more directly 'must do Y'. The categorical imperative is of more importance to Kant. It has three

Hypothetical Imperatives

- Hypothetical imperatives can be described as 'if/then' ideas – if you want to achieve X in order to get to that end.
- These are generally less about duty and morality – they are about what you do or do not want to achieve an end, then you do not necessarily need to do that.
- For example, if you want an A* in your AS or A Level Religion and Ethics exam, then you must work hard. If you want to be a doctor, you must study hard. These are hypothetical imperatives, you **ought** to work hard and revise in order to achieve your goal. However, you do not necessarily need to do something which would be **morally wrong** if you chose not to do it.
- Therefore, it is a hypothetical imperative rather than a categorical imperative.

Categorical Imperatives

- Categorical imperatives are usually of the form, 'You ought to do X'.
- They are imperative maxims, and they are good in and of themselves because they are good maxims.
- They command us to do something. They are unconditional commands. The words 'ought' and 'must' are used. Politicians or prominent public figures often issue 'categorical imperatives' to distract themselves from a scandal in the newspapers; they mean to say 'I ought to do what is right'.
- The difference between hypothetical imperatives and categorical imperatives is that hypothetical imperatives are conditional, whereas categorical imperatives are unconditional. For example, 'If you want to get £3, you ought to sell your old CD' can be transformed into a hypothetical imperative, 'You ought to sell your old CD if you want to get £3', whereas 'Attention! March! Turn' can be translated into 'You ought to stand to attention, you ought to march, you ought to turn'.
- There are three different forms of the categorical imperative. They are as follows:

The First Formulation

- Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative gives rise to a particular decision which is sometimes known as the universalisability test.
- The core idea is that when we make any moral decision we must ask ourselves if we can will that our action should become a universal law. In Kant's language, we are asking whether it could become a universal maxim (a maxim is another word for a general principle or rule). For example, 'I will drive over 30 mph in the town centre', 'Don't run in the corridor'.
- For some actions, this is clearly impossible. If I like the look of your new mobile phone, I might be tempted to steal it, Kant would immediately ask that I stop and consider 'Could you honestly recommend the maxim that in any circumstance where I see a mobile phone I should steal it?' they should go ahead and do it?
- Now, I might well turn round and say, 'Get lost Kant! I'll take what I like, when I like, and I'll keep it!' but this simply would not work. If everyone were permitted to steal

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notion of private property would soon disappear. In fact, people would probably do anything if it was only going to be stolen, so pretty soon there would be nothing to steal. That maxim, 'It is permissible to steal whenever you feel like it' is self-defeating.

- On the other hand, a maxim such as, 'It is not permissible to torture small children' is universalised. If nobody ever tortures small children, no problems are likely to arise. Nothing contradictory or self-defeating about that rule. The opposite, however ('It is permissible to torture small children'), could quickly defeat itself.
- There is also another reason why Kant would have a big problem with torturing someone to an end, which is against the humanity principle.

The Second Formulation

- One of the problems we encountered with act utilitarianism is its dubious status as a relativist theory, all options remain on the table, even if the very thought makes us sick. In the classic example, torturing the innocent to save the multitude may be permitted if it leads to the greatest happiness for the greatest number.
- Kant takes the opposite view. Certain actions are *never* permissible. It is this so-called 'humanity formula', which has had the most enduring influence on modern moral philosophy.
- The crucial idea here is that people can never be used as a means to an end. You cannot stop a twisted sadist from setting off a chemical weapon in Piccadilly Circus because somebody is being *used* as a tool for some other purpose.
- There is an intuitive appeal to this idea: how often have we seen in a melody 'used me!' uttered with absolute disgust? There is something deeply unsettling about being used by things with or to you, not because they like you, or value you, or even love you, but because of their perhaps malevolent, purpose.
- Kant recognised this, and thought he could explain why people feel this way. Because they are rational beings and rational beings deserve dignity, they demand that we *always treat them as ends in themselves*.
- Human beings are not just 'means' but 'ends in themselves'.
- It is fine to use inanimate objects for our means, and once they stop serving our purpose, to discard them and replace them. For example, if I am using a pen to write some essays on ethics, and that pen runs out of ink, then it is completely morally fine for me to throw it away and get another one (with ink) instead, as this serves my means.

The Third Formulation

- For his final formulation of the categorical imperative, Kant envisions a utopian world where all people share the same moral vision, desiring the same goods and sharing the same responsibilities.
- It builds upon the two previous formulations, as the laws the hypothetical moral community would devise are based on the 'universal law of nature' and 'humanity' formulas.
- Hence, any moral rules constructed must be universalisable without contradiction. A rule that leads to self-contradiction or never means.
- The third formulation adds a political dimension to Kant's theory: he is trying to show how a society could be governed if all people were to accept his deontological ethics.
- When acting individually, we should then try to imagine whether our actions could be universalised, in the hope that by doing so, we might bring it closer to reality.

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The Three Postulates

- In order for Kantian ethics to work in a practical manner, he also put forward three postulates, which, combined with reason, were believed by Kant to make this ethical theory function. These are as follows:
 1. **Freedom** – individuals must be free in order to make their own choices
 2. **Immortality** – there must be an afterlife in order for summum bonum to be achieved
 3. **God** – God has to exist in order for the fair and just judge to decide who is worthy of the summum bonum in the afterlife.
- This is in a sense a religious argument for the existence of God within that section of the course. This analysis is beyond the scope of this ethics course.



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺	
What is the base concept of Kantian ethics?				
What is a hypothetical imperative?				
What is a categorical imperative?				
What are the forms of the categorical imperative?				
How does the categorical imperative make Kantian ethics practical?				
What is meant by 'deontological'?				
What is meant by 'summum bonum'?				
In what situation does Kant argue that summum bonum will be fulfilled?				
If something is said to be 'universalisable' then what does it mean?				
How is free will important to Kantian ethics?				
What is meant by the 'humanity formula'?				
What is meant by the 'kingdom of ends'?				



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Discussion of Issues Raised by Kant

Overview

Kantian ethics is a logical form of ethics which appeals to those with a strong sense of logic. Kantian ethics also make it a straightforward method of ethical practice to apply in many situations without its issues.

Therefore, in order to properly evaluate and discuss Kantian ethics, both limitations and strengths of the ethical code must be addressed.

Key Points

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- It is very clear and concise.
- It provides one central idea and moral code, with little ambiguity.
- The humanity formula appeals to modern ideas of the value of individual human beings.
- The idea of universalisability appeals to the ease of making maxims which can be universalised and which are, therefore, able to be popularised with relative ease.
- The importance of reason appeals to and reflects the important role that reason plays in modern society. Reason today is, above all, the best way of working out ethical dilemmas and has a high importance for many. Therefore, the importance of reason in Kantian ethics is a strength.

Weaknesses

- The strict nature of deontology does not allow for situational differentiation in certain trickier moral dilemmas.
- Not all moral decisions can be universalised, which might lead to the right action being impossible because it cannot be applied in every single situation.
- It necessitates the existence of God in order for summum bonum to make sense.
- The existence of God is a whole separate area of philosophy which has yet to be conclusively proven. Therefore, in order for this to work, it requires proof of the existence of God.
- One big issue with Kantian ethics is that its deontological nature means that the consequences of actions do not necessarily matter. If we take the common example of the axe murderer posing that even if your friend is murdered (a negative outcome), your choice to tell the truth is the right one.

Modern Applications and Arising Issues

Modern Applications

- One of the issues within Kantian ethics is that the kingdom of ends principle is impossible – for example, this particularly becomes an issue when navigating modern business ethical practices which face various issues associated with the Kingdom of Ends principle.
- In modern times, the importance of reason is one of the cornerstones of modern ethics. As Kantian ethics is based on reason, this appeals well to the sensibilities of modern society. However, in a highly relativistic in ethical and legal practices (for instance, due to the context of the crime will be considered). Kantian ethics would not allow for this to arise here.

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Is It Compatible with Religious Approaches to Morality?

- Kantian ethics can in some ways be considered to be compatible with religious aspects of Kantian ethics are tied to religious ideas – the sense of moral duty, religious ideas about morality.
- The universalisability principle both holds well and comes into conflict with religious teachings are considered to be good no matter the situation, e.g. lying regardless of the situation in the majority of religious teaching.
- However, there are situations within religious teachings which may conflict with the universalisability principle and be incompatible.
- It is impossible for religious teachings to be upheld universally if they conflict with the principle of universalisability would conflict with religious teaching and religious decision making.
- There are further similarities to religious forms of ethics such as divine command theory where the rules is absolute.
- However, one key issue when holding Kantian ethics to religious teaching and the fact that within Kantian ethics, reason stands above all. Reason is the means by which a decision necessarily to be made.
- This places reason in the same place as God, which within a religious context is idolatry. This, within many religious contexts, is immoral (a sin).
- Within religious circles, as within Kantian ethics, intentions matter. In this way, we are concerned with the moral motivations of the individual rather than the outcome of intent is the key.
- The same is true of Kantian ethics, where the intention to fulfil moral duty is what matters.
- Within Kantian ethics, in order for the ethical system to work, the idea of summa bonum is central to the system of ethics.
- It is necessary to reward good actions – rewards afforded to the individual in the afterlife.
- To this end, it is not compatible with religious ideas of the afterlife and rewards for good actions cannot be achieved without the belief in God or belief in an afterlife and, therefore, Kantian ethics can be married well.

Is It Relevant Today?

Yes

- Kantian ethics can be considered to be compatible with many secular, mainstream ethical theories.
- In the modern day, issues such as the importance of human rights have become central to within mainstream dialogue.
- The principle of the kingdom of ends and the humanity formula are both valuable and marry particularly well with the modern emphasis on human rights.

No

- Kantian ethics can in some ways be considered to be incompatible with some religious teachings. The principle of summa bonum necessitates belief in God, as does the postulation of the afterlife, which is seen as increasingly in conflict with atheism.
- The way in which Kantian ethics is applied is highly, highly varied and diverse, which may cause issues with universalisation. What is ethical in one society or situation may not be in all.

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Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹️	Some Idea 😐	Good Idea 😊	
What are the strengths of Kantian ethics?				
What are the weaknesses of Kantian ethics?				
How does Kantian ethics marry with religious ideas?				
What issues might arise concerning practical application?				
How might Kantian ethics work in the modern day?				

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Practice Exam-style Question

- ◆ If you are sitting the AS qualification, please answer the following question.
- 5. Assess the view that Kantian ethics is the best ethical code to live by in modern times.
- ◆ If you are sitting the A Level qualification, please answer the following question.
- 6. 'Kantian ethics is the best ethical code to live by in modern times.'



In your answer you should:

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
 - ◆ the basics of duty-based ethics
 - ◆ Immanuel Kant
 - ◆ the hypothetical and categorical imperatives
 - ◆ the three forms of the categorical imperative
- Assess and evaluate facets of religious approaches and differing ideas and their impact, such as:
 - ◆ duty to human beings is universalisable
 - ◆ the naturalistic fallacy
 - ◆ consequences are not considered
 - ◆ the issue of belief in God
 - ◆ clear, and easy to follow
 - ◆ relevance and pragmatism

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Utilitarianism

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Utilitarianism	Ethical system which posits that the most moral thing is to create the greatest happiness for the greatest number
Hedonism	From the Greek word for pleasure, hēdonē, it is a philosophy that posits that pleasure is the ultimate good in life
Trolley problem	An analogous story often used to communicate the idea of utilitarianism
Pleasure	The experience of a positive emotion, such as happiness
Principle of utility	Also known as the principle of greatest happiness; the principle that the right action is the one that produces the greatest happiness for the greatest number
Act Utilitarianism	The theory which holds that the right action is the one that produces the greatest happiness and minimises pain
Rule Utilitarianism	The theory which holds that the right action is one which, if universally obeyed, would create the maximum amount of happiness and minimum amount of pain
Empirical	Something which is evidence-based, or observable with the senses
Impartial	Giving equal weight and credence to different viewpoints
Jeremy Bentham	Philosopher who first put forward the theory of utilitarianism
J S Mill	Philosopher who posited a secondary form of utilitarianism, rule utilitarianism
Peter Singer	Utilitarian thinker and philosopher
Hedonic calculus	A method or criteria for ascertaining the impact of the action on the greatest happiness for the greatest number
Higher pleasures	Pleasures which help people to reach their full intellectual and moral potential
Lower pleasures	Pleasures which help people fulfil their basic needs and desires
Qualitative	Measuring something by the quality of the concept
Quantitative	Measuring something by the quantity of the concept

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Utility and Hedonic Calculus

Overview

Utilitarianism is a modern form of secular ethics, although it is not a new sphere. It is centred on the key ideas of **happiness/pleasure** and **pain**. It was created by Bentham, but further developed by John Stuart Mill and others.

The general principle of utilitarianism is that an act can be considered to be more moral if it generates the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people – this is known as the principle of utility, which was developed by Jeremy Bentham.

Key Points



Jeremy Bentham's Utilitarianism

- Utilitarianism is an ethical theory which is widely accepted. It is a theory of ethics which works towards the principle of utility, which states that the greatest happiness for the greatest number is achieved by the most moral action.
 - ◆ Bentham developed what is known as the hedonic calculus. This is a method of measuring the goodness which will be derived from an action.
 - ◆ He also developed the principle of utility, discussed below, which is the basis for utilitarian thought.

What is Utility?

Jeremy Bentham is often considered the founder of the utilitarian philosophy. His groundbreaking *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* opens with these famous words:

Nature placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is not for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what is right or wrong.

