



# Revision Summaries for A Level Year 2 OCR

## Component 2: Religion and 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 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 A Level Year 2 Component 2: Ethics part of the specification.

## Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

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, providing 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 Question:** A practice essay question 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 on 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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\* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers

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# Meta-ethical Theories

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Meta-ethics	Meaning 'beyond ethics', this is ethics which is concerned with the nature of ethical terms rather than whether or not they are morally correct or morally wrong.
Naturalism	The idea that moral values find their definition in some naturalistic terms.
Intuitionism	Intuitionism is the belief that moral truths are self-evident and defined sufficiently, but that they are evident to the mind.
Emotivism	The meta-ethical theory that posits the idea that moral statements have no meaning beyond communicating the feelings of the person communicating the statement.
G E Moore	Moore was one of the main opponents of ethical naturalism and moral theory instead of ethical non-naturalism.
Ayer	English philosopher A J Ayer (1910–1989) is the most famous philosopher associated with the development of emotivism.
Mackie	Philosopher who strongly opposed naturalism and moral realism.
Objective	Things which are either right, or wrong regardless of individual opinions.
Subjective	Things which are either right or wrong depending on individual opinions.
Cognitive	A statement which is intended to put forward a claim that can be said to be either true or false in nature.
Non-cognitive	A statement which does not forward a proposition that can be true or false.
Realism	The idea that reality exists and will continue to exist regardless of whether or not we are aware of it.
Anti-realism	The idea that reality only exists in the conscious mind.

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# Introduction to Meta-ethics

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## Overview

Meta-ethics literally translates as 'beyond ethics'. It is different to ethics, which is mainly concerned with the question of what is good.

Meta-ethics, in general, is concerned with what we mean when we say something in language and the way that language is used. It is not surprising that many of the philosophers who were part of the so-called 'linguistic turn' which occurred around the start of the 20th century were concerned with meta-ethics.

These thinkers were not primarily concerned with which moral statements are right or wrong, but about whether they have any meaning at all, or whether they are just a way of saying what we think, for the largest number of people, but about whether they are true or false at all.




## Key Points

### General Points

- As stated above, meta-ethics is more concerned with the language used to discuss ethics than with the ideas of what is and is not moral.
- Therefore, terminology is important. For a subject so concerned with the meaning of language, that meta-ethics requires its own dictionary.
- You will encounter a lot of new terminology in this section, which is one of the main aims of this course.
- Being able to use it competently is a challenge, but will stand you in very good stead.

### Key Terminology in Meta-ethics

- Realism and anti-realism are two key terms that you will encounter when addressing meta-ethics. They are defined as follows:

 Realism holds that moral facts exist.	Cognitivism holds that ethical statements make claims about <i>reality</i> and so can be true or false. Since those claims are about reality, they are objective (as with scientific facts, an individual's opinion is not right or wrong when we make an ethical judgement).
Anti-realism holds that moral facts do not exist.	Non-cognitivism holds that ethical statements do <i>not</i> make claims about independent reality and so <i>cannot</i> be true or false. Since they are not true or false, they are subjective (as with an opinion – we cannot say it is right or wrong).

- Cognitivism and non-cognitivism make claims about language.
- Realism and anti-realism make claims about what exists.
- Generally, realists are also cognitivists and anti-realists are also non-cognitivists.
- Within these two camps, there are a large number of, often highly nuanced, positions. This course will be concerned with utilitarianism (both species of cognitivism) and intuitionism (both species of non-cognitivism).



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## Absolutism and Relativism

- In ethics, absolutism and relativism make claims about the *nature of morality*.
- Definitions of the two standpoints are as follows:
  - ◆ **Absolutists** hold that the nature of morality is such that it admits of no exceptions. Murder, for example – are *always* wrong. This is true in all cultures, at all times and in all situations. Natural law theory is an example of an absolutist theory.
  - ◆ **Relativists** hold that the nature of morality is relative to each individual or particular culture (cultural relativism). What is right for me may be wrong for you. What is acceptable in Britain is not acceptable in Saudi Arabia.
- Crucially, relativists maintain that *all perspectives are equally valid*: if my perspective is that the high jump is severing the feet from live rabbits, and yours is that animals can even be happy, I cannot establish that our own position is superior, or the other's inferior. People often openly identify themselves as relativists; in fact, it is more often used as a term of abuse. As critics say, is to be self-defeating: if we can never say one position is better than another, what is the philosophy at all? The existence of human rights enshrined in international law, such as sexual, racial and gender equality, are often pointed to as clear evidence that relativism is not just a theory, but is, in fact, desirable. Meanwhile, defending the claim that a country with slavery is a challenge for even the most radical of thinkers.
- Nevertheless, outside the academy, relativism continues to attract followers.

## Cognitive and Non-cognitive

- These are terms which refer to our understanding of ethical statements as being either cognitive or non-cognitive. We assert or question whether or not these statements are right or wrong.
- A statement which is cognitive is one which can be said to be intending to put forward a claim which, therefore, can be said to be either true or false in nature.
- A statement which is non-cognitive is one which is believed by some not to put forward a claim which cannot be said to be true or false.

## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea (frowny face)	Some Idea (neutral face)	Good Idea (smiley face)	
What is meant by the term 'meta-ethics'?				
What is realism?				
What is anti-realism?				
What is absolutism?				
What is relativism?				
What is a cognitive statement?				
What is a non-cognitive statement?				

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# Naturalism

## Overview

Ethical naturalism is an important form of meta-ethics. It is the idea that ethical ideas and values can be most easily defined in relation to natural parts of the world.

A truth is understood by the way it relates to the world. It takes into consideration the ethical value or maxim or statement proposed in relation to the world. It is also – its opponents, such as J L Mackie, are not – insistent as they would believe that there is an objective moral truth.

## Key Points



### What is Ethical Naturalism?

- Ethical naturalism is a **cognitive** theory. This means that it is possible to say that ethical statements are true or false within human experience.
- It is the belief that decisions about what is right and wrong can be arrived at by looking at the **world and human nature**.
- An action can be right or wrong if it fulfils the intended purpose of human nature – it produces happiness (utilitarianism).
- Human nature and happiness are both things that exist in the world and can be tested.
- Ethical naturalism treats ethical statements in the same way as non-ethical statements.
- Just as we would expect the statement 'that car is blue' to be empirically testable (we can see and be certain that it is blue), so too ethical statements such as 'happiness is good' can be tested by analysing whether an action produces happiness.
- On this basis, ethical statements can be proved true or false – they are verifiable.
- There are four principles of ethical naturalism, or four key ideas within the view:
  1. Moral statements are always propositional.
  2. These propositions are true.
  3. These propositions are true not because of human beings, but because of the way the world is around us.
  4. The natural realities of the world can be reduced to ethical realities.
- So, for example, the phrase 'murder is wrong', within naturalism, would be correct because it has relation to natural things which can happen in the world around us – it is both moral and cognitive.
- Ethical naturalism is largely reductionist in the way that it deals with ethical ideas to being only natural and eliminates the possibility of other ways of thinking about ethics.
- An example of an ethical theory which makes use of ethical naturalism is utilitarianism.
- By stating that the most ethical thing to do is to generate the greatest happiness, utilitarianism gives natural value to the moral assertion that goodness is pleasure.

### Naturalism and Absolutism

- Ethical naturalism is the belief that moral ideas can be reduced to natural moral ideas.
- It is not uncommon for ethical naturalist theories to be absolutist ethical theories – they fall into both categories – they are not mutually exclusive.
- Natural law is an example of an ethical theory which is both absolutist and naturalist.

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## Analysis

- Critics of this way of talking about morality are keen to point out these theoretical mistakes: they confuse what is the case with how it ought to be.
- This is known as the **is-ought gap**.
- It was first pointed out by Hume. He makes the point that when philosophers they are prone to slipping from what is the case to what ought to be the case, they got from the former to the latter.
- Furthermore, Hume thinks it is not clear at all how somebody could justify this is in Jeremy Bentham's assertion that 'everybody seeks pleasure and avoids pain'.
- It is a distinctive claim made by Jeremy Bentham in the opening line of his work *Principles of Morals and Legislation* ('Nature has placed mankind under the dominion of pain and pleasure.').
- Bentham would argue that this is a factual state of affairs and, I imagine, many would agree.
- However, Hume critiques this.
- This sentence is a normative claim. It is saying what we ought to do. That is not how things are. It might have been the case that the vast majority of Afro-American slaves in mid-eighteenth-century Mississippi, but few today would argue it ought to have been the case. Yet how can we decide? The problem of whether it is possible to move from 'is' to 'ought' is a discussion founded on a fallacy? The problem of whether it is possible to move from 'is' to 'ought' are in the same way we talk about how they ought to be will occupy us for many years.
- **J L Mackie** strongly opposed naturalism, as he believed that there is no such thing as objective moral truth. Therefore, all moral statements which are moral propositions are therefore false.

## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺	
What is naturalism?				
What is meant by stating that naturalism is a cognitive theory?				
How might naturalism be considered reductionist?				
What is an example of a naturalistic theory?				
What is the is-ought gap?				
What examples does Hume give to illustrate this?				
Why did J L Mackie oppose naturalism?				

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# Intuitionism

## Overview

Intuitionism is the belief that moral truths are, at their core, unadorned and that they are evidential of themselves. We are aware of them, so the theory goes, and they are championed by philosopher G E Moore.

It also posits some ideas about the nature of good and evil – that goodness is good and human beings exist, and that goodness cannot be altered or understood in any way other than that it is good.

