

2016 specification
first exams in 2018



Revision Summaries for A Level Year 2 AQA

Component 1B: Ethics

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Contents

Thank You for Choosing ZigZag Education.....	ii
Teacher Feedback Opportunity.....	iii
Terms and Conditions of Use	iv
Teacher’s Introduction.....	1
Introduction to Meta-ethics: The Meaning of Right and Wrong	2
Divine Command Theory	3
Naturalism.....	6
Ethical Non-naturalism	9
Practice Exam-style Questions	11
Free Will and Moral Responsibility	12
The Conditions and Extent of Moral Responsibility	13
Practice Exam-style Questions	16
Conscience	17
Differing Ideas about the Nature of Conscience	18
Application and Value of Conscience	22
Practice Exam-style Questions	26
Bentham and Kant	27
Comparison of Key Ideas	28
Kant, Bentham and Religious Teaching.....	33
Practice Exam-style Questions	36
Mark Schemes	37
Levels of Response (A Level)	37
Indicative Content.....	38

Teacher's Introduction

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

Remember!

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

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.
- ✓ **Student Checklist:** A helpful guide to what students need to know by the end of the revision summary and a way to check their understanding and progress through a particular topic.
 - ! **Note:** The checklist is presented in question format and these questions would be ideal to set for homework or revision so that students can build the skills they need in order to progress to longer exam-style questions.
- ✓ **Exam-style Question:** A practice essay question with helpful assessment objectives, complete with levelled mark schemes and indicative content at the end of the resource. These are useful for students approaching their end-of-year exams or wishing to improve their essay technique on a particular topic.

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

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

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Introduction to Meta-ethics: The Me and Wrong

G₂ L₁ O₁

Fallacy	An error or fault in reasoning making the course of a p
Intuition	A faculty of the mind that grasps truths or falsehoods for conceptual judgment.
Intuitionism	The belief that moral truths are at their core unable to be proven that they are evidential of themselves.
Cognitivism	A statement which is intending to put forward a proposition said to be either true or false in nature.
Non-cognitivism	A statement which does not forward a proposition and is not true or false.
Meta-ethics	Meaning 'beyond ethics', this is ethics which is focused on ethical terms rather than whether or not the ideas are morally correct or morally wrong.
Objective	Things which are either right or wrong.
Subjective	Things which are either right or wrong depending on the individual.
Naturalism	The idea that values find their definition in some natural world.
Divine command theory	The belief that ethical sentiments are sourced from the deity, usually the traditional Judaeo-Christian God in the discussion.
The Ten Commandments	A clear example of divine command theory – some consider that these have been given by God both within Judaism and Christianity.
Non-naturalism	The idea that values do not find their definition in some natural world.
Absolutism	The idea that moral ideas are wholly and completely correct or incorrect.
Euthyphro's dilemma	A challenge to divine command theory found in the work of Plato.
Arbitrariness	One of the challenges posed by Euthyphro's dilemma to divine command theory.
Is-ought gap	The fallacy of assumption that because something is the case in one situation it should be the case in other situations.

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Divine Command Theory

Overview

Meta-ethics literally means 'beyond ethics'; it is the discussion of what is good and what is bad. It does not seek to posit that something is good or bad, but rather seeks to establish the terms, and whether or not they have any meaning.

Divine command theory is the theory that the origins of moral statements and ideas (right and wrong) all come from God. This belief about the origins of ethical theories is held by those who believe in divine command theory, and also must believe in God.

An example of an ethical theory which would generally fit with divine command theory is Aquinas' natural law theory.



Key Points

General Points

- Divine command theory is the meta-ethical belief that the origin of ethical ideas is from God – and can be derived from divine revelation, including Scripture and religious tradition.
- Actions which are commanded by God are morally right, actions which are forbidden by God are morally wrong.
- Religious people such as Christians believe that God created the world and morality. Therefore, it would follow that such a creator would also create rules for living in the world created.
- To put it in layman's terms, it is the belief that ethical behaviour which is good and bad ethics come from a good God. God commands what is good and what is good and bad.
- This can take various forms of communication – either through revelation such as Scripture, or through more indirect forms of communication such as the realities of the natural world, e.g. the laws we can observe governing nature may be considered to be the laws of God – and if these happen to align with religious Scripture then all the better.
- There are various different issues within discussions of divine command theory. For example, whether or not an individual believes in God, and is able to read and interpret Scripture.
- One common example is the Ten Commandments given to Moses in the Old Testament, Exodus 20. These include divine commands such as not to kill or lie, and not to worship God in vain.
- These laws are considered to be wholly good as God is considered to be wholly good and justifies the ethical nature of the laws. Furthermore, the omniscience of God justifies the laws – God is all knowledgeable and, therefore, knows what is and what is not good for people.
- Karl Barth is one important theologian to consider here. A Swiss reformed theologian and command theorist.
- Barth specifically underlined that he did not believe an effective ethical system could be based on human reason, as humans are increasingly fleeting in opinion and methods of thought depending on situation, occupation, location, and many other facets of life. The establishment of a secular ethical system is impossible. He also points out that human reason is fallible, which would render any possible ethical system created by human beings fallible.
- He argues that ethical principles cannot be known from studying and reasoning, but must be believed in. He believes that they arise from God communicating directly with humans through Scripture. For Barth, this revelation is the revelation given by Jesus Christ in his life, death and resurrection.
- Not all divine command theorists are Christians, as other religions such as Judaism and Islam have similar viewpoints; however, all divine command theorists must believe in some form of divine theory to have any kind of hold.

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Euthyphro's Dilemma

- This is a dilemma which was first posited by Greek philosopher Plato in his dialogue Euthyphro.
- Through this dialogue the initial question is posed:

'Are acts moral in and of themselves, and therefore commanded by God because they are good, or are acts good because God has commanded them?'

- This question poses a huge challenge to divine command theorists.
- If divine command theorists maintain that an action is good because it is commanded by God, how then are those actions which are commanded by God to be considered good? Are they inherently good? Or are they simply good because God says so? This is the challenge posed by this dilemma.

Analysis

- When one first encounters divine command theory one might view it in a positive light. In a vacuum it logically works – if one believes in a God who is good and from whom moral authority is derived, obviously it makes sense that ethical rulings given by such a God would be considered good. If one removes the theory from all other factors and examines it on its own, then it appears to be a simple and clear theory.
- One of the strengths of divine command theory is that it is relatively clear – there are clear codes and rules by which followers are called to live morally – Jews live by the Ten Commandments, Muslims live by the Shariah, Christians live by the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. This makes making ethical decisions involving any of the topics addressed in the theory relatively clear and simple.
- However, within the vacuum itself there are issues with the theory – namely, contradictions within religious texts or lack of direct rulings. If one is using religious commands in order to garner guidance as to how to behave in a situation where no direct ruling is given, then you come to the situation where people are using their own opinion and interpretation of the text, which can differ between people.
- Therefore, you would end up with two people following the same theory and ending up with very different interpretations. This is inconsistent and causes confusion when trying to apply a meaningful ethical theory.
- Furthermore, those who propose to follow divine command theory will inevitably face the dilemma – Euthyphro's dilemma, to be precise, and the various problems associated with divine command theory as a result.
- The **independence** problem refers to the issue that if we come to the conclusion that moral values exist themselves (and, therefore, are good independent of God), then one would conclude that there is an even greater power who has termed them good, or more simply that this is the nature of an omniscient God.
- The **arbitrariness** problem occurs when one takes the viewpoint that goodness is good because God commanded it. When taking this viewpoint, it would appear that morality would be based on the whims of God, and somewhat arbitrary.
- The problem of **abhorrent commands** occurs when we go down the line of arguing that an action is good because God commands them. This opens up the possibility that God could command actions, such as murder, are morally good. In such a case, it would be possible to murder without it being considered bad, and, therefore, a virtue and encouraged to be practised. Obviously, this causes emotional pain both to the victim and to those around him or her. This causes the thought that a God could demand to simply change what is considered good, and then have it carried out.
- Some religious theorists may counter this by citing what they consider to be the nature of God, which would argue supports the idea that just because he could do such things, he would not.

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Key Figures



Plato

- Greek philosopher who put forward what is now known as Euthyphro dialogue of the same name, which poses a challenge to the ideas of
- He is well known for his philosophical works, as well as his influence

Key Texts

Euthyphro

- This is a Socratic dialogue by the Greek philosopher Plato.
- It is dated approximately 399–395 BC
- It contains the titular Euthyphro's dilemma which is central to the critique of

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea 😞	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😄
What is divine command theory?			
Where does this theory believe ethics come from?			
What is an example of divine command theory?			
How might omniscience and benevolence undermine divine command theory?			
What are the strengths of divine command theory?			
What is the viewpoint of Karl Barth?			
What is Euthyphro's dilemma?			
What is the arbitrariness problem?			
What is the independence problem?			
What is the abhorrent command problem?			

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Naturalism

Overview

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

A truth is understood by the way it relates to the world. It also takes into consideration the ethical value or maxim or statement proposed in relation to the world. It is also often contrasted with moral absolutism. It is also often contrasted with its opponents, such as J L Mackie, argue against it as they would believe that there is an objective moral truth.

Key Points



General Points

- Ethical naturalism is a **cognitive** theory. This means that it is possible to say that ethics are true or false within human experience.
- It is the belief that decisions about what is right and wrong can be arrived at through the **world and human nature**.
- An action can be right or wrong depending on how it fulfils the end purpose. utilitarianism is moral if it produces happiness.
- Human nature and happiness are both things that exist in the world and can be tested.
- Ethical naturalism treats ethical statements the same as non-ethical statements.
- Just as we would expect the statement 'that car is blue' to be empirically tested (we see and be certain that it is blue), so too such ethical statements, such as 'happiness is good', can be empirically tested by analysing whether an action has produced happiness.
- Therefore, if we return to the example of the Utilitarian theory, we can see that we can test the morality of our actions. If the goal is happiness, then an action can be moral if it caused happiness. What if it did not cause happiness – for example, an honest compliment. What if it caused someone pain – for example, insulting someone. On this basis, we can see that ethical statements can be proved true or false – they are verifiable.
- 1. The four principles of ethical naturalism, or four key ideas within the theory are:
 - Moral statements are always propositional.
 - These propositions are true.
 - These propositions are true not because of human beings, but because of the natural world around us.
 - The natural realities of the world can be reduced to ethical realities.
- So, for example, the phrase 'Murder is wrong', within naturalism, would be considered wrong because it has relation to natural things which can happen in the world around us, not because of moral and cognitive.
- Ethical naturalism is largely reductionist in the way that it deals with ethical statements.
- An example of an ethical theory which makes use of ethical naturalism is utilitarianism.
- By positing that the most ethical thing to do is to gain the greatest happiness for the greatest number, utilitarians are giving natural value to the moral realm, so that goodness is placed in the natural world.

Naturalism and Absolutism

- Ethical naturalism is the belief that moral ideas can be reduced to natural moral ideas.
- It is not uncommon for an ethical naturalist theory to be an absolutist ethical theory, but they are not mutually exclusive.
- Naturalism is an example of an ethical theory which is both absolutist and naturalist.

Analysis

- Critics of this way of talking about morality are keen to point out that these theories are a utterly damning, mistake: they confuse what is the case with how it ought to be.