Crucially, Bentham is arguing that being ruled by **pain** and **pleasure** is just the way humans are. We have no choice in the matter; we must seek pleasure, and we must avoid pain. He goes on to argue that basing our ethical decision-making (that is, how we decide what to do) on anything else would simply be foolish.

The Principle of Utility

Having made this claim about human nature (these are sometimes called *descriptive claims* – they describe how things are), Bentham goes on to make his *normative claim* (he wants to tell us how things ought to be). This is the *principle of utility* which states:

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 Trolley Problem



- The trolley problem is one of the most common ways to explain utilitarian ethics.
- *My house is quite close to the train station, so I usually follow the track when I go to work. One day as I was passing I heard a lot of screaming off in the distance. As I drew closer I saw a group of people lined up like sardines on the rails. Just as in an old western, it looked like they were calling me to the track! As soon as they spotted me they began desperately calling out to me.*

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asked, gazing up at the 20-foot barbed wire fence that stood between us. 'Look their heads in the direction of a peculiar-looking pedestal a few paces to my left. Press that button, it will switch the tracks and then we'll all be saved!' I rushed forward, was about to push the button I saw, over in the far distance, on the other track, when I saw his own bonds. 'Hey!' I shouted to the five of them at the top of my voice, 'Don't! You're all else tied up on the other side of the tracks?'

'Yes,' one of them said, 'but please, there are five of us here and only one of him!'

My finger hovered over the button in indecision.

'Quick!' they yelled, this time with a desperation I had never heard before. 'The train, oh God, the train – it's coming!'

- This problem, which is often used to explain utilitarian principles, is used to show how the inspector of this problem, the utilitarian would press the button and switch the tracks to the side where only one person is tied up, creating the greatest good for the greatest number.

The Hedonic Calculus

- Bentham was trained as a lawyer and had a keen interest in social and legal issues, so it is no surprise that he intended his system to have practical uses. To that end, he devised what has come to be known as the *hedonic calculus*, a method for determining *quantitatively* (in terms of quantities, i.e. numbers) the right course of action (a hedonist is a person who seeks pleasure above all else; like many other terms, it comes from the Greek: *hēdonē*, meaning 'pleasure').
- Bentham listed seven factors which must be taken into account when calculating the actual amount of pleasure an act will produce. They included '**intensity**' (the strength of a pleasure), '**duration**' (the length of the pleasure) and '**fecundity**' (the likelihood to lead to more pleasures). The calculus is a distinctive feature of Bentham's utilitarianism. Significantly, it maintains that ethical decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, known as **act utilitarianism**.
- The seven factors of the hedonic calculus are listed below, along with their definitions.

	Measure of Happiness	Definition
1	Intensity	How intense or weak the happiness is
2	Duration	How long the happiness will last for
3	Certainty	How likely or unlikely the happiness is to occur
4	Propinquity/remoteness	How near or remote in time the happiness is
5	Fecundity/richness	How likely or unlikely the happiness is to recur
6	Purity	How free from pain the happiness is
7	Extent	How far the happiness will reach

Key Ethical Concepts

All utilitarian theories rely on three key ethical concepts. These are:

1. **Consequentialist** – Utilitarianism places ethical judgement on whether an action leads to the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. It is concerned with the outcome, not the will or intention of the moral agent.
2. **Relativist** – Utilitarianism believes what is right will depend on the situation. Sometimes an action will be right but at other times it will not be – it all depends on whether the action will produce the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people.
3. **Instrumental** – Utilitarianism believes that no moral actions have **intrinsic value**; they produce the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. This is that utilitarians think the ends always justify the means.

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Key Figures

Jeremy Bentham

- Jeremy Bentham was an important influential philosopher who first put forward utilitarianism.
- He identified as an atheist.
- He was an early proponent of animal rights as well as a proponent of the equality of women.
- He was a proponent of psychological egoism, which is the idea that human beings make choices which benefit themselves.

Key Text

An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation

- This is the text written by Jeremy Bentham in which he posited the idea of utilitarianism, the hedonic calculus and the utility principle.
- It was first published in 1780.
- In the first chapter, he puts forward the principle of utility.
- In the fourth chapter, he puts forward the hedonic calculus.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
Who first put forward the theory of utilitarianism?			
What does Bentham believe that morality is ruled by?			
What does 'utility' mean?			
What statement summarises the utilitarian principle of utility?			
What is the hedonic calculus?			
What are the seven principles of the hedonic calculus?			
Is act utilitarianism teleological or deontological?			
What is meant by 'propensity'?			
What is meant by 'certainty'?			
What is meant by 'fecundity'?			
What is meant by 'purity'?			

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Act Utilitarianism and Rule Utilitarianism

Overview

Generally speaking, there are two main types of utilitarianism: act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. While Bentham's utilitarianism is widely popular, it is not the only form. Bentham's own godson, J S Mill, developed a form of utilitarianism.

He introduced the factors of higher and lower pleasures to the process of calculating moral and what generates happiness. He also introduced the idea of the harm principle. Mill's form of utilitarianism, as it is, is an amendment of Bentham's form.

Key Points

General Points

- In general terms, there are two main types of utilitarianism, although developed and continued since the time of Bentham and Mill and since then there have been many arguments.
- While act utilitarianism was the form posited by Bentham, Mill felt that Bentham's amendments as he felt they did not have enough structure and guidance.
- Therefore, he developed rule utilitarianism using such ideas as the harm principle and lower pleasures.

J S Mill

- A key figure in utilitarianism, and one vital to the understanding of rule utilitarianism.
- Bentham was Mill's godfather; therefore, Mill was introduced to utilitarian ethics from a young age.
- Mill's father, James Mill, was himself a utilitarian philosopher and economist who was keen that his son be capable of carrying on his intellectual legacy.
- J S Mill developed rule utilitarianism as a method of approaching utilitarianism which corrects what Mill perceived to be flaws.

Rule Utilitarianism

- One aspect of Bentham's philosophy that Mill rejected outright was the former's 'utility calculus'.
- Mill argued that happiness was 'much too complex and indefinite' to be calculated in every ethical situation.
- Therefore, he thought rules should be developed which guide moral agents to happiness.
- These rules would be developed through trial and error, rather than the utilitarian calculus.
- The theory holds that the right action is the one which follows **rules** that, if **universally followed**, will generate the **maximum amount of happiness** and the **minimum amount of pain**.
- For example, lying or hurting others nearly always causes unhappiness; therefore, 'do not lie' and 'do not hurt'.
- Followed en masse by everyone in society, these rules will generate, on the whole, the least pain for the greatest number of people.
- Happiness or pleasure? It is sometimes mistakenly said that Bentham equated happiness with pleasure. Mill equated it with happiness.

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- This is not correct. Both Mill and Bentham equated happiness with pleasure (Bentham measures pleasure qualitatively (in terms of its quality), whereas Bentham measures it in terms of its quantity).
- This means that Bentham was really only concerned with how much pleasure or pain.
- Being high on narcotics 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year would be a bad way to live (provided there were no ill consequences).
- Mill, on the other hand, would say that something is missing from a life devoted to pleasure.
- Nevertheless, both agreed that the only good in life is pleasure or happiness (hedonism).
- Don't be misled, then, to see Mill refer to the principle of utility as 'the greatest happiness principle' – it amounts to the same thing.
- Addressing Mill's idea regarding the action resulting in the minimum amount of pain known as the harm principle – that within rule utilitarianism, an act can be justified if it results in happiness for the greatest number but also does not do undue harm to another.
- One of the biggest ethical dilemmas that faces act utilitarians – the harm principle – is the minorities who may have suffered under act utilitarianism.
- Therefore, as it is a consequentialist theory, this is a teleological method of ethics.

Higher and Lower Pleasures

- As stated, unlike the thoughts of Bentham, Mill makes a distinction between higher and lower pleasures.
- It is hierarchical in terms of the approach towards the kinds of pleasures one can experience.
- While Bentham measures pleasure by the amount it generates, Mill prefers to measure it by the quality of the pleasure which is created, distinguishing between higher and lower pleasures.
- He considered lower pleasures to be pleasures which can be experienced by all humans, such as eating or having sex.
- Higher pleasures, however, were derived from activities which other animals could not experience, such as the pursuit of understanding philosophy or appreciation of art.
- Higher pleasures within Mill's utilitarian ideals had a higher level of importance.

Key Figures

J S Mill

- Mill was an influential thinker in discussions of utilitarianism who lived from 1806 to 1873.
- Mill was a committed utilitarian, having been raised by a good friend of Bentham.
- He was the godson of Bentham, so clearly had a strong influence of utilitarianism on his life.
- His upbringing clearly shows that he had a high level of familiarisation with the theory.
- He posited his own ideas throughout his lifetime, resulting in the development of the theory into a form which solved some of what could be argued as the original problems of utilitarianism.
- In his life he was also a politician, serving as an MP for City and Westminster.
- His text *On Liberty* became highly influential regarding social change, such as the abolition of slavery and homosexuality.

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Jeremy Bentham

- As discussed in the previous section, Bentham is widely heralded as being the
- It was his work which was challenged by Mill in terms of needing to introduce
- He is best known for this development and for positing of the theory of act utilitarianism known for rule utilitarianism.

Key Texts

Utilitarianism by J S Mill

- In this text John Stuart Mill, he defends the ideas of utilitarian ethics.
- He did, however, put forward in this text his own ideas, such as the harm principle as a part of rule utilitarianism.
- He agrees within the text with Bentham's premise that the happiness of human beings is the factor which is desirable as an end to an action.
- It is within this text that Mill puts forward the idea of differentiation between

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea 😞	Some Idea 😐	Good Idea 😊	
Who was J S Mill?				
What major differentiation did he feel exist between his version of utilitarianism and Bentham's?				
Is act utilitarianism teleological or deontological?				
In what text did Mill posit his ideas?				
What is a higher pleasure?				
What is a lower pleasure?				
What is an example of each type of pleasure?				
What is hedonism?				
What is the harm principle?				

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Discussion of Issues Raised by Utilitarianism

Overview

Despite being a hugely popular form of ethics due to the nature of its interest, utilitarianism is not without criticism and weaknesses. There are issues arising from itself, as well as with the conflict between act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism.

There is also the issue of if we accept that utilitarianism is a secular ethical code, how it fits with religious ideas. Can a religious person be considered a utilitarian? Finally, the relevance of the theory in today's world and in society.

Key Points



Weaknesses and Issues Raised by Critique of Utilitarianism

- Happiness cannot be quantified (made measurable) in the way the hedonic calculus allows. It is far more complex and subtle than the hedonic calculus allows.
- It is too simplistic to apply to the complexities of ethical decision-making and the situations that arise; one principle is not sufficient for this.
- Other values are arguably more important than happiness, such as justice or integrity. MacIntyre argues that 'If the word "virtuous" is held to have meaning apart from the goal of happiness, then utilitarianism as a theory or morality may well be a failure'.¹² It also does not consider values important in Christianity, such as charity, compassion and humility.
- It also does not consider the motive or intention of individuals to have any moral value.
- Different people have different opinions on what is the most pleasurable. It is difficult to determine how much pain might be sufferable for a later benefit. There is a lot of subjective judgment about the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. Vardy argues that of how some people might be willing to suffer diets and difficult exercise to lose weight, others would not – it is simply a matter of personal opinion.¹³
- Without knowledge of the future, humans are unable to know, or accurately measure, how much happiness will be achieved through their actions.
- Act utilitarianism could justify any kind of action, as long as it produces a balance of pleasure over pain for the majority. This could include actions widely considered to be immoral, such as sacrificing several people for the enjoyment of the majority. MacIntyre argues that it could justify the attitudes towards the Jews if it could be shown to benefit the majority.¹⁴
- There is no protection of justice for minority groups in society. John Rawls argues that justice is unfairly distributed between minorities and the majority.

*The striking feature of the utilitarian view of justice is that it does not matter how the distribution of satisfactions is distributed among individuals any more than it matters, for a utilitarian, how he distributes his satisfactions over time.*¹⁵

- This is particularly unconscionable today with the widespread commitment to equal human rights of all people.



¹² Vardy, P and Grosch, P, *The Puzzle of Ethics* (London: Harper Collins), p. 72.

¹³ Vardy, P and Grosch, P, *The Puzzle of Ethics* (London: Harper Collins), p. 67.

¹⁴ Quoted in Bowie, R, *Ethical Studies* (Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes Ltd, 2004), p. 46.

¹⁵ Rawls, John, *A Theory of Justice* (1971).

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Strengths

- Maximising happiness and minimising pain is arguably how most people already live, so utilitarianism is as desirable. This makes it practical and relevant to people's lives. This also makes it an acceptable ethical theory. Robert E Goodin argues that Bentham's theory is the only one that people pursue hedonism.¹⁶
- The hedonic calculus is easy to use and provides a clear, practical measure of happiness and exactly what kind of happiness should be pursued.
- It would only allow extreme actions in extreme situations. It could, for example, be used to justify a choice between torturing one person and killing five others. Such a choice is not a good one, but act utilitarianism provides the flexibility to respond in the most appropriate way.
- Act utilitarianism's focus on the majority is similar to **democracy**, which is widely accepted. In a democracy, the wants of a minority are not allowed to dominate and to prevent the majority from pursuing its goals.

Modern Applications and Arising Issues

Conflict with Partiality?

- Utilitarianism demands that in making moral decisions, the individual must be impartial. This means that in applying utilitarianism, moral agents must not give special consideration to the happiness of friends and family. It would be wrong to make a friend happy that would make two strangers unhappy. This impartiality is in conflict with the duty and partiality we feel we owe friends and family. This makes it an impractical theory. It can be very hard for moral agents to show impartiality.

