

Revision Summaries for AS / A Level Year 1 AQA

Component 1B: Ethics

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Teacher's Introduction

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

All students, whether they are academically strong, average or weak, can benefit from a concise and clearly explained set of notes to revise from, both as they work through the AQA 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 summary for each topic; they are 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.
- ✓ **Year 2 Advanced Considerations:** A brief look at how students may incorporate Year 2 knowledge and understanding into Year 1 topics.
- ✓ **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 for each level 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.
 - ! **Note:** While the exam-style questions are split by level for ease, both questions can be used by students studying either level by simply adjusting the command word and the number of marks as appropriate.

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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Normative Ethical Theori

G₂ L₁ O₁

Normative ethics	The branch of ethics that deals with how human beings should behave.
Deontology	A branch of normative ethics that judges whether actions are right or wrong based on whether they follow specific moral laws.
Duty	A moral obligation that human beings ought to follow.
Teleological	A type of ethical theory concerned with the ends or consequences of actions.
Consequentialism	A type of ethical theory concerned with the outcomes or consequences of actions.
Telos	A Greek word meaning end or purpose, and towards which making is often directed.
Agape	A type of love that is unconditional and non-preferential, directed towards all of humankind.
Rights	Moral or legal principles of entitlement, which state that certain goods are owed to people.
Virtue	The morally good characteristics, behaviour or qualities of a person.
Virtue ethics	An ethical system based on the thoughts of Aristotle, which focuses on the practice of showing virtues to other human beings.
Eudemonia	Happiness; excellence – the state of flourishing.
Autonomy	Freedom, and the ability for human beings to act without constraint or coercion.
Moral responsibility	The holding of a person responsible as praiseworthy or blameworthy for their actions.
Doctrine of the mean	Aristotle's theory that a moral choice can be made on the basis of the golden mean between excess and moral deficiency.
Theft	The intentional taking of a possession or value from a person who is taking it.
Lying	The communication of information which is untrue or misleading.
Application	The action of putting ethical ideas into real situations.
Legalism	The practice of unwavering adherence to a system of laws.
Antinomianism	An ethical approach that is against any moral norms or laws.

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Deontology

Overview

Duty-based ethics, also known as **deontological** ethics, is a system that there are certain moral duties held by every individual that, if adhered to, will benefit society.

These duties are commonly associated with the famous philosopher Immanuel Kant which is based on specific duties which are generally moral. He developed the highest categorical imperatives, which differentiate between duties you should do if you can and moral duties we all have to do in every action.

Key Points

General Points

- Deontological ethics can be religious if it is believed that the rules originate from God through revelation from God. However, they can also be secular if moral rules come from another source of authority, such as human rationality or the natural world.
- Christian ethics are often built around specific commandments or rules known as the Ten Commandments. In particular in Christianity there is often the belief that moral rules originate from God, called 'divine command theory'.
- Examples of specific laws include the Ten Commandments, and perhaps more.

Natural Law

- Natural moral law theory is most closely associated with the medieval Catholic philosopher St Thomas Aquinas. It is a form of religious deontological ethics.
- Natural moral law, as it is understood today, is built upon the twin pillars of the Bible, heavily influenced by the life, work and ideas of St Thomas Aquinas. He is referenced by the Vatican and the Catechism of the Catholic Church in teaching natural law.
- He reasoned that all things have a natural purpose towards which God wants to lead or **telos** to bring humans into unity and fellowship with God and enable the potential of humanity.
- There were two sources Aquinas believed that humans could use to understand their natural purpose: **the Bible and the world and reason.**
- Aquinas believed that humanity was given reason and freedom by God so that we can understand and fulfil our natural purpose. All humans had the ability to reason which means we can understand natural moral law if they chose to.
- Aquinas believes that everyone has a specific purpose unique to them that comes from their skills and talents given to them by God.
- Ideas about morality, or moral rules, therefore come from inside human beings but are not created by us; however, these ideas in turn come from God, according to Aquinas, because they are natural ideas.

Key Precept

- At the heart of natural law theory is a single, universal moral principle: *that we should aim to do **good** and to avoid doing **evil**.*

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Primary Precepts

- Aquinas believed that through reason, the Bible and the world, it became clear that there were five 'primary precepts' that formed the basis of natural moral law. Although Aquinas himself, it is clear that he thought the following five rules were the most significant:
 - to preserve life
 - to reproduce
 - to educate children
 - to worship God
 - to create an orderly, harmonious society
- These rules are **absolute** and there is never any time when they are wrong. There is always to do wrong.

Secondary Precepts

- From the primary precepts, Aquinas argued that moral rules could be deduced through logical decision-making so that humans can fulfil their natural purpose.
- Vardy describes these secondary precepts as 'unpacking' the primary precepts into what they involve and mean for daily decision-making.¹
- The secondary precepts also show us the **legalistic** character of Aquinas' ethical theory of deciding which rule to apply to a given situation.
- For example, from the primary precept of 'to preserve life', the Catholic Church based on natural moral law, has argued for the immorality of abortion based on the fact that it also fits the command in the Ten Commandments 'Do not murder'.
- Similarly, the Catholic Church argues that homosexual sexual acts are immoral because they prevent reproduction, another primary precept.

The Four Tiers of Law

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

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

The Doctrine of Double Effect

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

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¹ Vardy, P and Grosche, P, *The Puzzle of Ethics* (London: Harper Collins), p. 38.

Proportionalism

- As time has moved on, there has been a noted effort from those who ascribe (meaning the viewpoints held by St Thomas Aquinas, such as natural law) to the theory somewhat.
- Bernard Hoose, one such scholar, argued that we should generally follow natural law as a significant reason that would mean it was fair to temporarily set aside these principles.
- Therefore, acts are not inherently or **always** evil, assessing whether there is significant harm and setting them aside.
- This is known as 'proportionalism'
- Proportionalists would hold that in a given situation it becomes clear what is the right course of action.
- Proportionate reasons taken into consideration situation, intention and consequences including the most likely outcome but also other ontic goods such as justice or



Analysis: Strengths

- Aquinas' approach to human nature and its purposes is compatible and complementary to evolutionary biology.
- It appeals to reason, which all humans have and can exercise to make moral decisions. It is universal and applicable to all, which is one of the major strengths of this ethical theory.
- It is an objective theory which holds that certain actions are inherently and absolutely right or wrong.
- The doctrine of double effect and other adaptations such as proportionalism allow natural law theory a degree of flexibility when it comes to dealing with some of life's perplexing moral dilemmas.
- Evolutionary neuroscientists such as Steven Pinker may argue that some aspects of moral behaviour are determined genetically. Aquinas might well have taken this into account to support his idea of a natural law built into all humankind.

Analysis: Weaknesses

- Natural law in the thought of Aquinas can only work if you believe in God. There can be no divine commands from which to derive ideas.
- Nature does not always seem to be imbued with goodness, e.g. in the event of natural disasters. This raises questions about to what extent it reveals God's plan or desire, and the issues of evil and suffering such as the 'problem of evil'.
- Aquinas' focus on reproduction as one of the five primary purposes of human life leaves couples who cannot reproduce, such as because they are infertile – if it is one of the primary purposes, where does this theory leave such people?
- Aquinas commits the naturalistic fallacy and attempts to move from an 'is' (God's will) to an 'ought' (God's will ought to be followed). This can also be referred to as the is-ought fallacy.
- It is based on Aquinas' context and beliefs – e.g. his views on order, which he saw as essential for a good society – which highlights how natural law theory, despite its claims to objectivity, could be seen as subjective.
- Christians might believe that Jesus taught a less legalistic ethical theory and a more emphasis on love for one's neighbour. They may, therefore, choose to follow situation ethics rather than natural law.
- Feminist critics may argue that Aquinas is no more than a medieval misogynist in the modern world. For instance, the primary precept which commands that men should procreate implicitly assumes that the purpose of women is to procreate, which can be seen as a form of discrimination.



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Key Figures

Aristotle

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

St Thomas Aquinas

- The renaissance philosopher is considered such an important figure in the history of the thought of the pre-Christian Aristotle with biblical teaching.
- Aquinas used the teachings of Aristotle in order to formally write what is now remembered as an extremely important theologian.
- His influential works include *Summa Theologica*, in which he posited his 'five proofs' including the cosmological and teleological argument, two arguments which have influenced philosophers and theologians to this day.
- After the collapse of the Ancient Greek and Roman civilizations (the 'Classical Age') for a long time, been almost entirely lost to European civilisation.
- Fortunately, some of his writing had been preserved by Arabic scholars in the twelfth century, these works had gradually begun to spread, in translation, to Europe.
- Due to his keen interest in these translations, Aquinas became a leading figure in the development of scholasticism. This was a particular way of doing theology that developed because it was motivated by the perceived need to systematise all Christian theology and practice so that all belief were rational. The use of reason was a defining feature of scholasticism. Aquinas' decisions about exactly what Church doctrine should be.

Key Texts

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

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

Summa Theologica, 1–11, St Thomas Aquinas

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

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- The Catechism of the Catholic Church is a document in which all of the teachings of the Catholic Church are traditionally contained.
- Below are two quotes which highlight key ideas and teachings regarding natural law in the Catechism of the Catholic Church.
 - *The natural law is a participation in God's wisdom and goodness by man for which he is made. It is the basis of the dignity of the human person and forms the basis of his fundamental rights and duties.*
 - *The natural law is immutable, permanent throughout history. The rules of the natural law are substantially valid. It is a necessary foundation for the erection of moral laws and precepts.*

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Romans 1:20

- In this passage St Paul, the author of the Book of Romans, is describing how God created the world and that, therefore, people have no excuse not to follow him all around us.
 - *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)*

Romans 2:14–16

- In this passage, St Paul is describing how Gentiles (non-Jews) know the law from existing Jewish law but through their own hearts or conscience. Paul is appealing to a natural moral law because God instilled it in everyone. This latter is what Aristotle says about ethics.
 - *Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (Romans 2:14–16)*

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is meant by deontological ethics?			
What is natural law?			
Who posited natural law?			
What is the key precept?			
What are the primary precepts?			
What are secondary precepts?			
What is the doctrine of double effect?			
What is meant by proportionalism?			