## Key Points



### G E Moore

- G E Moore (1873–1958) is often associated with his Cambridge colleagues, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein.
- He was one of the main opponents of ethical naturalism, developing a theory of ethical non-naturalism.
- The work of these philosophers was considered radical at the time due to its close linguistic analysis and a lack of interest in 'speculation'.
- Moore, and his successors, all fundamentally felt that many of the puzzles philosophers had studied for millennia were actually not puzzles at all, but the result of confused language. They were extremely influential on what has come to be called analytic philosophy, which is the dominant way of doing philosophy today in English-speaking countries.
- He himself posited his ideas about ethical intuitionism in his work *Principia Ethica*.

### What is Intuitionism?

- Intuitionism is the belief that moral truths or ideas are unable to be sufficiently defined and are self-evidential of their moral truth.
- To illustrate this, Moore wrote:

*If I am asked, What is good? my answer is that good is good, and that is the end of the matter. How is good to be defined? my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is the end of the matter. Disappointing as these answers may appear, they are of the very best.*

*My point is that good is a simple notion, just as yellow is a simple notion; the manner of means, explain to anyone who does not already know it, what is good is.*

- What is 'good' could be known and identified through our intuition – we know it and it is self-evidently good.
- Moore uses the example of **yellow** to help explain this. Yellow is something we know it when we see it. We cannot say what yellow actually is – we can only point to a property, e.g. the Sun. We are, however, unlikely to dispute whether something is yellow or not.
- These truths are self-evident. They would continue to be true if human beings were extinct, and not dependent on, human beings' existence.
- We are unable to define the colour yellow as anything other than being a colour. In the same way, we are unable to define these truths as anything other than inherent truths.
- Moore believed that through the use of human reason and through our intuition we can know what these truths are. This is rather like the use of reason in Aquinas's natural law theory.

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## Analysis

- Moore's theory is able to overcome the **naturalistic fallacy** while still maintain objectivity. He is able to do so simply by insisting that moral goods are moral beliefs in this.
- **How exactly do we recognise goodness?** Moore claims that we are able to intuitively recognise 'goodness', but he does not explain how we do this or what exactly the non-natural is and so unlike anything else.
  - ◆ Geoffrey Warnock points out that this raises a number of serious difficulties. How can we distinguish natural moral properties from the natural properties? A utilitarian might say that we know it's wrong because it causes them pain, but this recognition is not the open question argument. Surely, however, that a utilitarian's influence on our moral thinking.
- **How does intuitionism explain moral disagreement?** How does it aim to resolve moral disagreement? As a moral cognitivist, Moore believes there are moral facts and moral falsehoods, yet how can we know them? If I think abortion is always wrong and you think it is always the opposite, how can we know who is grasping the moral fact and who the moral falsehood?
- **Even if there are moral facts, the intuitionist gives no reason why anyone should act morally.** If I say 'torturing innocent children is wrong', I may well be stating just such a fact, but this does not give anybody any reason *not* to torture children; all I've done, in effect, is state a fact, but I have not made it relevant to how persons should act.

## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is intuitionism?			
Which thinker championed this idea?			
How can we come to understand something as being 'good' within intuitionism?			
What example does Moore use to explain his idea?			
Which fallacy is intuitionism able to overcome?			
What issue does Warnock raise?			
What issue does intuitionism encounter in moral disagreements?			

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# Emotivism

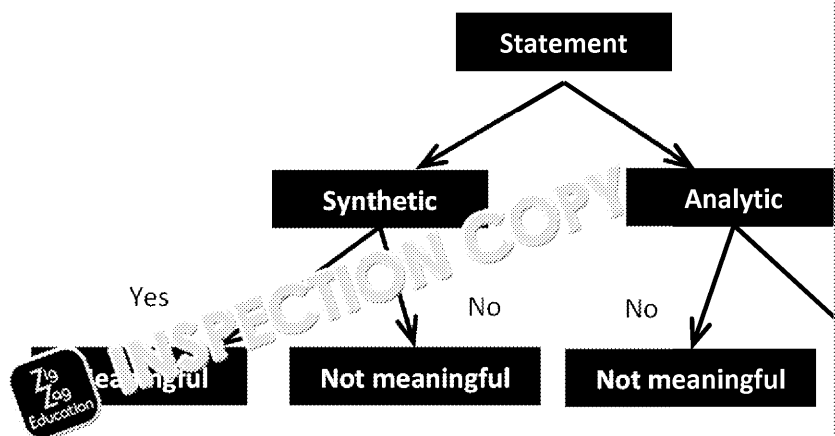
## Overview

Emotivism is the meta-ethical theory that posits the idea that moral statements are not statements of fact, but expressions of emotion. If someone says 'it is bad to lie', then all the meaning that this statement has is the value that it communicates. It is most commonly associated with A J Ayer, who was a key figure in the thought development of the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle. He posits that moral truths are not objective, which analytically, can be quite tricky when navigating all the right and wrong.

## Key Points

### A J Ayer

- The English philosopher **A J Ayer** (1910–1989) is the individual most closely associated with the development of emotivism.
- The roots of emotivism are in the Vienna Circle, a group of early-twentieth-century philosophers and scientists who met regularly in the Austrian capital to discuss ideas. This group was greatly influential on the thoughts of Ayer and his development of emotivism.
- The members of the Circle were advocates of a position known as **logical positivism**, which considered science and logic to be the only legitimate sources of knowledge. Crucially, logical positivism holds that for something to be called knowledge, it must be *meaningful*.
- Key to this insight was the **verification principle**, which set out a criterion for what can be considered meaningful or not.
- **Analytic statements** – statements which are true by definition, e.g. 'all bachelors are unmarried'.
- **Synthetic statements** – statements which can be proved/verified according to empirical evidence. Empirical evidence is proof based on knowledge from observation or experience. If a statement cannot be proved a priori (by reason alone), only a posteriori (by experience), then the synthetic statement 'it is raining' cannot be proved purely by thinking about it, but by looking out of the window. Synthetic statements also include mathematical statements, which are proved right or wrong according to the laws of mathematics.



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## Ethical Language as Functional and Persuasive: The 'Boo-hurrah'

- Ayer developed emotivism with the verification principle firmly in mind. He put ethical language to the test, we will find that it is clearly not tautological (the concept is not synonymous, for instance). Hence, ethical language cannot be analytical.
- It is also not possible to determine empirically whether a statement such as 'this is wrong' is true or false.
- Any attempt to do so would, of course, inevitably involve committing the naturalistic fallacy – taking ethical language out from being synthetically true or false. According to the verification principle, neither analytic nor synthetic statements are meaningful, then it is technically *meaningless*.
- Yet if this is true of ethical language, why do we persist in using words such as 'wrong'?
- Ayer holds that ethical language, although not logically meaningful, does have a function. It expresses disapproval or approval of a certain course of action, behaviour or character. This being unflatteringly referred to as the 'boo-hurrah' theory of morality, as it sees moral statements such as 'The mass murder of over two million people during the Cambodian genocide' as 'Boo! The Cambodian genocide! Boo! Mass murder!'
- In response to some of these criticisms, Ayer later amended his theory. He developed the 'weak verification principle', which held that statements could be considered meaningful, even if not verified by empirical evidence, 'if it is possible for experience to render it possible'.
- The weak verification principle made scientific and historical statements meaningful (ethical statements were considered meaningful if the statement referred to something, e.g. 'breaking that rule made you feel guilty').

## Analysis

- Emotivism helps to explain why it is so difficult to resolve conflicting moral views and reach an objective truth to arrive at.
- It recognises the wide variety of different moral viewpoints and gives them equal status, but they are all, in the end, meaningless.
- It is consistent with our understanding of morality and human development. We often attempt to influence others and seek approval.
- It shows how emotive statements, which lack empirical evidence, can still be powerful in influencing others.
- It makes moral debate pointless and meaningless, as all statements are equal.
- There is no way to judge between ethical statements and decide which one is better.
- People make ethical statements because they think they are true, not purely as a means of influencing others.
- It denies the opportunity for any universal or widely agreed-upon moral principles.
- Emotivist theories fail to properly distinguish ethical language from other forms of language. The emotional impact (for example, the impassioned speech that are the hallmarks of emotivism) is what gives it its power.
- Moreover, it seems that ethical language is not necessarily emotive in itself. When we are doing now, ethics is discussed in a matter-of-factly way.
- Historically, ethically significant decisions have been made, not in floods of emotion, but through dispassionate analysis in a bureaucrat's hand.
- The weak verification principle also rules out other forms of knowledge (historical knowledge, for example). Significantly, the emotivist theory is not itself verifiable, and so is technically meaningless on its own standards. (The statement, 'All meaningful statements are either synthetic or analytic, but not both' is neither an analytic nor a synthetic statement!)

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## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺	
What was the Vienna Circle?				
What is logical positivism?				
What is the verification principle?				
What is an analytic statement?				
What is a synthetic statement?				
What is a tautology?				
What purpose does Ayer think ethical language has?				
What is meant by the phrase 'boo-hurrah' arguments?				
What is a strength of logical positivism?				
What is a weakness?				
In what way does it contradict itself?				