Is It Compatible with Religious Approaches to Morality?

- Utilitarianism is largely inconsistent with religious morality because it does not have a source of moral knowledge.
- The value of happiness and pleasure is also contrary to many Christian teachings. The value of suffering, such as that demonstrated by the suffering of Jesus on the cross, is highly valued in Christianity.
- Christian teachings, such as situation ethics (which you will have seen in a previous section), emphasise showing love to one's neighbour, rather than happiness. Similarly, natural law emphasises obedience to religious laws, and strong religious traditions often have relativist understandings of morality.

Is It Relevant Today?

Yes

- Utilitarianism is compatible with today's secularist views.
- Many people pursue happiness and pleasure today, and these are seen as important values.
- Utilitarianism's teaching on the importance of the majority in making decisions is a value widely upheld today.
- Utilitarianism shaped political attitudes at the time, such as towards the poor and the working class.

No

- Society today believes strongly in the principles of justice, rights and the protection of the individual, not reference to utilitarianism.
- High percentages of populations of the globe are religious. Utilitarianism sometimes conflicts with forms of ethics as many religions preach self-denial for the benefit of others, which is not an end goal.

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¹⁶ Goodin, R E, 'Utility and the Good' in *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by P Singer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 101-11.

Key Figures

A MacIntyre

- Alasdair MacIntyre (born 1929) is a Scottish moral philosopher.
- He is a convert to Roman Catholicism.
- He has in his professional life held the position of professor of Philosophy at
- He has opposed the use and practice of utilitarianism on philosophical and moral grounds, arguing that a better approach would be a form of virtue ethics.
- He argues that moral judgement follows from the development of good

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea 😞	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😄	
How is the hedonic calculus limited?				
What is Vardy's critique?				
How does variation of opinion impact utilitarianism?				
What is MacIntyre's critique?				
How does utilitarianism impact the minority?				
What is hedonism?				
What is a strength of hedonism?				
How does utilitarianism support democracy?				
In what ways is utilitarianism relevant today?				
In what ways could it be considered to be irrelevant?				

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Practice Exam-style Question

- ◆ If you are sitting the AS qualification, please answer the following question.
- 7. 'Utilitarian ethics is not moral because it could be used to justify anything.'
- ◆ If you are sitting the A Level qualification, please answer the following question.
- 8. Assess the view that utilitarian ethics is immoral because it can be used to justify anything.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
 - ◆ the key ideas of utilitarianism
 - ◆ the ideas of Bentham and Mill
 - ◆ the principle of utility
 - ◆ the hedonic calculus
 - ◆ consequentialism
- Assess and evaluate differing ideas, including their implication and impact:
 - ◆ weaknesses of the principle of utility
 - ◆ the ideas of MacIntyre
 - ◆ the issue of minority
 - ◆ rule utilitarianism and the ideas of J S Mill

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Euthanasia

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Euthanasia	The practice of intentionally ending a life because it is the correct thing to do in a situation.
Assisted dying	The ending of the life of a terminally ill individual which is assisted by another person.
Active euthanasia	The form of euthanasia where an action is taken in order to end a life which would have continued on without that intervention.
Passive euthanasia	The form of euthanasia where the medical intervention is withdrawn and they are allowed to die naturally.
Sanctity of life	The idea that life is sacred and should only be taken by God.
Quality of life	The idea that the quality of life and enjoyment of life are important factors when discussing euthanasia.
Palliative care	End-of-life care which is aimed at alleviating pain of the terminally ill.
Hippocratic oath	An oath taken by doctors regarding their commitment to do no harm.
Bodily autonomy	The idea that the individual has the right to decide what happens to their body.
Voluntary euthanasia	When an individual asks to end their own life.
Non-voluntary euthanasia	When an individual is unable to give consent regarding euthanasia, consent is given by their next of kin.
Involuntary euthanasia	When an individual is euthanised without their consent or the consent of their next of kin, but it is in their best interest in the view of others.
Situation ethics	A form of Christian ethics focused around the idea of a 'Flotmål' (a goal or aim).
Double effect	The giving of medication towards one end (such as pain relief) with a secondary effect (such as shortening of lifespan).
Personalism	The idea within Christian situation ethics that the best interests of the individual are most important in decision-making.
Slippery slope	An argument against euthanasia which posits that it will lead to those who can be saved to be euthanised – that if one starts down this path, it is hard to know where to draw the line.
Persistent vegetative state	This is a medical state of an individual who has no brain activity, no recovery, whose body functions due to life-support machines.
Dignitas	A facility in Switzerland where individuals who wish to end their lives can do so.



Types of Euthanasia

Overview

Euthanasia, which literally translates from the Ancient Greek as 'good death', is the practice of *intentionally ending a life* because it is believed to be the morally correct thing to do. It is important to distinguish between three forms of euthanasia:

- ♦ **voluntary euthanasia**, where a person chooses to *end their own life* and request help for them
- ♦ **non-voluntary euthanasia**, where another person chooses to *end another person's life* who are *unable to decide for themselves*
 - A doctor turning off the life support machine of a patient who has been in a permanent vegetative state is an example of non-voluntary euthanasia. So too, however, was the Nazi 'euthanasia' programme during the Second World War.
- ♦ **involuntary euthanasia**, where a person *does not wish to die* but a decision is made to end their life without their consent regarding their death.

Key Points

Euthanasia

- Euthanasia is intentionally ending a life because it is the morally right thing to do in a particular situation, which is discussed within the context of medicine. It is an issue of great polarisation, with proponents of both sides of the argument regarding how morally permissible it is.
- It is legal to euthanise animals in the UK, as with many pet owners whose pet is suffering from a painful or debilitating illness, it is not uncommon for a vet to advise that the best option is to have a beloved pet put down. The same is not legal for humans at this point in time, although there are many different groups who are currently campaigning to change this.
- There are different forms of euthanasia, which are determined by the ability of the person to make the decision / take action to end their own life, along with other factors such as their physical ability and capacity to make their decision on the matter known.
- It is usually an issue that arises within serious health issues, such as terminal illnesses, where a cure is not possible and eventual death from the illness is inevitable. Patients may wish to die on their own terms – to die a painless death from drugs rather than a potentially painful death as a result of their illness. They would want to decide how, when and on what terms they die.
- Generally, the discussion centres on the religious concept of the sanctity of life (based on religious thought) and the secular concept of quality of life (although this is not always the case).
- The Hippocratic oath is an oath which is sworn by all doctors. One key aspect of this oath is that doctors should 'first do no harm' – this raises an issue regarding euthanasia as a morally sound action to end a patient's life, even if that patient wants it to end, as it breaks such a vow.
- Euthanasia is sometimes termed '**mercy killing**', as continued life in the situation is seen as painful/unpleasant/undesirable and, therefore, death would be a better option.
- Currently, euthanasia is illegal in the United Kingdom, however, there are countries such as Switzerland, where individuals who wish to die may travel to facilities such as Dignitas.
- There is an ongoing debate as to the morality of euthanasia, as well as whether it is a person's right to die on their own terms rather than dying of their condition. Many people who are terminally ill have expressed their desire for a good death, on their own terms, rather than facing a painful death as a result of health complications.
- Many of those who oppose euthanasia advocate end-of-life care, such as palliative care. They argue that all life is worth living and it is better to provide pain relief for the rest of their lives all together. Palliative care can take place in a hospital, at home, or in a facility dedicated to palliative care, such as a hospice.

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Types of Euthanasia

Voluntary euthanasia	The ending of someone's life via medical intervention at their wishes
Non-voluntary euthanasia	The ending of someone's life via medical intervention without their request, usually which they are unable to give (e.g. with the direct consent of someone acting on their behalf, such as a family member)
Involuntary euthanasia	The ending of someone's life via medical intervention without their consent, and against their personal wishes. This is murder, as usually it involves quickening death in someone who will die anyway, in a more painful manner.
Assisted suicide	The ending of someone's life with the aid of another person, usually a medical professional, but need not be
Double effect	This is the giving of pain relief or medication to an individual to achieve an end (such as pain relief) which will also result in death, for example, shortening their lifespan.

Active and Passive Euthanasia

- As established, there are various different types of euthanasia; however, they are categorised into two separate camps, so to speak. These two categories are active and passive euthanasia.
- Active euthanasia is actively doing something which will result in the ending of a life, such as the administering or providing of drugs to an individual, or an individual taking their own life. It implies, means an intentional action which, if not taken, would result in the individual continuing to live independently, without the aid of life support machines.
- Passive euthanasia is withholding treatment or a method of keeping an individual alive, such as a ventilator or a feeding tube, which is enabling the body to function that if removed, would result in death.
- The crucial differentiation is that passive euthanasia is simply not intervening to prolong life, allowing the individual to die naturally rather than attempting to save or prolong life. Active euthanasia, on the other hand, is the ending of the life of an individual which is not their own choice, even if such a life might be perceived by the individual to be of no value or a medical condition.

Legality of Euthanasia

- The legal situation surrounding euthanasia in the UK is complicated.
- **The Suicide Act of 1961** decriminalised the act of suicide. Previously, individuals who committed suicide or attempted were liable to be prosecuted. However, it was still illegal to assist a person in committing suicide.
- In **2006**, the Assisted Dying Bill, which would have allowed terminally ill individuals to end their lives, was rejected by the House of Lords.
- In **2009**, Debby Purdy, a multiple sclerosis sufferer, brought a case to the High Court for clarification of the law. Purdy wanted to travel to the Dignitas clinic in Switzerland to end her life. However, she wanted to know whether her husband, who was also a sufferer, could be prosecuted for assisting her suicide. At the time, the law stated that if another person to commit suicide could face up to 14 years in prison.
- After a lengthy legal battle, the House of Lords finally issued a ruling: the law regarding suicide, such as the nature of the victim's illnesses would have to be taken into account when considering a case.

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- The ruling was hailed by pro-euthanasia campaigners as a victory, because it would *not* be prosecuted for assisting with their partner's suicide in many circumstances.
- This is supported by the fact that, although over 100 British citizens are known to have assisted suicide since 2002, none of their relatives has been prosecuted on their return to the UK.
- Groups such as the Campaign for Dignity in Dying continue to pressure the government for legal reform.

	Legal in...
Assisted dying	US states of Washington and Oregon
Assisted suicide	Switzerland (e.g. Dignitas clinic)
Voluntary euthanasia	Netherlands and Belgium

All of the above are illegal in the UK.

Palliative Care

- Palliative care is the branch of medicine which offers assistance to those with terminal illnesses.
- Sometimes this is carried out in purpose-built facilities – hospices – but it can also be provided even at the individual's home.
- Palliative medicine involves drugs and therapies designed to alleviate the physical symptoms of illness, along with psychological or spiritual support for the dying and their families.
- This approach is *holistic*, which means it is concerned with the entirety of an individual, not just their physical symptoms. It can begin days, weeks or even months before death.
- Palliative care often finds support among **religious groups**, who consider it more dignified than euthanasia or assisted dying; the 'hospice movement', for instance. Dame Cicely Saunders, whose views on end-of-life care were much influenced by her Catholic background. Jesus emphasised caring for the sick and needy; therefore, it is in his example.

Key Text

Exodus 20:13

- This is a Bible verse which is commonly used by Christians who are against euthanasia.
- It is one of the Ten Commandments, which are the central rules for Christians.
- This Bible verse emphatically instructs believers that to kill is immoral. Many oppose euthanasia as they would argue that taking away the life of an individual is against God's will, that individual wishes to have their life ended.

The Suicide Act of 1961

- This Act decriminalised the act of suicide, so those who attempted suicide were no longer prosecuted for attempting to break a law.
- As British law is largely formed on the basis of Christian values due to the historical influence of Church and State, it is important to note the influence of Aquinas's ideas on the concept of the sanctity of life as being at play in the law.
- However, what this law emphatically did not do was allow individuals to aid or abet suicide. Should someone do so, under current UK law, they have committed a crime.

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Peter Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of our*

- In this book, Singer argues that euthanasia should be accepted more widely.
- He advocates that if our society is focused more on quality of life ideas, then societal attitudes and laws regarding euthanasia and assisted suicide/dying.
- He argues for a limited use of non-voluntary euthanasia such as in the case of disabilities which would result in what he would view as an extremely diminished quality of life.
- He uses the example of Tony Bland, a 26-year-old who was euthanised following the Hillsborough disaster, to illustrate his ideas about quality of life. Mr Bland had 26 years of years following his injuries when he was 19. He was in a persistent vegetative state and was eventually euthanised in 1993.



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹️	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😊
What is euthanasia?			
What is voluntary euthanasia?			
What is non-voluntary euthanasia?			
What is involuntary euthanasia?			
What is the view of Peter Singer regarding euthanasia?			
What is the status of euthanasia in the United Kingdom?			
What was done by the Suicide Act of 1961 in the UK?			
What is Dignitas?			
What is meant by the term 'palliative care'?			
Why might an individual advocate for palliative care rather than euthanasia?			
What is meant by the term 'double effect'?			
What is an example of a country in which voluntary euthanasia is legal?			



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Sanctity of Life and Quality of Life

Overview

Sanctity of life and quality of life are two key ideas within the course. Generally speaking, discourses around sanctity of life dominate religious viewpoints, while discourses around quality of life tends to be a secular argument. Those who believe in sanctity of life believe that all human life is sacred and should be protected.

Those who argue on the basis of quality of life tend to argue that some lives are therefore, individuals facing such a condition should be permitted to die a painless death on their own terms and by their own choice. Alternatively, in the case of abortion, those who argue for quality of life often argue that if, based on a condition such as a genetic condition, a foetus is deemed to have a poor quality of life (i.e. suffering from chronic pain), it is more merciful to abort.