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Teleological

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Overview

The word 'teleological' comes from the Greek root 'telos' which means that ethical models which are considered to be teleological are ethical models which are based on the intended or purposed outcome of the moral choice.

They are a form of normative ethics, suggesting that an action is good as long as it leads to something that is considered to be good. Utilitarianism is an example of this – an action is good so long as it leads towards the end goal of creating the greatest good for the greatest number. Another example is the idea of teleological ethics developed by Joseph Fletcher, which centres around the idea of situation ethics.



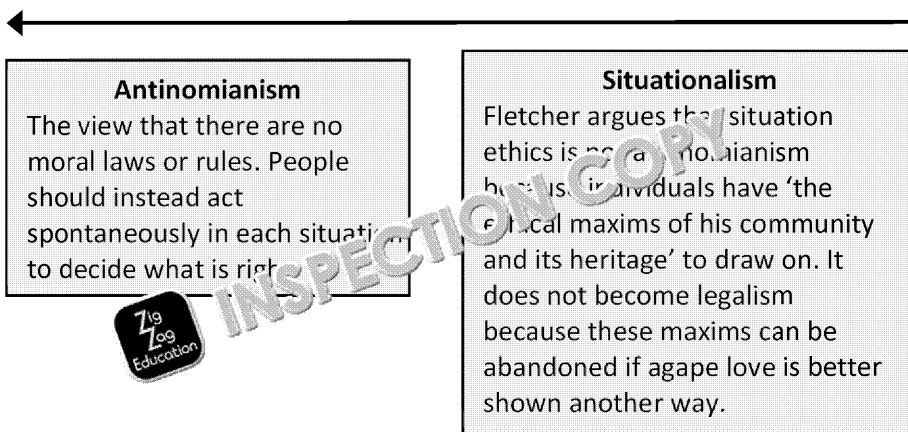
Key Points

General Points

- Joseph Fletcher wrote about situation ethics after J A T Robinson, whose ideas about agape and Christian situationalism preceded Fletcher's.
- In his book *Situation Ethics* (1966) Fletcher set forth this account of an ethical system. Unlike some more conservative elements of the Church, Fletcher believed that bible-thumping and moral condemnation was not a suitable response to dramatic shifts in social attitudes.
- Equally, however, he did not think a life unconstrained by any moral norms whatsoever was desirable. What was needed instead was a marriage of the old with the new, a re-evaluation of Christian ethics that would make it fit for a world very different to the one Aquinas or the Gospel writers had lived in. What was needed was a situational approach.
- In the teachings of situational ethics, as the interests of agape, unconditional love, are served, then actions can be said to be moral. From agape, maximum love is the goal.
- Fletcher considered situationalism a middle way between two equally unattractive moral philosophies (much like Aristotle considered each virtue to lie between two vices). On the one hand is an ethical system that is completely lacking in any guiding moral principles, a position which maintains people should be free to do whatever they see fit in any given situation.
- Fletcher termed this approach 'antinomianism', which literally translates from Greek as 'without law'.
- At the opposite end of the spectrum are those moral philosophies which hold that actions should always be made in accordance with a set of strict rules or commands. Fletcher called this legalism, because, like the legal system, it is concerned with the proper application of the Bible.

Moral extreme

Middle ground



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

You shall love your neighbour as yourself

Matthew 22:39 NRSV

The Historical Background

- The foundation for Situation Ethics developed in a time of change worldwide
- People had to decide for themselves the right way to behave and the rules of **command ethics**, which they saw as outdated.
- Many social and political events meant that there was an ethical shift occurring to view the traditional Christian approach to ethics (natural moral law) as being outdated.
- As a result, when situation ethics were developed, they proved to be hugely popular.
- The aforementioned historical events include:
 - The introduction of women in the workforce
 - The Vietnam War
 - J F Kennedy's assassination
 - The civil rights movement
 - The invention of the contraceptive pill
 - The sexual revolution
 - Hippy and student culture
 - An ethical shift away from Christian morals – the new morality of the twentieth century

Agape in the New Testament

- The concept of agape underpins both Fletcher and Robinson's arguments on Situation Ethics.
- Agape is argued by Robinson to have been in the following biblical passages:
 - When Jesus declared that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, it meant that strict rules regarding what should not be done on the Sabbath were not to be followed where it will hinder or harm others.
 - When Jesus healed individuals with leprosy, instead of considering following the law that lepers were unclean and sinners, and, therefore, should not be touched (Leviticus 13:45-46).
 - When Jesus saved a woman from being stoned to death by declaring, 'Whoever is without sin should throw the first stone' (John 8:7). Jesus is showing a situationalist approach. If Jesus had stoned the woman, it would be following the law, it would be hypocritical.
- Throughout the Bible, numerous references are made to the importance of love. It persists as a central theme and guiding force behind moral action, opposed to the Jewish elders and Pharisees as depicted in the Gospels.
 - In Matthew 5:43-46, Jesus, in contrast to the Old Testament instructions, tells his disciples to love their enemies. This particularly emphasises the sacrificial nature of Christian love.
 - In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, one of the most well-known passages in the New Testament, Paul speaks on the Christian ideal of love. He contrasts eternal love to temporary gifts of knowledge and knowledge, raising love above such things.

Practical Situation Ethics

So how does the situationist determine the correct moral decision in these circumstances? There is only one thing that is intrinsic and good: agape, or, as Barclay defines it, 'unconditional love'.

- This is important as it defines the two important points about situation ethics.
- The first is that love is the end of all actions. It is an intrinsic, not an instrumental good. It is not in the pursuit of another idea or concept.
- It simply is the sole guiding purpose behind all actions a person makes.
- The second point is that identifying this form of love as an end in itself allows people to stand against their own ethical principles or sensibilities.
- Therefore, while someone might intensely dislike and disagree with another person, they should still show agape love for them when considering their choices in any ethically difficult situations.

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Six Propositions

- Fletcher put forward six propositions in order to give a pragmatic basis for situation ethics. These are intended to show how **agape** should be understood and applied to different ethical situations.
- The propositions reveal a lot about situation ethics – for example, proposition number five states that the end justified the means.
- Therefore, this is a form of consequentialist ethics, also known as teleological ethics, as it is concerned with the outcome of a moral action rather than the intent behind the action itself.
- Furthermore, these propositions are intentionally directed towards the concept of agape rather than the principles which should be applied to moral decisions – these are the four principles.
- These six propositions are as follows:

	Fundamental Proposition	Explanation
1.	<i>'Only one thing is intrinsically good; namely love: nothing else at all'</i>	<i>The only intrinsically good thing – Love is not instrumentally good.</i>
2.	<i>'The ruling norm of Christian decision is love: nothing else'</i>	<i>The Jewish laws have been replaced by love to one's neighbour. It is more important than the law.</i>
3.	<i>'Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed, nothing else'</i>	<i>Love and justice are the same thing. Love is what he is owed and man is owed. We must decide how to distribute and apply it.</i>
4.	<i>'Love wills the neighbour's good, whether we like him or not'</i>	<i>Love should be shown regardless of the person or how we feel. It is not about developing a personal sense. It is about showing the right attitude towards others.</i>
5.	<i>'Only the end justifies the means, nothing else'</i>	<i>If love is the outcome of one's actions, then the means taken to achieve this are not morally significant. Only the outcome that matters.</i>
6.	<i>'Moral decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively'</i>	<i>Decisions must be made then and there. No general laws. Specific factors can be taken into account. Laws are not made on the basis of laws that precede them.</i>

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Four Working Principles

- In order to help those who wished to put Christian situation ethics into practical working principles in order to aid the implementation of situation ethics.
- These are things which moral choices theoretically should involve and are inapplicable principles against which individuals wishing to practise situation ethics make choices in a given situation.
- These are central to his discussion of situation ethics.
- These are as follows:

	Fletcher's four working principles	Explanation
1.	Pragmatism	Moral demands should be practical and achieve a result, which is love.
2.	Relativism	All situations should be assessed on how best they can be resolved rather than through following moral laws which use a one-size-fits-all approach.
3.	Positivism	Being able to say that 'God is love' on the basis of personal experience. The moral agent has to decide, through their own conscience, that love is the most important thing of all. ²
4.	Personalism	Demands that the needs and importance of people take precedence over the demands of moral laws.

Analysis: Strengths

- Situation ethics worked well insofar as working in the context of changing social and moral norms. Fletcher was writing in a time when an increasingly rejected Christianity was being challenged.
- It is in keeping with Jesus' teaching and his rejection of legalism so it is suitable for a Christian audience.
- It provides the flexibility to respond to individual situations on their own merits rather than being bound by moral laws that can result in terrible moral consequences, or inappropriate actions.
- It gives individuals responsibility, recognising that man is 'come of age'. This responsibility is challenging but it is important we take this responsibility on and make decisions for ourselves.
- Most people agree that agape is a desirable and laudable attitude to have towards others.

Analysis: Weaknesses

- Situation ethics has received a negative reception from the Church. In 1952, the Church of England rejected it, and in 1956 the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office banned it from being taught in Catholic schools.
- Charlotte and Peter Vardy argue that situation ethics 'confuses the concept of love with the concept of utility'. Therefore, the importance of loving God, the first of Jesus' two main commandments, is lost because he was trying to appeal to an increasingly secular audience (see Marva Collins).
- They also point out that the theory contains a large lack of guidance, so even when it is applied, there is much scope for interpretation.
- Today it is considered to be unpopular as a Christian ethic and is often seen as a form of relativism as Jesus condemned certain actions as always wrong and contrary to the will of God.
- Finally, it is a form of ethical relativism, consequentialist and, therefore, it is highly subjective. The rightness or wrongness of an action is not a weakness specific to situation ethics but a weakness of consequentialist theories.