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- This is known as the **is–ought gap**.
- It was first pointed out by Hume. He makes the point that when philosophers are prone to slipping from what is the case to what ought to be the case with got from the former to the latter.
- Furthermore, Hume thinks it is unclear precisely how somebody could justify this is in Jeremy Bentham's assertion that 'Everybody seeks pleasure and avoids pain'.
- It is a descriptive claim made by Jeremy Bentham in the opening line of his *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* ('Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure.').
- Bentham would argue that this is a factual state of affairs and, I imagine, many would agree.
- However, Hume criticises this.
- This section of the first *Principles of Morals and Legislation* is a normative claim. It does not say how things are. It is a very different thing to saying how things are. It might have been the case that if African-Americans were held in slavery in mid-eighteenth-century Mississippi it ought to have been the case. In fact, we might argue that it ought not to have been the case. How do we decide who is right if the entire discussion is founded on a fallacy? The problem is that we cannot talk, assuredly, about how things are in the same way we talk about how things ought to be. This is for much of this topic.
- **J L Mackie** strongly opposed naturalism, as he believed that there is no such thing as objective truth. Therefore, all moral statements which are moral propositions are therefore false.

Key Figures

J L Mackie

- Mackie was an Australian philosopher.
- His contributions include works on metaphysics and philosophy.
- He was a staunch opponent of ethical naturalism.

David Hume

- Scottish philosopher with a well-known critique of religious belief.
- He was a critic of ethical naturalism, pointing out the flaw of the naturalistic fallacy.

Key Texts

Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong

- Beginning with the phrase 'There are no objective values', this is the text in which Mackie makes his critique of ethical naturalism as discussed earlier in this section.

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Student Checklist

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

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Ethical Non-naturalism

Overview

Ethical non-naturalism is a form of meta-ethical theory which, not naturalism. There are different forms of ethical non-naturalism, including intuitionism.

Intuitionism is known as ethical non-naturalism because it is the antithesis of ethical naturalism. In intuitionism, what is considered moral is not determined by what we experience within nature. We experience good and bad through nature, but that what is good and bad is not determined by our experience in nature.

Key Points

General Points

- In a nutshell, ethical non-naturalism is the opposite of naturalism. If an individual is a naturalist then they will believe in the following ideas:
 1. Sentences which express ethical ideas express ethical proposals.
 2. Some of these proposed ideas can be said to be true.
 3. Some of these proposals are the result of facts of nature observable by human opinion.
 4. These features of the world are not able to be reduced to be non-moral.
- Intuitionism is a form of ethical non-naturalism.

Intuitionism

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

If I am asked, What is good? my answer is that good is good, and that is the answer. If I am asked How is good to be defined? my answer is that it cannot be defined, and that is the answer. But disapproving of these answers may appear, they are of the very nature of the thing.

My meaning of the word good is a simple notion, just as yellow is a simple notion; the only way in which I can explain it to anyone who does not already know it, what yellow is, is to point to what good is.
- What is 'good' could be known and identified through our intuition – we know it and it is self-evidently good.
- Moore uses the example of **yellow** to help explain this.
- Yellow is something that cannot be defined but we know it when we see it. What yellow actually is – we can only say things that have yellow as a property, e.g. the Sun is yellow. We can dispute whether something is yellow or not.
- These truths are truths themselves. They would continue to be true if human beings were external to and not dependent on human beings' existence.
- We are unable to define yellow as anything else other than being a colour which is yellow. In the same way, we are unable to define any of these truths as anything other than being simply is.
- Moore believed that through the use of human reason and through our intuition we can know what these truths are. This is rather like the use of reason in Aquinas' naturalism.

Analysis

- Moore's intuitionism is able to overcome the **naturalistic fallacy** while still maintaining that moral goods are natural goods. He is able to do so simply by insisting that moral goods are moral goods, and not natural goods.
- **How exactly do we recognise goodness?** Moore claims that we are able to intuitively know what is good, but he does not explain how we do this or what exactly the nature of 'goodness' is. This is non-natural and so unlike anything else.

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- Geoffrey Warnock points out that this raises a number of serious difficulties. How do moral properties interact with the natural properties? A utilitarian might say that killing with needles is wrong because it causes them pain, but this route is not open to an intuitionist. This is an open question argument. Surely, however, the fact that an action might cause pain is not relevant to our moral thinking.
- How does intuitionism explain moral disagreement? How does it aim to resolve moral disagreement? As a moral cognitivist, Moore believes there are moral facts and moral falsehoods, yet he does not know how to find them? If I think abortion is always wrong and you think it is always the right thing to do, how do we know who is grasping the moral fact and who is grasping the moral falsehood?
- Even if there are moral facts, the intuitionist gives no reason why anyone should act on them. For example, if I say that it is wrong to torture innocent children in any circumstances, I may well be stating just such a fact, but simply stating a fact does not give any reason not to torture children; all I've done, in effect, is state a fact that is not relevant to how persons should act.

Key Figures

G E Moore

- G E Moore (1873–1958) is often associated with his Cambridge colleagues, Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein.
- He was one of the main opponents of ethical naturalism, developing a theory of moral properties that was based on linguistic analysis and a lack of interest in 'speculation'.
- The work of these philosophers was considered radical at the time due to its focus on logical analysis and a lack of interest in 'speculation'.
- Moore and his successors, all fundamentally felt that many of the puzzles philosophers had studied for millennia were actually not puzzles at all, but rather the result of confusion about the meaning of words. They were extremely influential on what has come to be called 'analytic philosophy', which is the dominant way of doing philosophy in English-speaking countries to this day.
- He posited his ideas about ethical intuitionism in his book *Principia Ethica* (1903).

Key Texts

Principia Ethica

- This is the book in which G E Moore sets out his argument against ethical naturalism.
- It was published in 1903.
- He did not believe that goodness can be defined.

Student Checklist

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

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Practice Exam-style Question

1. 'The natural world is the most obvious source of ethical rights and wrongs' – evaluate this statement.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- evaluate and assess facets of the following, using approaches and differing ideas:
 - the impact of the following:
 - the strength of ethical naturalism
 - the relationship of religious ideas to ethical naturalism
 - the thought gap
 - the relationship of naturalism to divine command theory, including:
 - the challenges to ethical naturalism by G E Moore

2. Examine the view that ethical naturalism is the best way of ascertaining right and wrong.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including:
 - key ideas of naturalism, including the four principles of ethical naturalism
 - key contrasting ideas, including the theory of ethical non-naturalism
 - key ideas of divine command theory, including examples such as naturalistic Commandments

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Free Will and Moral Responsibility

G₂ L₁ O₁

Free will	The ability of an individual to make their own choices in restriction.
Moral responsibility	The holding of some one or a group to account for their actions for praise or blame.
Reductionism	The belief in or practice of explaining phenomena in terms of fundamental ideas.
Determinism	The view that all events are determined by or wholly caused by states of affairs.
Indeterminism	The view that not all events, in particular those of human actions, are caused by states of affairs.
Justice	The quality or state of fairness, where everyone gets what they deserve.
Compatibilism	The idea that the concepts of free will and determinism can coexist.
Causal	The form of determinism with the idea that due to the nature of the universe, any event which takes place is caused by an event which took place exactly before it.
Psychological	The form of determinism with the idea that human choices are determined by psychological states before the actions take place.
Theological	The form of determinism that asserts that God has decided from the beginning of the universe what would happen, when it would happen and how it would happen and man has no free will to make choices.

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The Conditions and Extent of Moral Responsibility

Overview

For many people, the concept of free will is closely tied to the idea that a person can only be held responsible for their actions if they have chosen a particular volition. If there was any kind of coercion involved, then this might diminish the responsibility.

There are discussions, however, about whether or not the reality of free will as perceived in scholarship is in fact the status quo. Such beliefs which challenge this include **determinism** – from secular to religious forms of determinism – but generally speaking people believe they have full free will and to some extent our choices are pre-determined either by genetic or environmental factors.



Key Points

General Points

- Firstly, we must establish what is meant by the term 'free will'.
- Free will is the ability of an individual to make moral choices free from forces that would prevent them from making a certain choice. It is a case of individual volition and intent.
- It is closely tied to the idea of moral responsibility as these two things are closely linked. If an individual cannot be considered to be held accountable, then they cannot be held morally responsible.
- Moral responsibility is the duty of the individual to make correct moral choices and which cause no suffering towards others.
- There is a variety of different viewpoints on the concept of free will within secular thought as well as within religious thought.
- **Determinism** is the belief that human beings do not have free will because the actions we take have been decided upon in advance by a higher power. There are different forms of determinism including **causal**, **psychological** and **theological**.
- **Libertarianism** is the truest form of free will, and believes that free choices are made without the influence of external factors. The external factors only affect those which do not have free will, i.e. other living beings such as plants.
- **Compatibilism** is the view that both determinism and libertarianism can be true and that the two ideas are both compatible.

Free Will and Moral Responsibility

- Traditionally, it has been held by the majority of scholars and thinkers that human beings have free will. This is largely because, empirically, we can experience that we appear to cognitively choose between right and wrong. It fits well with our experience of the world.
- With free will comes **moral responsibility** – if you choose to do a moral action, you are responsible for that choice and the outcomes of that choice. You have made a choice and, therefore, you must be prepared to deal with the repercussions.
- It is also the responsibility of the individual to make the correct choices for the benefit of others – to tell the truth, for example, is generally considered to be a moral action. If everyone within a situation has the correct set of information and, therefore, can make a choice, then they are morally responsible.
- If we have established that there are instances of situations in which individuals have reduced responsibility or no responsibility for the outcomes of their moral actions, then we need to have discussions as to what different factors impact the responsibility of an individual.
- For example, if an individual has diminished understanding of the actions they are committing, such as someone who has committed a violent crime but whose understanding of that crime is diminished through factors such as limited mental capacity, they are not considered to have full moral responsibility and will be treated accordingly as such in a legal sense, and largely within a social sense.
- Therefore, we can see there is a clear link between the issue of the extent of moral responsibility as the result of free will and the issue and implementation of criminal punishment.

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Hard Determinism

- Determinism is the belief that the choices we make are not the result of the moral agents, but rather the result of a predetermined outcome beyond their control.
- **Causal determinism** is the idea that due to the natural and physical laws of nature, every event which takes place can be explained by the events which took place earlier. In other words, that if you were to have knowledge of all coming changes or events within the universe, you would be able to know all the choices that people would make as a result.
- **Psychological determinism** is the idea that human choices are determined by factors that exist before the actions take place. There are many factors which would impact the choices of an individual, from upbringing to biological or environmental factors. As a result, the nature of human beings themselves are the deciding forces regarding the choices that they make.
- Psychological and causal determinism are both secular forms of determinism. **Theological determinism** which is, as the name would suggest, religious.
- **Theological determinism** is the belief that there is God, who is all knowing and all powerful so great that he has predetermined every choice that we make. Those who hold this belief would argue that God has decided since the beginning of the universe what would happen and what choices we would make.
- The opposite opinion to this view is **indeterminism** – this is the view that while we are influenced into the way in which they are influenced, not all can be said to be so.