Key Points

Sanctity of Life

- Sanctity of life is the idea that life is sacred, given to human beings as a gift from God.
- This is a religious idea that, within Christianity, has roots within biblical teachings.
- Specifically, the Bible teaches that human life is a gift which is created and given by God.
- In Genesis, the creation of human life in the form of Adam and Eve is described.
- Natural moral law, previously discussed in this course, has as a key precept the upholding of life. Euthanasia is the intentional ending of life. Therefore, it is difficult to see how the ending of life can uphold the sanctity of life.
- Euthanasia is largely seen as a violation of the sanctity of life by those who argue against it. Some argue that it is the case of humanity usurping the power of God in deciding when to end an individual's life, as this power is traditionally within religious thought the life is in the hands of God.
- Sanctity of human life is frequently underlined by the biblical passage in Genesis 1, in which it is written that God created man in his own image (*imago dei*), giving human beings a special status within his creation. Life, therefore, is considered to be sacred as it is a reflection of God.
- Sanctity of life is further enshrined in such biblical teachings as Exodus 20, in which the Ten Commandments are given from God to Moses. In Exodus 20:13, murder is forbidden. Those who take away the life of another person are explicitly said to have committed a sin in the eyes of God, and, therefore, many religious people who hold ideas about the sanctity of life apply this teaching to ideas of euthanasia and see euthanasia as a form of murder.
- Specifically, the Catholic Church has emphatically stated in its 'Declaration on Euthanasia' that euthanasia violates the sanctity of life and, therefore, it includes the sin of murder.
- Sanctity of life arguments are not limited in their scope to the medical issues, but also cover other issues surrounding modern medical ethics, such as abortion.

Quality of Life

- Quality of life is the idea that the value of a life can be measured by the quality of the individual's life, rather than the mere fact of being alive. Crucial, in this view, is the differentiation between quality and quantity of life, as this view does not give human life innate worth. Human life is not innately have inarguable value, but this value is rather defined by attributes and circumstances, which dictates whether or not that life is considered to be worth living.
- This is a view that has secular origins rather than religious origins, so it is based on human reason and ethical systems which are secular rather than religious doctrines.

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- This argument is commonly used in support of movements to legalise euthanasia.
- Common forms of this argument involve examples of individuals whose conditions or medical issues have debilitated their abilities or capabilities to the point at which they believe that their life is no longer worth living, as they are experiencing far more suffering than good out of their life. For these individuals, they argue, they would prefer death to the life they are faced with living or the life they are currently living.
- Another example of a quality of life argument is the desire not to allow an individual's condition to deteriorate their life to the point where they feel that their quality of life is severely affected, e.g. if they became bedbound or severely disabled and became dependent on others for their care. Many who propose this argument argue that they wish to maintain their dignity, which they feel they would lose should they be forced to continue living with a disease which would only deteriorate.
- Such arguments draw on arguments of **bodily autonomy**, such as those of the argument that every individual has bodily autonomy; that is, they are free to and about their own body and how they wish to treat it. It is not the place of anyone to interfere with an individual's bodily autonomy. Therefore, they argue, this includes the right to let one's body cease to function and the individual dies.

Views on Sanctity of Life Arguments

- Those who believe that God created life (and it is, therefore, sacred) obviously believe in the sanctity of life.
- However, not all Christians agree with an absolutist interpretation of the idea of the sanctity of life. Some point to a situationalist approach to euthanasia to be more moral. Such a view would argue that the legalisation of euthanasia would mean that a judgement could be made on a case-by-case basis for the individual.
- Those who oppose sanctity of life arguments argue that it is unfair for a religious belief that the majority of Britons today believe in has become such a hindrance to individuals what they can and cannot do with their bodies. Old laws based on religious beliefs have changed as society has, so why not laws regarding euthanasia?

Views on Quality of Life Arguments

- The allowance of euthanasia as a solution to pain and suffering at the end of life would mean that choosing this and it becoming the norm, resulting in a lack of need for research and development, as the result would be wasted life.
- Opposition to quality of life arguments is often aimed at the idea that some people are better than others. People who hold this view posit that it is immoral to believe that a person with a debilitating condition is worth less somehow than an individual who is not. This is termed to be **ableism**, a form of discrimination against the disabled.
- Organisations such as Care Not Killing oppose their opposition to quality of life arguments that:

Any change in the law to allow assisted suicide or euthanasia would place pressure on people for fear of being a financial, emotional or care burden upon other people who are disabled, elderly, sick or depressed.

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¹⁷ <https://www.carenotkilling.org.uk/about/>

Key Figures

St Thomas Aquinas

- Aquinas's development of natural law has been applied to the debate regarding euthanasia.
- In this natural law, he proposed the idea of the key precept of the importance of life, therefore, under natural law euthanasia could never be considered to be morally acceptable.
- Such ideas, as discussed earlier in this revision guide, are based in biblical teaching, Exodus 20:13.

Diane Prettyman

- Diane Prettyman was an individual who used the quality of life argument as part of her case to decriminalise assisted suicide in the United Kingdom. She advocated for the right to die on her own terms and avoid the suffering she believed that her end of her life. This was an argument based on the idea of the quality of life.
- She suffered from motor neurone disease, and wished to '... have a quick death surrounded by my family'.¹⁸
- She appealed to the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in the hope that it would not prosecute any of her loved ones in the event that she did end her own life in the future. This was denied.
- She died in 2002 at a hospice in London as a result of health issues due to her condition.

Tony Bland

- Tony Bland was a 22-year-old man who was a victim of the Hillsborough disaster. Bland being in a PVS (persistent vegetative state). In 2002, the authorities permitted his removal, and, therefore, he underwent passive euthanasia. His example is a case which alleviated suffering, this was a case of passive euthanasia.
- His example was used by Singer in his work *Rethinking Life and Death: The Case for Legalising Euthanasia*.

Key Texts

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (May 5th 1980) Declaration on Euthanasia

- This is a declaration of the Catholic Church, put forward in the 1980s, which opposed euthanasia.
- It termed euthanasia, among other issues, such as abortion and wilful death, as a crime against life.
- On the issue of assisted suicide or assisting an individual to end their own life, it states that '... no one can make an attempt on the life of an innocent person without opposing God, violating a fundamental right, and therefore committing a crime of the gravest kind'.
- Also, it specifically states that '... it is morally impermissible to even ask to be killed, nor is it permitted to ask for the killing, either for himself or herself or for another person, nor can one ever consent to it, either explicitly or implicitly, nor can one ever be permitted to permit such an action'.¹⁹

¹⁸ BBC News, 'Husband's tribute to Diane Prettyman' Monday, 13 May, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/20020513.stm>

¹⁹ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Declaration on Euthanasia, The Catholic Church, 1980, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19800505_euthanasia_en.html

- It does, however, permit natural death to take place without medical intervention. Medical intervention to prolong life would be 'burdensome' as it states:

When inevitable death is imminent... it is permitted in conscience to take treatment that would only secure a precarious and burdensome prolongation of life... due to a sick person in similar cases is not interrupting the dying process.

- It encourages those Christians who are suffering as a result of a prolonged illness. Christ as an example, stating that:

suffering, especially suffering during the last moments of life, has a special place in the Christian life, as a sharing in Christ's passion and a union with the redeeming sacrifice which the Father's will.²¹



Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea 😞	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😊	
What is sanctity of life?				
What is the origin of ideas of sanctity of life?				
What is quality of life?				
What are the origins of the quality of life argument?				
What is the importance of natural law in the debate about sanctity of life?				
Who is an example of an individual who campaigned for the right to die?				
Which individual was used as an example in the works of Peter Singer regarding the morality of euthanasia?				
What arguments might be given against the idea of sanctity of life?				
What arguments might be given against the idea of quality of life?				
What arguments might be given in favour of the idea of sanctity of life?				
What arguments might be given in favour of the idea of quality of life?				



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²⁰ Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Declaration on Euthanasia, The Catholic Church
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_1980050

²¹ Ibid.

Discussions of Issues Raised by the Ethical Theories to Euthanasia

Overview

Euthanasia is an issue which has been and continues to be at the centre of a discourse around the legalisation and morality of the euthanasia of human beings. It is a discourse of the UK and beyond, and thus there are various different viewpoints and theories to the debate. It is important to make the distinction that while arguments might oppose euthanasia, not all religious groups are in opposition. In the same way, in support of the legalisation of euthanasia, not all are in support.

Key Points

Application of Natural Law

- One of the key precepts of natural moral law is to preserve life. Obviously, as an intentional ending of a life, it directly contradicts this key precept. Therefore, according to natural law, it appears to be immoral.
- Indeed, those who subscribe to natural law, such as the Catholic Church, hold that euthanasia is never permissible in any situation.
- Life, in the view of natural law, is divinely given – and taken – by God alone. Euthanasia is the position of God, something which is sometimes termed ‘playing God’.
- In the eyes of natural law theologians, euthanasia is wrong.
- Double effect may be considered to be morally permissible in some cases in natural law, but this would not be popularised and is not a viable option for mass euthanasia. It is an interpretation of natural law, however, and there are some who would even accept it.
- Many argue that the current sanctity of life argument is outdated – the logic of a religious idea to dictate what is and what is not legal within a modern age where the majority of adults in the United Kingdom are becoming increasingly secularised.

Strengths and Weaknesses

- Joseph Fletcher, a proponent of situation ethics, argues that such arguments based on natural law are too rigid.
- One strength of natural law is that in not allowing euthanasia, you do not alienate the medical community regarding euthanasia.
- Fletcher rejects the idea that euthanising an individual is playing God, as he argues that one would have to immediately cease all science and medical endeavours in the name of God in those areas also. He argues, ‘Such beliefs are a hopelessly primitive kind of talk, but they hang on long after theologians generally have bid them good-bye’.

Application of Situation Ethics

- Situation ethics also has a part to play in the debate regarding euthanasia.
- The fourth of the working moral principles to govern moral action application is that the needs and importance of people are considered first, not the demands of the law.
- ‘Life is sometimes good, and death is sometimes good... Our present laws about death are civilized... Let the law favour living, not the life’²² – Joseph Fletcher in his essay ‘The Case for Euthanasia’.
- From this we can see that Fletcher’s situation ethics affected his view on euthanasia.
- He used the example of a child who was born with Down’s syndrome. His argument was that the child endured by that child at the time at which it was born (before modern medicine) it has at this point in time) would be too great to justify life. This line of argument is used by some to support euthanasia.

²² Bernard Bard and Joseph Fletcher, *The Atlantic Monthly*, 221 (1968 Apr), p. 59–64.
<http://www.riverbenddds.org/index.htm?page=fletcher.html>

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Slippery Slope Arguments

- Slippery slope arguments claim that making one, minor change to the law may have catastrophic consequences. For example, in the euthanasia debate, it has been argued that if we legalise medically assisted suicide we would inadvertently put pressure on certain people that euthanasia is an option may strengthen a seriously ill individual's belief that they should die. Friends and family. As a result, even if they still want to live, they might feel forced to die.
- The problem is compounded if they happen to be elderly relatives with one living child. Just as it is not the slip but the fall that kills the unfortunate mountaineer (even with good intentions) some forms of euthanasia we would be opening the floodgates to a slippery slope.
- One counterargument to the slippery slope argument is that countries where euthanasia is legal, such as Switzerland, have not experienced this phenomenon. However, this is negated by the differences in attitudes to healthcare which exist between countries and cultures. What works in one country may not necessarily translate into another.
- There is also concern that by legalising euthanasia, too much power is being placed in the hands of doctors. It is argued, and the life of an individual who could have been saved otherwise as a part and parcel of the slippery slope argument as such negligent medical treatment creates the slope than the current situation.

Key Figures

Joseph Fletcher

- Fletcher was a liberal Protestant theologian who in the 1960s developed a religion based on the maximising of agape love as its primary goal.
 - ◆ In particular, he argued there were no strictly or objectively good or bad decisions; a decision is only good or bad depending on the context or situation it is made in.
 - ◆ This was termed situation ethics and he demanded those following it that a person should aim to make the most loving decision possible.
 - ◆ He argued this is justified by the figure of Christ in the gospels, who, in his teaching, was a legalistic moralist, unlike figures such as the Pharisees and emphasised justice, mercy and loving morality above all else.
 - ◆ He proposed four working principles to govern moral action: pragmatism, relativism, and **personalism**.

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Key Texts

Exodus 20:13

- This is part of the passage of the Old Testament book in which God imparts the Ten Commandments, of which the fifth is not to take any life – 'Thou shalt not murder'. Some people who support euthanasia on the basis of natural law may use this verse to support their opposition. However, it is morally wrong within the Bible to take life – any life.

John 15:12–13

- Here Jesus states that the greatest command he has towards humanity is that they love him. This is the central Christian principle governing all moral actions. It is derived from the sacrificial love of Jesus. One has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

P Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Morality*, Oxford, OUP, Chapter 7

- Peter Singer in this book makes the case for the abandonment in the modern world of traditional morality towards life and death.
- He uses the example of Tony Bland, a 22-year-old who was euthanised following the Hillsborough disaster.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹
How does situation ethics apply to euthanasia?	
How does law ethics apply to euthanasia?	
What were Joseph Fletcher's views on euthanasia?	
What example did he use to illustrate his ideas?	
How did the fourth proposition fit within euthanasia arguments?	
What was Peter Singer's view on Euthanasia?	
What is meant by the term 'slippery slope'?	
Why might some people think that euthanasia would create a slippery slope?	
Why might some people disagree with this?	
What is one Bible verse used to support an argument against euthanasia?	