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² Vardy, C and Vardy P, *Ethics Matters* (London: SCM Press, 2012), p. 126.

Key Figures

Joseph Fletcher

- Joseph Fletcher developed Robinson's ideas as he too felt that Christian ethics needed a more flexible approach.
- In his works, he developed the idea of agape which was first discussed by J A Robinson.
- Fletcher's approach towards Christian situation ethics was proposed as a midway point between legalistic ethics and antinominalism.

J A Robinson

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

Key Texts

Situation Ethics: The New Morality

- This is the text published in 1997 in which Joseph Fletcher put forward his theory of situation ethics.
- It is in this text that he outlines his ideas regarding the working principles and how to put them forward and providing practical regulation for situation ethics.

Matthew 22:39

- The context of this verse was Jesus teaching those asking about what is the greatest commandment. He responds that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second greatest is to love your neighbour as yourself.
- The following verse gives a teaching that would be incredibly important to the development of situation ethics (Matthew 22:40). By arguing that through the concept of agape that all of the moral laws of the Bible are fulfilled, it becomes clear how the most loving thing in a situation can be different from the moral laws. If loving other people is the most moral, then moral laws go against some biblical teachings. If loving other people is the most moral, then it seems logical that agape should be the most important commandment other than loving God, then it seems logical that agape should be the most important commandment other than loving God.

Matthew 19:16

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

Mark 12:28–31

- *One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had answered them, he asked him, 'Of all the commandments, which is the most important one?' answered Jesus, 'is... "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbour as yourself." No other commandment is greater than these.'*

Luke 10:27

- *Jesus answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your strength"; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'*

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Year 2 Considerations

Another form of teleological ethics is utilitarian ethics, which will be discussed in detail. Put forward by Jeremy Bentham, this is a form of ethics which emphasises that the greatest number is the ideal end of any ethical decision. This idea is known as the greatest happiness principle, but Bentham's is the most well-known example of many different forms of utilitarianism, but Bentham's is the most well-known example of utilitarian thought. It is also a consequentialist theory, which means that it is concerned with the consequences of an action.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
Who was Joseph Fletcher?			
What is agape?			
What was the historical context to situation ethics?			
What is the governing principle of situation ethics?			
What is situation ethics the midway between?			
What are the four working principles?			
What are the six propositions?			
What is the meaning of each of the four working principles?			
What is the meaning of each of the six propositions?			
What is the relationship between the principles and the propositions?			

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Virtue Ethics

Overview

Virtue ethics (or character-based ethics) is a form of ethical thinking and beliefs of Greek philosopher Aristotle, who believed that the end and purpose of life is to achieve eudemonia. The practice of virtue is considered to be the means by which eudemonia is achieved.

The idea of virtue stems from the Greek word 'a life – meaning virtue. This has a broader general connotations which come to mind when considering the general modern understanding of goodness, but instead ascribes ideas of general excellence.

The most important text to consider when discussing the influence of virtue ethics is Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* text. This outlines his ethical theory, which is what is now commonly known as virtue ethics.



Key Points

General Points

- Virtue ethics is a normative and teleological form of ethics which is centred on character – specifically the virtue within the character of the individual. It is an act-based ethical theory.
- Virtue, in this sense, does not mean the same thing as it would in modern discourse. 'excellence' when considering the Greek culture it comes from. It stems from 'a state of character that enables one to perform his function well'.
- Virtue ethics is commonly associated with the Greek Philosopher Aristotle, particularly his *Nicomachean Ethics*.
- It is a form of teleological ethics as he argues that the actions one takes are generally directed towards an end or a purpose. All beings work towards an end (a telos).
- Human beings are no different. The end which all humans work towards is eudemonia.
- This is best translated as 'flourishing' or 'happiness'. However, it is important to note that eudemonia is not considered to be pleasure, although it might be understood within utilitarianism. Pleasure can be experienced by animals and eudemonia is exclusive to human beings.
- Therefore, when making a decision, Aristotle's ethical code is concerned with the result in terms of achieving eudemonia.
- He puts forward the functionality of his argument as follows:
 - All things work towards a function, e.g. leaves function by absorbing light and performing the process of photosynthesis. All things have different functions and therefore different purposes. Humans have the function of the ability to reason.
 - He rejects the ends or functions of pleasure, goodness, wealth and honor as being the ultimate goal. Traditionally virtues include ideas such as prudence and justice. Justice is considered by Aristotle to be a virtue of which there could be no excess.
- A key part of achieving virtuous behaviour is phronesis (practical wisdom), which all individuals need in order to work out what is virtuous and the extent to which a principle should apply in a situation.

Aristotle's Function Argument

- Aristotle argues that all things are dedicated towards a particular function. For example, leaves function to absorb sunlight and convert it into energy for a plant via photosynthesis.
- To this end they have characteristics that enable them to achieve this end, and the good is how well it performs its natural functions.
- However, different things have different kinds of characteristic functions, depending on their nature.
- Where animals have vegetative souls (characterised by nutrition and growth) which encompass a wider variety of characteristics and functions.
- Yet human beings differ in being able to reason, and, therefore, possess what Aristotle calls a rational soul. The good for human beings is performing their functions well, and the unique function of human beings is their rationality, then the good for human beings is performing the activities of this rationality well.

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Reason and Virtue

- Within Aristotelian virtue ethics, there is a hierarchy of souls. Humans are at their possession of the ability to reason.
- This is closely tied to the idea of the human soul.
- This reason is central for Aristotle as it is indicative of the rational soul of humans.
- In his theory there are two facets to the human soul – the rational and the non-rational. Virtues for the non-rational soul.
- Therefore, the eudemonia, or flourishing of a human soul, occurs when humans act in accordance with the rational activity of the soul.
- It is reached by the engagement of the soul with the rational activity of the soul, which creates excellence.
- For Aristotle, to reason is to exercise virtue.
- For Aristotle, there are differences between moral virtues and intellectual virtues. The soul is the source of both.
- We must know what is correct to do, and then choose to do this correct action.
- Awareness and intent are important here – a virtuous action is only virtuous if it is done with awareness and intent.

The Doctrine of the Mean

- In everyday situations, we will encounter moral choices. In order to navigate these choices, we require the use of our reason.
- It is similar to the concept of the mathematical mean – if you are familiar with that knowledge here.
- Virtue lies between two extremes of action – the excess of virtue and the deficiency of virtue.
- The doctrine of the mean dictates how virtue lies in a mean between two extremes and one of deficiency.
- Many different possible examples, e.g. courage vs rashness and cowardice.
- To act virtuously is to find the medium between the excess of virtue and deficiency.

Analysis: Strengths

- Virtue ethics is agent-centred – emphasising the importance of understanding moral character rather than just focusing on their moral choices in a specific situation.
- Unlike many other ethical theories, it respects and underlines the importance of and passion in using reason, in deciding upon right actions.
- The theory fits well with human experience of complex factors and multiplicities.
- It places emphasis on the base idea of virtue and builds on this, rather than going to other ethical theories.
- It fits with ideas of Aristotle regarding how to view a person as moral – as he believed that we can tell if someone is moral by observing some virtues in people.

Analysis: Weaknesses

- If virtues are not universal, and conditioned by the culture a particular person lives in, then it is difficult to provide universal moral guidance in new scenarios.
- It could be argued that because of the allowance that different virtues can be found in different societies, virtue ethics is not making a case for moral rights and wrongs, but just describing different practices within societies.
- One of the criticisms of virtue ethics is that it is only partially useful – it is useful for everyday actions, but when it comes to meatier moral dilemmas, it falls short. The virtues of individuals does little to assuage the suffering of those living in extreme poverty.
- Further limitation of virtue ethics is that it comes into contact with issues such as the trolley problem. The virtues of individuals do not necessarily result in the outcome in a political or social context. The best thing for the community could only go so far as the individual, leaving no room for so important issues in the world.
- Other theories which challenge these ideas include the development of modern applied ethics which offer different ways to issues such as medical ethics (euthanasia, etc).

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Key Figures

Aristotle

- Famous Greek philosopher whose work the *Nicomachean Ethics* put forward ethical theory of virtue ethics.
- He lived from 384 to 322 CE.
- His thoughts and works on ethics were highly influential on ethical thought to this day.

Key Texts

Nicomachean Ethics

- This is the work of Greek philosopher Aristotle in which the theory of virtue ethics is developed.
- It takes the form of about 10 different scrolls and is centred around the idea of 'good' or ethical.
- It is from this discussion that the theory of virtue ethics is developed.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is virtue ethics?			
Who first put it forward?			
What is eudaimonia?			
What is the Greek understanding of virtue?			
What is the importance of reason?			
Which ideas does Aristotle's virtue ethics reject?			
What is Aristotle's function argument?			
What is the doctrine of the mean?			
What are some of the strengths of virtue ethics?			
What are some of the weaknesses of virtue ethics?			

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Theft and Lying

Overview

Theft and lying are widely considered to be immoral. This is for a number of reasons. Theft is the intentional taking of something which does not belong to you from someone else. Lying is the deliberate giving of false information to someone else.

In the case of theft, it is also illegal. In some cases lying is also illegal, such as in the case of perjury. However, this is not always the case – you will not be prosecuted for lying about eating the last slice of pizza. The implications are, however, tied closely to the ideas – ‘thief’ and ‘liar’ as two words considered to have moral implications. It is important for practical application to understand the implications of these actions. The deontological, teleological and virtue ethics theories as part of this course apply to these actions.



Key Points

General Points

- In the realm of normative ethical theories, it matters less whether or not they are right or wrong – what is more important within the realm of this course is understanding what is considered to be wrong according to the ethos of each of the theories.
- Theft is the deliberate taking of a good or value which does not belong to you.
- Lying is deliberately communicating false information to another (or, in the case of omission, some, omitting information). It is legal in some circumstances (e.g. telling your parents that you have definitely finished your homework and have obviously been on Instagram the whole time) and illegal in some circumstances (perjury). Lying to yourself is illegal, which is lying under oath in a court of law.
- Legality and morality, however, are not necessarily the same thing. How these two examples measure up when ethical theories of natural law, situational ethics and virtue ethics are applied.