Libertarianism

- This is the view which considers free will in its purest state, so to speak.
- In reaction to determinism, the libertarian view is that people have wholly free will.
- This was the view of St Thomas Aquinas.
- It concedes that there are external factors, causations, which can impact decisions.
- In terms of direct causations, these only apply to the mechanical world within libertarianism. A leaf is predestined to be blown by the wind as it does not have the capability to make free choices.
- There are what is known as contingent causations, which are things which are likely to be true, but not certain – for example, A is stronger than B. In a fight, A would win against B in the majority of cases.
- However, this is not predetermined. It is theoretically possible that B could win.
- A similar concept is used by Michael Palmer to communicate his ideas about free will.
- Within libertarian thought, external factors having an impact on decisions is accepted, however, these do not necessitate a choice made.
- Take, for example, an individual raised in abject poverty. Just because of the circumstances, they are predestined to a life of crime in order to attempt to escape poverty, as there are other options available to be undertaken. There is not a direct correlation, an enforced correlation, between poverty and crime.

Compatibilism

- This is the school of thought that free will and determinism are compatible ideas. They are not to be mutually exclusive and are both, to some extent, valid.
- They might consider that situations which are caused by external forces do not negate free will.
- For example – Mahatma Gandhi famously went on hunger strike in order to gain independence for Indian territories. Such an action, while influenced by the external factor of British rule, was still a free and intentional choice.
- An individual in captivity who is being given food, however, has no choice in the matter as this is predetermined.

Implications and Relevance of Moral Responsibility

- If we do not have free will, then what implications does this have regarding moral responsibility?
- If we have total free will, what implications does that have?
- If both are valid, mutually existing ideas, then what impact does that have?
- These are important questions that must be asked and discussed in order to gain a deeper understanding of ideas of free will.

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- If determinism is considered to be the correct way in which our free will is interpreted, then we should have no moral responsibility. If you cannot choose your actions, then you cannot be held responsible for your actions.
- If libertarian free will is correct, then human beings are in possession of full moral responsibility and should be treated as such.
- Compatibilism offers a view of free will which accepts both a libertarian and a deterministic view as being valid; however, it is markedly different to determinism in that it allows for moral responsibility. If some free choices are able to be made, then moral responsibility is afforded.
- The relevance of these views is crucial. It impacts the moral ruling of individuals as well as obviously on the way in which a country is governed and upon the laws that are created. A libertarian component may argue that someone who has committed a crime, their action has been affected by external factors because they do not have free will. A compatibilist system may show more leniency, accepting that there are some factors that are not free will. A deterministic viewpoint would hold that people cannot be held responsible for their actions as they have no control over what they view to be predetermined.

Key Figures

Augustine

- St Augustine, famed for his introduction to the Christian doctrine of the idea of free will, who lived from the fourth to the fifth century CE.
- He argues that evil only came into existence (and continues to exist) as a result of the fall of man.

John Calvin

- John Calvin was a highly influential reformer theologian whose views on Christianity are known as Calvinism.
- Calvin posited a doctrine of hard determinism, specifically theological determinism, where all events are determined by God.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😄
What is free will?			
What is moral responsibility?			
How are these things linked?			
What is an example of a condition of moral responsibility?			
What is determinism?			
What is libertarianism?			
What is compatibilism?			
What is the implication and relevance of moral responsibility?			

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Practice Exam-style Question

3. Examine the view that libertarian free will is the most effective in navigating moral responsibility.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including
 - key ideas about what free will is
 - key ideas about libertarian free will
 - key ideas about determinism (religious and non-religious)
 - key ideas of compatibilism

4. 'Libertarian free will is the best way of navigating moral responsibility'

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- evaluate and assess facets of religious approaches and differing ideas, their implications and impacts.
 - The impact of libertarian free will on moral responsibility
 - The impact of other views of free will on moral responsibility
 - Comparison of key ideas.
 - Practical impact

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Conscience

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Conscience	An inner sense of right and wrong thought to be possessed by all human beings.
Synderesis	The innate disposition in every human being to do good.
Prudence	The ability to discern what is correct and what is not.
Guilt	The feeling of contrition or remorse usually generated when one's actions are in conflict with conscience or moral beliefs.
Internalisation	The process of a person coming to accept values and norms and socialisation in their lives.
Autonomy	Freedom, and the ability for human beings to act as they see fit, free from coercion.
Sociology	The study of how human society develops and functions.
Freud	Austrian psychiatrist famous for developing the theory of psychoanalysis.
Aquinas	Thirteenth-century theologian and monk who posited a philosophical and theological approach to the conscience.
Id	The first part of the human brain, which is completely driven by instinct.
Ego	The part of the brain which Freud claims to mediate between the id and the superego.
Super ego	The part of the brain which is influenced by the social and cultural norms of the culture in which a person was raised.
Ratio	This was the term that Aquinas used to refer to the idea of reason, which he believed to be a key part of human nature.
Conscience	The human reason which is used to make moral choices.
Psychosexual	The stage in childhood when Freud believes that the Oedipus complex occurs.
Durkheim	French sociologist who posited a sociological view of collective conscience.
Collective conscience	The idea that a group with shared societal values will share a common moral code.
Evolutionary	The idea that the development of a collective conscience is scientifically speaking to help a group of animals stay at an advantage evolutionarily.
Legal responsibility	The consequences faced by an individual for breaking the law. The culpability for this can be debated in the issue of free will.

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Differing Ideas about the Nature of

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Overview

The idea of a conscience is relatively universal – it is a phenomenon experienced by mankind as a consensus. It is well known enough to have been brought through characters such as Jiminy Cricket in Disney's *Pinocchio*, who acts as an emblematic inclination to do what is right and avoid what is wrong.

Generally the idea of a conscience refers to the drive or sensation of experiencing wrong – or an instinctive sense of what is right and wrong. The intuitive nature of philosophical debate, with different philosophers such as Aquinas and thinkers such as different approaches to the interpretation of conscience.



Key Points

General Points

- Generally, the concept of the conscience is the idea that we experience guilt and subconscious when we commit an action that is wrong. In other words, a sense of guilt.
- Conscience is often thought to have two aspects. The first is a reflective element on actions, judging them as good or bad depending on whether they conform to moral principles. This is often accompanied by feelings of regret or contrition.
- The second is an element that looks forward to future decisions, and guides us through dilemmas, such that one is generally motivated to not act against one's conscience.
- Conscience is important as it is a key part of many people's moral motivation. When deciding whether someone is morally responsible for their actions, a common factor is whether the person had good or bad intentions, and whether they knew they were acting against their conscience.
- For other thinkers, the conscience reflects something deeper, a human ability to discern right and wrong accordingly, and so conscience is a way of revealing what humans should do.
- It is also important to consider the challenge posed by individuals who are thought to be without a conscience who claim that they do not experience guilt or have a conscience.
- Within discussions of the conscience, there are various different ways of understanding it, including religious, the sociological and the psychological understandings.

Aquinas' Religious Understanding

- Conscience was seen traditionally by many theologians throughout history as the voice of God acting through human beings. This is the view held by Aquinas who developed his ideas about conscience in his development of natural law.
- For Aquinas, ideas of the conscience are underpinned by his emphasis on the importance of human reason, which he terms *ratio*. This is, in Aquinas' thought, a gift from God which should be viewed as marking human beings apart from other creatures.
- Simply put, this is the idea that the feeling of conscience in an ethical dilemma is the knowledge of going against the will of God. This is believed to be an innate feeling considered to be a warning away from making a decision which would cause harm.
- In the New Testament, in the teachings of the Apostle Paul, the word which is used for conscience is known as a **synderesis**. This is the pain experienced by an individual who has done something against their conscience.
- For Aquinas, there were two different parts to making a moral decision. These are:
 - **synderesis**: the correct moral reason, choosing to do what is right and re

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- **conscientia**: this is the conscious, which is able to decipher what is good to make a correct judgement in a moral choice.
- Aquinas posited that there are two different ways of making a moral choice – against the established moral code (the Bible) and choose to do it anyway, or against your conscience.
- To make a correct choice and to have the wisdom to do so is considered with virtue, termed **prudence**. This is of vital importance in Aquinas' theory.
- **practica ratio** – the practical application of reason in order to choose the correct moral action.
- The conscience is, in Aquinas' thought, innate in all human beings. It is some natural make-up as a species and we always seek to discover the correct thing to do.
- Aquinas' interpretation of the conscience gives the individual human being an ability to make choices in the face of events and have human free will, able to either obey or disobey our instincts.
- Aquinas, however, make an important distinction between different kinds of individuals knowingly doing something wrong as they know the truth of the law, and someone choosing to perform an action against the law of God when they are

Freud's Psychological Understanding

Freud understood conscience differently.

- He believed that conscience was a psychological phenomenon the cause of which could be located within the brain due to the experiences which took place in the childhood of the individual.
- He introduced three key ideas about the psychology of human beings, separating the brain into three parts – the id, the ego, and the super ego.
- For Freud, the conscience is linked inextricably with guilt, the instinctual emotion which is felt when an individual has done something they consider to be wrong.
- Guilt for Freud was conflict between the super ego and the ego and the id.
- The conscience is for Freud a reaction between the super ego and the id – and is managed by the ego.
- Freud argues the libido is the source of sexual desire, that forms the basis of the energy that drives unconscious structures as a whole.
- Children grow up through experiences which develop their conscience and the parents and institutions who have authority in their lives as they are growing up.
- Repression, a Freudian thought, is the tension between the id and the super ego, which is considered to be socially unacceptable.
- Our defence mechanisms are also dictated by our experience in childhood and the interaction between the different facets of the mind.
- The way in which our adult selves navigate social interaction and deal with pressure and defence mechanisms and are rooted in the subconscious development which occurs in childhood.
- When we do something that the super ego has learned through childhood is wrong, we feel guilty. This is known as internalisation – when the values we were taught by those in authority become our own due to regular exposure and socialisation over the period of childhood.
- To an extent, under this ideology we have free will; however, here issues of conscience come into play and the question is raised as to whether or not such a choice can ever be truly free if internalised so much of the morality and ideas from our childhood.

Durkheim's Sociological Understanding

- Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) was a French sociologist. As a sociologist, his concern was with society and the interaction between individuals in order to make judgement about the structures and institutions that shape society.
- In Durkheim's view, the conscience experienced by an individual is the result of socialisation, the result of experiences both in childhood and as an adult. When someone feels guilty is simply the result of a consciousness of internalized values which they have learned from society.
- Notably, Durkheim attempts what other scholars addressing issues of conscience do not – for why some people appear to completely lack a conscience. He argues that if someone lacks a conscience, then they do not have the complete set of moral values from a society. There are a number of reasons – either they have not been raised as part of a society, or

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internalise the values from around them, or due to personal circumstances or unable to adjust and learn these values.

- Durkheim also posits the idea of what he terms the 'collective conscience'. This arises from the complete sphere of beliefs and values that are shared between a society. The collective conscience, therefore, is felt by all members of a society and is the sphere of these shared beliefs and values.
- Durkheim's theories help demonstrate how individuals participate in shared beliefs and values, which give people motivations to work towards the collective good.
- Durkheim muses over whether or not conscience is an evolutionary trait, as it helps to support social survival of groups of individuals to live better in cohabitation. Shared beliefs and values promote cohesion within a social group, building collective identity and protecting against external threats.

Key Figures



St Thomas Aquinas

- Thomas Aquinas was a thirteenth-century monk.
- He was a hugely influential theologian, philosopher and intellectual.
- He is the philosopher who developed the theory of natural law which is a theory of ethics that applies to groups such as the Catholic Church.
- He is currently viewed as a saint by the Catholic Church and his main ideas put forward in his most famous document *Summa Theologica*, as discussed below, are quoted as being a source of moral authority for the Catholic Church, which is a document which puts forward all of the teachings of the Church.