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Practice Exam-style Question

- ◆ If you are sitting the AS qualification, please answer the following question.
- 9. Assess the view that religious people might argue that euthanasia is wrong in the United Kingdom. (30)
- ◆ If you are sitting the A Level qualification, please answer the following question.
- 10. 'Religious people should not support the legalisation of euthanasia'



In your answer you should:

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
 - ◆ key ideas about what euthanasia is
 - ◆ voluntary, non-voluntary and involuntary euthanasia
 - ◆ the legal situation
 - ◆ the right to die movement
- Assess and evaluate facets of religious approaches and differing ideas, impact, such as:
 - ◆ quality of life arguments
 - ◆ sanctity of life arguments
 - ◆ examples such as Diane Pretty
 - ◆ autonomy
 - ◆ slippery slope arguments



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Business Ethics

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Corporate social responsibility	The issues that businesses need to consider in order to function
Whistle-blowing	When an employee alerts their superior or their seniors to ethical issues
Employer	Person or company who offers permanent or temporary work
Stakeholder(s)	An individual or a group of individuals who have a vested interest in the business
Customer	Consumers of goods who willingly pay to receive the goods
Profit-making	The generation of financial gain from a business endeavour
Economy	A system of capital flow of input and output
Globalisation	The increasing interaction and integration of individuals across the world due to developments in modern technology
Capitalism	An economic system based on ownership of property and business for profit
Good ethics is good business	The theory that by having good, ethical business practices one can achieve success and, therefore, more profit
Hypocritical window dressing	The practice by a company of marketing themselves as ethical while in reality they contain poor ethical standards.
Stakeholder Theory	A theory which posits that all stakeholders involved within a business should be considered when making business decisions
Ethical	Things which are considered to be morally right
Unethical	Things which are considered to be morally wrong
SWOT	A strategic analysis in business: strengths; weaknesses; opportunities; threats
PESTEL	Political E – economic S – social T – technological E – environmental
Animal rights	The rights of non-human creatures to be treated fairly and with respect
Treatment of workers	The rights of employees to have a fair working environment
Treatment of suppliers	The right of those who are supplying goods to be paid a fair price
Treatment of customers	The way in which consumers of goods are treated by a business

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Corporate Social Responsibility

Overview

Ethics affects nearly every area of life, and businesses are no exception. Many of the endeavours by individuals developed in order to make profit. Individuals involved are themselves interested in making profit, although many may also have an interest in ethical business conduct. Within a capitalist society, there is the need for businesses to recognize that their business practice is ethical. This end is practiced through the use of corporate social responsibility (CSR), also known as corporate conscience, which involves various types of ethical considerations affecting the practice of corporate social responsibility. It is also important to examine ethical theories, which for the rest of this course will be utilitarian and Kantian ethics.

Key Points



General Points

- Business ethics is the ethical considerations necessary for the practice of self-regulation from an external body.
- One of the key aspects of business ethics is the concept of corporate social responsibility.
- This is the business philosophy which has the aim of attempting to satisfy the needs and wants of all the stakeholders involved in that business.
- In order to have a meaningful conversation about this, we must first understand the concept of 'stakeholder' – it is not simply the owners of the business whose interests must be considered.
- Stakeholder theory is a theory of business ethics first posited by Ian Mitroff in *Organizational Mind*, (1983). It is a theory of business ethics which posits the existence of the different stakeholders within a business when making ethical decisions (a view of emphasising the role of the shareholders (e.g. business owners)).
- Different kinds of stakeholders include
 - ◆ shareholders
 - ◆ customers, suppliers
 - ◆ employees
 - ◆ creditors/banks
 - ◆ government
 - ◆ local community
 - ◆ suppliers
- Within capitalism, there is a variety of ethical and unethical behaviours, which are discussed in the context of corporate social responsibility.
- It is also important for businesses to consider various factors which are of corporate social responsibility, which are discussed below.
- The challenge laid within corporate social responsibility is whether or not human beings can thrive in a situation which is centred around capitalistic and materialistic/consumerist environments, such as corporate businesses.
- Corporate social responsibility is the application of ethics to a business environment enable human beings to attempt to navigate these environments in a way which enables them to behave in the way they consider to be ethical and attempt to achieve the end which is most moral.
- Two main considerations will be given here – **utilitarian** ethics and **Kantian** ethics.

Internal stakeholders

Employees

Manager

Owners

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Types of Ethical and Unethical Behaviour

- There is a variety of different factors which affect the way in which businesses behave ethically or unethically.
- These include:
 - ◆ animal rights
 - ◆ treatment of workers
 - ◆ treatment of suppliers
 - ◆ treatment of customers
 - ◆ environmental considerations
- One of the ways in which the ethical considerations of a business can be measured is through a SWOT analysis, as represented below.

S – Strengths	W – Weaknesses
O – Opportunities	T – Threats

- This analysis can be used to make a business more ethical.
- An example of a situation in which someone might use the SWOT analysis in relation to business ethics is as follows:

Bob owns a small grocery business in a big city. He pays his workers the minimum wage. He wants to raise the wages of his workers as he would like to pay them the living wage. He thinks this would treat his employees better and make his business more ethical. He wants to evaluate the pros and cons of making this change.

- S** – The strengths would be that this would make his business more ethical.
- W** – The weaknesses would be that it would be an extra cost in labour for Bob.
- O** – Opportunities would be that it would motivate staff, improve worker morale and increase productivity as a result.
- T** – Threats would be that increased morale and productivity are not guaranteed and, therefore, the added cost may not be offset by the benefits of increased productivity.

Based on this analysis, Bob makes the decision to take the risk, as he believes that paying employees a living wage will boost morale and lead to a better situation for his business as a whole.

- There is a further acronym which is useful for the analysis of business ethics.
- This is a method of measuring a business's ethical criteria against different key areas. These are listed below:
 - ◆ P – political
 - ◆ E – economic
 - ◆ S – social
 - ◆ T – technological
 - ◆ E – environmental
 - ◆ L – legal

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Application of Kantian Ethics

- Kantian ethics has quite a lot to say on business ethics and corporate social responsibility. It has a good deal of sense considering that the founder of the ethical theory, Immanuel Kant, was a philosopher.
- Within Kantian ethics, businesses should be viewed as being made up of human beings who have a duty to one another and, therefore, in this sense they should be viewed as being ends in themselves. Respect between those involved in a business is of utmost importance.
- Businesses should be relatively democratic under Kantian ethics.
- Kantian ethics agrees with a number of points to stakeholder theory.
- The aims of the business must be to benefit all of the stakeholders.
- The principle of Kantian ethics which posits the kingdom of ends is key – human beings are ends in themselves rather than a means to an end. Therefore, there is a variety of factors that need to be considered through the lens of the principle of the kingdom of ends.
- For example, trying to price one's goods so that the consumers will choose your goods over your competitor's would be considered here to be unethical, as it is using the consumers as a means to an end rather than treating them as an end in themselves.
- Bribery within a business environment would be completely against Kantian ethics, as it is being as a means to an end rather than treating them as an end in themselves.
- The environment is one of the key considerations of corporate social responsibility. Under Kantian ethics, it is considered fair for the environment to be used by business, but it is emphasised that it should be used in moderation as the maxim of over-utilising the resource of the environment is unethical, and, therefore, cannot be considered to be ethical.
- Kantian ethical approach to corporate social responsibility has various strengths. It emphasises the importance of the dignity of the individual, and it provides a contrast and check on the claims of utilitarian ethicists.
- The democratic viewpoint of Kantian ethics, which takes into consideration the interests of all stakeholders equally, fits well with our democratic society.
- Furthermore, it also dictates that as long as such laws are ethical, a business must follow them, as a company which is set by the country in which the business is based.

Application of Utilitarian Ethics

- Unlike Kantian ethics, which is deontological, utilitarian thinking is consequentialist. It is more concerned with the method of arriving at an end, so long as the end garners the greatest number. This causes somewhat of a problem in terms of not being able to judge the morality of an action, as well as potentially opening up utilitarian ethics as a way to exploit others for an overall positive result for the business.
- The application of utilitarian ethics is multifaceted when concerning business ethics. There are different forms of utilitarianism and thus the differing ways in which it can be applied.
- Generally speaking, act utilitarianism is the form of utilitarianism which causes the greatest happiness by attempting to apply this method of thinking to business ethics.
- Concerning CSR, act utilitarianism would emphasise the quantity of happiness generated should be the greatest number. This leaves there being greater emphasis on the interests of the consumers.
- Therefore, within act utilitarianism, it would be considered fine to exploit the workers in order to make a product by paying them extremely low wages, as it will theoretically result in the greatest happiness which will in turn result in the happiness of the consumers, as they will have the product.
- Bentham certainly saw the consumers as the largest group of stakeholders, and he placed them at the top of their position as being the priority in terms of developing happiness for the greatest number.

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- Rule utilitarianism differs in that it does believe consumers are important stakeholders; by contrast, act utilitarianism believes that all those involved within a business are equally important. It advocates making decisions based on the least involving compromises, leading to a give-and-take approach towards the balance of those consuming the material goods and the welfare of those who are making the decisions.
- Peter Singer, an important utilitarian, viewed the environment as being an important stakeholder. He argued that it is important to ensure that we are not unduly damaging the environment.

Key Figures

Immanuel Kant

- Founder of deontological ethics
- Proponent of a duty-based attitude towards ethics
- Prominent businessman during his life, meaning that his ethical approaches were based on practical experience
- Developed the hypothetical and categorical imperatives

Jeremy Bentham

- Founder of utilitarian ethics
- Developed the principle of utility
- Largely associated with act utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill

- Developer of utilitarian ethics, adding to and extending the thoughts of Bentham
- Developed the harm principle
- Largely associated with rule utilitarianism

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Key Texts

'The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits'
(13th September 1970) in *New York Times Magazine*, The *New York Times Company*

- This is an article which was first published in 1970 in which the author, Milton Friedman, challenges the notion of corporate social responsibility, which he says businesses should not necessarily have.
- He instead posited the idea that there should be moral responsibilities placed at the micro level (e.g. day-to-day staff interactions).
- However, he argued that businesses had no responsibility towards the community.
- Free market capitalism, he argues, should achieve social good in and of itself without the need for a method of disciplining corporations.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea 😞	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😄
What is corporate social responsibility?			
What are all of the different kinds of stakeholders?			
What factors might be considered with regard to ethical or unethical behaviour by a company?			
What is meant by the term 'SWOT analysis'?			
What is meant by the acronym 'PESTEL'?			
How does Kantian ethics apply to corporate social responsibility?			
How does utilitarian ethics apply to corporate social responsibility?			

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Whistle-blowing

Overview

Whistle-blowing is the act of an employee alerting or revealing using unethical practice, even if it is against the contract of the individual. A whistle-blower chooses to draw attention to this malpractice within a business by shedding light on it to those inside the company, or those outside the company, depending on the situation.

This is reliant on the moral code of the individual. Whistle-blowing the whistle can be a costly decision for the individual, i.e. putting their job security at risk. It is important too when considering theories to such ideas, such as the ideas of Kantian ethicists and utilitarians.

Key Points

General Points

- Whistle-blowing is the term that is used to describe the act of an individual calling out a company for ethical malpractice.
- Whistle-blowers throw abuses of a business's ethics into the spotlight and reveal business conduct to the public.
- An example of a famous whistle-blower is Edward Snowden.
- He previously worked for American intelligence agencies, such as the NSA and was considered to be sensitive information in what he declared to be a whistle-blower.
- He believed that their level of surveillance could easily be misused and handled.
- He believed that whistle-blowing was a key and extremely important part of a business, even though it may have a cost, and as he experienced, that cost can be very high.
- He stated it was 'a greater commitment to justice than fear of the law'.
- In 2013, the US government found him in violation of the **Espionage Act** of 1917.
- He is currently living in an unknown location in Moscow, Russia, having been granted asylum.
- This is an example which is used by many as an example of the extreme cost of whistle-blowing who choose to blow the whistle on issues they see within their places of work.
- While Mr Snowden is one of the most famous examples of a whistle-blower, whistle-blowing is not always so large scale; it could be as small as calling out a business practice in its books (a colloquial term referring to a form of fraudulent malpractice where a company records its books in order to financially benefit a company).
- Occasionally, there are issues regarding the idea that within some companies whistle-blowing might be a failure to comply with the contract of an individual. Some individuals have signed an NDA (non-disclosure agreement) with their employer, so to tell the public is in breach of their contract and they have broken their agreement.
- In other instances, it might be a case in which an individual would be considered to be in breach of their contract. Some whistle-blowers may even face jail for their decision to blow the whistle.
- There is debate about whether or not whistle-blowing is an ethical practice; there are upsides to the practice, including accountability for those involved with business standards.
- Whistle-blowing serves the interest not only of those who are blowing the whistle, but also agrees with the 'good ethics is good business' principle (which will be covered in more detail). Whistle-blowing practices as whistle-blowing should theoretically lead to improvements in business practices of employees, and, in theory, an increase in profit.

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Application of Kantian Ethics

- Kantian ethics is deontological ethics, or duty-based ethics. Therefore, the idea of an individual to do the right thing is at the heart of this particular form of ethics.
- It is important, then, that we examine how this duty-based ethical system may be applied to whistle-blowing and consider whether or not it can be considered to be a duty.
- In Kantian ethics, it is considered both the right and the responsibility of the individual to act if they see or hear of something which is a case of or obviously bad ethical business.
- Kantian ethicists would agree that this is an a priori maxim – it is pure reason and not a duty to reveal malice.
- One possible conflict within the idea of the duty of whistle-blowing within Kantian ethics should always be considered to be binding and not a duty to reveal malice.
- It would be impossible to universalise a maxim which would see a contract being completely nullify the need for there to be a contract. If a contract includes a disclosure agreement then it could be considered to be breaking this contract and therefore be wrong within Kantian ethics, and, therefore, comes into conflict with the idea of a duty to be considered to be a duty.