Natural Law and Theft

- Theft within natural law is considered to be immoral, for a variety of reasons. According to the principles of moral law, we must hold this practice up to the primary precept of natural law – do no harm.
- To steal is to violate the precept of worshipping God as this is directly in conflict with the primary precept. Along with other actions such as lying and fornication (sex outside the context of marriage), *Theologia* Aquinas deems theft as always wrong as it directly disobeys the divine law, being a form of divine command theory, takes the lead on the attitude towards the divine source – the Bible. Exodus 20 outlines the Ten Commandments given to the people of Israel. In this text, theft is emphatically condemned in the phrase ‘Thou shalt not steal’.
- It also violates the precept of seeking order in society. Today we function in a society with the idea that if you work at a job, you will be remunerated financially. You will then use this money in order to fund your living expenses, and any disposable income can be used at your discretion. However, this, however, violates the order we have set up in society. The order that dictates that you need to pay money for them. In this way, theft can be considered to be in conflict with the primary precept of natural law.
- Aquinas does, however, allow stealing in exceptional circumstances – for example, if you need to take food to someone who would otherwise die of starvation, then this would not be considered to be wrong. This is because it would preserve life – one of the primary precepts of natural law.
- Bernard Williams’ interpretation of natural law in proportionalism would not be as strict. In a vast majority of cases he would still consider it to be wrong, but in a very small number of cases he would argue to be correct – for example, if it could be seen to serve one of the primary precepts of natural law – preserve life or preserve order within society, in extreme cases then it might be considered to be correct.

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Natural Law on Lying

- To lie may also violate the precept of maintaining social harmony and order. It may disrupt the social order of a society, or may result in a situation where the societal structures may break down.
- It also violates the precept of seeking order in society. A lie which is believed to be true can have consequences which are devastating for societies. Therefore, it would be considered a violation of the primary precept.
- However, not all natural law theorists take this view.
- Bernard Hoose's interpretation of natural law in terms of proportionality may consider lying to be moral in the case that it directly serves one of the primary precepts. For example, if a doctor tells someone in order to save the life of an individual, then this would be considered a violation of the primary precept of preserving life.

Virtue Ethics on Theft

- Aristotle, Greek philosopher and founder of virtue ethics, would emphatically state that theft is a vice.
- Aristotle would view theft as a 'base action'. Therefore, there is no way to perform a virtuous act through theft. Just as one cannot cheat on one's spouse in a virtuous way, so one cannot steal in a virtuous way.
- The question would then emerge as to how Aristotle would navigate the issue of theft in a situation where survival is at stake. The peers of Aristotle were all men who had high standing in Greek society. Theft would indeed be a base issue of greed. This causes issues when one introduces a utilitarian approach to theft versus the theft in the case of Aristotle's contemporaries. Aristotle would not allow for an allowance of theft in the case that it would give food to someone who would otherwise starve. There is no such allowance made in virtue ethics.

Virtue Ethics on Lying

- The emphasis in the issue of lying within virtue ethics is that lying is tied to social interaction and is a violation of interpersonal interaction.
- For Aristotle, truth and lies are not a simple matter. Lying is not as simple as saying something that is not true. If truthfulness is a virtue, then those are bound by virtue ethics to show virtue to others. Lying would be considered a vice and would be immoral.
- A complex situation may occur in the navigation of virtue ethics. If a situation arises where the practice of another virtue lead an individual to the conclusion that a lie is necessary, they are left at somewhat of a moral impasse within the realm of virtue ethics.

Situation Ethics on Theft

- Situation ethics, as ever, differs depending on the situation. The overarching principle is to act in a way that ensures the outcome of serving the end of agape love in the best possible way.
- An example from popular culture would be the bread-stealing crime of Jean Valjean. In the movie 'Les Misérables', the audience know that stealing is wrong, the action is presented as being justified as Jean Valjean needs to steal bread to feed his sister's child who was dying of starvation. This was out of agape love for his sister. A situation ethicist would consider his action to be moral, even if the action of stealing is wrong.
- They would, however, view the stealing of the life savings of an elderly person to fund a business as being wrong. The purpose of the stealing is for personal and personal vanity, rather than the love of agape.
- The overarching serving of agape love could take a variety of forms, e.g. would it be moral to steal a car to result in protecting someone from harm?

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Situation Ethics on Lying

- Again, situation ethicists would argue that the individual situation has to be considered. There can be no overarching blanket rule that will apply to all moral cases as they arise.
- The question a situation ethicist would ask is not 'is it always wrong to lie?', but 'is it wrong in this situation?' or 'would lying best serve the interests of agape, or would it not?'
- For example, lying to your mother and saying that you actually love the family business passed down to you (when, in reality, you think it is a curse) might be considered a loving thing to do in this situation; therefore, it might be considered to be morally acceptable. It would only hurt your mother's feelings, but it would also create a negative connotation for a family that is emotionally important to her.

Key Figures

Aristotle

- Famous Greek philosopher whose work the *Nicomachean Ethics* put forward his theory of virtue ethics.
- It is through his thoughts and works that we are able to apply virtue ethics to our lives.

St Thomas Aquinas

- St Thomas Aquinas was a thirteenth-century monk who posited the ethical theory of natural law.
- It is used by the Catholic Church in its formulation of its ideas about what is a morally good action.
- Because Aquinas bases his ethical theory on the Bible and reason, his viewpoint is that the moral laws laid out in the Bible are not subject to change.

Joseph Fletcher

- Joseph Fletcher developed situation ethics as a more flexible form of Christian ethics.
- His viewpoint is that instances of living ethically depend very much on the individual situation and how these actions serve the greatest of the Christian principle of agape.

Key Texts

Nicomachean Ethics

- This is the work of Greek philosopher Aristotle in which the theory of virtue ethics is developed.
- It takes the form of about 10 different scrolls and is centred around the idea of 'good' or ethical.
- It is from this discussion that the theory of Virtue ethics is developed.

Situation Ethics: The New Morality

- This is the text published in 1997 in which Joseph Fletcher put forward his theory of situation ethics.
- It is in this text that he outlines his ideas regarding the working principles and putting forward and providing practical regulation for situation ethics, which is based on the individual situation such as an instance of lying or an instance of theft.
- It is important to stress that this text does not necessarily justify all instances; rather, it provides an instance on a case-by-case basis and deliberates as to whether the instance could be morally justified.

Summa Theologica, 1st part, St Thomas Aquinas

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

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Year 2 Considerations

Whether or not someone who has lied or stolen something can be considered to other discussions too – such as the discussion of free will and moral responsibility then they cannot be held responsible for their actions. How would this view impact actions? To what extent can a person be considered to be immoral if their actions choose them? These questions will be discussed in Year 2 of this course in the Responsibility.

Student Checklist



What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is the attitude of natural law to the issue of lying?			
What is the attitude of natural law to the issue of theft?			
What is the attitude of virtue ethics to the issue of lying?			
What is the attitude of virtue ethics to the issue of theft?			
What is the attitude of situation ethics to the issue of lying?			
What is the attitude of situation ethics on the issue of theft?			



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Practice Exam-style Question

If you are sitting the AS exam, please answer the first question. If you are sitting the A Level exam, please answer the second question.

1. Explain how deontological approaches to ethical decision-making can be used to address the issues of lying and theft.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- exhibit awareness and comprehension of relevant belief including:
 - the key ideas of deontological ethical theories
 - Explain the key issues of lying and theft
 - Explain how deontological ethics approaches the issues of lying and theft

2. Examine the view that teleological ethics is a better way of making ethical decisions than deontological ethics. Make reference to the issues of lying and theft.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- exhibit awareness and comprehension of relevant beliefs, including:
 - the key ideas of normative ethical theories, including **deontological** and virtue ethics
 - the key ideas of situation ethics and naturalistic ethics
 - the key concepts of virtues, doctrines of the mean, duty

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Applications of Normative Ethical

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Cloning	The process of making an identical genetic copy of a
Embryo research	Scientific investigations and experiments that involve
Designer babies	Embryos that have been genetically modified to produce
Euthanasia	The intentional ending of a person's life in order to
Assisted suicide	The act of helping of another person to end their own
Abortion	The medical process of ending a woman's pregnancy
Conception	The point at which a sperm fertilises an egg; some refer
Intensive farming	The practice of producing large amounts of food, whether
Meat consumption	The human practice of consuming animal meat as part
Organ transplant	The practice of transferring organs from either another
Cloning	The process of replicating the DNA of a being in order
Blood sports	Sporting activities involving acts of violence with animals
Scientific experimentation	The intentional use of animals in order to test substances
Sanctity of life	The belief that life is a gift from God, created by him
Personhood	The quality of being considered a human person, with

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Issues of Human Life and Death

Overview

Human life is complicated, filled with daily small and large ethical navigation. Modern living and modern developments in technology and human science in the introduction of new ethical dilemmas – the proverbial issue of just because you can does not mean you should – the question remains as to whether or not you should.

The way that the normative ethical theories discussed within this course deal with them each has its own strengths and weaknesses.

Key Points



General Points

- One of the natures of humanity is that there are realities with which individuals grapple within their lifetimes. Ethical practices need to be applied to real-life situations to see how well they will hold up when faced with the challenges of modern life.
- Developments in modern medical science have in some cases created new ethical dilemmas which individuals are attempting to grapple with in the application of ethical theories to real life.
- Issues important to the study of this course include embryo research, cloning, abortion, voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide.
- One of the key ideas which appear repeatedly throughout discussions of human life and death, specifically within ethical systems such as natural law, is the idea of sanctity of life. This is a theological idea which posits that God gave human beings life and, therefore, life is sacred and should not be ended.