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## Practice Exam-style Question

1. 'Ethical naturalism is the best way of approaching meta-ethics.' Discuss

### HINTS

In your answer you should:

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
  - ◆ key ideas regarding the nature of meta-ethics
  - ◆ key ideas within meta-ethical theories, describing what those theories claim
- Assess and evaluate facets of religious approaches and differing ideas and their impact:
  - ◆ awareness of which meta-ethical theories would support and oppose emotivism, naturalism and intuitionism.
  - ◆ awareness of challenges, strengths and weaknesses of the argument with the statement

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# Conscience

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<b>Ratio</b>	This was the term that Aquinas used to refer to the part of the human mind that he believes to be intrinsic to human nature.
<b>Synderesis</b>	The inner inclination that directs people away from making the morally wrong choices
<b>Conscientia</b>	The human reason which is used to make moral choices
<b>Thomas Aquinas</b>	Thirteenth-century theologian and monk who posited a theological approach to the conscience
<b>Vincible ignorance</b>	When an individual does not know that they are doing wrong
<b>Invincible ignorance</b>	When an individual does have the knowledge that they are doing wrong
<b>Romans 2:14–15</b>	Bible verse which supports Aquinas's concept of the conscience
<b>Intuitive</b>	Thomas Aquinas believed that conscience was inherent in our intuition.
<b>Reason</b>	The use of human logic to come to a conclusion
<b>Sigmund Freud</b>	Austrian psychiatrist famous for developing the theory of psychoanalysis
<b>Psychosexual/phallic stage</b>	The stage in childhood when Freud believes that the child's sexual feelings are directed towards the parent of the opposite sex
<b>Libido</b>	Sexual urges or desire
<b>Id</b>	The part of the human mind which is completely driven by instinct and desire
<b>Ego</b>	The part of the mind which Freud believes acts as a mediator between the id and the superego
<b>Superego</b>	The part of the mind which is influenced by the social norms and values of the culture in which an individual was raised
<b>Oedipus complex</b>	The phenomenon of psychosexual development in which a young boy has sexual feelings for his mother and envies his father
<b>Guilt</b>	Freud defines this as when the concepts of the superego are violated
<b>Electra complex</b>	The female equivalent of the Oedipus complex

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# Aquinas's Theological Approach

## Overview

St Thomas Aquinas was an important theologian in the development of natural law theory, specifically concerning the development of natural law theory, and his five proofs of God were set forward in his *Summa Theologica*. His approach to the idea of conscience has strong links with ideas which were addressed in previous parts of the course.

The idea of our conscience is actually really important to the understanding of natural law. This natural law is something that we all instinctively have in our own minds. He believes that we can use reason with this, and we can use reason in order to work out moral ideas from it.



## Key Points

### General Points

- Aquinas's ideas about the conscience are closely tied to his ideas regarding natural law, which were set forward in Year 1 of the course.
- As a thirteenth-century Christian monk, Thomas Aquinas is writing from a Christian perspective. His viewpoints are a Christian form of ethics, and any reference to God in this context is about the God of traditional Judeo-Christianity.
- He argued that the knowledge of what is right and wrong is instinctive and innate. He believes that this is something that we all have within ourselves.
- Our conscience, according to Aquinas, is our inward knowledge, the innate sense of whether or not the things that we do are morally correct or incorrect. He believes that these ideas come from God, but that when God created human beings, He imbued us with these ideas, so that human beings could use reason in order to discover moral truth and become closer to God.
- Reason, for Aquinas, was completely and utterly central to his ideas. He believed that human beings' conscience was a helping tool from which human beings could use their reason in order to ascertain what is morally right and wrong. He stated in his *Summa*, 'Reason is in man rather than in God'.
- He believed that every human being possesses ratio. This is, for Aquinas, the human ability to reason. It was a combination of the innate moral sense with the divine law – the Bible – for example, in Romans 2:14–15).

*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. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and they themselves will at times accuse them and at other times even defend them.*



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## The Concept of Conscience in Aquinas

- Conscience is strongly linked to the idea that we have innate knowledge of what is right and wrong, which informs our understanding of what is right and wrong.
- In the New Testament, in the teachings of the Apostle Paul, the word which describes conscience is known as a **synderesis**. This is a concept used to explain the part of the mind which who experiences guilt.
- For Aquinas, there were two different parts to making a moral decision. These are:
  - **Synderesis**: the correct moral principle, choosing to do what is right and not wrong.
  - **Conscientia**: the practical intellect, which is able to decipher what is good and bad in a particular situation and make a judgement in a moral choice.
- Aquinas argued that there are two different ways of making a moral choice: firstly, intentionally against the law of the Bible; secondly, doing something which you do not know is against biblical law).
- To make a correct choice as a result of using wisdom is considered to be a virtue of prudence.
- The conscience is, in Aquinas's thought, innate in all human beings. It is something that is part of the natural make-up as a species, and will always seek to discover the correct moral choice.

## Vincibility and Invincibility

- Sometimes Aquinas argues that there are two different categories of moral errors: **vincible** errors and **invincible** errors.
- He believed that it is not appropriate to blame someone with impaired conscience for their actions if their conscience has led them to make a wrong choice when they could have made a right one.
- The conscience can be mistaken (which Aquinas terms 'vincible') or it can be wrong despite having been correct (which he terms 'invincible').
- He also argues that children do not have a fully developed sense of conscience. Their thoughts overlap (slightly!) with Freud's. This is the stage in life when errors happen as children are still developing and do not yet fully have the virtue of prudence. As we learn from mistakes in moral choices and learning from them, we can begin to understand the correct moral choice in our moral choices.
- These errors in judgement can also be termed **vincible ignorance** and **invincible ignorance**.
- If someone commits a wrong act when they are **vincibly ignorant**, then they are not responsible for their actions. If someone commits a wrong act when they are **invincibly ignorant**, then they are considered to be responsible for their actions.
- When we err morally, in Aquinas's thought, it is not an error of the conscience itself, but an error of the intellect. We interpret our conscience incorrectly.

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## Natural Law

- When we consider his teachings within the context of natural law and the law of God, we can see how the two ideas link strongly. Aquinas's ideas about natural law play a large role in human experience.
- **Synderesis** is innate knowledge, which Aquinas believes to be the primary principle of natural law.
- **Conscientia** is then used to bridge the gap between primary precepts and conscience, in the thought of Aquinas, can be used to create secondary precepts. These can be moral as our knowledge of the primary precepts is believed to be innate, and we can use it to create secondary precepts.
- Prudence, therefore, is an important virtue in learning how to use our conscience to create secondary precepts from the basis of our innate sense of conscience.
- We can see the idea of natural law as being part of Christian thought on the law of God within the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (GS 16):

*In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself; it invites him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience often speaks to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that. For man has in his conscience the very image of God's own likeness; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will*

## Key Figures

### St Thomas Aquinas

- Thomas Aquinas was a thirteenth-century monk.
- He was a hugely influential theologian, philosopher and intellectual.
- He is currently viewed as a saint by the Catholic Church and his main ideas put forward in his document *Summa Theologica*, as discussed below, are quoted as being a source of inspiration for the Catholic Church which is the Church at which puts forward all of the teachings of the Church.

## Key Texts

### *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas

- This is the major work of Aquinas and contains many of his famous ideas, including his ideas on existence.
- Within *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas also put forward his ideas about natural law and his ideas about the conscience and how this functions in human beings.
- His beliefs were influenced by his Christianity, taking teachings from the Bible. Romans 15 are useful in understanding the basis of his ideas on inner knowledge and conscience.

### Romans 2:14–15

- Romans 2:14–15 are key Bible verses which Aquinas considered to be divine law and which also directly describes his idea of the conscience. This is the passage which addresses the concept of synderesis, which is key to the ideas of Aquinas.

*"When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, they are a law to themselves. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, and their conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or excuse them."*

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## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹️	Some Idea 😐	Good Idea 😊
Who did Aquinas believe that our sense of conscience comes from?			
Which other text is this heavily influences the idea of conscience?			
In which text did Aquinas posit his ideas?			
What is a vincible error?			
What is an invincible error?			
On what two pillars did Aquinas build his views?			
What is meant by synderesis?			
What is meant by conscientia?			
What is the significance of Romans 2:14–15 to Aquinas's teachings?			

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# Freud's Psychological Approach

## Overview

Sigmund Freud was a famous psychotherapist whose ideas about the mind were somewhat ingrained in the British social consciousness – coining such phrases as ‘the unconscious’ and ‘the Oedipus complex’. The concepts of the conscience were linked strongly to his ideas regarding psychological links between the mind and the body.

He believed that the conscience was a psychological phenomenon rather than a spiritual one, shaped through experience of the world and the influences one has in childhood.

## Key Points

### General Points

- Famous psychiatrist and psychoanalyst (indeed, famous for inventing that term). Sigmund Freud also posited an idea about the conscience.
- As his job and ideas might suggest, his approach towards ideas of the conscience was based in the mind – in the psychology of human beings rather than from a divine source, such as the one posited by Aquinas.
- Freud was an atheist and did not believe in God.
- He put forward his ideas in his famous work *The Ego and the Id*.
- For Freud, the conscience is pre-rational – it is something we have in our brain that comes into conflict occasionally with our reason. It is often as a result of a conflict between the id and the superego.
- Before addressing his ideas about the conscience, we must first touch on his ideas about the mind.
- He did not believe that human beings have a soul, unlike Aquinas, and believed that the mind can be broken down into different sections and from this be understood – rather than being a single, indivisible entity.
- Freud believed that the ‘person’, or our understanding of a person, could be broken down into sections that interact and are often in conflict:

#### 1. The id:

This is the unconscious, base self, driven by base desires. It has no real moral compass and wants to pursue instant gratification.

#### 2. The ego:

This is the conscious self. It attempts to generally mediate between the id and the superego.

#### 3. The superego:

This is the part of the mind which is formed by external influences, such as parents and society. It is the internalised values imposed upon the individual from the outside.