Application of Utilitarian Ethics

- In utilitarian ethics, as always, there are mixed ideas and responses. In general, the action should achieve the greatest happiness or pleasure for the greatest number of people.
- A utilitarian viewpoint towards whistle-blowing, therefore, would vary from case to case to what will garner the greatest happiness for the greatest number in that particular situation.
- Therefore, should blowing the whistle in a situation result in improving the welfare of the workers at minimum cost and loss of profit for one shareholder, then an act of whistle-blowing would be good.
- However, on the flip side, should the whistle-blow result in an issue for the company being the consumers, then it would be considered to be immoral and not ideal. It would result in unhappiness of the largest number of people.
- Conversely, within rule utilitarianism, the higher pleasure of valuing individual employees to be heard would be considered to be of greater good. The idea of an open, honest workspace where individuals are able to blow the whistle would be considered good than simply producing cheap products.

Key Figures

Edward Snowden

- Born in 1983, Mr Snowden was a former IT professional who had worked with the CIA and the NSA, which are both companies which are paramount for the national security of the United States. He realised through his work that the level of surveillance and power of the surveillance of civil liberties was, in his opinion, too great. He blew the whistle on the press.
- In 2013, the US government found him guilty of espionage, and he is currently in prison.
- He is one of the most famous examples of a figure who is associated with the idea of whistle-blowing.

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Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹️	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😄
What is whistleblowing?			
In what situation might an individual blow the whistle?			
Why might a whistle-blow result in an individual losing their job?			
Who was Edward Snowden?			
How does Kantian ethics apply to whistle-blowing?			
How does utilitarian ethics apply to whistle-blowing?			

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Good Ethics is Good Business

Overview

This is the idea that the structure of business and human nature with good ethical practices, this will attract consumers and hard-working (and happy) business will be proficient and make a good profit. In other words, good ethical business model and good business practice.

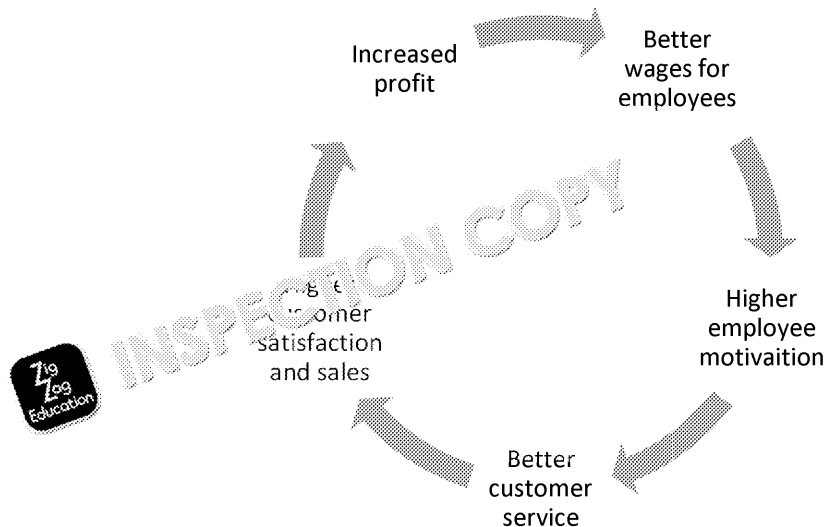
One of the issues, however, that arises within this discussion is the problem of hypocrisy when a company attempts to give the impression of being more ethically conscious business in order to attempt to gain the benefits of the theory of good ethics gain.

Key Points



General Points

- The idea of the theory of 'good ethics is good business' is a cyclical structure of business that if a business practises good ethical standards within the running of the business, it will have better productivity for the company, better products, a raised profile for the company, and the number of customers choosing to buy from that business.
- An example of the feedback cycle for a company which sells goods is represented below.



- You can see how the positive feedback cycle represented above would be beneficial for businesses to experience.
- One of the drawbacks of this ethical theory is that when it is attempted dishonestly, the danger arises of **hypocritical window dressing**.
- There is some argument regarding whether or not the concept of corporate social responsibility is hypocritical window dressing.
- Hypocritical window dressing is the phrase which is used to refer to the instant market itself as fulfilling many of the ends of corporate social responsibility when CSR are comparatively very poor.
- One example of hypocritical window dressing might be a company advertising their consumption of organic energy or begun recycling significantly more.
- However, hypocritical window dressing occurs when this effort has not been a genuine movement in the company to improve its business's ethics, but in compliance with regulatory requirements, for example.
- It might market this as the company making a unique and concerted effort to show that it might attract more environmentally friendly customers and also to raise the common view, also with the end of gaining more business profit.

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- This example is a specific form of hypocritical window-dressing known as **greenwashing**. It is one of the many types of hypocritical window dressing; however, greenwashing is a good example of how hypocritical window dressing happens.

Application of Kantian Ethics

- In principle, Kantian ethics would agree with and support good business ethics. Kantian ethics would see the duty of caring for the staff, valuing employees and all stakeholders all the time. Kantian ethics would firmly support the idea of good business ethics.
- However, if this was done in order to attempt to simply gain more profit, then it is using human beings as a means to an end and does not fulfil the third categorical imperative.
- However, the application of good business ethics could be universalised and, therefore, it would be considered a categorical imperative.
- Hypocritical window dressing within Kantian ethics is specifically wrong.
- It treats consumers as a means to an end. By feeding them information with the end goal of raising profits overall, this is treating the individual consumer as a means to an end of increased profit rather than as human beings who are an end in themselves.

Application of Utilitarian Ethics

- Within utilitarian ethics, one of the main features is gaining the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Should ethical business result in good business, then this would work well with utilitarian ethics. Everyone theoretically happier under the new good business ethics, but also the quantatively largest group, are happier because they are receiving better products. Therefore, within act utilitarianism, it would be considered to be a good thing.
- Within rule utilitarian ethics, the 'good ethics is good business' model thrives. The 'good ethics is good business' model thrives because the stakeholders. Good business ethics would mean good business productivity and therefore, would be considered a positive thing.
- Furthermore, it fulfils the utilitarian pleasure of creating a positive difference to the world.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😊
What is meant by the phrase 'good ethics is good business'?			
What is meant by 'hypocritical window dressing'?			
What is meant by 'greenwashing'?			
What benefits would greenwashing have for business?			
What would be the utilitarian approach to greenwashing?			
What would be the utilitarian approach to greenwashing?			

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Globalisation

Overview

With the increasing ease of travel and communication in the modern world, it has meant that human beings in distant countries are able to take part in business internationalisation. This process has resulted in the need for businesses to adapt their practices and their products to fit within new cultures. Therefore, within business ethics (especially considering corporate social responsibility) the impact that this has on the stakeholders needs to be considered.

The development of new technology and the globalisation of the world market has resulted in the need for a negotiation of the application of business ethics, and it comes from the expansion of the world of experience within business.

Encountering issues such as the outsourcing of work and manufacture, as well as the importing and exporting of goods for business, are all by-products of the process of globalisation. It is important to consider regarding the impact this can have on the ethical conduct of business.

Key Points

General Points

- Globalisation widens the pool of considerations regarding the number of people affected by a business's actions and its margin.
- One of the biggest effects on businesses in general is that they have now 'gone global'. If they were previously selling their products in one market, they are now selling them in multiple markets with differing cultures and values, and, therefore, this introduces various considerations.
- An example of how globalisation has affected the products which have been introduced is the phenomenon of fast food which is McDonald's.
- McDonald's is well known for adapting its menu based on the wants of the local market in different markets all over the globe.
- For example, in the UK, the menu and various other features of the famous restaurant chain differ depending on the location of a certain branch, demonstrating that globalisation has resulted in the diversification of branding and the flexibility of products to fit different markets.
- In America the supersize option is available, which it is not in the UK.
- In Indian McDonald's they do not sell beef, as in India the cow is considered inappropriate to eat.
- In Portugal they serve alcohol with some McDonald's meals as this is more of a social norm in that area, as they have a different social attitude towards the consumption of alcohol.
- In Sedona, Arizona, the famous yellow McDonald's 'M' is a different colour due to the local regulations on signs within that state.
- We can see clear and varied differentiation within a company alone dependent on the location – this is globalisation manifested.
- Globalisation has meant that businesses have the opportunity to diversify and expand their endeavours and this has resulted in vast expansion of some companies in some countries. It is a decision to be made when considering this new modern phenomenon and to navigate it as an ethical business practice.
- It also allows companies to diversify their business practice and their sourcing. A common method of outsourcing labour to countries where wages are perhaps lower than within the United Kingdom. This then raises the ethical question of whether this is a fair treatment of workers and if this is an ethical business practice.

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- A further concern regarding globalisation is the increased stress put on the individuals and companies are now able to fly in goods and trade with people who have been too far out of the bounds of what is geographically possible.
- These developments will be discussed with reference to both Kantian and utilitarian ethics.

Application of Utilitarianism

- Utilitarian ethics pursues the greatest happiness for the greatest number. This is the stage of globalisation – the problems are much greater than those encountered by local business.
- The debate about globalisation within the context of utilitarian ethics is focused on the issue of exploitation of cheaper labour in low-income developing countries.
- Many businesses have capitalised on the lack of minimum wage and the lack of workers, meaning that they can manufacture goods in such countries at a price that would not be possible if they were manufactured in the United Kingdom.
- Examples of such places in which this is taking place are India and China.
- Act utilitarianism, which is proposed by Bentham, would have no issue with this as it focuses on happiness for the greatest number as the desirable ethical end.
- Therefore, as there are arguably far more consumers than there will be workers, Bentham argues that this is morally permissible.
- Rule utilitarian John Stuart Mill would disagree, however. He would argue that the quality of the working environment is considered to be more important than the amount of pleasure. The higher quality of the ethical working environment would win out.
- Furthermore, Mill's harm principle would argue that this is a kind of morally permissible harm to workers.
- Preference utilitarianism, as developed by Singer and posits that the most important thing is to satisfy the preferences which creates the greatest preference fulfilment.
- Regarding the environmental impact of globalisation, both Mill and Bentham would agree that it has no intrinsic value – that is to say, value in and of itself. They do not agree on whether it is a good or bad thing.
- Bentham would give businesses free rein in how they treat the world and its resources.
- Mill would disagree as he argued that it could be used in moderation, but that the environment is wrong when kept unchecked.

Application of Kantian Ethics

- Kantian ethics has strict codes of duty as it is a system of ethics which is strictly based on duty.
- Kantian ethics cannot under any situation justify the use of outsourcing cheap labour in order to cut costs and maximise profits. Human beings have a duty to other human beings and to prioritise them over the generation of profits.
- It cannot use workers as a means to an end, as a result of the principle of the humanity.

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- Kantian ethics posits criteria for the treatment of workers within a business outsourcing, and these are as follows:
 1. Any outsourced workers must choose, free from coercion, to do the job.
 2. The work that is being offered must a) be meaningful and b) provide the advancement.
 3. The work must allow the individual to develop themselves ethically.
 4. It must provide the individuals with a fair salary on which they can both afford them activities which they can enjoy.
- Regarding the environmental impact of globalisation, Kantian ethics emphasises previous issues with corporate social responsibility, it would be impossible ethical at all fronts as well as sustain a working business.
- When navigating how to make these decisions as a business, Kantian ethics views decisions made by businesses as if they were made by individuals.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is globalisation?			
What impact has globalisation had on business?			
What issues have arisen considering outsourcing?			
What issues have arisen considering globalisation?			
How might Kantian ethics approach these issues?			
How might utilitarian ethics approach these issues?			

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Practice Exam-style Question

- ◆ If you are sitting the AS qualification, please answer the following question:
11. Assess the view that Kantian ethics is the best approach to practice business ethics.
- ◆ If you are sitting the A Level qualification, please answer the following question:
12. 'Kantian ethics is the best method of approaching business ethics.'

In your answer you should:

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
 - ◆ the definition of business ethics
 - ◆ key ideas of corporate social responsibility
 - ◆ key ideas of Kantian ethics
- Assess and evaluate facets of Kantian ethics and differing ideas, including impact, such as:
 - ◆ the strengths of the application of forms of Kantian ethics to business
 - ◆ the weaknesses of the application of forms of Kantian ethics to business
 - ◆ the strengths and weaknesses of these forms of Kantian ethics when considering whistle-blowing, globalisation, corporate social responsibility and the environment

(AO1)

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Mark Schemes

Levels of Response (AS)

Level	Levels of Response (AO1)
5 (13–15 marks)	The student's answer will display very good knowledge and understanding. It will answer the question, and contain a great amount of applicable content generally applied to the relevant issues with very good breadth or depth. There will be a precise use of technical language and a substantial number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
4 (10–12 marks)	The student's answer will display good knowledge and understanding. It will answer the question, and contain a good amount of applicable content generally applied to the relevant issues with moderate depth or breadth. There will be a precise use of technical language and a good number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
3 (7–9 marks)	The student's answer will display adequate knowledge and understanding. It will answer the question, contain a fair amount of applicable content and show a general understanding of the relevant issues, though without depth or breadth. There will be some technical language and a few references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
2 (4–6 marks)	The student's answer will display a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the question, contain some applicable content and show a limited understanding of the relevant issues. There will be some technical language and a few references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
1 (1–3 marks)	The student's answer will display a poor knowledge and understanding. It will disregard the question, contain little applicable content and show a very limited understanding of the relevant issues. There will be minimal technical language and very few references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.