Embryo Research

- This is the scientific endeavour of using human embryos in order to test theories and believe they will be able to develop new cures or treatments previously unavailable.
- Human embryos can be created from stem cells which could be used in order to treat individuals with various illnesses.
- The issue surrounding this stems from whether or not you consider embryos to have human status. The issue lies in the debate surrounding the idea that the embryos are then disposed of – and if one considers these embryos to be human beings (from the moment of conception) then this is both exploitation and murder.
- **Natural Law:** The main issues which come from embryo research are rooted in the idea that life should be preserved at all costs as many who believe in natural law (largely Christian) believe that life begins at conception. Therefore, by experimenting on embryos, you are experimenting on human beings. This would compromise the idea of dignity of human beings. Furthermore, the creation of embryos from embryos will involve the destroying of embryos. This would, in terms of natural law, be against which is against the primary precepts.
- **Virtue Ethics:** In the pursuit of eudemonia it could be argued that the benefits of developing stem cell embryos could result in eudemonia. By eradicating issues by developing stem cell embryos, being able to heal those who are paralysed using stem cells, would be considered a good thing, eudemonia and, therefore, could be considered to be a positive thing. The fact that possessing such a technology does not mean using not to act on it might be argued, even if one is doing so for moral reasons.
- **Situation Ethics:** Situation ethics would, as always, undermine that what should be done is determined by the situation. One of the four working principles of situation ethics (emphasis on the importance of the individual person), comes into play in the context of this issue. A situation ethicist, therefore, would be faced with quite a difficult decision and, in reality, this argument hinges on whether or not they would consider the embryos to have personhood. It could be argued to be the most loving thing to allow a potential human to live, but it could also be argued to be the most loving thing to use them to create a cure for life-threatening or debilitating diseases.

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Cloning

- Cloning is the process by which exact genetics are replicated using scientific methods.
- The first successful mammal clone was Dolly the sheep, who was cloned in 1996 and died in 2003 until 2003.
- The potential for such a technology working has huge implications for human beings. Do we consider clones to be persons? Would they be able to be used as a source of organs? Is testing on clones permitted? Would this be an alternative way of reproducing – simply cloning rather than reproducing in the traditional way?
- **Natural Law:** Natural law as positive law, Aquinas would likely oppose this idea as it does technically create life and, therefore, would fulfil that particular primary principle which is unnatural. This would upset the order of society, which Aquinas considers a primary principle. As natural law theory is a theistic method of ethical principles, moral practitioners might consider cloning to be playing God, or taking life, which would not be considered to be moral.
- **Virtue Ethics:** The problem for virtue ethics would be whether or not the clone has a rational soul. McIntyre argued that clones would lack what he termed necessities that individuals necessitate stories to structure and frame their lives. It is important to consider the potential unintended impacts of the decisions made.
- **Situation Ethics:** Fletcher himself states that there are benefits to cloning which would serve the interests of agape. If we accept that avoidance of disease is a loving act, then that 'control of a child's sex by cloning, to avoid any one of 50 sex-linked genes, is justifiable'. Should love be served by the ethics of cloning, then to Fletcher it is.

Designer Babies

- Designer babies is the term used to refer to the scientific use of human embryos to create a human baby who fulfils certain characteristics or a set of certain characteristics. Beings who have had their DNA edited early in life to avoid certain diseases, or just have certain selected characteristics such as a particular colour of hair, sex, etc.
- While this might be used for medical reasons, including the elimination of genetic diseases, hereditary, it could also be used for cosmetic reasons or discriminative reasons. Some types of designer babies (hair colour, eye colour) or gender. Other people might want to design a child without genetic disabilities as this suggests that people with disabilities exist. Therefore, it is clear that this is a controversial issue.
- **Natural Law:** Natural law might oppose designer babies in a number of ways. Designer babies might prevent the ordering of society, especially if they heighten and exacerbate abuses between those who are rich and poor. However, another might simply see it as a form of reproduction, and biblical texts that emphasise human beings as made in the image of God indicate that it is simply wrong to interfere with nature, and as such designer babies are not a plan.
- **Virtue Ethics:** Virtue ethics might oppose designer babies for a number of reasons. In a teleological ethical system, it relies on identifying a specific set of ends for human beings. If humans changed enough through DNA editing, these might eventually change, meaning the language of virtue might not apply in the same way. Another reason is that curing specific genetic diseases, the creation of designer babies cannot be said to be any specific virtue. Rather than trying to improve human beings, it can be seen as a virtuous person is improving the lives of others and demonstrating virtue to, those who are suffering.
- **Situation Ethics:** Fletcher argues that the designing and improvement of human beings is rejected, and that so long as it is demonstrated there is no reason not to eliminate suffering and improve the lives of human beings through DNA editing. In fact, Fletcher would justify the use of such procedures even for the purposes of improving human beings, just to alleviate serious conditions, so long as there are proper controls in place.

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Abortion

- Abortion is the medical termination of a pregnancy.
- Abortion is a subject of much controversy. It was only made legal in the UK in 1967. Before this it was a criminal offence as part of the Offences against the Persons Act (1861) – it was named such because the foetus was considered to be a person. This is the crux of this debate.
- **Natural Law:** Pro-life (i.e. anti-abortion) stances can be justified by appeal to natural law theory. Two **primary precepts**, ‘to preserve life’ and ‘to reproduce’, can be used. If we accept that an embryo or foetus is a person (or has the *potential to be a life*) then directly contradicting the precept ‘to preserve life’. Similarly, abortion, since it directly contradicts the precept ‘to reproduce’. It is for this reason that the use of contraception by Catholics is also considered immoral. This is said, the **doctrine of double effect** has often been invoked to justify abortion in special circumstances, usually if, by giving birth, the mother's life is in danger. Sometimes, although performing an abortion results in a bad consequence (the death of the foetus), the intention (to save the mother's life) is good.
- **Virtue Ethics:** Abortion is addressed in a sense in Aristotle's writing *Politics*. He suggests that people should have a number of children which exceeds their capability or wealth in their ability to raise them. Then abortion should occur ‘before sense and life have begun’ (*Politics:7, XVI*). This is used to distinguish between different kinds of fetuses in a sense – those who have mental capabilities and those who do not – i.e. a foetus who has developed beyond the point where they have developed only currently a cluster of cells (technically referred to as a ‘zygote’).
- Here it can also be important to remember the intent behind the practice of abortion. The intent behind the motivation to seek abortion is important. To have an abortion out of vanity or to improve one's appearance is considered to be immoral. However, if it is for the sake of the mother's health, it is considered to be moral within virtue ethics.
- **Situation Ethics:** Once again, situation ethics approaches this issue on a situational basis. Fletcher himself supported abortion in instances where it would end the suffering of the mother. This would be considered to be moral in his view. He gives examples in his text *Situation Ethics* such as rape in which he would consider abortion to be the most logical choice. A common example used to justify the approach of a situation in which abortion would be the ethical path to take is the actions of the Angel of Auschwitz, whose abortion of pregnant prisoners en route to concentration camps saved the lives of the women. The women were sent straight to the gas chambers as a result of their pregnancy. In this instance, it is considered moral by terminating their pregnancies.

Voluntary Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

- Voluntary euthanasia is the intentional ending of the life of an individual through their request.
- Assisted suicide is the action of providing an individual with the means to meet their death in a peaceful and comfortable manner, usually using drugs. It is different to euthanasia in that the acting agent being someone other than the dying person. Assisted suicide is when someone helps another end their own life, e.g. by providing suitable medication, so that they can then take their own life.
- **Natural Law:** Euthanasia always involves *ending* a life, hence it breaks the primary precept of preservation. From this basis we might conclude that natural law theory holds euthanasia to be wrong. Another primary precept which a natural law theorist may bring to bear is the notion that we should strive to create a just, harmonious society. Here we must consider the moment and considering the **doctrine of double effect**. Remember, this holds that as long as the consequences are *adverse* as long as they were intended to bring about good. So, would voluntary euthanasia satisfy this criterion? Here is one case where it might. A doctor, with a patient who is in severe pain and has no hope of recovery, administers a fatal dose of painkillers. The doctor's intention is not, of course, to cause the patient's death (a bad consequence), it is rather simply to put an end to their suffering (a good consequence).
- **Virtue Ethics:** Eudemonia is the happiness and the end purpose of human life. If it is considered to be no longer possible for an individual – for example, should someone be in a persistent vegetative state) – then virtue ethics could be used to support euthanasia.

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- If eudemonia is no longer possible then it might be considered moral within virtue ethics. However, it might be considered courageous to suffer, which could be considered a virtue within virtue ethics.
- **Situation Ethics:** As ever, agape love is considered to be the most important principle in situation ethics. Fletcher himself believed that voluntary euthanasia is one of the most difficult situations. Every situation, as ever, must be considered for its individuality. Ethical decisions to be considered include whether or not the individual has a terminal illness. All ethical decisions should be based on the pain experienced by an individual in their situation. If a person is only going to suffer as they watch their loved one in pain, then death is desired then in situation ethics, death might be considered to be the most loving course of action.

Capital Punishment

- Capital punishment is otherwise known as the death penalty – it is the killing of a person as the sentence given to them at their conviction of a crime.
- It is usually reserved for highly serious crimes, such as murder.
- The death penalty is not currently practised within the United Kingdom; however, it is practised in many countries, including the United States, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.
- There is a variety of different methods of administering capital punishment, including hanging, the electric chair, stoning, hanging, and death by firing squad.
- One of the main issues regarding capital punishment is the morality of the state killing the perpetrator.
- Furthermore, the issue that innocent people are (or could be) killed for crime continues to be a platform for which people argue against the death penalty.
- **Natural Law:** In Aquinas' thought, capital punishment is acceptable, but the moral authority is placed on this. Divine commands of God prohibit the killing of another human being. There is support for capital punishment on the occasion of particular crimes, such as murder. God is considered to be the presiding power over which the moral authority of an individual comes from. Capital punishment in the case of some crimes can be considered to be a just application of the precept of the upholding of order of society by protecting society from danger. Upholding God's laws in terms of administering capital punishment for certain crimes is considered to be a just application of justice.
- **Virtue Ethics:** The just application of virtue ethics from Aristotle's thought is considered to be an application of justice. There is no consideration of the virtue of justice in virtue ethics. Therefore, it could be considered that capital punishment is easy to justify as it serves the purpose of justice.
- **Situation Ethics:** In situation ethics, the service of agape is ever important. The most loving love is served. Obviously to execute an individual would be considered to be the most loving course of action; however, it is important to consider how loving such an action would be towards the individual who would continue to go on to kill, or attack, members of society. In situation ethics, the most loving course of action in some instances.