- These terms refer to the different parts of human nature and the different external influences that environment can have on our psyche. His ideas about the conscience are developed from his ideas about the development of adult minds.
- These three ideas, he argues, are constantly interacting.
- The id wishes only for pleasure, driven by desires to have our base wants satisfied. The ego, as the mediator between the id and the superego, which are usually the forces that control the id, believes in a sense of morality, as a result, guilt.
- He disagreed with natural moral law; our moral codes, he believed, are not innate but are learned through experience rather than something which is natural.
- We have not always had them, but rather have developed them over the course of our lives through experiences and the authorities in our lives. The experiences and influences in our lives shape who we are.

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- He believed that all psychological conditions in adults can be explained through three different parts. He believes that these reactions were usually caused by the superego and the ego.
- For Freud, conscience is linked strongly to guilt.

## Psychosexual Development in Childhood

- One of the key aspects in Freud's psychological approach is the effect of childhood experiences on the development of the psyche.
- He believed that childhood was important to the development of the psyche. The development of issues in adulthood are linked to his ideas of the five stages of psychosexual development.
- In childhood, Freud believes that the id is the natural default state. This is the example of a baby crying for a reason regarding when they will be fed and will react badly if not being fed.
- There are five psychosexual stages in childhood, which is largely driven by the libido.
- As children grow up, Freud posits that they go through certain psychological stages. In the phallic stage, he believes children develop sexual awareness and calls the Oedipus complex.
- This is the development of the id's sexual awareness in which a child will experience attraction to the opposite-sex parent. In this case, they will develop a resentment of the other parent.
- In Freud's theory, individuals will experience a form of sexual attraction towards a parent when concerning the Oedipus complex. In this case, they will develop a complex with the parent.
- This is an example of the conflict between the superego and the id – the id seeks to satisfy its desires, however, the superego dictates the social norm that it is inappropriate to have sexual feelings for a parent. Therefore, the complex is experienced.
- There is an equivalent complex for females, known as the Electra complex, which affects females, known as the Electra complex. This is less well known, and Freud believes that it is not as strong as the Oedipus complex.

## Conscience and Freudian Thought

- For Freud, conscience is linked inextricably with guilt.
- Guilt for Freud was conflict between the superego and the ego and id.
- Children go through experiences which develop their conscience as a result of interactions with parents and institutions who have authority in their lives as they are growing up.
- Repression in Freudian thought is the tension between the id and the superego. The superego is considered to be socially unacceptable.
- Our defence mechanisms are also dictated by our experience in childhood and the interaction between the different facets of the mind.
- The way in which our adult selves navigate social interaction and deal with problems are rooted in the subconscious development which occurred in childhood.
- When we do something that the superego has learned through childhood is wrong, we experience guilt.

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## Key Figures

### Sigmund Freud

- Sigmund Freud was a highly influential and famous Austrian scientist.
- He is known for inventing the theory of, and coining the term, psychoanalysis.
- His ideas about guilt and conscience as having their roots in the psychosexual development during the development of their mental capacity through different stages of childhood in its time and continues to influence psychology today.

### Key Texts

#### The Ego and the Id

- This is the influential academic paper in which Freud put forward his ideas regarding the psychosexual development of children.
- He posited in this text the idea of the three facets of the human mind – the id, ego and superego.

## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺	
What was Freud famous for inventing?				
What is the id?				
What is the ego?				
What is the superego?				
How did he believe these effected the conscience?				
What was the term for the psychosexual issue Freud believed occurred in childhood?				
What were the key ideas about this psychosexual stage?				
What is meant by the term 'phallic stage' of childhood?				
What role did Freud believe God played in the conscience?				
In which paper did he put forward his ideas?				
Where did he think guilt came from?				

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# Comparison between Freud and Aquinas

## Overview

The two theories are, obviously, quite at odds with one another in the origins of their ideas. It is important, then, to evaluate their respective strengths and weaknesses in a comparison of their ideas.

Their ideas have both modicums of agreement and disagreement on the issues surrounding the concept of guilt, the presence of God in conscience (the superego for Freud) and the influence of social context on decision-making.

## Key Points

### On the Concept of Guilt

- Both Aquinas and Freud acknowledge the reality of the human experience of the experience of conscience.
- Aquinas's theory and Freud's theory both encounter the same issue in the face of the experience of guilt. Psychopaths contradict both theories as, regardless of what their childhood, they still exhibit no guilt or empathy, and, if this is the case, the ideas and concepts are not innate, effectively challenging Aquinas's ideas.
- Erich Fromm critiqued Freud's polarisation of the idea of what drives human behaviour (the superego). He argued this view was too narrow and too polarised. He also argued that the superego was problematic – the superego is obeyed not because it is moral, but because of the life of the individual – whereas in Aquinas's theory, human beings should do the right thing. Taking the example of Nazi Germany, if the social context was such that situations provoke and which situations do not provoke a feeling of guilt, then suffering in a society in which causing suffering and inflicting would experience no guilt. There were many who felt that, despite the authority of the regime, it was not right to do the actions that it did, so Aquinas's approach appears a more accurate representation of the human experience.
- An extreme example of someone following his superego without question would be a soldier who argued that he did nothing but follow the orders he was given.

### On the Presence of God in the Conscience

- Aquinas, obviously, as a Christian monk, viewed the presence of God in such a way that it was central to his theory of conscience.
- Freud, as an atheist, obviously disagreed.
- One of the biggest weaknesses of Aquinas's argument on conscience is that it relies on the presence of God. If the individual does not believe in God. Take God out of the argument, and the argument falls apart.
- Furthermore, Aquinas's evidential proof for his argument on conscience is the holy book given to humans as divine revelation, then of course it makes sense. However, if one does not, then we run into a slight conundrum.
- Conversely, Freud's theory does have some evidential basis and some case studies that illustrate and illuminate his ideas, such as the Oedipus complex being illustrated in the case of Little Hans. This was somewhat controversial, however, so it is worth remembering that Freud considers this evidence to be sufficient to support his theory.
- One of the strengths of Aquinas's argument is, however, that the vast majority of human experience supports the existence of conscience and a general idea of what is right and wrong, and that it is not just a social construct.
- The idea of God within the superego is somewhat present, not as a reality but as a moral authority.
- Freud argued that the religious ideas about God and about the moral codes are involved with the construction of the conscience. The key difference is that the influence of God is less about the fact of God himself and more about the influence of social context on decision-making.

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## On the Process of Moral Decision -making

- On the topic of making a moral decision we can see clear differences between
- The question revolves mainly around how much moral responsibility can be a decision based on the two different ideas of conscience.
- One weakness of Aquinas's theory here is that the focus on intent removes the
- If someone does something wrong and did not intend to cause harm, then the Aquinas's thought. However, that is not how modern society and modern law the law are punished.
- It is notable, however, that conscience does come into play regarding the punishment of moral decisions and the infractions of the law. Reduced sentences might be removed for the actions, or harsher ones given to those who do not. If an impairment of the ability to use their conscience, then this may also be a factor.
- Aquinas's theory does, however, do very well to emphasise the role of human making, as the majority of people would agree that they use their conscience process of making an ethical choice.
- The idea also assumes that every person has an innate moral value and sense therefore, every person should have the same sense of right and wrong. However, there are many people who feel strongly, for example, that eating meat is morally wrong, while others who do not see any issue with the consumption of animal meat for food.
- There are so many factors which influence the individual understanding of what is right and wrong, including the culture and environment in which a person was raised and lives.
- Some people might also have a genetic predisposition to view things in a certain way, for example, for those who are psychopaths, whose understanding of right and wrong, whose sense of guilt as a result, is greatly reduced when compared to the average person.
- In this way, the Freudian reading of conscience seems to be stronger as it makes the phenomenon is heavily influenced by the situation of the individual.
- He also does not necessarily address the situation in which conscience and reason are in conflict, how then does the process of moral decision-making proceed?
- Further, Aquinas does not leave his argument open to the possibility that an individual might knowingly commit a wrong action.
- One of the issues with Freud's idea of the superego imposing its will on the ego is that the choice being made. It is the manifestation of social convention, rather than a personal choice.
- If we examine the id, it is free of any moral ideas, completely and utterly driven by base experiences, e.g. the want to feed. It is obsessed with meeting base desires, while the superego, mediated by the ego, stopping the id from simply doing whatever it wants.

## Key Texts

### *Man For Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics.* London Routledge, IV.2

- In this book, Erich Fromm argues that modern men and women have become isolated from their collective social group has lost a sense of a guiding force (such as a conscience).
- He also discusses the importance of individuals' rights, and puts forward his own ideas on how to achieve a better society.
- He does also give his praise to Freud as a great thinker and acknowledges his influence on the modern world, emphasising ideas of conscience.

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## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
How does Aquinas approach the idea of guilt?			
How does Freud approach the idea of guilt?			
How does Aquinas approach the presence of God in conscience?			
How does Freud approach the presence of God in conscience?			
How does Aquinas approach the idea of moral decision-making as a result of conscience?			
How does Freud approach the idea of moral decision-making as a result of conscience?			