Sigmund Freud

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

Emile Durkheim

- French sociologist, who devoted his life to the study of society.
- As part of his work, he developed a theory of religion and conscience.
- Famous for his sociological development of the ideas of the conscience.

Key Texts

Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas

- The major work of Aquinas which contains many of his famous ideas, including his theory of natural law and his theory of existence.
- Within *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas also put forward his ideas about natural law and his theory of the conscience and how this functions in human beings.
- His beliefs and his writings were heavily influenced by his Christianity, taking into account the teachings of the Holy Bible. Regarding the teachings of his idea regarding the inner workings of the human mind, verses such as Romans 2:14–15 are useful in understanding the basis of this theory.

The Ego and the Id, Sigmund Freud

- This is the influential academic paper in which Freud put forward his ideas regarding the structure of the human mind and the psychosexual development of children.
- He posited in this text that the human mind has three facets – the ego, the superego and the id.
- It is with the idea of the conscious and unconscious thoughts that Freud begins to explore the importance of the conscience in his theory regarding human behaviour.

The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Emile Durkheim

- Published in 1912, this is the text in which French philosopher Emile Durkheim explored the sociological function of religion, including his view of conscience and how this relates to the individual and the society.

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Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺	
Who did Aquinas believe that our sense of conscience comes from?				
In which text did Aquinas posit his idea of conscience?				
On what two pillars did Aquinas build his views?				
What is meant by synderesis?				
What is meant by conscientia?				
What is the significance of Romans 2:14–15 to Aquinas' teachings?				
What did Freud believe about the root of conscience?				
What did Freud believe was the root of conscience?				
Why is the idea of guilt important in Freudian thought?				
What was Durkheim's view?				
What is a sociological interpretation of conscience?				
What is a sociological interpretation of conscience?				

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Application and Value of Conscience

Overview

From the previous section we are able to see the idea of what causes a conscience.

These theories are markedly different and, therefore, have markedly different applications as they interact with different applications – for example, the moral issue of lying or adultery. Both of these issues are viewed differently when considering the different approaches.

It is also important to consider the different approaches to what a conscience is.



Key Points

General Points

- In general, the concept of conscience can be understood in two ways.
- Firstly, it can be understood as a retroactive, reflective concept, which involves actions and judging their moral value (i.e. whether or not they are good or bad) and measure up to the yardstick of your moral principles and values. This will be a source of contentment in one's choices, depending on the choices one has made.
- Secondly, it is a concept and facet of human reason that enables us to think ahead with in future ethical dilemmas, and guide our choices when faced with such dilemmas – we may or may not be inclined to pursue a certain ethical direction in our choices, and this is one form of conscience.
- Conscience is, therefore, a key element of morality for each individual. It becomes a sense of moral responsibility – whether conscious or unconscious – which enabled them to know that either doing something wrong has influenced the way in which they are considered to be responsible and, in some cases, to atone for their crime.
- For some, conscience is a deeper instinctive part of human nature, inescapable and universal. It is a way to come to understand moral truths and, therefore, is a source of moral codes.
- Therefore, we can tell that conscience is a wholly important concept, and is a central part of the debate of what it means to be human.

Lying

- Lying is the act of intentionally telling an untruth with the knowledge that you are imparting incorrect information to another.
- **Aquinas' natural law approach:**
 - In general, those who would subscribe to Aquinas' approach generally argue that a person who chooses to tell a lie is performing what they would consider a fundamentally irrational act. Their rational conscience, as rooted in Aquinas' ideas of natural law, would tell them that lying is irrational as it communicates an untruth and subverts the primary purpose of the social order of society by sowing mistrust and incorrect information. Their rational conscience would instruct them to tell the truth.
 - There are instances, however, in Aquinas' natural law where lying may be considered permissible on a situational basis. It would need to be justified by a higher moral principle. Aquinas would argue that an occasion would not conflict with synderesis and would not be a violation of the natural law if, in the order of society, this would be considered to be permissible.
- **Freud's psychological approach:**
 - As ever, Freud's psychological approach focuses on the individual person. He believed that the moral principles we believe were imbued into us due to our childhoods. These views were specifically those in authority within our childhoods, such as our parents.

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- If someone was raised with the value that would dictate that lying was wrong, individuals of authority within their childhood (i.e. parents, society or other figures) would, in the instance of the occurrence of a lie, provoke in an individual that the individual has violated the values with which they were raised and, therefore, be rebuked by those they consider to be in authority roles. However, if an individual is raised with a different belief, then the theory follows that they would be able to lie with abandon for their chosen course of action.
- **Durkheim's sociological approach:**
 - The social understanding of lying is central to the sociological approach to lying and lies. The regular and accepted practice of lying would create a social structure regarding structure, stability and order of society would be threatened if society were to function or fail. Therefore, the conscience understanding of lying from a sociological collective understanding that in order for society to function properly, then it would need to be considered to be wrong.

Marriage and Adultery

- Marriage is a legal, and sometimes religious, union of two people who agree to form an exclusive romantic relationship for the duration of their lives or until such a time as they choose to legally separate. Adultery is the act of cheating on your partner, whether physically or emotionally; however, this does tend to take the form of a physical affair. In general, within moral discussions of the modern day it connotes something which is considered to be immoral.
- **Aquinas' natural law approach:**
 - Aquinas would take the position that the conscience within the individual would be able to instinctively tell that they are doing something wrong. The primary precept of the order of society which is one of the underlying principles of natural law. In this instance there are two values which conscience can be violated in a natural law system – it is a failure of conscience either caused by ignorance or a pursuit of an apparent good (desire of love or sex with another person) over what Aquinas would consider the keeping of marriage vows.
- **Freud's psychoanalytic approach:**
 - In the realm of Freudian thought, an individual, he would argue, would be able to control their engagement in adultery as a result of the internalised views they had learned. If someone is raised with the view that marriage vows are important and should be kept, they would experience guilt should they break them. However, someone who is raised without such views would not experience such guilt.
- **Durkheim's sociological approach:**
 - Someone who understands conscience in a sociological way may believe that the social structure within society is the key to the conscience response to cheating. Marriage is a system of order and provides structure for the romantic inclinations of humans, providing the scaffolding for family life facilitating reproduction. Therefore, cheating threatens this structure as well as resulting in interpersonal conflicts. Durkheim would argue that the instinctive idea that cheating is wrong could be rooted in the social necessity of the order of society. They may experience guilt themselves if they engage in such an activity.

Modern Critical Perspectives on the Value of a Conscience

- Within the development of modern psychology, the consensus has often indicated that human beings are not, as we would assume, free.
- Instead, it would indicate that these choices are strongly influenced by the subconscious and to external factors which we cannot control.
- This theory would result in the limitation of the human capacity to reason. Conscience is not an act of choice, but rather a natural stimulated response to situations based on previously learned characteristics learned by an individual during childhood.

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- The question which is raised here then poses whether or not our sense of conscience regarding our moral choices. In this view, conscience may be argued to not be one of our human faculties.
- Some thinkers posit the idea that conscience is a faculty given by God to humans to be free and make decisions, but is not necessarily an inbuilt, reason-based understanding of what is not moral. It is a guide leading humans to what is good and bad but the individual has the burden of making those choices in following their conscience.
- For this viewpoint, as human beings we are viewed as being responsible for our moral actions made with our free moral agency, which we consciously make of our own volition.
- Therefore, here there is a clear line of contention – the extent to which a conscience is viewed as being useful.
- On the one hand, it is argued that it is useless as to whether or not we feel a certain way about our actions, as these are seen as being psychological responses to stimuli, rather than free choice.
- On the other hand, if we exercise our free will and our conscience, then our conscience is, generally, viewed as having value as a guide for how to behave, but not necessarily a force which would be considered moral.
- However, if it is indeed an inherent, important, grounded part of human beings, then it is of the utmost importance to the way in which we view the interactions which occur as a result (i.e. crime and punishment).

Key Figures

St Thomas Aquinas

- Thomas Aquinas was a thirteenth-century monk, and a hugely influential theologian and intellectual.
- His theory of natural law is a theistic ethical theory still used by groups such as the Catholic Church.
- He is currently viewed as a saint by the Catholic Church and his main ideas are contained in his document *Summa Theologica*, which contains many of his ideas on God and morality, and arguments for the existence of God and his ideas about conscience.

Sigmund Freud

- Sigmund Freud was a very influential and famous Austrian scientist, best known for his work on the term, 'psychoanalysis'.
- He sees the ego and conscience as having their roots in the psychosexual development of their mental capacity through various different stages of childhood.
- While popular, his ideas are viewed in a mixed way in today's society, as many would not be considered today to be sufficient scientific grounding and experimentation.

Emile Durkheim

- French sociologist who devoted his life to the study of society, through which he developed his ideas on religion and conscience, which we are now able to study, analyse and apply to within this course.
- Famous for his sociological development of the ideas of the conscience, as explained in the course.

Key Texts

Summa Theologica, Thomas Aquinas

- The major work of Aquinas, his *Summa Theologica*, contains many of his famous ideas, including his ideas on the existence of God. You may encounter this if you are studying Philosophy of Religion.
- In this text, Aquinas put forward his ideas about natural law, and included his ideas on conscience and how this functions in human beings.
- His beliefs and his writings were heavily influenced by his Christian faith as he drew on the Bible and influences for his thoughts from the basis of the Bible.
- Regarding the teachings of his idea regarding the inner knowledge and conscience, the verses 2:14–15 are useful in understanding the basis of this idea.

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The Ego and the Id, Sigmund Freud

- This is an influential academic paper written by Freud in which he puts forward psychoanalysis – and furthermore, the psychosexual development of children in childhood which he posits.
- He put forward the idea within this text of the three different parts which make up the mind.
- In his ideas, these are: the id, the ego and the super ego.
- It is with the ideas of conscious and unconscious thought that Freud begins to explore the very beginning of the importance of the conscience in his theory regarding human behaviour.

The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, Emile Durkheim

- This text was published in 1912 by French philosopher Emile Durkheim.
- In this text Durkheim put forward his ideas regarding his views on the social functions of religion.
- These views included his view of conscience and how this functions within religion.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea ☺	Good Idea ☺
Why is it important to examine the application of conscience?			
How does Aquinas' view of conscience deal with the issue of lying?			
How does Freud's view of conscience deal with the issue of lying?			
How does Durkheim's view of conscience deal with the issue of lying?			
How does Aquinas' view of conscience deal with the issue of marriage and adultery?			
How does Freud's view of conscience deal with the issue of marriage and adultery?			
How does Durkheim's view of conscience deal with the issue of marriage and adultery?			
What is the importance of the value of conscience?			
What is a practical example of how the value of conscience is important to society?			