Key Figures

St Thomas Aquinas

- Thirteenth-century monk.
- Founder of natural law.
- Writer of influential text *Summa Theologica*.

Aristotle

- Greek philosopher, thinker and writer of many influential texts on philosophy.
- First philosopher to put forward the ideas of virtue ethics.
- Valued the pursuit of virtue within the ethical interaction of human beings.

Joseph Fletcher

- In his works, he developed the idea of agape which was first discussed by J A. Richards.
- Joseph Fletcher developed Robinson's ideas as he too felt that Christian ethics were too rigid.
- Fletcher's approach towards Christian situation ethics is posed as a midway point between rule-based ethics and antinomianism.

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Year 2 Considerations

One aspect which is touched upon in the discussion of capital punishment is the person who has committed the crime. If someone is never taught that something is wrong, or has no conscience for their actions, then should this impact how we view and treat them? This is a key theme of Year 2 of the course in the section on Conscience, in which the views of Aquinas and the role and impact of the conscience are put forward and their value analysed.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is embryo research?			
How does natural law apply to embryo research?			
How does virtue ethics apply to embryo research?			
How does situation ethics apply to embryo research?			
What is cloning?			
How does natural law apply to cloning?			
How does virtue ethics apply to cloning?			
How does situation ethics apply to cloning?			
What is a designer baby?			
How does natural law apply to designer babies?			
How does virtue ethics apply to designer babies?			
How does situation ethics apply to designer babies?			
What is abortion?			
How does natural law apply to abortion?			
How does virtue ethics apply to abortion?			
How does situation ethics apply to abortion?			
What is voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide?			
How does natural law apply to voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide?			
How does virtue ethics apply to voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide?			
How does situation ethics apply to voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide?			
What is capital punishment?			
How does natural law apply to capital punishment?			
How does virtue ethics apply to capital punishment?			
How does situation ethics apply to capital punishment?			

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Issues of Non-human Life and

Overview

The application of ethics does not stop at human beings. There are many issues one encounters when applying normative ethical theories beyond the issues of human life, namely the well-being of animals and their treatment by humans.

The way in which human beings treat animals has many different facets to examine – the eating of meat itself, and the way in which it is sourced, is a particular issue. In the modern age has seen developments in intensive farming due to technological advances.

Key Points

General Points

- Ethics applies not just to the practice and issues regarding human life, but also to the treatment of animals – essentially, the treatment of animals by human beings.
- This idea has both religious and secular applications, as they will cite differing ethical theories.
- Issues involved within the discussion of issues of non-human life and death include methods of sourcing meat such as intensive farming, use of animals for cloning, genetic experimentation, and sourcing organs from animals.
- Often the rights of an individual are viewed as being possessed due to some factors that are possessed by humans due to our personhood, which many consider to be unique. Factors include our knowledge of, and ability to feel, pain.
- The application of normative ethical theories can be used here in order to discuss how we would respond and interact with these challenges posed.
- Many of these issues relate to human impact on the world. Different people from different backgrounds have various approaches to this. Many religious people believe that humans have a responsibility to care for the earth known as stewardship; however, many secular people believe that humans have a responsibility to care for the world without the need for God.

Eating Animals and Intensive Farming

- The consumption of meat, the flesh of animals, for human nutrition has been a part of human diets for centuries; however, in the modern day there are ethical issues which arise due to the widely available and large amount of meat.
- The way in which animals have been raised for the purpose of the slaughtering them for their meat has changed dramatically as industrialisation and urbanisation have taken place within the last few centuries.
- The demand for meat has increased too, as more people eat an increased amount of meat as part of their diet.
- Intensive farming is the use of technology, new efficient farming techniques and methods in order to produce the largest amount of yield (to meet higher demands). This applies to the farming of animals but also of crops.
- Factors that should be considered from an ethical standpoint are the well-being of the animals before it is slaughtered, whether the consumption of meat is ethical and whether the methods of production used are sustainable.
- **Natural Law:** Aquinas' natural law recognised a hierarchy of creation in which humans were at the top. Under this hierarchy, he believed that humans could use animals as they see fit. However, according to Aquinas' view, humans have the capacity to reason and make reasoned moral ethical decisions, whereas animals did not believe could fulfil that role. Therefore, in his view, the use of intensive farming as a method of procuring meat would be considered unethical.
- **Virtue Ethics:** Like Aquinas, Aristotle (the founder of virtue ethics) believed that humans were at the highest point. Therefore, it would not be considered ethical to intensively farm, as humans are only required to show virtues to other humans. However, it may be the case that as some forms of intensive farming can be viewed to cause harm to animals, it may be considered to be in conflict with the values of virtue ethics. Modern ethical theories often consider the well-being of animals as a key factor in ethical decision-making.

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displaying virtues should not stop with the application to other humans but the virtues to all – animals included. It might also be a consideration point that the environmentally may cause harm to future generations of humans and, therefore, these people might involve opposition to intensive farming practices.

- **Situation Ethics:** Situation ethicists are governed by the actions which display virtues in a particular situation. Therefore, the individual situation of intensive farming is important. For example, a situation ethicist might be fine with the intensive farming of plants but not suffering as intensive farming of animals for meat. However, they would also consider the harm to humans which intensive farming practices are generating.

Cloning and Scientific Experimentation

- Cloning for scientific experimentation is the intentional use of animals as test subjects. For example, guinea pigs are used for the development of scientific endeavour.
- This might be done for a variety of reasons.
- Within the consumerist sphere, specifically the cosmetic market, animals are used to ensure that they are safe for human use or to see whether or not a substance is likely to be harmful to humans.
- Within the medical sphere, experimentation on animals may aid scientific endeavours in curing diseases which are killing human beings. It may enable scientists to develop treatments for current illnesses by gauging the effect their theories may have on the animals. The possibility of developing treatments which could save countless human lives is a benefit previously impaired by conditions.
- Cloning is the making of an identical copy of an animal. This might be done to preserve genetic traits within an animal, to preserve a species or for less serious, more practical reasons.
- The positive implications for humankind are huge – the ethical implications for animals are of a grey area.
- **Natural Law:** Again here we are seeing Aquinas' view of the hierarchy of creation. The underlying factor in his reaction to this issue is that animals only have instrumental value and, therefore, they are able to be used for the purpose of human beings. However, the issue arises when it begins to impact humans' treatment of animals. The natural law holds strongly that there is an order of creation. To disrupt the world's order, which was intentionally designed by God, is considered bad. Therefore, for this reason it could be considered to be bad.
- **Virtue Ethics:** Aristotle considered virtues are only necessarily displayed to humans. It is one of the fundamental defining characteristics of human beings. If experimentation could be considered to be a good thing as long as it does not impact human beings negatively. Modern ethicists may differ to Aristotle, however, as they may believe that virtuous behaviour such as compassion should be extended to all creatures. They would ask the question as to whether or not it could ever be considered virtuous to experiment on an animal and ask the question as to whether or not it could ever be considered virtuous to experiment on an animal.
- **Situation Ethics:** As ever, a situation ethicist seeks the most loving course of action. If cloning would be most loving, then they would consider that to be the moral course of action. Experimentation creating cures for human diseases is one argument which might be considered as being a loving course of action. However, cosmetic testing is not considered to be a worthy reason as the agape of lovingly looking after animals is more worthy than producing beauty products.

Blood Sports

- Blood sports are sports which involve the harming of, or the eventual death of, an animal as the end goal of the event.
- An example of a blood sport is bullfighting, as the end goal of the event is for the bull to be killed.
- These games usually take place for no reason beyond human entertainment and the pleasure of the spectators.
- In the past century, moral ideas about blood sports have shifted significantly, unfavourably by many people due to the fact that the animals involved are viewed as having little value beyond entertainment to the humans involved.
- In the application of ethical theories, however, there are different arguments

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- **Natural Law:** As Aquinas views animals as only having instrumental moral value, he would not particularly oppose blood sports. However, the satisfaction felt by observing being manifested in violence against humans, which would be considered unjust, is wrong. Potentially, also, it could be argued that they foster violent values which are contrary to the principles of societal order, which is one of Aquinas' key precepts.
- **Virtue Ethics:** As blood sports were actually very popular in the Greek society, the view is likely to not be condemnatory. As animals are considered to be fine for the purpose of practice would be considered to be okay; however, if human beings were particularly affected, it would be different. However, modern ethicists might consider this to be a barbaric practice if there is no benefit to human life apart from entertainment, especially considering that there is no benefit to human life apart from entertainment from blood sports.
- **Situation Ethics:** A situation ethicist would be most likely to oppose blood sports if it is against the interests of agape. The only good they could be argued to generate is entertainment, which is a low-level value and can be garnered through other means which are not harmful. However, this would be dictated by the specific situation.