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## Practice Exam-style Question

2. Assess how useful the theological approach towards conscience is. (4)

### HINTS

In your answer you should:

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
  - ◆ key ideas regarding what conscience is
  - ◆ key ideas about the theological approach towards conscience
  - ◆ key ideas about psychological approaches towards conscience
- Analyse and evaluate facets of religious approaches and differing ideas and impact:
  - ◆ key arguments for the strength of other ideas, including Freud's psychoanalysis
  - ◆ key arguments as to why the theological approach is more useful, if at all
  - ◆ issues of proof and evidentiary basis
  - ◆ issues of exceptions, for both arguments

[AO2]

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# Sexual Ethics

G<sub>2</sub>

L<sub>1</sub>

O<sub>1</sub>

<b>Sex</b>	The physical act of intercourse
<b>Heterosexuality</b>	Exclusively opposite-sex attraction in the context of sexual activity
<b>Marital sex</b>	Sex within the context of a marriage, between two people who are married
<b>Premarital sex</b>	Sex before the context of marriage
<b>Extramarital sex</b>	Sex outside the context of marriage, between one married person and their spouse
<b>Natural law</b>	A system of ethics posited by St Thomas Aquinas which informs sexual ethics
<b>Homosexuality</b>	Same-sex sexual and romantic relationships
<b>Adultery</b>	Sex outside marriage; another term for extramarital sex but with a negative connotation
<b>Contraception</b>	The means by which an individual or a couple may attempt to prevent pregnancy while being sexually active
<b>Exodus 20:14</b>	Biblical teaching which specifically prohibits the practice of adultery
<b>Genesis 2:23–24</b>	Biblical teaching which is used to support the promotion of marriage
<b>Leviticus 20:13</b>	Biblical teaching used to oppose the practice of homosexual acts
<b>Humanae Vitae</b>	An encyclical of the Roman Catholic Church which expressly forbids contraception such as homosexuality and the use of contraception
<b>On Liberty</b>	An influential paper by utilitarian philosopher John Stuart Mill which played a role in the decriminalisation of homosexual acts with the Criminal Justice Act 1967

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# Introduction to Sexual Ethics

## Overview

Sex is present among most creatures and beings of the Earth – in the animal kingdom, plants, and human beings are no different. Sexual ethics is the discussion of how we should practice sex. There are various issues which are of consequence and discussion concerning pre- and extramarital sex, homosexuality and contraception.

Therefore, when discussing the issue of sexual ethics, we must first come to an understanding of what sex is, what their background is (religion, culture and socially speaking) and how these issues relate to how they are understood in modern society.

## Key Points

### General Points

- Sex and sexuality have various different understandings and forms within human society. Before discussing ethical themes to understand the different kinds of sexual practices, it is important to have a clear understanding of the different discussions of sexual ethics regarding these ethical theories.
- Traditionally, within Christianity, sex was (and is) viewed as something which was only for procreation and within marriage.
- The United Kingdom has traditionally been a Christian country, and, therefore, sexual ethics have heavily influenced social and cultural attitudes towards sex and law.
- However, as time has gone on, and society evolved with it, the way in which sex is viewed by society within Britain has changed and shifted.
- The challenge of secularism has meant that for many people, the authority of the church is no longer in the hands of the church.
- Therefore, when approaching discussions of modern sexual ethics, it is important to have a clear understanding of the different viewpoints.
- The legal and tolerability of a variety of sexual practices has shifted.
- Marital sex is generally one of the most accepted forms of sexual practice.
- Within a traditional, heteronormative view, this is sex between a married couple and only between a man and a woman to each other.

### Premarital Sex

- Premarital sex refers to sex outside marriage, literally before marriage.
- This is increasingly common within today's society, with many couples opting to have sex before getting married as they may not see marriage as a desirable option for themselves.
- 2018 saw a heterosexual couple win a court case in which they wanted to legalise their civil partnership rather than a marriage (previously this was an option only for same-sex couples).

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- There are numerous arguments for and against premarital sex, some of which

Arguments for premarital sex	Arguments against premarital sex
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is an individual's choice when they have sex, and it only affects the individuals involved.</li> <li>Marriage has become less important in today's society, with more people choosing to cohabit.</li> <li>There can be loving, committed and stable relationships outside marriage.</li> <li>Sexual intercourse is a common occurrence.</li> <li>Religious teaching is not relevant to atheists or agnostics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It increases the risk of sexually transmitted diseases.</li> <li>Judeo-Christian religions regard it as immoral because sex is only for a harmonious relationship and the exclusive commitment of marriage.</li> <li>There can be serious problems from unprotected committed relationships.</li> <li>It risks pregnancy outside a stable family.</li> </ul>

## Extramarital Sex

- Extramarital sex is sex with someone who is not your married partner, which is often referred to as adultery.
- Adultery is quite widely condemned in both religious and secular ethics as a violation of the values of fidelity, trust and loyalty. It often causes emotional distress for all members of the married couple, and can lead to divorce or separation.
- Marriage is generally considered to be a relationship which is exclusive and lifelong. These values are reflected in the vows made during wedding ceremonies (including the promise of fidelity). Therefore, extramarital sex is a violation of the ideal of marriage.
- Adultery can also refer to sex that takes place after a married couple have separated. There is no discussion about whether sex in this situation is right or wrong. Some people believe that it is right to have sex with another partner after a marriage has broken down, while others still believe that one's married partner should remain.
- Certain cultures, including in some Christian and Muslim traditions, accept polygamy. Polygamy is the practice of marriage as an exclusive bond between two people.
- Also, within secular culture, relationships such as open marriages may be considered acceptable. In these relationships, all involved within the relationship have full knowledge of the relationship and agree to extramarital sex which is happening.
- Christianity traditionally condemns extra- and premarital sex.
- It is considered to be against the will of God and contrary to the need for self-control and the desires: **1 Thessalonians 4:3–4**: 'For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and self-control, as you compete for the possession of your own vessel as one who is holy and without blemish; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and self-control, as you compete for the possession of your own vessel as one who is holy and without blemish; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and self-control, as you compete for the possession of your own vessel as one who is holy and without blemish.'

## Homosexuality

- Homosexuality refers specifically to a same-sex romantic and sexual relationship in a romantic relationship.
- However, there are a variety of different sexual identities that are covered by the term, and many of the same issues within sexual ethics as those who identify as heterosexual.
- Homosexuality has, within the UK, been viewed through the lens of the traditional Christian based worldview. This views homosexuality as immoral.
- While homosexuality within society was traditionally not accepted, modern society has become more accepting of different sexualities.

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- Homosexuality was decriminalised in the UK in 1967, and in 2004 homosexual couples were able to form **civil partnerships** (granting them the same legal rights as other married couples).
- Despite significant religious opposition, in March 2014 homosexual couples were able to marry in the UK, marking another milestone in equal treatment.
- Within Christianity, homosexuality was traditionally considered not to be the Christian view, considered to be morally wrong. This has evolved over time, and while some Christians, from a Christian viewpoint, such as adhering to natural law, may still view it as wrong, other Christians, such as situation ethicists, have resulted in a shift towards a focus on the teachings of Christ which are based on love and against judgement.
- This is due to certain biblical teachings, such as Leviticus 20:13 which states:
 

*If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; their blood is upon them.*

## Key Texts

### Leviticus 20:13

- This is a teaching within the Old Testament of the Bible, and, therefore, considered a teaching for Christians and Jews.
- If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; their blood is upon them.*

### Genesis 2:23–24

- This is one of the first biblical teachings on marriage, coming from the very beginning of the Bible concerning the very first married couple (Adam and Eve). It teaches that in marriage, a man and a woman should leave their families and make a new family in their marital union.
- Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Man, for out of Man this one has been taken.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

### Exodus 20:14

- This is the seventh of the Ten Commandments which states:
 

*You shall not commit adultery*
- As one of the Ten Commandments, it is central to the Christian understanding of the law. It should, therefore, be understood to be of importance in discussions of extra-curricular activities.

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## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹️	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea ☺️	
What are sexual ethics?				
What are the different sexual ethics within Great Britain?				
How have these evolved?				
What is premarital sex?				
Why might some people disagree with this?				
What is extramarital sex?				
Why might some people disagree with this?				
What is homosexual sex?				
Why might some people disagree with this?				
What impact does the teaching of Genesis 2:23–24 have on sexual ethics?				

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# Application and Discussion of Four Ethical Theories

## Overview

Ethical theories are theories which instruct individuals how to live life for many people and, therefore, it is important that ethical theories can be applied to such things. In the interests of this topic, there are four main ethical theories which will be discussed in the context of sexual ethics. These are natural law, situation ethics, Kantian ethics and utilitarian ethics. Each of these ethical theories can be applied to sexual ethics and in some cases directly address some capacity.

## Key Points

### General Points

- All of these ethical theories have been discussed before in Year 1 of this Religion course. You should be familiar with the basic principles. What this section is focusing on is applying these ideas and principles to real-life issues.
- Sex is an example of one such real-life issue, as some sexual issues have traditionally been a source of contention.
- In the interests of examining different ethical theories from this course, sexual ethics will be approached through four different ethical theories – natural law, situation ethics, Kantian ethics and utilitarian ethics. Each of these ethical theories has a different approach to sexual ethics.