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Practice Exam-style Question

5. Examine how the sociological understanding of conscience deals with

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including
 - key ideas of conscience
 - religious interpretations of conscience such as that of Aquinas
 - non-religious interpretations of conscience such as those of Freud and Durkheim

6. 'Freud's interpretation of conscience is the most coherent when discussing lying and adultery.' Evaluate this statement.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- evaluate and assess facets of religious approaches and differing ideas, their implications and impacts.
 - The attitudes of Aquinas to the issues of lying and adultery
 - The attitudes of Freud to the issues of lying and adultery
 - The attitudes of Durkheim to the issues of lying and adultery
 - The impact and importance of the value of conscience

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Bentham and Kant

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Duty	The obligation of an individual to do something.
Maxim	A statement of a general moral principle or truth.
Good will	In Kantian ethics, this is a person who acts according to decisions concerning moral law.
Hedonism	From the Greek word for pleasure, <i>hēdonē</i> ; it is a philosophy that pleasure is the ultimate good in life.
Postulate	Something that is regarded as fundamental or a basis for action.
Deontology	Duty-based ethics systems that are based on the idea to do something.
Immanuel Kant	The founding philosopher of Kantian/deontological/duty ethics.
Jeremy Bentham	The founding philosopher of utilitarian ethics.
Pleasure	The experience of a positive emotion such as happiness.
Principle of utility	Also known as the principle of greatest happiness; that the greatest happiness for the greatest number.
Hypothetical imperative	The idea that if you want something, then you ought to do it, but you the end, but it is not immoral if you choose not to.
Categorical imperative	The idea of moral maxims that everyone has a duty to follow.
Universability	The concept of being able to apply a maxim on a universal scale.
Humanity formula	The concept of a maxim ensuring that human beings are treated as ends in themselves rather than being used as a means to an end.
Kingdom	The concept of a hypothetical idyllic kingdom where all people live in harmony and treat each other as means in themselves rather than as ends.
Summum bonum	The place where happiness is given as a reward for good actions in the afterlife.
Axe murderer dilemma	An example of a situation in which Kantian ethics cause a conflict.
Intention	The reason or will behind why an action was taken. This is a key concept in Kantian ethics.
Reason	The human ability to use logic in order to make a decision.
Consequentialist	This is a form of ethics which is concerned with the results of an action, opposed to duty-based ethics, which is not concerned with the results of an action, but the intent.
Act utilitarianism	The theory which holds that the right action is the one that produces the highest number of good consequences.

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Comparison of Key Ideas

Overview

Jeremy Bentham and Immanuel Kant are two of the most influential individuals in the field of ethical theory. Their ethical theories, though markedly different, are practical for many individuals.

The two have starkly different views and ethical theories. Bentham is a utilitarian, a form of ethics focused on generating the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Kant is a deontological ethicist who focuses on generating maxims which can be categorical and is adhered to across all situations, regardless of the situation.

Key Points

Kantian Reason and Ethics

- For Kant, reason governs morality. Religion and morality were, for Kant, not from heaven, and he wished to promote the idea that morality should be rooted in reason.
- Knowing what is right or wrong to do in a given situation is a little bit like solving a math problem with a correct answer, and we simply need to apply the right method to find it.
- Doing the right thing is our *duty* as rational beings. If we do the wrong thing, we are acting immorally, we are acting irrationally too.
- To understand why Kant believes this, we must first turn to his important distinction between hypothetical and **categorical** imperatives.
- Imperatives are just commands – instructions which tell us what to do. There is a categorical command within Kant's work because he believed it was important to distinguish between hypothetical and categorical imperatives so that we can act morally.
- So, why is the distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives so important?
- Because he thinks that one can only do something good if it is done *unconditionally*, with no strings attached. As a result, it is our duty to do good.
- Analogously, it is a soldier's duty to protect the nation – even if they wake up in the middle of the night, much like fighting or a soldier *must* do it.
- He states that all other things which might be considered good, such as 'intelligence, power, wealth, honour, even health' and, crucially, happiness, if misused or misapplied, can be said to 'sparkle like a jewel all by itself'; its value doesn't 'go up or down or be lost or fruitless it [is]'. It is 'the condition of all [other goods], even of the desire for happiness, in accordance with **reason**'. It just doesn't make sense to say anything else is good if it is not in accordance with good that is absolute – whereas, any other thing we might consider good, could turn out to be bad. From this standpoint, Kant derives his entire system of **deontology**.
- Kant's ideas about ethics revolve around the idea of duty specifically, and this is the core of Kantian ethics.
- One important thing to emphasise is that Kant's ideas are deontological, not teleological.
- That is to say, if someone were to follow a Kantian ethic and the consequences of the action are still moral – regardless of the consequences.
- This is markedly different to teleological approaches such as utilitarianism in which the consequences of the action in the amount of happiness it is believed to have are what matters.
- As long as you have acted morally, then the outcome, even if it is negative or painful, will not be the fault of the individual who acted. Because they acted correctly according to their duty.
- A famous example of this is the 'trolley problem' or 'trolley dilemma'.

Kant's Hypothetical and Categorical Imperatives

- Kant distinguished between his concepts of the hypothetical and categorical imperatives.
- Hypothetical imperatives can be described as 'if/then' ideas – if you want to achieve an end X in order to get to that end.
- This is generally less about duty and morality – it is about what you should do to achieve an end. If you do not want to achieve an end then you do not necessarily need to do these things.
- Therefore, it is a hypothetical imperative rather than a categorical imperative.

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- Categorical imperatives are usually of the form, 'You ought to do x'. They are good in and of themselves because Kant believes they are innately good.
- There are three different forms of the categorical imperative. They are as follows:
- Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative gives rise to a particular decision which is sometimes known as the universalisability test.
- The core idea is that when we make any moral decision we must ask ourselves whether we could do the same thing in similar circumstances. In Kant's own language, we are asking whether it could become a universal law (a maxim) (another word for a general principle) (e.g. 'I will drive over 30 mph in the town centre' vs 'I will not drive over 30 mph in the town centre').
- The second form of the categorical imperative is the humanity formula. Certain actions are permissible. The crucial difference here is that people can never be used as a mere means to an end. It is not permissible for a twisted sadist from setting off a chemical weapon in a crowded area to justify a terrorist's actions, because somebody is being *used* as a tool for some other purpose. It is not permissible for a naturalist to justify the naturalisation of a species. People feel like this, Kant said, because they are rational beings, they deserve dignity, they deserve respect, and that means *always treating them as ends in themselves*. Beings are what Kant termed 'ends in ourselves'.
- The final formulation of the categorical imperative is known as the kingdom of ends. It shares the same moral vision, desiring the same goods and sharing the same ends.
- It builds upon the two previous formulations, as the laws the hypothetical moral agents would devise are based on the 'universal law of nature' and 'humanity' formulas.
- Hence, any moral rules constructed must be universalisable without contradiction. This never means.
- The third formulation adds a political component to Kant's theory: he is trying to show how a society could be governed if all people were to accept his deontological ethics.
- When acting individually, we should then try to imagine whether our action would be consistent with the 'kingdom of ends', in the hope that by doing so, we might bring it closer to reality.
- Finally, in order for Kantian ethics to work in a practical manner, Kant also put forward three postulates which, when combined with reason, are believed by Kant to make this ethical system work. These are:
 1. **Freedom** – individuals must be free in order to make their own choices and actions.
 2. **Immortality** – there must be an afterlife in order for summum bonum to be achieved.
 3. **God** – God must exist in order to be the fair and just judge to decide who is worthy of happiness in the afterlife.

Bentham's Utilitarian Consequentialism

- Utilitarianism is a modern form of secular ethics, although it is not totally exclusive to the modern world.
- It is a form of ethics developed by Jeremy Bentham, who believed that happiness was the goal of all human action. Happiness, therefore, becomes the central crux of why we make moral decisions.
- The key ideas of happiness/pleasure and pain.
- It was originally developed by Jeremy Bentham, but further developed by John Stuart Mill.
- Unlike deontological Kantian ethics, utilitarian ethics is a consequentialist type of ethics.
- This means that whether or not an action is considered moral depends on the consequences of that action. It can be believed to have.
- For example, if we take the previously mentioned axe murderer dilemma compared to the ideas of Kantian ethics, a utilitarian would take a different approach.
- The end which utilitarians believe to be the most desirable is the end of happiness.
- In the axe murderer dilemma, there are three people involved, and two will be answering the door. One will be the friend of the friend of the axe murderer. The one answering the door lies or tells his friend from the axe murderer. The one answering the door honestly is the axe murderer, as he will be the friend of the person answering the door.
- Thus, in utilitarian ethics the best thing to do in this situation is lie.

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Bentham's Act Utilitarianism and Hedonic Calculus

- The general principle of utilitarianism is that an act can be considered to be morally right if it generates the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people – this is known as the **principle of utility** which was developed by Jeremy Bentham.
- Bentham's utilitarianism was hinged around the idea of the **principle of utility**, described below.
- Bentham argues that being ruled by **pain** and **pleasure** is just the way human nature is; we must seek pleasure, and we must avoid pain. He goes on to argue that this is the basis of decision-making (that is, how we decide what to do) on anything else would be wrong.
- Having made this claim about human nature (these are sometimes called *descriptive* claims), Bentham goes on to make his *normative claim* (he wants to tell us what we should do). This is the **principle of utility** which states: When faced with an ethical decision, we should choose the action which *maximises* pleasure and *minimises* pain for the *greatest number* of people.
- To that end, he devised what has come to be known as the hedonic calculus, which is a way of measuring pleasure quantitatively (in terms of quantities, i.e. numbers) the right course of action for someone who seeks pleasure above all else; like many other terms, it comes from the Greek word 'hedone', meaning 'pleasure'.
- Bentham listed seven factors which must be taken into account when calculating the amount of pleasure an act will produce. They included 'intensity' (the strength of the pleasure), 'duration' (the length of the pleasure) and 'fecundity' (how likely one pleasure was to lead to another). The hedonic calculus is a distinctive feature of Bentham's version of utilitarianism. Since it is difficult to calculate, ethical decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis; thus it is known as **act utilitarianism**.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Kantian Ethics

Strengths:

- It is very clear and concise.
- It provides one central idea and moral code, which is free from ambiguity.
- The humanity formula appeals to most people because of the value of individual human beings.
- The idea of universality appeals to most people because of the ease of making maxims which can be universalised, which are, therefore, more easily popularised with relative ease.

Weaknesses:

- The strict nature of deontology does not allow for situational differentiation, which can lead to certain trickier moral dilemmas.
- Not all moral decisions could be universalised, which might lead to the right course of action being rejected because it wouldn't apply in every single situation.
- It necessitates the existence of God in order for summum bonum to be achieved.
- The existence of God is a whole separate area of philosophy which has yet to be proven conclusively. Therefore, in order for this to work, it requires the proof of the existence of God.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarian Ethics

Strengths:

- It is impossible to know the future or what the consequences of actions will be, so it is difficult to judge someone on what they do in the long term, good or bad.
- It treats everyone equally and justly in much the same way the justice system applies the law indiscriminately.
- It creates core, absolute moral principles which cannot be dismissed because they are based on the greatest happiness for the greatest number.
- Moral decisions are simple and straightforward because what is right and wrong is based on the principle of utility.
- The categorical imperative creates moral rules which are consistent with those of utilitarianism, as that lying or murder is wrong. This helps to make it relevant and practical.
- Following one's duty is more important than doing what one thinks is right, but this is often influenced by our own biases and selfish preferences.
- It recognises the intrinsic value of humans. It protects them from being used as a means to an end, as in utilitarianism, where the minority could rightly be made to suffer for the benefit of the majority.