Sourcing Organs from Animals

- One method of treating those who have large issues with their organs such as organ donors. Scientific advancement has meant that it is not outside of the realm of possibility to have organs engineered in order for their organs to suit the needs of such people, and then be transplanted.
- The implications for the medical community are huge and this could potentially save many lives. There are, of course, risks involved, as interspecies transplantation would be more challenging than interpersonal.
- There are issues arising too regarding the ethical nature of treating animals in order to harvest their organs purely in order to kill them and harvest their organs is ethical.
- There may also be societal issues arising in that treatment might be too expensive for those able to pay are offered an unfair advantage of being able to prolong their lives.
- One must consider, too, the application of ethical theories to this discussion.
- **Natural Law:** As this was not a scientific capability at the time of Aquinas, it is difficult to know what stance he would take on this issue. However, it is possible to apply his ideas to the issue at hand. In terms of the ethical treatment of animals, Aquinas viewed them as having a purpose in the world. Therefore, it is permissible for humans to use animals for a purpose, especially if it serves the precept of preserving life. However, it would be an issue for a natural law ethicist if it involves altering the biological make-up of human beings by cross-species transplantation.
- **Virtue Ethics:** Aristotle would be in favour of such an endeavour as not only using reason to solve the problem posed by issues with human organs, but it also shows compassion and mercy towards the person receiving the transplant. However, if it involves using virtues to animals may think it immoral to use them as a source of organs.
- **Situation Ethics:** Obviously this would differ depending on the situation, and the purposes of agape love. Therefore, if it is the most loving thing to do, it is permissible. However, distress may be caused to intelligent animals (e.g. pigs) if they are used as a source of organs. A situation ethicist as they may not see causing distress to be the most loving thing to do.

Key Figures

St Thomas Aquinas

- Thirteenth-century philosopher, Christian thinker and founder of natural law.
- Writer of the seminal text *Summa Theologica*.

Aristotle

- Greek philosopher, thinker and writer of many influential texts on philosophy.
- First philosopher to put forward the ideas of virtue ethics.
- Valued the ideas of virtue within the ethical interaction of human beings.

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Joseph Fletcher

- Christian ethicist who developed the idea of agape which was first discussed
- He too felt that Christian ethics needed a more flexible approach, and this resulted in situation ethics.
- Fletcher's approach towards Christian situation ethics is posed as a midway point between rule-based and antinomianism.

Year 2 Considerations

Another form of teleological ethics is utilitarian ethics. Bentham's utilitarian utilitarianism states that the greatest happiness for the greatest number is the ideal end of any ethical decision. This includes the use of animals. Bentham believes that the greatest happiness for the greatest number includes a utilitarian calculation. Therefore, the eating of animals could not be justified. There can be no moral justification for the experimentation on animals for medical purposes. This will be the course.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
What is intensive farming?			
What are the ethical implications?			
How would a natural law ethicist respond?			
How would a virtue ethicist respond?			
How would a situation ethicist respond?			
Why do humans care about using on animals?			
What are the ethical implications?			
How would a natural law ethicist respond?			
How would a virtue ethicist respond?			
How would a situation ethicist respond?			
What are blood sports?			
What are the ethical implications?			
How would a natural law ethicist respond?			
How would a virtue ethicist respond?			
How would a situation ethicist respond?			
Why might animals be used as a source of organs?			
What are the ethical implications?			
How would a natural law ethicist respond?			
How would a virtue ethicist respond?			
How would a situation ethicist respond?			

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Practice Exam-style Question

If you are sitting the AS exam, please answer the first question. If you are sitting the A Level exam, please answer the second question.

3. 'Situation ethics is the best way of approaching the issue of euthanasia'

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- assess facets of religious approaches and differing ideas, including the following:
 - The person of Joseph Fletcher
 - The four principles
 - The six propositions
 - How these apply to euthanasia
 - Strengths of this application
 - Weaknesses of this application
 - The application of natural law to this issue
 - The application of virtue ethics to this issue
 - The strengths and weaknesses of both of these ethical approaches

4. Examine the view that natural law is the most effective method of approaching the issue of animal rights

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- exhibit awareness and recall of the scope of relevant beliefs, including:
 - the key ideas of natural law
 - the key ideas of animal rights issues
 - key points of viewpoints differing to natural law

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Mark Schemes

Levels of Response (AS)

Level	Levels of Response (AO1)
Level 5 (13–15 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer should demonstrate a good level of knowledge and understanding of the content which is requested in the question. The answer should also make use of and reference to specific views of specific theories which demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding. Use of specific or specialist language should be employed accurately.
Level 4 (10–12 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer should demonstrate fair knowledge and understanding of the subject raised in the question. The answer should also make use of and reference to specific views of specific theories which are sufficient to demonstrate good knowledge and understanding. Use of specific or specialist language should be generally employed accurately.
Level 3 (7–9 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer should demonstrate sufficient knowledge and understanding of the subject raised in the question. The answer should also make use of and reference to specific views of specific theories which are sufficient to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. Use of specific or specialist language should be generally employed.
Level 2 (4–6 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer should demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding of the subject raised in the question. The answer should also make use of and reference to specific views of specific theories to demonstrate limited knowledge and understanding. Use of specific or specialist language should be generally employed, although not accurately.
Level 1 (1–3 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will demonstrate poor, or lack, of knowledge and understanding of the subject raised in the question. The answer should also make use of and reference to specific views of specific theories which are insufficient to demonstrate poor knowledge and understanding. Use of specific or specialist language may be employed inaccurately, or not at all.

Level	Levels of Response (AO2)
Level 5 (13–15 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer should contain a high level of analysis and evaluation of the content. Strong argumentation should have been employed throughout the answer in a clear manner, and the answer should lead to a justified conclusion based on content analysis. Use of specific or specialist language should be employed accurately.
Level 4 (10–12 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer should contain a good level of analysis and evaluation of the content. Good argumentation should have been employed throughout the answer in a clear manner, and the answer should lead to a justified conclusion based on content analysis. Use of specific or specialist language should be employed mostly accurately.
Level 3 (7–9 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer should contain a sufficient level of analysis and evaluation of the content. Some argumentation should have been employed throughout the answer in a clear manner, and the answer should lead to a conclusion based on content analysed throughout the answer. Use of specific or specialist language should be employed.
Level 2 (4–6 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer should contain limited analysis and evaluation of the content demonstrated. Limited argumentation should have been employed throughout the answer in a clear manner, and the answer should lead to a somewhat less than justified conclusion based on content analysed throughout the answer. Use of specific or specialist language should be employed although limited.
Level 1 (1–3 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will have given a poor standard of analysis and evaluation of the content. Poor use of argumentation, or complete lack of argumentation, will be present. Answer will lack justification for the arguments or views presented, or contain irrelevant information. Use of specific or specialist language will have been poorly employed and not clearly related to the question.

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Levels of Response (A Level)

Level	Levels of Response (AO1)
5 (9–10 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will communicate a strong knowledge base showing nuanced and fully relevant information included. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied accurately, demonstrating above average understanding. Use of specific language will be applied accurately, demonstrating excellent context and meaning of these phrases.
4 (7–8 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will communicate a good knowledge base showing nuanced and mostly relevant information included. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied accurately, demonstrating above average understanding. Use of specific language will be applied accurately, demonstrating above average context and meaning of these phrases.
3 (5–6 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will communicate an adequate knowledge base showing some relevant information included. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory understanding. Use of specific language will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory context and meaning of these phrases.
2 (3–4 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will communicate a limited knowledge base showing understanding and some relevant information included. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory understanding. Use of specific language will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory context and meaning of these phrases.
1 (1–2 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will communicate a poor knowledge base showing very limited understanding with little relevant information included. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied, demonstrating limited understanding. Use of specific language will not be applied, or if it is it will be applied incorrectly.

Level	Levels of Response (AO2)
6 (13–15 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will display outstanding analysis and evaluation of the content raised by the text. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied accurately, demonstrating excellent understanding. A strong argument will be displayed showing nuanced and balanced understanding. Use of specific language will be applied accurately, demonstrating excellent context and meaning of these phrases.
4 (10–12 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will display above average analysis and evaluation of the content raised by the text. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied accurately, demonstrating above average understanding. An above average argument will be displayed showing balanced understanding. Use of specific language will be applied accurately, demonstrating above average context and meaning of these phrases.
3 (7–9 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will display sufficient analysis and evaluation of the content raised by the text. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied correctly. A sufficient argument will be displayed showing some balanced understanding. Use of specific language will be applied sufficiently, demonstrating satisfactory context and meaning of these phrases.
2 (4–6 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will display fairly basic analysis and evaluation of the content raised by the text. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory understanding. A basic argument will be displayed showing some understanding. Use of specific language will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory context and meaning of these phrases.
1 (1–3 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will display poor, or lack, evaluation of the content raised by the text. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be applied, demonstrating limited understanding. A poor argument will be displayed showing limited understanding. Use of specific language will not be applied, or if it is it will be applied incorrectly.