### Natural Law

- Natural law is an ethical theory within the Christian faith which was developed by St Thomas Aquinas (a thirteenth-century Italian philosopher) in his famous *Summa Theologica*.
- The application of natural law to sexual ethics is not as abstract as some of the other ethical theories that we will discuss here, because it has been clearly demonstrated in the teachings of the Catholic Church in their catechism, which contains their teachings on various ethical dilemmas.
- The catechism is heavily influenced by the teachings and ideas of Thomas Aquinas's natural law, so much so that it even cites *Summa Theologica* in the references section of the text.
- The catechism of the Catholic Church views any sexual union or a sexual practice between two heterosexual adults who are married as being immoral.
- Concerning homosexuality, within natural law theory, it is unethical. This is because it is not through the union of two people of the same sex. Since one of the primary purposes of sex is to procreate, this, therefore, is in violation of one of the key ideas, and would be considered immoral.
- It is also against divine law, which is contained within the Bible through teaching the aforementioned verse in Leviticus.
- On sex, Aquinas stated that 'the natural style or manner of intercourse is to be observed, which he might have considered to be unnatural, which in the case of homosexuality. For Aquinas, any emission of semen which did not have the purpose of procreation was immoral and therefore sexual conduct. Therefore, homosexual practices which do not result in procreation (with the exclusion of the rhythm method) can be considered to be against natural law. If the telos (purpose) of human beings is to procreate, then any sexual act which is not correct if it cannot fulfil this.
- Within natural law, there are primary precepts which Aquinas believes are designed to govern moral choices.

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- The primary precepts of importance to the debate surrounding sexual ethics are of life, reproduction and the order of society.
- In the encyclical by the Roman Catholic Church on sexual ethics, *Humanae Vitae*, the teachings of natural law as their source for sexual ethics are underlined. In this document, men are called to natural observation of sex. It argues that homosexuality is unnatural as it cannot result in reproduction, but it does concede that such desires are from nature.
- Sexual pleasure is considered a secondary result of sex, which, while good within marriage, is not considered to be the main aim of sexual intercourse and, therefore, the focus. It is considered an appetitive good, rather than a real good – it is a happy function of sex.
- Concerning extramarital sex, and to an extent premarital sex, natural law is not seen as the ideal, and sex outside marriage or before marriage threatens the ordered society, as it is sex outside the confines which natural law has deemed appropriate for society.
- There is a variety of ways in which natural law can be challenged. It can be argued that indeed this legalism gave rise to the reactionary situation ethics within Christianity.
- It can be argued to not fully address many of the new issues of modern life. Does natural law apply to a couple who have done everything 'right' within the bounds of natural law (heterosexual, marital sex) but are infertile. Should their sex be considered to be moral if it cannot fulfil the telos of creation of life?

### Situation Ethics

- Situation ethics was developed in response to a cultural shift away from natural law as a result of a big change in cultural attitudes away from a legalistic form of morality.
- The primary focus of situation ethics is the concept of agape, which is the unconditional love demonstrated by Christ. As long as an action can be said to be serving the love of agape, then it can be said to be moral in the thought process of situation ethics. Furthermore, as long as love and justice are served, then the interests of agape have been served and, therefore, an action can be considered to be moral.
- So, for example, homosexuality can be considered to be morally permissible within situation ethics.
- How then, does this apply to discussions of sexual ethics?
- There are four principles to situation ethics – pragmatism, personalism, relativism and positivism.
- The three more important parts of these principles which apply specifically to sexual ethics are personalism, relativism and positivism. The thought goes, within situation ethics, the right thing for the individual, relative to their specific situation and their specific circumstances, regardless of whether or not it violates natural law, it can be considered to be moral. If the agape, the most loving thing to do in that situation, then it is fine.
- Things such as cohabitation, for example, under the ideas of situation ethics, are acceptable as long as there is love emphasised in the relationship between the two cohabitants.
- Homosexuality could also be argued to be permissible here within Christianity. It goes that as long as two consenting adults love each other, and this love serves the good, it can be considered to be moral.
- They argue that the traditional view of natural law theory can lead to condemnation with a view to different sexual orientation to the perceived norm of heterosexuality, which is contrary to the teachings of Christ and contrary to the principle of upholding the sanctity of marriage.
- Extramarital sex could, perhaps, cause an issue for the situation ethicist as seen when separated from the reality of emotional pain. Justice might be challenged by the situation ethicist as it would not be considered to be moral – it does not seem just to break a vow.

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- Furthermore, while it can be used to posit that premarital sex can be justified, consider promiscuity to be an ideal, as it may not serve the end of upholding marriage.
- How, then, can we assess situation ethics?
- It is not the most specific approach and is incredibly flexible; however, it can be a method of measuring what is and what isn't morally permissible.
- It does fit well with the individualistic societal attitude, which is pervasive today.

## Kantian Ethics

- Kantian ethics is governed first and foremost by the thoughts of the founder, Immanuel Kant, and the duty of every individual.
- The view on sex and sexual ethics is complicated within Kantian ethics. Unlike natural law theory, there is not one cohesive view, and it cannot be said to be supportive of one stance – there is a lot of nuance.
- Kant personally held marriage in an extremely high regard, and had a somewhat negative view of homosexuality as he declared it to 'lower man below beast'. However, this does not dictate Kantian ethics – the view of the man does not dictate the view of the ethical system as a whole.
- Kantian ethics contains an idea of three postulates.
- In terms of the categorical imperatives, how do these apply to sexual ethics?
- Consent is central to the idea of Kantian ethics – freedom is one of the three postulates, and the freedom to choose to enter into a sexual relationship or situation is highly valued. Any sexual activity which is occurring outside a consensual context is considered to be wholly wrong.
- While this may seem obvious, consent has less importance within some other ethical systems, such as utilitarianism, which will be explored later.
- The permissibility of homosexuality is argued by some Kantian ethicists to be universalisable. We are all born gay, and do not all feel same sexual urges (homosexual or heterosexual).
- Furthermore, if we universalised this principle, then all people would be homosexual, and natural reproduction, which would be a problem for the continuation of the species.
- However, the challenge can then arise with the third categorical imperative that human beings should be treated as an end in themselves rather than a means to an end. Procreation is a good thing and to be promoted, rather than the absence of it. If this can be read to view human beings as a means to an end rather than an end in themselves, Kantian ethics, this is wrong.
- Importantly, duty within Kantian ethics also includes the importance of the institution of marriage. Extramarital sex is wrong.
- Even if those who are in a marriage decide that after a few years they are happy and their relationship works and perhaps have an open marriage, this, within Kantian ethics, can be wrong as it cannot be universalised without causing harm to society (all husbands cheating on all the time!), and it would also break the vow of faithfulness which should be made. Extramarital sex is condemned within Kantian ethics.
- Furthermore, promiscuity within the context of premarital sex (i.e. a one-night stand) can be considered to be wrong as it is using an individual as a means to an end (the end being sex) and this would be considered to be immoral.
- Masturbation in the same way can be considered to be immoral – you are treating yourself as a means to an end rather than an end in yourself.
- Therefore, this would be considered to be immoral.

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## Utilitarian Ethics

- Utilitarianism is, as discussed in the first year of this course, the ethical theory that posits that the best course of action within a moral dilemma is the course of action which will gain the highest level of happiness for the greatest number of people possible.
- There are various different forms of utilitarianism, and as a result, different views on what is considered to be ethical within the topic of sexual ethics.
- Act utilitarianism, which is the original form of utilitarianism, as posited by Jeremy Bentham, is relativist towards an individual's acts – it posits the importance of the greatest happiness for the greatest number in a given situation.
- However, when applied to sexual ethics, this approach can be considered to be problematic. The infamous example of this is the fact that theoretically, the principle of utilitarianism (the greatest happiness for the greatest number) could ethically justify horrific things such as gang rape – in this case, the pleasure of the perpetrators is quantitatively greater than that of the victim as there are more perpetrators than victims.
- Furthermore, since utilitarianism measures with pleasure – if someone is involved in an action which they didn't consent to, but did experience some pleasure from the encounter, as sometimes happens within rape, then pleasure on both ends has been achieved, meaning that the action must be good.
- Rule utilitarianism prohibits this. This was posited by John Stuart Mill. He introduced the harm principle – as long as an action creates the greatest happiness for the greatest number and causes no great harm to another person, then it can be considered to be ethical. The harm principle, therefore, does not consider the original example of gang rape to be ethical.
- Furthermore, Mill focused on a qualitative measure of pleasure. He believed that pleasure can be divided into two categories, the higher and the lower category. He considered sex to be a lower pleasure, therefore, this would give sexual ethics less importance.
- Utilitarianism is also works in the favour of the majority, so if the majority of people are homosexual and would be upset by the practice of it, then it is immoral. However, if society has no problem with homosexuality, and it creates happiness for homosexuals, then it is moral.
- This is a highly relativist way of approaching sexual ethics and is, therefore, not a widespread level.
- Singer's preference utilitarianism could easily be used to support sexual ethics such as homosexuality – this theory would see no problems with homosexuality. Singer sees an action as moral as long as it promotes the interests of those who are involved within the action.
- If it is in the interests of two people of the same sex to have a sexual and/or romantic relationship, then he would have no ethical issue with this taking place as it is fulfilling the interests of those who are involved.

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## Key Texts

### St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

- This is the text in which Thomas Aquinas put forward his ideas on natural law
- It became incredibly influential in Church thought, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church

### J S Mill, *On Liberty*

- This was an influential text in which utilitarian John Stuart Mill posited the idea that individual choices did not have a negative impact upon another person (known as the harm principle) and that the business of that individual was what their sexual ethics were.
- This work was influential in the legalisation of homosexual relations in the UK

## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺	
What is natural law?				
Which precepts of natural law impact thoughts regarding sex?				
How do these impact Church teaching?				
What is situation ethics?				
How does it impact sexual ethics?				
How might situation ethicist view homosexuality and extramarital sex?				
What is Kantian ethics?				
How important is consent in Kantian ethics?				
What issues arise within Kantian ethics regarding sexual ethics and the universalisation principle?				
How might utilitarian ethics impact sexual ethics?				
How might utilitarianism be problematic regarding sexual ethics?				
How does rule utilitarianism impact sexual ethics?				
How did J S Mill's thoughts impact sexual ethics?				