Level	Levels of Response (AO2)
5 (13–15 marks)	The student's answer will give a very good analysis and evaluation. It will have a persuasive and coherent argument, with well-developed justification and evidence for the thesis presented, and will fully and skilfully address the question. There will be a precise use of technical language and a substantial number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
4 (10–12 marks)	The student's answer will give a good analysis and evaluation. It will have a persuasive and coherent argument, with some well-developed justification and evidence for the thesis presented, and will pertinently address the question. There will be a mainly precise use of technical language and a good number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
3 (7–9 marks)	The student's answer will give an adequate analysis and evaluation. It will have a coherent argument, though it will lack full justification and evidence for the thesis presented, and will generally address the question. There will be some well-used technical language and partly effective references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
2 (4–6 marks)	The student's answer will give a rudimentary analysis and evaluation. It will have some successful efforts to give a coherent argument, but with minimal justification and evidence for the thesis presented, and will only partly address the question. There will be some technical language and ineffective references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
1 (1–3 marks)	The student's answer will give a poor analysis and evaluation. It will have a rudimentary argument, lack justification and evidence for the thesis presented, and will fail to address the question. There will be minimal technical language and very few references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.

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Levels of Response (A Level)

Level	Levels of Response (AO1)
6 (14–16 marks)	The student's answer will display excellent knowledge and understanding. It will show a clear and nuanced focus on the question, and will contain a pertinent and wide-ranging analysis of the issues, applied with flair. It will show a very detailed understanding of the relevant issues with very good breadth and depth. There will be a rigorous use of technical language and significant references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
5 (11–13 marks)	The student's answer will display very good knowledge and understanding. It will show a clear focus on the question, and will contain a good amount of applicable content applied appropriately. It will show a detailed understanding of the relevant issues with very good breadth or depth. There will be a good use of technical language and significant references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
4 (8–10 marks)	The student's answer will display good knowledge and understanding. It will show a clear focus on the question, and will contain a good amount of applicable content, generally applied appropriately. It will show a solid understanding of the relevant issues with moderate depth. There will be a mostly precise use of technical language and a good number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
3 (5–7 marks)	The student's answer will display adequate knowledge and understanding. It will show a clear focus on the question, contain a fair amount of applicable content and show a general understanding of the relevant issues, though without depth or breadth. There will be some technical language and some references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
2 (3–4 marks)	The student's answer will display a rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the question, contain some applicable content and show a limited understanding of the relevant issues. There will be some technical language and a few references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
1 (1–2 marks)	The student's answer will display a poor knowledge and understanding. It will disregard the question, contain little applicable content and show a very limited understanding of the relevant issues. There will be minimal technical language and very few references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.

Level	Levels of Response (AO2)
6 (21–24 marks)	The student's answer will give an excellent analysis and evaluation. It will have a clear and coherent argument, with clear, well-developed and in-depth justification and evidence for the views presented, and will thoroughly and skilfully answer the question. There will be a precise use of technical language and significant and substantial references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom which enhance the answer.
5 (17–20 marks)	The student's answer will give a very good analysis and evaluation. It will have a clear and coherent argument, with well-developed justification and evidence for the views presented, and will fully and skilfully answer the question. There will be a precise use of technical language and significant references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
4 (13–16 marks)	The student's answer will give a good analysis and evaluation. It will have a clear and coherent argument, with some well-developed justification and evidence for the views presented, and will pertinently address the question. There will be a mainly precise use of technical language and a good number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
3 (9–12 marks)	The student's answer will give an adequate analysis and evaluation. It will have a clear and coherent argument, though it will lack full justification and evidence for the views presented, and will generally address the question. There will be some well-used technical language and some partly effective references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
2 (5–8 marks)	The student's answer will give a rudimentary analysis and evaluation. It will have some successful efforts to give a coherent argument, but with minimal justification and evidence for the views presented, and will only partly address the question. There will be some technical language and some ineffective references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
1 (1–4 marks)	The student's answer will give a poor analysis and evaluation. It will have a weak argument, lack justification and evidence for the views presented, and will fail to address the question. There will be minimal technical language and very few, if any, references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.

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Indicative Content

1. 'Natural law is the best approach to modern ethical issues.' Discuss. (AS)
2. Assess the view that natural law is the best approach to navigating ethical issues in the 21st century. (A)

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below.

- Natural moral law is a traditionally held religious theory of law and morality.
- It is a set of precepts based on biblical principles which was originally conceived of by St Thomas Aquinas, who is considered to be the individual who first put forward natural law.
- Natural moral law theory is legalistic (it specifies certain rules for moral behaviour) (it holds that the principles are universal).
- The principles on which this natural moral law was developed were influenced hugely by Aristotle's philosophy – specifically, his thoughts on *telos* (purpose).
- He reasoned that all humans have a natural purpose towards which God wants them to strive. This purpose, or *telos*, will bring humans into unity and fellowship with God and enable them to reach their highest human potential.
- There were two sources Aquinas believed that humans could use to understand this purpose: **the Bible and the world** (The Bible is considered revelation, so it reveals God's will about God. The world also reveals God's moral law because it was designed by God and has signs of its creator in its design) and **Reason** (Aquinas believed very strongly in the power of reason to gain knowledge about God. Aquinas argued that through reason we could understand the actions would fulfil our natural purpose.)
- Aquinas developed a key precept, which is that we should aim to do good and to avoid evil.
- Aquinas believed that through reason, the Bible and the world, it became clear that there were a number of 'primary precepts' that formed the basis of natural moral law. Although he did not provide a list himself, it is clear that he thought the following five rules were the most important: to preserve life, to reproduce, to educate children, to worship God, to create an ordered society.
- These rules are **absolute** and to disobey them is always to do wrong.
- Secondary precepts, or other rules about morality, can be derived from these.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below

Ways in which natural law is considered the best approach:

- Natural law seems to be imbued with goodness, e.g. natural disasters and suffering raises questions about to what extent it reveals God's plan or desire.
- Atheists are unlikely to follow this supposedly universal ethic because it is based on the belief that God created the universe and the moral law within it.
- It is also based on the premise that there is life after death and that the purpose of life is to achieve happiness with God and his purpose for us.
- Aquinas's focus on reproduction as one of the five primary purposes of human life is problematic for couples who cannot reproduce, such as because they are infertile.
- Aquinas commits the naturalistic fallacy and attempts to move from an 'is' (God's will) to an 'ought' (that God's will ought to be followed).
- It is based on Aquinas's assumptions and belief in God, which he saw as natural, as well as on order, which he saw as based on kings and barons, etc. Both these points highlight the theory, despite its claims to objectivity, could in fact be culturally relative.
- Christians might believe that Jesus taught a less legalistic ethical theory and a more one based on love for one's neighbour. They may, therefore, choose to follow situational ethics rather than natural moral law.
- Feminist critics may argue that Aquinas is not only a medieval misogynist, but also a patriarchal one, in place in the modern world. For instance, the primary precept which commands the couple to procreate implicitly assumes that women have a God-given duty to produce children. This would be considered by many people to be old-fashioned, if not outright offensive.
- The French existentialist philosopher J P Sartre famously claimed that 'existence precedes essence' – the idea that humanity had a purpose (an 'essence') before it existed as a result of an assumption in the face of our experience as radically free beings.

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Ways in which natural law may be considered to be the best approach:

- Aquinas's approach to human nature and its purposes is compatible and common to
- It is clear – there is very little ambiguity within natural law, meaning that moral decisions are clear and easy to make.
- It appeals to reason, which all humans have and can exercise to make moral decisions. It is universal and applicable to all.
- It is an objective theory which holds that certain actions are inherently and absolutely right or wrong.
- The doctrine of double effect and other adaptations of natural law such as proportionalism give natural law a degree of flexibility when it comes to dealing with some of life's more perplexing moral dilemmas.
- Evolutionary neuroscientists such as Paul D. MacLean may argue that some aspects of human behaviour are determined biologically.
- Aquinas might have taken this to support his idea of a natural law built into human nature.

3. 'Situation ethics is the best interpretation of Christian Scripture.' Discuss. (AS)
4. Assess the view that situation ethics is the best approach to ethics based on Christian Scripture.

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below.

- Situation ethics is a form of Christian ethics developed by Joseph Fletcher.
- He developed this form of Christian ethics in response to social changes in the twentieth century, such as the development of the contraceptive pill, the increasing secularisation of society, and the civil rights movement.
- It was a new Christian ethical approach which was more flexible and appealed more to the emotions than traditional Christian ethics within society.
- Fletcher believed that the existing form of Christian ethics was far too legalistic, something that Jesus himself stood opposed to in his lifetime.
- In the teachings of situationism, as long as the interests of agape, the central idea of love specific to the teachings of Christianity, are served, then an action can be said to be morally right. From agape, maxims are derived.
- Fletcher put forward six propositions in order to provide a pragmatic basis for situation ethics. These were intended to show how agape should be understood and applied to different ethical dilemmas. The propositions are: agape is inherently good; the ruling principle for Christian decision is agape; love and justice are inseparable; as justice is love lived out, it wants the best thing for their neighbour; the end justifies the means; decisions vary from situation to situation rather than being based on fixed principles.
- Fletcher put forward four working principles which should govern the way in which situation ethics should be lived out, enabling others to use his thoughts to live out situation ethics themselves. These are: pragmatism, relativism, positivism and personalism.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below.

Students may give any of the following reasons why situation ethics is the best interpretation of Christian Scripture:

- It is in keeping with Jesus's teaching and his rejection of legalism, so it is suitable for the modern world.
- Jesus taught that the first most important commandment is to love God and the second most important commandment is to love your neighbour.
- Jesus states here that it is through the lenses of these two teachings that all the other commandments should be viewed. This could be argued to be a biblical mandate for the use of situation ethics, as it could be argued to be a fulfilment of this teaching by Jesus.
- Jesus repeatedly condemned throughout the gospels the Pharisaic legalism he encountered in his lifetime.
- An example of this is Luke 11:37–54.
- Therefore, by rejecting legalistic teachings and focusing on agape, situation ethics can be argued to be the most biblical way of approaching moral decision-making.
- It gives man responsibility, recognising that man has 'come of age'. Biblical teaching emphasises the role of man as having free will to choose whether or not to follow God's commands. This level of responsibility makes the individual's decision make sense and is in keeping with biblical teaching.
- This responsibility might be difficult and challenging but it is important we take this responsibility and make decisions for ourselves. This is repeatedly underlined through the recording of figures in the Bible.

Students may give any of the following reasons why situation ethics is not the best interpretation of Christian Scripture:

- Many Christians have opposed the use of situation ethics as in many cases the teaching of situation ethics might lead individuals to make decisions about ethical issues which directly go against biblical teaching.
- For example, many people have used situation ethics to justify support of same-sex marriage.
- For many, the use of the agape principle has led them to the conclusion that it is unchristian for their neighbour to deny them romantic happiness.
- However, this would violate biblical laws regarding the prohibition of homosexual relationships.
- Therefore, many would argue that it is not the best interpretation of Scripture because in some instances, encourage the breaking of biblical law.
- In 1952, Pope Pius XII explicitly rejected it, and in 1956 the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office banned it from being taught in places of Catholic teaching and learning.
- It could be argued to be adapting too much from the biblical rules of Christians in order to fit modern times; violating the teaching within 1 John 2:15–17 on living by the law of God rather than by worldly standards.
- It was argued that, although the conscience could be used to interpret what God wanted, situation ethics treated conscience as the source of moral knowledge.
- Instead, the source of moral knowledge should be natural moral law, which provides absolute laws from God to follow.

5. Assess the view that Kantian ethics is the best ethical code to live by in modern times.
6. 'Kantian ethics is the best ethical code to live by in modern times.' Discuss. (A Level)

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below:

- Duty-based ethics, also known as deontological ethics, is a system of ethics based on the idea that there are certain moral duties held by every individual that if adhered to should produce a good moral society. It is also known as Kantian ethics due to its formulator – Immanuel Kant.
- He posited a moral system which is based on duty – specific duties which are inherent in our nature.
- He developed the hypothetical imperatives and the categorical imperatives, which distinguish between duties you should do if you want to achieve a certain end, and moral duties which apply to every action.
- Imperatives are just recommendations or instructions which tell us what to do.
- Hypothetical imperatives are 'ought to' rules should you wish to achieve a certain end. For example, 'If you want to be happy, you ought to be virtuous'.
- There are two forms of the categorical imperative: the principle of universalisability and the formula and the kingdom of ends.
- There are also three postulates which must be fulfilled within Kantian ethics, which are: freedom – individuals must be free in order to make their own choices and decisions; immortality – there must be an afterlife in order for summum bonum to be experienced; God – God must exist in order to be the fair and just judge to decide who experiences summum bonum in the afterlife.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below.

Students may agree that Kantian ethics is the best ethical code to live by in modern times because:

- Kantian ethics promotes a sense of duty to other human beings.
- It is impossible to know the future or what the consequences of actions will be, especially long-term or secondary impacts. It therefore seems more just to judge someone on what they have done, which is itself good or bad.
- It treats everyone equally and justly in much the same way the justice system applies the law to everyone indiscriminately.
- It creates core, absolute moral principles which cannot be dismissed because of changing circumstances or concerns.
- Moral decision-making is simple and straightforward because what is right and wrong is clear.
- The categorical imperative creates moral rules which are consistent with those many people already follow, such as 'do not kill' or 'do not steal'. This helps to make it relevant and practical.
- Following duty is more important than doing what one thinks is right, because what one thinks is right is often influenced by our own biases and selfish preferences.
- It recognises the intrinsic value of humans. It protects them from being used for negative purposes, as in the case in utilitarianism, where the minority could rightly be made to suffer for the benefit of the majority.