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Indicative Content

1. AS: Explain how deontological approaches to ethical decision-making can be used to justify or condemn theft.

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

- When discussing normative ethics, a good example of a deontological ethics is natural law.
- Natural moral law is a traditionally held religious theory of law and morality.
- It is a set of precepts based on biblical principles which was originally conceived down by St Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas is considered to be the individual who first put together the theory of natural law.
- The principles on which this natural moral law was developed were influenced by Aristotle's philosophy – specifically, his thoughts on telos (purpose).
- He believed that all humans have a natural purpose towards which God wants them to strive. Pursuing this purpose, or telos, will bring humans into unity and fellowship with God and exercise of the highest human potential.
- There were two sources Aquinas believed that humans could use to understand their purpose: the Bible and the world.
- Aquinas developed a key precept which is that we should aim to do good and avoid evil.
- Aquinas believed that through reason, the Bible and the world, it became clear that there are a number of 'primary precepts' that formed the basis of natural moral law.
- Although Aquinas did not provide a list himself, it is clear that he thought the most significant were: to preserve life, to reproduce, to educate children, to create an orderly, harmonious society.
- These rules are absolute and to disobey them is always to do wrong.
- Secondary precepts, or other rules about morality, can be derived from these primary precepts.
- Theft within natural law is considered to be immoral, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it is against the principles of moral law, we must hold this practice up to the principles of natural law.
- To steal is to violate the precept of worshipping God as it is directly in contradiction to the primary precept of seeking order in society.
- In *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas deems theft as wrong as it directly disobeys the primary precepts of God. Natural law, being a divine command theory, takes its authority from the attitude towards lying and the primary precept – the Bible.
- Exodus 20 outlines the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses and the people of Israel. In this text, the fifth commandment is explicitly condemned in the phrase 'Thou shall not steal'.
- This also violates the precept of seeking order in society. Today we function in a society based on the idea that if you work at a job, you will be remunerated financially. This money is then used to fund your living expenses, and any disposable income is used at your will. To steal goods, however, violates the order we have set up in society. This order dictates that in order to obtain goods, you need to pay money for them. Stealing would be considered to be immoral.
- Aquinas does, however, allow stealing in exceptional circumstances – for example, if a thief would provide food to someone who would otherwise die of starvation, then this would be considered to be immoral. This is because it would preserve life – one of the primary precepts of natural law.
- Bernard Hoose's proportionalism does not prohibit theft entirely. In the vast majority of cases, it would still consider it to be wrong, but in a very small number of cases it could be considered to be correct – for example, if it could be seen to serve one of the primary precepts. Stealing to preserve life or preserve order within society, in extreme cases then it might be considered to be acceptable.
- To lie also may violate the precept of maintaining social harmony and order. Lying can cause discord within society, or may result in a situation where the societal structure of law, order or justice may be obstructed.
- It also violates the precept of seeking order in society. A lie which is believed to be true can have devastating consequences for societies. Therefore, it would be considered to be immoral.
- It also violates the primary precept of seeking order in society.
- Bernard Hoose's proportionality, however, may consider lying to be permissible if it directly serves one of the primary precepts. For example, if you need to lie to someone in order to save the life of an individual, then this would be considered to be okay because you would be serving the primary precept of preserving life.

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2. A Level: Examine the view that deontological ethics is a better way of making teleological or virtue ethics. Make reference to the issues of lying and theft in

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

- When discussing normative ethics, a good example of deontological ethics is natural moral law.
- Natural moral law is a traditionally held religious theory of law and morality.
- It is a set of precepts based on biblical principles which was originally conceived down by St Thomas Aquinas, who is considered to be the individual who first put the idea of natural law.
- The principles on which this natural moral law was developed were influenced by Aquinas' interest in Aristotle's philosophy – specifically, his thoughts on telos.
- He reasoned that humans have a natural purpose towards which God wants them to strive. Pursuing this telos, will bring humans into unity and fellowship with God and realise the highest human potential.
- There were two sources Aquinas believed that humans could use to understand what God had given humanity: the Bible and the world.
- Aquinas developed a key precept which is that we should aim to do good and not evil.
- Aquinas believed that through reason, the Bible and the world, it became clear that there were a number of 'primary precepts' that formed the basis of natural moral law.
- Although Aquinas did not provide a list himself, it is clear that he thought the most significant were the most significant: to preserve life, to reproduce, to educate children, to create an orderly, harmonious society.
- These rules are absolute and to disobey them is always to do wrong.
- Secondary precepts, or other rules about morality, can be derived from these primary precepts.
- Theft within natural law is considered to be immoral, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, this is against the principles of moral law, we must hold this practice up to the principles of natural law.
- To steal is to violate the precept of worshipping God as this is directly in contradiction of God.
- In *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas deems theft as always wrong as it directly disobeys the commandments of God. Natural law, being a form of divine command theory, takes the attitude towards lying and theft from its primary source – the Bible.
- Exodus 20 outlines the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses and the first of these is 'Thou shalt not steal'. This text, theft is explicitly condemned in the phrase 'Thou shalt not steal'.
- It also violates the primary precept of seeking order in society. Today we function in a society based on the idea that if you work at a job, you will be remunerated financially and use this money in order to fund your living expenses, and any disposable income is used at your will. To steal goods, however, violates the order we have set up in society that dictates that in order to obtain goods, you need to pay money for them. Therefore, it would be considered to be immoral.
- Aquinas does, however, allow stealing in exceptional circumstances – for example, if you would provide food to someone who would otherwise die of starvation, then this would be considered to be immoral. This is because it would preserve life – one of the primary precepts of natural law.
- Bernard Hoose's proportionalism does not prohibit theft entirely. In the vast majority of cases, he would still consider it to be wrong, but in a very small number of cases it could be correct – for example, if it could be seen to serve one of the primary precepts, such as stealing to preserve life or preserve order within society, in extreme cases then this could be considered to be acceptable.
- To lie also may violate the precept of maintaining social harmony and order. Lying can cause discord within society, or may result in a situation where the societal structure breaks down or justice may be obstructed.
- It also violates the precept of seeking order in society. A lie which is believed to be true can have consequences that are devastating for societies. Therefore, it would be considered to be against this primary precept.
- Hoose's proportionalism, however, may consider lying to be permissible if it directly serves one of the primary precepts. For example, if you need to lie to someone in order to save the life of an individual, then this would be considered okay because you would be serving the primary precept of preserving life.

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3. AS: 'Situation ethics is the best way of approaching the issue of euthanasia.'

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

Students may give any of the following reasons why situation ethics is the best way of approaching the issue of euthanasia:

- Situation ethics focuses on what is the most loving thing to do in any given situation. This means that one clear advantage of situation ethics is the fact that
- One advantage is that because love is considered to be the most important of the principles of this ethical theory.
- Fletcher himself believes that voluntary euthanasia is one of the most loving things to do in a given situation. Every situation, as ever, must be considered for its individuality.
- Factors which might be considered include whether or not the individual is suffering from a terminal illness.
- Another consideration might be the pain experienced by an individual in their final days.
- If a person is only going to suffer more, their families suffer as they watch their loved one suffer. If death is desired then in situation ethics voluntary euthanasia might be considered as a more permissible option.
- There is an element of compassion within situation ethics, however, that could be seen as an advantage over natural law. It is far more flexible, giving more scope within moral decision-making.
- While both natural law and situation ethics are Christian ethics acting in a large society, situation ethics better marries to the individualist culture.
- Within virtue ethics, there is no direct ruling, so this is compatible with situation ethics. In virtue ethics, it might be considered courageous to suffer, which could be considered a moral within virtue ethics.
- It could then be argued that compared to this, situation ethics is more useful as it can prioritise the individual sufferer and relief of their pain rather than the arbitrary suffering.

Students may give any of the following reasons why situation ethics is not the best way of approaching euthanasia.

- One disadvantage is that because situation ethics is such a situational form of ethics, it is difficult to apply with one individual's situation. What is the most loving thing to do in one situation may not be the most loving thing to do in another.
- It is also important to consider what is the most loving thing to do for all people – it may not be clear what is the most loving thing to do when that outcome is different depending on whom the focus lays. The most loving thing for the patient may be different to that for the doctor.
- As a consequentialist form of ethics, it is difficult to apply as it is difficult to know what the outcome would be.
- Other ethical forms might also be useful in this instance.
- The clarity of natural law in condemning the ethical nature of euthanasia could be seen as more useful. There is one blanket rule which is easily applied, making the decision easier.
- Virtue ethics is useful in determining, for example, the situation when eudemonia is no longer possible. Eudemonia is the happiness and the end purpose of human beings. If it is considered to be no longer possible for an individual – for example, should someone be in PVS (persistent vegetative state) – then virtue ethics could be used to support the decision to allow euthanasia. If eudemonia is no longer possible then it might be considered more appropriate to allow virtue ethics to allow virtue ethics.

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4. A Level: Examine the view that natural law is the most effective method of a

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

- Natural law is a method of absolutist ethics based on religion – specifically the
- Issues involved within the discussion of issues of non-human life and death (a
- issues) include eating animals and methods of sourcing meat such as intensive
- animals for cloning and scientific experimentation and sourcing organs from
- In discussing the views of natural law on animal rights issues, it is of utmost im
- remember the place in which natural law and Aquinas placed animals in society
- Aquinas' natural law is based on a hierarchy of creation in which human beings w
- Under this hierarchy, he believed that humans could use animals as they see fit
- Therefore, because, in Aquinas' view, human capacity to reason and make reaso
- decisions distinguished humans from animals, who Aquinas did not believe
- that role.
- Therefore, in his view the use of animals for meat and also intensive farming a
- procuring meat would be considered to be okay.
- For Aquinas, the differentiation between ethical farming and intensive farming
- impact this has on the animal is of relative unimportance.
- Regarding the issue of blood sports, the concern of natural law is not necessar
- of the animals but rather the morality of the human beings involved.
- Concerning blood sports, many people view that as morally wrong because of
- impact these have on the animals (causing pain, undue distress etc.)
- As Aquinas views animals as only having instrumental moral value, theoretical
- particularly oppose blood sports.
- However, the satisfaction felt by observing violence may spill over into being r
- violence against humans, which would be considered under natural law to be
- Potentially, also, it could be argued that it fosters violent values, which would
- principles of societal order, which is one of Aquinas' precepts.
- Therefore, it is out of concern for the human moral order rather than for the a
- Aquinas would express concern for
- As the use of animals for cloning was not a scientific capability at the t
- writing, it is not possible to know how he himself would have reacted to this is
- However, it is possible to apply natural law's precepts to the issue at hand.
- Therefore, on the ethical treatment of animals, Aquinas viewed humans as being
- in a hierarchy of the world.
- Therefore, it is permissible for humans to use animals towards their own purp
- if it serves the precept of preserving life.
- However, it might violate the precept of the order of society by altering the bi
- of human beings by cross-species transplanting, which would be an issue for a
- ethicist.
- Therefore, throughout all issues of animal rights it should be demonstrated th
- Aquinas' view of animals within the hierarchy he believes was set out in the B
- concern for these issues would be for the morality, and essentially human nat
- people involved, rather than the animals.

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