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# Discussion of Issues about Sexuality

## Overview

We have seen that there are various different ethical approaches. As we have seen, full of people who subscribe to different types of ethical theories, it is interesting to see which hold the most importance and influence within society. It raises the issue of whether religious views should hold the same influence in a society that is becoming more secular. It is no longer holds such a strong influence. It is also important to consider the issue of whether or not sexual behaviours and practices should be considered to be a private and personal matter, or whether these things should be measured and judged by society, and whether they have impacts upon society in certain instances.

## Key Points

### Should Sexual Behaviour be Private, or Publically Regulated?

- There is a debate within sexual ethics as to the extent to which the public should regulate the sexual practices of individuals.
- The government does have legislation regarding what is and what is not sexual. Rape and paedophilia are considered to be sexually wrong and are illegal.
- Gareth Moore points out that the regulation of sexual behaviour by religious law seems somewhat selective. He points towards that fact that the Bible contains many rules close to the ones concerning homosexuality which are no longer given importance.
- These are not treated in the same way, which appears to be selective. There are many other rules that are largely ignored, then why are rules regarding homosexuality still enforced?
- During the discussion regarding the legalisation of homosexual acts within UK in the 1960s, this concept was an area of debate.
- Patrick Devlin (philosopher and legal judge), for example, argued that such a view was very much in line with the ideas of natural law.
- At the time, he believed that should homosexuality be made a legal practice, it would structure society. He argued that society is structured around the idea that people should reproduce.
- He argued that the morality of society would be compromised should homosexuality be legalised.
- The common focus would shift from reproduction.
- This debate about whether or not sexuality should be viewed as a private or public matter is still surrounding the process of the legalisation of homosexuality in the mid twenty-first century.
- Some regulation of sexual behaviour by the law is obviously necessary. If there is no regulation of sexual behaviour by legal codes, then we would encounter issues.
- The question would then arise as to what to regulate and how much to regulate.
- A modern example of new legislation regarding sexual ethics is the criminalisation of sexual harassment.

### Should Religious Belief Still have Influence in Sexual Ethics?

- The ONS Report on Religion in 2011 (the next one is due to take place in 2021) shows that religious belief is on the decline. Therefore, based on this, it is easy to pose the question of whether religious belief still have influence in sexual ethics.
- Secularists, for example, are a group of individuals who are not religious and do not believe in God.
- They argue that religion should not wield any influence in the field of sexual ethics, which has influence on the regulation of public interest or public action.

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- The debate here spills over somewhat into the debate about the separation of church and state, in which Christianity still plays in influencing issues within modern Great Britain. This is a complex topic, but it is important to know that this debate and tension go on.
- Currently, the Church of England opposes same-sex marriage while also not being openly gay. The Church as an institutional religious body is split on the issue.
- The Church of England put forward its ideas in the Church of England House of Bishops' *Issues in Human Sexuality* (1991).
- They argue that, 'sexual union has a special place in marriage'<sup>1</sup>, referring to the importance of natural law. Within the document itself on this issue, they refer to Aquinas's teachings, the importance of natural law.
- On a more general level, it is important that religious belief is still able to have influence on individuals. When an individual chooses a certain faith and, therefore, chooses the part and parcel of that faith, the United Kingdom law system protects their rights within the bounds of the law.
- Religious belief does have value in terms of sexual ethics insofar as it respects the value of sex. It recognises the value of sex and does not cheapen it, which can lead to different views in some viewpoints.
- Radical Christian agape, the love and serving of other people, could be considered to have a positive impact on sexual ethics.
- Many argue that natural moral law is too narrow and restrictive for such a dynamic and ever-changing society, observing more and more within modern culture.
- Those such as Michael Foucault argue that traditional Christianity is far too conservative in its views as being a negative thing within sexual ethics. There are those who would argue that this is a viewpoint; for example, Devlin, who would argue that it is this limitation that is necessary for society which are important.

### Are Normative Theories Useful in Sexual Ethics?

- The nature of sexual ethics is a complex topic, but it is also an incredibly intimate and personal experience. To experience this in an ethical way is important for personal choice and also how we as a society tolerate and legislate sexual practices.
- Normative theories such as the four examined within this topic have a variety of perspectives explored throughout their discussions.
- Each of these theories has useful and helpful methods of examining and navigating ethical issues. However, each method and ethical theory also has problems in the way it is applied to sexual ethics. For example, utilitarianism, when applied metaphorically to some sexual ethics, could be used to justify actions that are obviously an issue.
- One of the main challenges when attempting to apply normative ethical theories to sexual ethics are so varied that among them there are differing opinions and approaches. There is no single, conclusive premise.
- Normative ethical theories have, historically, played a role in aiding the dialogue within society. For example, in rule utilitarianism, specifically in the thoughts of John Rawls, the principle of liberty and the harm principle played a key role in the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> The Church of England, *Issues in Human Sexuality* (1991). <https://www.chpublishing.co.uk/uploads/2017/05/Issues-in-Human-Sexuality-1991.pdf>

## Key Texts

### J S Mill *On Liberty*

- This was an influential work by a rule utilitarian which advocated the freedom of their acts are not harming anyone else. This is known as the harm principle.
- This was a key argument involved in the decriminalisation of homosexual acts with the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1967.

### Church of England House of Bishops (1991) *Issues in Human Sexuality*

- This is a document which outlines the position of the Church of England regarding human sexuality.
- It addresses issues such as homosexuality, premarital sex and extramarital sex.
- This document makes clear reference to the work of Aquinas, demonstrating the influence of Christian thought.

## Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺	
What are some sexual practices currently regulated by the government?				
Why are these practices regulated, while others are not?				
What were Patrick Delpy's views about private and public sexual relationships?				
What is the view of Gareth Moore on this issue?				
How might the decline in the number of religious people impact the influence of religious thought on sexual ethics?				
What is the view of Michael Foucault on sexual ethics?				
When were homosexual acts legalised in the United Kingdom?				
How did J S Mill's <i>On Liberty</i> impact ideas about sexual ethics?				
What is the view of the Church of England House of Bishops regarding issues of human sexuality?				

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## Practice Exam-style Question

3. 'The sexual ethics of an individual are of no business to anyone but themself'

### HINTS

In your answer you should

- Exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
  - ◆ awareness of key texts regarding sexual ethics
  - ◆ awareness of the social and historical context of sexual ethics
  - ◆ awareness of the current legal situation regarding sexual ethics in the UK
- Analyse and evaluate facets of religious approaches and differing ideas and impact:
  - ◆ awareness and comprehension regarding the arguments for the strict view of J S Mill and Gareth Moore.
  - ◆ awareness and comprehension regarding arguments against the strict view of natural law, the structure of society and individuals such as Patrick Deneen.

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## Mark Schemes

### Levels of Response (A Level)

Level	Levels of Response (AO1)
<b>6</b> (14–16 marks)	The student's answer will display excellent knowledge and understanding. It will contain a strong and nuanced focus on the question, and will contain a pertinent and applicable content applied with full understanding. It will show a very detailed understanding of the relevant issues with comprehensive breadth or depth. There will be a rigorous use of technical language and a substantial number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
<b>5</b> (11–13 marks)	The student's answer will display very good knowledge and understanding. It will contain a great amount of applicable content applied appropriately to the question, showing a good understanding of the relevant issues with very good breadth or depth. There will be a good use of technical language and substantial references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
<b>4</b> (8–10 marks)	The student's answer will display good knowledge and understanding. It will address the question, and will contain a good amount of applicable content generally on the whole, a solid understanding of the relevant issues with moderate use of technical language and a good number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
<b>3</b> (5–7 marks)	The student's answer will display adequate knowledge and understanding. It will address 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.
<b>2</b> (3–4 marks)	The student's answer will display a rudimentary knowledge and understanding. It will address 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.
<b>1</b> (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)
<b>6</b> (21–24 marks)	The student's answer will give an excellent analysis and evaluation. It will contain a persuasive 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 an extensive use of technical language and significant and substantial references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom which enhance the answer.
<b>5</b> (17–20 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 views presented, and will fully and skilfully answer the question. There will be a precise use of technical language and a good number of references to appropriate scholars, academic opinions or sources of wisdom.
<b>4</b> (13–16 marks)	The student's answer will give a good analysis and evaluation. It will have a 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.
<b>3</b> (9–12 marks)	The student's answer will give an adequate analysis and evaluation. It will attempt to give a 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.
<b>2</b> (5–8 marks)	The student's answer will give a rudimentary analysis and evaluation. It will attempt 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.
<b>1</b> (1–4 marks)	The student's answer will give a poor analysis and evaluation. It will lack a coherent argument, lack justification and evidence for the views presented, and will not 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. 'Ethical naturalism is the best way of approaching meta-ethics.' Discuss. (40 marks)

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

- The discussion regarding whether or not ethical statements are meaningless or meaningful is a central theme in meta-ethics.
- Meta-ethics literally means 'beyond ethics'; it is different to normative ethics, which is concerned with the question of what is good.
- Ethical naturalism is a cognitivist theory. This means that it is possible to say that statements about ethics are true or false on the basis of human experience.
- It is the claim that decisions about what is right and wrong can be arrived at through naturalistic means and human nature.
- An action can be right or wrong if it fulfils the intended purpose of human nature (e.g. utilitarianism produces happiness).
- Both human nature and the happiness of human beings can be empirically tested and in this way the theory can be considered to have a basis in human experience.
- This form of meta-ethical argumentation treats ethical statements in the same way as factual statements.
- An example of a non-ethical statement could be compared to an example of an ethical statement to show it shown how ethical naturalism would seek to empirically test both to see whether they can be considered to be true. The examples given in the revision summary are those of a statement about the idea that happiness is desirable.
- On this basis, ethical statements can be proved true or false – they are verifiable or falsifiable. This is done through testing experience.
- There are four principles of ethical naturalism, or four key ideas within the viewpoint. The first follows: the idea that moral statements are always propositional; the propositions are not true because of humans but because of natural realities of the world. Finally, can be reduced to what is true about natural realities.