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Weaknesses:

- There seems little justification or authority for the moral obligations in deont
- willing to accept that there is a divine lawgiver (God).
- It is not practical, or even possible, to act according to duty alone – human de
- are arguably more complex than this.
- Following absolute moral commands or one's duty could result in awful consi
- situations where certain disastrous consequences should be avoided. There
- respond to complicated or extreme moral situations. Similarly, good consequ
- actually good because what matters is the intention, e.g. an action that result
- It does not allow compassion or sympathy to motivate moral actions.
- It does not provide a clear resolution for the situation in which there are two
- would be the best choice, but if they are opposed choices then it does not
- how to choose that choice.
- Kant was a Christian and saw his ethic as consistent with Christianity, but God
- how 'Kant largely reduced religion to ethics – to be holy is to be moral'. This
- relevant to Christians.
- Kant's principle of universalisation allows for the universalisation of amoral a
- because a principle can be universalised does not mean it is right, or even ser
- Kant commits the naturalistic fallacy because he turns an 'is' into an 'ought'.
- There needs to be an actual reason to act according to one's duty – not simpl

Key Figures**Immanuel Kant**

- Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was a philosopher who first put forward what is
- Kantian ethics. This was a system of duty-based ethics developed in order to
- What set Kant apart from other key figures such as Voltaire (now known prim
- *Candide*), Rousseau (the French political philosopher) and Adam Smith (gen
- modern economics) was his unswerving commitment to understanding what
- *could not*.
- He famously talked about instituting a 'Copernican revolution' in the way philoso
- consequent to the astronomer Copernicus' discovery that Earth revolved a
- previous thought, the other way round).
- Kant was a devout Christian, but he largely tried to work from what might be
- an *agnostic* basis. We just can't *know* for sure whether God exists, though K
- have good reasons to *believe* in him, but not enough to ever be certain.
- As a result, when he did write about God, Kant mostly liked to talk about how
- could know about him through speculative thought alone. (If you are studying
- of Religion alongside this course, you are sure to encounter his critiques of th
- and cosmological arguments.)

Jeremy Bentham

- Bentham was a British philosopher, juror and writer who posited the theory
- the most ethical action is the one which posits the principle of utility: that the
- highest amount of happiness to the greatest number.
- Bentham was an atheist and developed utilitarian theory which was removed
- Utilitarianism is an ethical theory widely accepted. It is a theory of e
- works towards the principle of utility which states that the greatest happiness
- greatest number of people is achieved by the most moral action.
 - Bentham developed what is known as the 'hedonic calculus'. This is a m
 - measuring the goodness which will be derived from an action.
 - He also developed the principle of utility, which is the basis for utilitarian

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Key Texts

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

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

Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*

- This is the text written by Jeremy Bentham.
- It was originally printed in 1780 and then again in 1823.
- It is in this text that Jeremy Bentham put forward the theory of utilitarianism, the principle of utility and the hedonic calculus.

Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea 😞	Some Idea 😊	Yes I know it!
Who was Immanuel Kant?			
What is the base concept of Kantian ethics?			
What is the importance of duty in Kantian ethics?			
What two imperatives did Kant put forward?			
Is Kantian ethics teleological or deontological?			
What, in the thoughts of Kant, governed morality?			
What were Kant's religious beliefs, and how did these influence his ethics?			
What are the weaknesses of duty-based ethics?			
What are the strengths of duty-based ethics?			
What is the base concept of Kantian ethics?			
What is a hypothetical imperative?			
What is a categorical imperative?			
What is utilitarianism?			
What did Bentham consider to be the most important end in ethical action?			
What is the importance of utility in utilitarianism?			
What is the principle of utility?			
What is the hedonic calculus?			
What are the strengths of utilitarianism?			
What are the weaknesses of utilitarianism?			
What type of ethics is utilitarianism?			

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Kant, Bentham and Religious Teaching

Overview

The ideas of Bentham and Kant interact differently with religious teaching. While Bentham considers himself to be secular in a sense, there are marked differences in the way he interacts with and conflict with religious teaching. It is important to remember that Kantian ethics is not religious, and the same is true of utilitarian thinkers.

When considering the way these theories interact with religious teaching, it is important to consider the individuals who developed them. Kant was a devout Lutheran Christian. Jeremy Bentham was known to be a deist.

Kantian Ethics

- Kantian ethics can in some ways be considered to be compatible with religious teaching.
- Indeed, some aspects of Kantian ethics are tied to religious ideas – the sense of moral duty, for one, is largely similar to religious ideas about morality.
- The universality principle both holds well and comes into conflict with ideas of religious teaching respectively. Many religious teachings are considered to be good no matter the situation, e.g. lying is considered to be wrong regardless of the situation in the majority of religious teaching.
- However, there are situations where some religious teachings may conflict with each other and, in this case, the universality principle would be incompatible.
- It is impossible for both religious teachings to be universal if they conflict with the principle of universality would conflict with religious teaching and religious morality.
- The principle of the Kingdom of Ends is particularly important when considering religious ideas.
- The idea of moral duty as proposed within Kantian ethics does indeed tie well with religious beliefs.
- There are other similarities to religious forms of ethics, such as divine command to the rules is absolute.
- However, one key issue when holding Kantian ethics to religious teaching and the fact that within Kantian ethics, reason stands above all.
- Reason is the means by which all moral decisions are necessary to be made.
- Reason within Kantian ethics to an extent subverts the need for God as an authority.
- If reason within Kantian ethics is the be all and end all of the source of ethical decisions, God who is the source of morality is somewhat subverted.
- This, within a religious context, would be considered to be God rather than reason.
- This places reason in the same place as God, which, within a religious context is idolatry. This, within many religious contexts, is immoral (a sin).
- Within religious circles, as within Kantian ethics, intentions matter.
- In this way, the religious ethical system is concerned with the moral motivation of the outcome of the action. The goodness of the intention is the key.
- The same is true of Kantian ethics where the intention to fulfil moral duty is what matters.
- Within Kantian ethics, in order for the ethical system to work, the idea of suffering is necessary.
- It is necessary to have a reward good ethics – rewards afforded to the individual in the afterlife.
- To this end, it marries within religious ideas of the afterlife and rewards for good actions. However, it also cannot be given without the belief in God or belief in an afterlife and, therefore, Kantian ethics can be married well.

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Utilitarian Ethics

- The crux of utilitarianism is the principle of utility – the aim of maximising pleasure.
- This may fit very well within some religions, e.g. Buddhist aims to avoid pain.
- However, it may be considered to be egoistic within some religious circles, as the pursuit of pleasure to be selfish. It is egoistic to an extent as it may concern the good of the individual rather than the good of others.
- Within Christianity, there can be similarities drawn between the golden rule and the principle of utilitarianism.
- They are both rules which offer an overarching guide to making moral decisions and ease in making decisions.
- However, the focus of the golden rule is on other people – to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The principle of utility, however, could include the interests of other people, but the individual.
- Utilitarianism places the human being in the place of importance – the major importance given within religious thought to the rules of God.
- Utilitarianism is a consequentialist form of ethics. The action can be considered right if the outcome creates the greatest happiness for the greatest number. However, in religious thought, the motivation is important.
- It can also focus on the good of the majority. This is the only preferential treatment.
- However, within religious thought there is consistent emphasis and preference for the poor or oppressed.
- The care for the most vulnerable in society is an important part of many religions. For example, Jesus emphasised to Christians that in service of God, the care for the poor is a way to show love and service to God.
- This is communicated in the parable of the sheep and goats: in Matthew 25, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40).
- The majority, however, is the concern within utilitarian ethics.
- Jesus encouraged a grace-filled approach to the law.
- There are instances within the gospel where he challenges traditional Pharisaic interpretation of the law.
- The idea of utilitarianism is flexibility within the moral code found within utilitarianism, a chord found in religious teaching also.
- It could be argued that rule utilitarianism marries well with Christian teaching and the commandments of the law in order to heal on the Sabbath, as recorded with Jesus.

Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. They were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up here." Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil? To kill or to live?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and frustration, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched out his hand, and it was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how to kill Jesus.

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Student Checklist

What Do I Know?	No Idea ☹	Some Idea 😊	Good Idea 😄
How does the Kantian principle of universality challenge religious ideas?			
How does the Kingdom of Ends support religious ideas?			
How does the idea of <i>summum bonum</i> support religious ideas?			
How does the importance of reason in Kantian ethics challenge religious ideas?			
How does the principle of utility fit with religious ideas?			
How does the principle of utility challenge religious ideas?			
How might the principle of utility come into conflict with the gospel rule?			
How does the Bible passage Mark 3:1–6 support rule utilitarianism?			

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Practice Exam-style Question

7. 'Kantian ethics is more moral than utilitarian ethics.' Evaluate this statement.

HINTS

In your answer you should:

- evaluate and assess facets of religious applications and differing ideas, implications and impacts.
 - The principle of universalisation to the golden rule
 - The application of utilitarian ethics to other religions, such as Buddhism
 - The impact of the majority



8. Examine the view that utilitarian ethics is the best ethical code to live by.

HINTS

(AO1)

In your answer you should:

- exhibit awareness and comprehension of differing beliefs, including the following:
 - Basics of duty-based ethics and utilitarian ethics
 - Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham
 - Hypothetical and categorical imperatives and the principle of utility
 - How these ideas apply to religious thought



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Mark Schemes

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. Use of specific language will be applied accurately, demonstrating exact 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. Use of specific language will be applied accurately, demonstrating appropriate 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 included. Use of specific language will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory understanding of the meaning of these phrases.
2 (3–4 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will communicate a limited knowledge base showing understanding of some relevant information included. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be included. Use of specific language will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory understanding of the 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 included. Use of specific language will not be applied, or if it is it will be applied incorrectly.
0 marks	0 marks awarded for incorrect or irrelevant content, or no answer provided.

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. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority. A strong argument will be displayed showing nuanced and balanced understanding. Use of specific language will be applied accurately, demonstrating exact 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. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority. An above average argument will be displayed showing balanced understanding. Use of specific language will be applied accurately, demonstrating appropriate 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. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be included. A sufficient argument will be displayed showing some balanced understanding. Use of specific language will be applied sufficiently, demonstrating satisfactory understanding of the context and meaning of these phrases.
2 (4–6 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will display basic analysis and evaluation of the content. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be included. An argument will be displayed showing some understanding. Use of specific language will be applied, demonstrating satisfactory understanding of the context and meaning of these phrases.
1 (1–3 marks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Answer will display poor and lacking analysis and evaluation of the content. Reference to the scholars, views and sources of wisdom and authority will be included. 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.
0 marks	0 marks awarded for incorrect or irrelevant content, or no answer provided.

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Indicative Content

1. 'The natural world is the most obvious source of ethical rights and wrongs.'

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the ideas as below:

- Ethical naturalism is a cognitive theory. This means that it is possible to say that ethics are true or false within human experience.
- It is the belief that decisions about what is right and wrong can be arrived at through the natural world and human nature.
- An action can be right or wrong depending on whether it fulfils the intended purpose of human nature (natural morality) or whether it produces happiness (utilitarianism).
- Human nature and happiness are both things that exist in the world and can be empirically tested.
- Ethical naturalism treats ethical statements the same as non-ethical statements.
- Just as we would expect the statement 'that car is blue' to be empirically tested (e.g. 'that car, I can see and be certain that it is blue'), so, too, ethical statements, such as 'murder is wrong', can be empirically tested by analysing whether an action has produced happiness.