Students may disagree that Kantian ethics is the best ethical code to live by in modern times

- It is deontological – therefore, the duty to fulfil the right purpose is the most important. It might cause difficulty ethically – sometimes, when duty is followed, the consequences are considered to be an immoral result, e.g. the axe murderer dilemma.
- There seems little justification or authority for the moral obligations in deontological ethics. One is willing to accept that there is a divine lawgiver (God). The postulate which does not necessarily make the best rule set for morality for an increasing society.
- It is not practical or even possible to act according to duty alone – human decision-making and psychology are arguably more complex than this.
- Following absolute moral principles or one's duty could result in awful consequences in certain situations. In certain disastrous consequences should be avoided. There is a need for flexibility in response to complicated or extreme moral situations. Similarly, good consequences cannot be interpreted as actually good because what matters is the intention, e.g. a doctor who results in a child's life being saved.
- It does not allow compassion or sympathy to motivate moral actions.
- It does not provide us with a solution for the situation in which there are two categories of choice – both would require us to make a choice; however, if they are opposed choices, there is no guidance as to how to make that decision.
- Kant was a Christian and saw his ethics as consistent with Christianity, but God is side-lined. He describes how 'Kant largely reduced religion to ethics – to be holy is to be moral'. This makes ethics less relevant to Christians, which is ironic as the postulate regarding God may be more relevant to the non-religious.
- Kant's principle of universalisation allows for the universalisation of amoral and immoral actions just because a principle can be universalised, does not mean it is right or even sensible.
- Kant commits the naturalistic fallacy because he turns an 'is' into an 'ought' (see below).
- There needs to be an actual reason to act according to one's duty – not simply because of duty.

7. 'Utilitarian ethics is not moral because they can be used to justify evil.' Discuss. (AS)
8. Assess the view that utilitarian ethics is not moral because it can be used to justify actions.

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below.

- Utilitarianism is a modern form of secular ethics, although it is not totally exclusive to the secular sphere.
- It is centred on the key ideas of happiness/pleasure and pain.
- It was originally developed by Jeremy Bentham, but further developed by John Stuart Mill.
- Bentham developed what is known as the hedonic calculus. This is a method of measuring goodness which will be derived from an action. This measures happiness using several factors: intensity, duration, certainty, propinquity, fecundity, purity and extent.
- He also developed the principle of utility, which is the basis for utilitarian thought. The principle of utility is the central idea of utilitarianism – that the most moral course of action is the one that will result in the greatest happiness for the greatest number.
- Crucially, Bentham is arguing that being ruled by pain and pleasure is just the way humans have no choice in the matter; we must seek pleasure, and we must avoid pain.
- It is consequentialist, relativist and instrumental.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below.

Students may support the argument that utilitarian ethics is not moral because it can be used to justify evil:

- One of the biggest issues with utilitarian ethics is using the principle of utility.
- It is too simplistic to deal with the complexities of ethical decision-making and the different ethical principles involved; one principle is not sufficient for this.
- Society believes strongly in the principles of justice, rights and the protection of the vulnerable which are not reflected in utilitarianism.
- Act utilitarianism could justify any kind of action, as long as it produces a balance of pleasure over pain for the majority. This could include actions widely considered to be immoral, such as torturing several people for the enjoyment of the majority.
- MacIntyre argues that it could even justify the Nazis' attitudes towards the Jews if it resulted in a benefit to the majority.

- There is no protection of justice for minority groups in society. John Rawls argues that justice could be unfairly distributed between minorities and the majority.
- The striking feature of justice is that it does not matter, except indirectly, how the satisfaction of desires is distributed among individuals any more than it matters, except indirectly, how a man distributes his satisfactions over time.
- This is particularly unconscionable today with the wide commitment to equality, minority rights and the human rights of all people.

Students may oppose the argument that utilitarian ethics is immoral because it can be used to justify evil:

- Not all forms of utilitarian ethics can be used to justify moral evils. Act utilitarianism can be used to this end, but this is not the only form of utilitarianism.
- Other forms such as rule utilitarianism, offer forms which would solve the problems of act utilitarianism.
- Rule utilitarianism was largely developed by J S Mill.
- This theory holds that the right action is one which follows rules that, if universally followed, would create the maximum amount of happiness and the minimum amount of pain.
- The crucial element of this which solves some of the issues caused by act utilitarianism is that it must also cause the minimum amount of pain – this is known as the harm principle by Mill.
- Mill also introduced the idea of higher and lower pleasures, which would solve the issue of the case study of utilitarianism theoretically justifying gang rape – Mill argued that sexual pleasure is a lower pleasure, and that the pleasure of being a good person who does not rape, is a higher pleasure that would outweigh the pleasure derived from non-consensual sex. Therefore, it is not justified.

9. Assess the view that religious people might argue that euthanasia should be legalised.
10. 'Religious people should support the legalisation of euthanasia in the UK.' Discuss. (AO2)

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below.

- Euthanasia, which literally translates from the Ancient Greek as 'good death', refers to the intentional ending of a life because it is believed to be the morally correct course of action in certain circumstances. It is important to distinguish between three forms of euthanasia:
 - Voluntary euthanasia, where a person chooses to end their own life and requests another person to do it for them.
 - Non-voluntary euthanasia, where another person chooses to end another person's life 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.
- Euthanasia is currently illegal within the United Kingdom.
- Suicide itself was decriminalised in 1967; however, attempting to help someone to commit suicide remains illegal.
- There is an ongoing debate as to the morality of euthanasia, as well as whether or not a person has the right to die on their own terms rather than dying of their condition. Many people who support the right to die movement have cited their desire for a good death, on their own terms, as being the ideal, rather than facing a painful death as a result of health complications.
- There is a variety of movements attempting to campaign for the legalisation of euthanasia.
- Conversely, however, there are also organisations which actively oppose the legalisation of euthanasia.
- There are arguments on both sides of the debate, including the views of those who are religious and those who are secular.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the issue through the arguments below.

- Arguments for the legalisation of euthanasia:**
- Quality of life arguments are frequently put forward.
 - Students may refer to the examples of Tony Bland, as utilised by Peter Singer.
 - They could also use the example of Diane Pretty.
 - Quality of life is the idea that the value of a life can be measured by the quality of experience. In this view, an individual is able to derive from life. Crucial, in this view, is the differentiation from the arguments, as this view does not give human life innate worth. Human life in this view does not innately have inarguable value, but this value is rather defined by attributes – the quality of life someone's life dictates whether or not that life is considered to be worth living.

- Common forms of this argument involve examples of individuals whose conditions have debilitated their abilities or capabilities to the point at which they believe that they are no longer worth living, as they are experiencing far more suffering than good out of their lives. For these individuals, they argue, they would prefer death to the life they are faced with living in their current state. They are currently living.
- Another example of a quality of life argument is the desire not to allow an individual's condition to deteriorate their life to the state in which they feel that their quality of life is severely impacted, e.g. if they became bedbound or severely disabled and became dependent on others for care. Many who propose this argument argue that they wish to maintain their dignity and that they would lose should they be forced to continue living with a disease which would cause such a deterioration.
- Such arguments draw on concepts of **bodily autonomy**, such as those of the right to life. They argue that every individual has bodily autonomy; that is, they are free to and entitled to make decisions about their own body and how they wish to treat it. It is not the place of others to make decisions about the individual's body. Therefore, they argue, this includes the right to decide when (and how) the body ceases to function and the individual dies.
- People who argue for the legalisation of euthanasia might point out that Britain is not a Christian country, and the number of people who regularly attend church or identify as Christian is in decline. They would question why, then, religious ideas such as sanctity of life are given weight within the law.

Arguments against the legalisation of euthanasia:

- The main religious argument against the legalisation of euthanasia is the sanctity of life.
- Sanctity of life is the idea that life is sacred, given to human beings as a gift from God. This is a religious idea that, within Christianity, has roots within biblical teachings.
- Specifically, the Bible teaches that human life is a gift which is created and given by God.
- The main secular argument against the legalisation of euthanasia is the slippery slope argument.
- The slippery slope argument claims that making one, minor change to the law may lead to catastrophic consequences.
- For example, in the euthanasia debate, it has been argued that by legalising medical aid in dying, we would inadvertently put pressure on certain people to end their lives. Knowing that euthanasia is an option may strengthen a person's belief that they are a burden on friends and family. As a result, even if they still want to live, they might feel it is their duty to die.
- The problem with this argument is that it is based on the assumption that if they happen to have greedy relatives with one eye on their inheritance and testaments. Just as it is not the slip but the fall which kills the unfortunate mountaineer, so legalising euthanasia (even with good intentions) some forms of euthanasia we would be opening the door to all manner of nastiness.

11. Assess the view that Kantian ethics is the best approach to practical business ethics. (AS)

12. 'Kantian ethics is the best method of approaching business ethics.' Discuss. (A Level)

(AO1) Students may describe and explain the ideas below:

- Business ethics are the ethical considerations necessary for the practice of self-regulation and occasionally regulation from an external body.
- One of the key aspects of business ethics is the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Therefore, in order to evaluate Kantian ethics and the application of it to business ethics, we need to consider how well Kantian ethics fulfils and deals with the aspects of CSR.
- This is the business philosophy which has the aim of attempting to satisfy the needs and wants of all the stakeholders involved in a business. These include: customers/consumers, employees, creditors/banks, government, the local community, etc.
- The application of Kantian ethics is not complicated when concerning business ethics due to the differing principles and approaches of Kantian ethics which can, on occasions and regarding different issues, be quite complex.
- Kantian ethics is a deontological form of ethics which is concerned mainly with the duties of individuals towards others, holding certain principles as being universalisable principles.
- Kantian ethics has quite a lot to say on business ethics and corporate social responsibility. It does make a good deal of sense considering that the founder of the ethical theory, Immanuel Kant, was himself a businessman. Therefore, in theory, it should be a form of ethics which is well suited to business ethics.

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(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the question through the arguments below.

Students may agree with the success of Kantian ethics in approaching business ethics:

- There is an argument for Kantian ethics being a better method of navigating business ethics. Theoretically it emphasises the importance of whistle-blowing as a duty. This would make the business practice more honest.
- Because Kantian ethics is deontological ethics, or duty-based ethics, the idea of the individual to do the right thing is at the heart of this particular form of ethics. The idea of whistle-blowing. Kantian ethics would dictate that whistle-blowing is a duty.
- In Kantian ethics, it is considered both the right and the responsibility of the employee to blow the whistle when they see or hear of malpractice, which is indicative of obviously bad ethical practice. A Kantian ethicist would argue that this is an a priori maxim – it is pure reason and understanding that it is a duty to reveal malpractice.
- In principle, Kantian ethics would agree with and support good business ethics. If the business focused on the duty of caring for the staff, valuing employees and all stakeholders in the chain, then it would firmly support the idea of good business ethics.
- However, the application of good business ethics could be universalised, and, therefore, it would fulfil the first categorical imperative.
- Hypocritical window dressing within Kantian ethics is specifically wrong; therefore, it would be an issue for someone who was following a Kantian form of business ethics.
- It treats consumers as a means to an end. By feeding them information with the intention of increasing the profile with the end goal of raising profits overall, this is treating the individual as being means to the end of increased profit rather than human beings who are an end in themselves.
- The application of good business ethics could be universalised if the end remained to be the good of the business, not to generate profit, and, therefore, it does fulfil the first categorical imperative.
- Kantian ethics cannot under any situation justify the use of outsourcing cheap labour done in order to cut costs and maximise profits. Human beings have a duty to others and to treat them morally and to prioritise them above the generation of profits.
- It cannot use workers as a means to an end, as a result of the principle of the kingdom of ends.
- Kantian ethics posits criteria for the treatment of others within a business situation. If outsourcing was applied, therefore, in this way, if Kantian ethics was applied it would vastly improve the ethical standards faced by globalisation and the employment of cheap labour in LEDCs (less economically developed countries).
- Regarding globalisation and business practice, Kantian ethics as an ethical code for business would encourage positive changes to the current status quo.

Students may disagree with the success of Kantian ethics in approaching business ethics:

- One reason Kantian ethics may not be considered the best ethical practice is because the maxims of Kantian ethics conflict with other maxims. For example, while the idea of whistle-blow within Kantian ethics is important, it comes into conflict with the principle of contracts. Kantian ethics contracts should always be considered to be binding and should always be followed. It would be impossible to universalise a maxim which would see a contract broken, as this would completely nullify the need for there to be a contract. If a contract includes, for example, a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), then it could be considered to be breaking this contract by whistle-blowing. This would be wrong within Kantian ethics and, therefore, comes into conflict with the idea that whistle-blowing could be considered to be a duty.
- One issue with 'good ethics is good business' is that it can on occasion conflict with the goal of the business – to make a profit. If good ethics are employed by a business in order to make a profit, then ethically this would be wrong as it is using human beings to achieve an end and not as an end in themselves. Therefore, it would not fulfil the third categorical imperative.
- Hypocritical window dressing within Kantian ethics is specifically wrong.
- It treats consumers as a means to an end. By feeding them information with the intention of increasing the profile with the end goal of raising profits overall, this is treating the individual as being means to the end of increased profit rather than human beings who are an end in themselves. Therefore, it would not fulfil the first categorical imperative.