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

#### Arguments for

- It appeals to human experience and instinct. For example, within ethical naturalism the statement 'murder is wrong' would be considered to be objectively true. This is because the idea of being wrong appeals to our interpretation of the world around us. It is a proposition that is true and cognitive.
- The empirical nature of ethical naturalism means that it fits well with other theories of ethics.
- Many modern theories, such as the scientific method, rely heavily on empirical evidence to inform hypotheses and, therefore, to those who support this method of obtaining knowledge, it fits well with their ideas, leading them to be more accepting of this as a method of obtaining knowledge.
- In answer to critiques of ethical naturalism by the use of emotivism, students here could refer to the work of logical positivism, stating challenges which are encountered within the theory, e.g. the verification principle. Therefore, it may not stand as a strong challenge to the theory of ethical naturalism.

#### Arguments against:

- Ethical naturalism is largely reductionist in the way that it deals with ethical statements. It reduces ethical ideas to being only natural and denies the possibility of other ways of understanding.
- Some might argue that even saying something to be an objective moral truth (i.e. 'right' or 'wrong') is not possible. Since J.L. Mackie strongly opposed naturalism, as he believed there was no such thing as an objective moral truth. Therefore, all moral statements which are propositional are then considered to be false.
- Critics of ethical naturalism are keen to point out these theories all make a simple, yet common, mistake: they confuse what is the case with how it ought to be.
- This is known as the is-ought gap, which was first pointed out by Hume. He makes the point that when philosophers talk about ethical matters, they are prone to slipping from what is the case to what ought to be the case without ever explaining how they got from the former to the latter.

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- Hume takes this further, using the example of the principle of utility in utilitarianism that this is a normative claim.
- Proponents of other ethical theories would also oppose this view. For example, an ethical naturalist would argue that a moral statement has no meaning beyond what the feelings of the people who hold that statement are. Naturalism is the belief that decisions about what is right and wrong are arrived at through discovery of the natural world and human nature.
- A J Ayer developed the theory of emotivism (largely influenced by logical positivism) which states that ethical language cannot be said to be tautological (true by definition) and, therefore, it cannot be considered to be true or false. Therefore, it has no meaning.

Similarly, a student may posit the use of intuitionism as a method of gaining moral knowledge. Intuitionism is the belief that moral truths or ideas are unable to be sufficiently defined by reason; they are in a way self-evident or intuitively evident. They could use the view of G. E. Moore, as he believes evidence of their moral truth. They could use the view of Moore, as he believes evidence of their moral truth. They could use the view of Moore, as he believes evidence of their moral truth. He is able to do so simply by insisting that moral goods are objective and not budging on his belief in this.

## 2. Assess how useful the theological approach towards conscience is. (40 marks)

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

- Conscience is generally considered to be the emotional feeling experienced by humans after they have committed either a good or a bad act. It is closely tied to the idea of feeling guilty, a famous phrase a 'guilty conscience'.
- The theological approach was posited by St Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth-century medieval philosopher influenced by his ideas regarding natural law. He believed God made human beings with reason and emotion, both of which can be used in order to gain knowledge of what is right and wrong.
- He argued that the knowledge of what is right and wrong is instinctive and innate in humans. He believes that this is something that we all have within ourselves.
- In the New Testament, in the teachings of the apostle Paul, the word which is used to describe a conscience is **synderesis**, which is the pain experienced by an individual who experiences a moral conflict.
- For Aquinas, there were two different parts to making a moral decision. These are **synderesis** (the moral reason, choosing to do what is right and rejecting what is wrong) and **conscience** (the conscience, which is able to decipher what is good and evil and use that knowledge to make a correct judgement in a moral choice).
- The psychological approach was posited by Sigmund Freud, famous psychiatrist and psychoanalyst. He believed that the phenomena of mental issues within adults can be traced back to childhood. He believed that the human psyche can be split into three sections – the id, the ego and the superego.
- He believed that guilt is the result of the superego interacting with the id, where the conflict arises.

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

**Students may argue that theological approaches are more useful:**

- As a thirteenth-century Christian monk, Thomas Aquinas was writing from a Christian perspective. Therefore, his viewpoints are a Christian form of ethics, and any reference to God in his work is speaking specifically about the God of traditional Judeo-Christianity.
- He argued that the knowledge of what is right and wrong is instinctive and innate in humans. He believes that this is something that we all have within ourselves.
- One of the biggest strengths of the theological argument is that it largely appeals to common sense. Most people would agree that we do have innate ideas of right and wrong – it is something that we all have.
- Aquinas' argument does very well to emphasise the role of human reason in moral decision-making. It is something that the majority of people would agree that they use in the process of making a moral choice.

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**Students may argue that the theological approaches are less useful:**

- Aquinas's theory and Freud's theory both encounter the same issue in the face of the experience guilt. Psychopaths contradict both theories as, regardless of whatever has happened to them in their childhood, they still exhibit no guilt or empathy, and if this is the case then these individuals these ideas and concepts are not innate, effectively challenging Aquinas's theory.
- The idea also assumes that every person has an innate moral value and sense of what is right and wrong; therefore, every person should have the same sense of right and wrong. However, this is not the case. There are many people who feel strongly, for example, that eating meat is wrong, while there are others who do not see any issue with the consumption of animal meat.
- There are so many factors which influence an individual's understanding of what is right and wrong, including the culture and environment in which a person was raised and lives.
- One of the biggest weaknesses of Aquinas's argument on conscience is that the argument functions on the basis that an individual does not believe in God. Take God out of the argument, and the argument is flat.
- Furthermore, Aquinas's evidential proof for his argument on conscience is the Bible. If the Bible is to be a holy book given to humans as divine revelation, then of course it makes sense to have a solid source. However, if one does not, then we run into a slight conundrum.

Conversely, Freud's theory does have some evidential basis and some case studies which can illustrate and illuminate his ideas, such as the Oedipus complex being illustrated by the famous example. This was somewhat controversial, however, so it is worth remembering that not everyone considers this evidence to be sufficient or valid.

**3. 'The sexual ethics of an individual are of no business to anyone but the individual'**

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

- There is a debate within sexual ethics as to the extent to which the public should have any say in the sexual practices of individuals.
- The government does have legislation regarding what is and what is not sexually ethical.
- The United Kingdom has traditionally been a Christian country, and, therefore, Christian sex and sexual ethics have been influential in shaping social and cultural attitudes towards sex. Of course, the law.
- This has changed culturally as the process of secularisation has taken place, leading to a decriminalisation of sexual practices such as homosexuality.
- The law currently regulates some sexual practices but does not permit others – for example, those which involve consensual adults are generally considered to be legally permissible; however, those which involve someone under the age of consent or without the consent of one person in a sexual act are considered to be illegal. For example, rape and paedophilia are considered sexually wrong and are illegal.
- However, there are those who argue that there should be regulation based on moral principles of what is sexually right and wrong.

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

**Students may agree with the quote with the following arguments:**

- There are many people who would agree with this argument as they believe that humans have the right to privacy regarding bodily autonomy and what they do with their own bodies.
- J S Mill's form of utilitarianism would support this view, stating that as long as there is no harm caused to people or anyone involved. This is known as the harm principle. For Mill, as long as consensual sexual practices do not harm others, they are permissible.
- Gareth Moore points out that the regulation of sexual behaviour by religious bodies is a form of control which serves the interests of the collective. He points towards the fact that the Bible contains many passages, including the ones concerning homosexuality which are no longer given importance or observed, but these are not treated in the same way. Therefore, he argues that if certain rules are largely ignored, then why are rules regarding homosexuality still enforced?
- During the discussion regarding the legalisation of homosexual acts within UK law in the 20th century, this concept was an area of debate.

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- On a micro level, it is important that religious belief is still able to have influence on the individual.
- If an individual chooses a certain faith and, therefore, chooses the sexual ethical code as a parcel of that faith, the United Kingdom law system protects their religious rights to within the bounds of the law.

**Students may disagree with the quote with the following arguments:**

- Individuals who hold religious beliefs such as a strict adherence to the teachings of natural law disagree with this on the basis that they view certain sexual practices as being immoral and outside the natural order. As they believe that God intended for human beings to be heterosexual, they argue that any other sexual practice is a sin.
- Patrick Devlin (philosopher and legal judge), for example, argued that such acts should be illegal. His view was very much in line with the ideas of natural law.
- He believed that if homosexuality was made to be a legal practice, it would undermine the structure of society.
- He argued that society is structured around the idea that human beings have a purpose and that purpose is to reproduce.
- He argued that the morality of society would be compromised should homosexuality be legalised.
- The common focus would shift from reproduction.
- Some regulation of sexual behaviour by the law is obviously necessary.
- If there were absolutely no regulation of sexual behaviour by legal codes, then we would see issues such as a rise in cases of rape.
- For those who argue that some regulation is necessary in order to avoid harmful sexual practices, the question is posed as to how to regulate these things as new issues arise in the modern world. An example of new legislation regarding sexual ethics is the criminalisation of revenge porn.



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