Students might give any of the following arguments for this statement:

- On this basis, ethical statements can be proved true or false – they are verifiable.
- There are four principles of ethical naturalism, or four key ideas within the view.
- Moral statements are always propositional.
- These propositions are true.
- These propositions are true not because of human beings, but because of the natural world around us. This fits well with our ideas about empiricism and scientific method. To our society this method of ascertaining ethical ideas appeals.
- The natural realities of the world can be reduced to ethical realities.
- So, for example the phrase 'Murder is wrong', within ethical naturalism, would be considered objectively true because it has relation to natural facts, which can happen in the world. It is a proposition which is moral and cognitive.
- Ethical naturalism is largely rejected in the way that it deals with ethical statements.
- An example of an ethical theory which makes use of ethical naturalism is utilitarianism.
- By positing that the most ethical thing to do is to gain the greatest happiness for the greatest number, utilitarians are giving natural value to the moral assertion that good actions are those which produce the greatest happiness.
- Utilitarianism is often used as an example which is useful in arguing that naturalism is the best way to deal with ethical rights and wrongs as the majority of people in the modern day would subscribe to act in a utilitarian way as this would benefit the most people. Indeed, it would be the most obvious source of ethical thought as the majority of people would subscribe, whether consciously or not, to this form of ethical thinking.

Students might give any of the following arguments against this statement:

- Critics of this way of talking about morality are keen to point out these theories are an utterly damning, mistake: they confuse what is the case with how it ought to be.
- This is known as the is-ought gap.
- It was first pointed out by Hume. He makes the point that when philosophers talk about moral matters they are prone to slipping from what is the case to what ought to be without explaining how they got from the former to the latter.
- Furthermore, Hume thinks it is unclear precisely how anybody could justify such a claim. An example of this is in Jeremy Bentham's assertion that 'Everybody seeks pleasure'.
- It is a descriptive claim made by Jeremy Bentham in the opening line of his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* ('Nature has placed mankind under the dominion of a sovereign master, pain, and pleasure.').
- Bentham would argue that this is a factual state of affairs and, I imagine, many would agree. However, Hume critiques this. This sentence is a normative claim. It is saying that we ought to seek pleasure. It is a very different thing to saying how things are.
- Therefore, while it is a useful, and some would argue instinctive, way to look at ethics, it is without its critics and issues.

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2. Examine the view that ethical naturalism is the best way of ascertaining what is right and wrong.

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

- Ethical naturalism is a cognitive theory. This means that it is possible to say that ethics are true or false within human experience.
- It is the belief that decisions about what is right and wrong can be arrived at through the study of the natural world and human nature.
- An action can be right or wrong depending on whether it fulfils the intended purpose of human nature (natural moral) or whether it produces the greatest happiness (utilitarianism).
- Human nature and happiness are natural things that exist in the world and can be empirically tested.
- Ethical naturalism treats ethical statements the same as non-ethical statements.
- Just as we would expect the statement 'that car is blue' to be empirically tested (we can see and be certain that it is blue), so, too, ethical statements, such as 'murder is wrong', can be empirically tested by analysing whether an action has produced happiness.
- On this basis, ethical statements can be proved true or false – they are verifiable.
- There are four principles of ethical naturalism, or four key ideas within the view.
- Moral statements are always propositional.
- These propositions are true.
- These propositions are true not because of human beings, but because of natural facts about the world around us.
- The natural realities of the world can be reduced to ethical realities.
- So, for example, the phrase 'Murder is wrong', within naturalism, would be considered objectively true because it has relation to natural things which can happen in the world. 'Murder is wrong' is a proposition which is moral and cognitive.
- Ethical naturalism is largely reductionist in the way that it deals with ethical statements.
- An example of an ethical theory which makes use of ethical naturalism is utilitarianism.
- By positing that the most ethical thing to do is to gain the greatest happiness for the greatest number, utilitarians are giving natural value to the utilitarian assertion that goodness is what produces the greatest happiness.
- This functions as an example which is useful in arguing that naturalism is the best way of ascertaining ethical rights and wrongs as the utilitarianism of people in the modern day would be to act in a utilitarian way, that is, to do what would benefit the most people.
- Critics of this view, however, about morality are keen to point out these theories are not based on natural facts. The mistake: they confuse what is the case with how it ought to be.
- This is known as the is-ought gap.
- It was first pointed out by Hume. He makes the point that when philosophers discuss moral matters they are prone to slipping from what is the case to what ought to be. In other words, explaining how they got from the former to the latter.
- Furthermore, Hume thinks it is unclear precisely how somebody could justify a moral claim. An example of this is in Jeremy Bentham's assertion that 'Everybody seeks pleasure and avoids pain'. It is a descriptive claim made by Jeremy Bentham in the opening line of his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* ('Nature has placed mankind under the dominion of a few sovereign masters, pain and pleasure.').
- Bentham would argue that this is a factual state of affairs and, I imagine, many would agree.
- However, Hume critiques this. This sentence is a normative claim. It is saying that everybody ought to seek pleasure and avoid pain. That is a very different thing to saying how things are.
- Therefore, while it is a useful, and some would argue instinctive, way to look at morality, it is not without its critics and issues.

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3. Examine the view that libertarian free will is the most effective in navigating responsibility.

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

- Free will is the ability for an individual to make moral choices free from forces that force them to make a certain choice. It is a case of individual volition and intent.
- It is closely tied to the idea of moral responsibility as these two things are closely linked. If free will, individuals cannot be considered to be morally accountable.
- Moral responsibility is the duty of the individual to make correct moral choices that are good, and which cause no harm to others.
- Libertarianism is the freest, purest form of free will, and believes that free choice is possible without the influence of external factors. The external factors only affect behaviour in the natural world, not other living beings such as plants.
- There are different understandings of free will, including determinism and compatibilism.
- Determinism is the belief that human beings do not have free will because their actions have been decided upon previously by a higher power. There are different forms of determinism including causal, psychological and theological. Compatibilism is the view that determinism and libertarianism can be considered to be true and that the two ideas are compatible.
- Libertarian free will is the view which considers free will in its purest state, so that individuals are not influenced by external factors.
- In reaction to determinism, the libertarian view is that people have wholly free will.
- It concedes that there are external factors, causations, which can impact decisions that are made.
- In terms of direct causation, these only apply to the mechanic world within the natural world. e.g. a flower is predestined to be blown by the wind as it does not have the capacity to make free moral decisions and choices.
- There are what is known as contingent truths – things which are likely to be true but are not necessarily true – for example, A is stronger than B. In a fight, A would win against B in a likely scenario. However, this is not predetermined. It is theoretically possible that B could win, there is still the situational possibility for A to lose.
- A similar example is used by Michael Palmieri to communicate his ideas about free will.
- Within libertarian thought, external factors having an impact on decisions is considered to be a reality; however, these do not necessitate a choice made.
- This is wholly key to the libertarian view could be the most useful in navigating moral responsibility because it is the idea which could be argued to be a natural inclination.
- For example, an individual raised in abject poverty. Just because of the circumstances they are not destined to a life of crime in order to attempt to escape poverty through other avenues of life which could be undertaken. There is not a direct correlation, between poverty and a life of crime.
- Therefore, if a person commits a crime, while it is important to consider the factors that led to them they have still committed a crime and, therefore, should under the law receive punishment for their crime.
- This is useful as this is largely how the legal system currently functions.
- By comparison, determinism completely absolves an individual of moral responsibility. If an individual has not chosen to act in a way, then it is not correct to punish them.
- This could be an issue as, if people are not held responsible for their actions within the legal sense, then the legal framework of society would have no point.

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4. 'Libertarian free will is the best way of navigating moral responsibility.' Evaluate this statement.

(AO2) Students may analyse and evaluate the ideas as below:

- Free will is the ability for an individual to make moral choices free from forces that prevent them from making a certain choice. It is a case of individual volition and intent.
- Libertarianism is the truest, purist form of free will, and believes that free choice should be made without the influence of external factors. The external factors only affect beings that do not have free will, i.e. other living beings such as plants and animals.
- It is closely tied to the idea of moral responsibility as these two things are closely linked. Without free will, individuals cannot be considered to be held accountable.
- Moral responsibility is the ability of the individual to make correct moral choices that lead to actions which are good, and do not cause suffering towards others.
- There are different understandings of free will, including determinism and compatibilism. Therefore, it is possible to apply each of these different understandings to the concept of moral responsibility to assess their effectiveness in terms of navigating moral responsibility.

Students may agree that libertarian free will is the best way of navigating moral responsibility.

- Libertarian free will does indeed lay out a very clear path towards navigating moral responsibility which appeals to human nature.
- For example, it appeals to the sense of justice which human beings experience. We feel that someone for an action they have chosen. If an individual has done something wrong, we instinctively want to hold them responsible. If an individual has done something good, society honour that.
- Libertarian free will appeals to and fits well with many of the laws and ideas of modern society today.
- Our justice system currently acts on the basis of libertarian free will. People are held accountable.
- To remove libertarian free will is to challenge our legal system and open up the possibility to allow people to commit crimes and not suffer repercussions. This does not fit with ideas of justice.

Students may disagree that libertarian free will is the best way of navigating moral responsibility.

- However, there are issues proposed by libertarian free will which impact the way we understand moral responsibility. For example, the issue of external forces or issues impacting on free will. One example which could be used here is an individual who may have a diminished capacity to understand their actions – we may not view them as having total free will as they are not acting better.
- The issue of psychological determinism comes in here. Psychological determinism states that human choices are determined by their psychological states before they make a choice. There are many factors which would impact the psychological disposition of an individual, including upbringing, including biological or environmental factors. As a result, these factors, rather than human beings themselves, are the deciding forces regarding the choices that they make.
- This discussion leads us on to the opposite approach to moral responsibility, which is determinism – the view that the best way of understanding free will, moral responsibility, is by understanding that all actions are predetermined.
- This in turn has issues, as while determinism does make lots of sense in many situations, for example, taking into account different factors in the life of an individual which would impact them to make a decision (i.e. causal determinism or psychological determinism), the view of the actions of someone can be said to be nuanced.
- However, one of the main issues with determinism as a theory is that it argues that all actions are predetermined and therefore, if we are not free moral agents, we cannot be held responsible for our actions. This causes issues with moral responsibility as no one can be held accountable for their actions.
- The issue of determinism is also considered to be an issue as systems such as the law would not be able to function without moral responsibility.

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5. Examine how the sociological understanding of conscience deals with the

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

- Sociological understandings of the conscience are linked strongly to analysis of moral choices function within societies.
- Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) was a French sociologist. As a sociologist, his study of society and the interactions between individuals in order to make judgements about the nature of societal structures and interactions.
- In Durkheim's view, the conscience experienced by an individual is the result of social conditioning, as a result of their experiences both in childhood and as an adult.
- When someone feels a guilty conscience, it is simply the result of a conscious awareness of moral values which they have learned throughout their life.
- Nietzsche, like Durkheim, attempts what other scholars addressing issues of conscience have done – the case for why some people appear to completely lack a conscience.
- He argues that should a person not have a conscience, then they do not have internalised moral values from a society.
- This could be for a number of reasons – either they have not been raised as people who do not absorb and internalise the values from around them, or due to particular circumstances or biological factors they were unable to adjust and learn these values.
- Durkheim also posits the idea of what he terms the 'collective conscience'.
- This is the idea of the faculty that arises from the complete sphere of beliefs and values shared between members of a particular society.
- The collective conscience, therefore, is felt by all members of a society as they participate in the sphere of these shared beliefs and values.
- Durkheim's theories help demonstrate how individuals participate in shared moral values.
- These values will give people motivations to work towards the collective good.
- Durkheim muses over whether or not conscience is an evolutionary trait, as it provides the scaffolding to support social survival of groups of humans to live better in communities.
- Sharing values and morals enables cohesion within a social group, aiding collective action and protecting against outside threats.
- The way in which conscience is understood in a sociological understanding deals with the issue of how it is linked to the ideas within a particular society regarding marriage. Therefore, the way in which the society in question understands conscience is key.
- Someone who understands conscience in a sociological way may believe that the moral values within society is the key to the conscience response to cheating.
- Marriage affords within society a system of order and provides structure for the moral inclinations of human beings as well as providing the scaffolding for family life and reproduction.
- Therefore, cheating would result in threatening this structure as well as result in social conflicts.
- Therefore, the individual might argue that the instinctive idea that cheating is wrong is rooted in the threat it poses to the necessity of the order of society.
- They may experience guilt themselves for this reason should they ever engage in cheating. This would be rooted in the society's values and priorities rather than the moral values of the individual of the action.

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6. 'Freud's interpretation of conscience is the most coherent when discussing this statement.'

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

- Sigmund Freud was a highly influential and famous Austrian scientist, best known of, and coining the term, 'psychoanalysis'; his ideas about the conscience are largely based on his theories of the psyche.
- Specifically Freud based his ideas in the psychosexual development of the child and how their mental capacity through various different stages of childhood. The things that happen in childhood profoundly affect the way that we later experience the emotions of the psyche.
- One important aspect of Freud is that he introduced three key ideas about the psyche, separating the brain into three parts – the id, the ego, and the super ego.
- For Freud, the conscience is linked inextricably with guilt, the instinctual emotion that an individual has when they consider something to be wrong – the root of guilt for Freud is the conflict between the ego and the id, specifically a reaction between the two that is managed by the ego).
- The way in which our adult selves navigate social interaction and deal with problems and defence mechanisms and are rooted in the subconscious development which occurs during childhood.
- When we do something that the super ego has learned through childhood is wrong, we experience guilt. This is known as internalisation – when the values we were taught by those in authority have become our own due to regular exposure and socialisation over the period of childhood.

Students might argue that Freud's theory is the most coherent:

- Therefore, when we apply this method of thought to the issues of adultery and a wide spectrum of potential moral responses, depending on the individual and what they were taught during their childhood and specifically those in authority within our childhoods. This is coherent in that it is easily applied to our knowledge and experience that we have.
- If someone was raised with the value that would dictate that lying was wrong, then their conscience would, in the instance of the occurrence of a lie, provoke in an individual a sense of guilt. The individual has violated the values with which they were raised and are violating the codes set by those they consider to be in authority roles. However, if someone was not raised with such a belief, then the theory follows that they would be able to lie without provoking no sense of guilt for their chosen course of action.
- Freud's thoughts on the ideas of adultery are similar – an individual, he would argue, would experience conscience in committing adultery as a result of the internalised views they had during their childhood. If someone is raised with the view that marriage vows are important and should not be broken, then they would experience guilt should they break them. However, if someone was not raised with such a belief, then they would not experience such guilt.
- While Freud's theory could be considered to be the most coherent situationally, for example, in the case of an individual who does appeal and make sense. However, in the interest of individualism and respect for one another, Freud's theory, while logical, is largely impractical. The hurt done to an individual will not be undone simply by explaining that this was a view developed in childhood.

Students might argue that Freud's theory is not the most coherent:

- This can be contrasted with the likes of Aquinas' natural law theory in which Aquinas would argue that the conscience within the individual who is committing adultery would instinctively tell that they are doing something wrong. Aquinas' theory could be argued to be more coherent as it is more concrete and clear. There are no grey areas.
- The act of adultery violates the primary precept of the order of society, which is one of the most important teachings of Aquinas' natural law. In this instance there are two ways in which it can be interpreted within the natural law system – it is a failure of conscience either by wrongly prioritising an apparent good (desire of love / sex / another person) over a real good, i.e. the keeping of marriage vows. The same can be said of lying.
- Durkheim too could be argued to be more coherent as his approach to these issues is more pragmatic, and appeals to our sense of reason.
- His view of marriage and adultery can be argued to be perhaps a clearer version of Aquinas' as it focuses more on the society in which an individual lives than an individual situation.
- Someone who understands conscience in a sociological way may believe that marriage with its vows is the key to the conscience response to cheating. Marriage provides a social order and provides structure for the romantic inclinations of individuals, providing the scaffolding for family life facilitating reproduction.
- Therefore, if someone cheats, cheating would result in threatening this structure as well as resulting in social conflicts. Therefore, the individual might argue that the instinctive idea that cheating is wrong is rooted in the threat it poses to the necessity of the order of society. They may feel that they should themselves for this reason should they ever engage in such an activity.
- On lying, Freud points out how the structure of society and interaction between individuals can break down in the instance of lies and untruths. Society cannot make actions that are based on lies; this will lead to mistakes and issues. It is a very clear-cut, pragmatic approach to the issue.

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7. 'Kantian ethics is more moral than utilitarian ethics.' Evaluate this statement

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

- Duty-based ethics, also known as deontological ethics, are a system of ethics based on the idea that there are certain moral duties held by every individual that, if adhered to, should be the basis of a moral society. They are also known as Kantian ethics due to their formulator – Immanuel Kant.
- He posited a moral system which is based on duty – specific duties which are derived from a set of principles.
- He developed the hypothetical imperatives and the categorical imperatives, which distinguish between duties you should do if you want to achieve a certain end, and moral duties which are required for every action.
- He developed two key types of imperatives – hypothetical imperatives and categorical imperatives.
- Hypothetical imperatives are 'ought to' rules should you wish to achieve a certain end. Categorical imperatives are 'ought to' rules – these are moral maxims which need to be applied to all actions.
- There are two forms of the categorical imperative: the principle of universalisability and the Kingdom of Ends.
- There are also three postulates which must be fulfilled within Kantian ethics as individuals must be free in order to make their own choices and decisions; immortality – an afterlife in order for sunnum bonnum to be experienced; God – God has to be a fair and just judge to decide who experiences sunnum bonnum in the afterlife.
- There are a wide variety of ethical codes which are proffered for people to live by, including the common utilitarian form of ethics posited by Jeremy Bentham.

Students may agree that Kantian ethics is more moral:

- Kantian ethics promotes a sense of duty to other human beings.
- It is impossible to know the future or what the consequences of actions will be, so it is more just to judge someone on what they do, which itself is good or bad.
- It treats everyone equally and justly in much the same way the justice system treats everyone indiscriminately.
- It creates core, absolute moral principles which cannot be dismissed because of changing circumstances.
- Moral decision-making is simple and straightforward – it is clear what is right and wrong.
- The categorical imperative creates moral rules which are consistent with those of most religions today, such as that theft or murder is wrong. This helps to make it relevant and applicable.
- Following one's duty is more important than doing what one thinks is right, being influenced by one's emotions and selfish preferences.
- It recognises the intrinsic value of humans. It protects them from being used for the benefit of others, as in utilitarianism, where the minority could rightly be made to suffer for the benefit of the majority.

Students may disagree that Kantian ethics is not more moral:

- It is deontological – therefore, the duty to fulfil the right purpose is the most important thing, even if it might cause difficulty ethically – sometimes when duty is followed the consequences are considered to be an immoral result, e.g. the axe murderer dilemma.
- There seems little justification or authority for the moral obligations in deontology unless one is willing to accept that there is a divine lawgiver (God). The postulate which dictates that God exists does not necessarily make the best rule set for morality for an increasingly secular world.
- It is not practical, or even possible, to act according to duty alone – human decisions and psychological factors are arguably more complex than this.
- Following absolute moral commands or one's duty could result in awful consequences in certain situations where certain disastrous consequences should be avoided. It lacks the flexibility to respond to complicated or extreme moral situations. Similarly, good intentions cannot be interpreted as actually good because what matters is the intention, not the results, which results in a child's life being saved.
- It does not allow compassion or sympathy to influence moral actions.
- It does not provide us with a solution to the situation in which there are two equally good choices – both would require us to make a choice, but if they are opposed choices the categorical imperative provides no guidance as to how to make that choice.
- Kant was a Christian and saw his ethics as consistent with Christianity, but God is not mentioned in his ethics. This shows how Kant largely reduced religion to ethics – to be holy is to be moral. This is less relevant to Christians, which is ironic as the postulate regarding God is more relevant to non-religious people.
- Kant's principle of universalisation allows for the universalisation of amoral and immoral actions just because a principle can be universalised does not mean it is right or even sensible.
- Kant commits the naturalistic fallacy because he turns an 'is' into an 'ought'.
- There needs to be an actual reason to act according to one's duty – not simply because it is a duty.

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8. Examine the view that utilitarian ethics is the best ethical code to live by for

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

- Utilitarianism is a modern form of secular ethics, although it is not totally exclusive to the secular sphere.
- It is centred on the key ideas of happiness/pleasure and pain. It was originally developed by Bentham, but further developed by John Stuart Mill and others.
- The general principle of utilitarianism is that an action can be considered to be morally right if the action generates the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. This is the principle of utility, which was first developed by Jeremy Bentham.
- Bentham argues that being ruled by pain and pleasure is just the way humans are naturally inclined to be.
- We have no choice in the matter; we must seek pleasure, and we must avoid pain.
- It could be argued that basing our ethical decision-making (that is, how we decide what is right) on pleasure and pain would simply be foolish.
- Despite being a secular form of ethics, utilitarian ethics is not wholly limited to the secular world. Many religious people may identify as utilitarians.
- The crux of utilitarianism is the principle of utility – the aim of maximising pleasure and minimising pain.
- This may fit very well within some religions, e.g. Buddhist aims to avoid pain and suffering.
- Jesus encouraged a grace-filled approach to the law.
- There are instances within the gospel where he challenges traditional Pharisaic interpretations of Jewish law.
- The idea that there is flexibility within the moral code found within utilitarianism may have resonated with religious teaching also.
- It could be argued that utilitarianism marries well with Christian teaching, as Jesus encouraged a grace-filled approach to the law in order to heal on the Sabbath, as recorded in the gospels.
- However, it may be considered to be egoistic within some religious circles, as utilitarianism focuses on the pursuit of pleasure to be selfish. It is egoistic to an extent as it may concern the individual rather than the good of others.
- Within Christianity, there can be similarities drawn between the Golden Rule and the Utility Principle of Utilitarianism.
- They are both rules which offer an overarching guide to making moral decisions for their respective faiths.
- However, the focus of the golden rule is on other people – to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. The principle of utility, however, could include the interests of others as well as the interests of the individual.
- Utilitarianism places the human being in the place of importance – the majority rule – rather than the importance given within religious thought to the rules of God.
- Utilitarianism is a consequentialist form of ethics. The action can be considered to be morally right if the outcome creates the greatest happiness for the greatest number. However, within religious schools of thought, the motivation is important.
- It can also focus on the good of the majority. This is the only preferential treatment within utilitarianism.
- However, within religious thought there is consistent emphasis on and preference for the care of the poor, needy, sick or oppressed.
- The care for the most vulnerable in society is an important part of many religious practices – for example, Jesus emphasised to Christians that in service of God, caring for the poor and needy in society is a way to show love and service to God.
- This is communicated in the parable of the sheen and goats in Matthew 25: Jesus will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)
- The majority, however, is not the focus within utilitarian ethics.

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