



Examiners' Report

June 2023

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 02

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Introduction

For the first time since 2019, this year's cohort sat their A level examinations after two full years' teaching in their centres.

As a result, candidates were in a position to have a strong grasp of the whole specification and to have practised in examination conditions during their studies. Consequently, overall standards were consistent with pre-Covid series' and it was good to see candidates keen to convey their learning and to engage with the topics they had enjoyed during their studies. However, it continues to be evident that some candidates and centres lack confidence with certain topics and, although there were fewer unanswered questions than in previous sessions, they were not entirely absent.

The majority of candidates were able to respond to all five questions and to write full answers, which gave them access to the full range of marks.

Question (Q)01 on equality and Q03 on Situation Ethics (including the extract from William Barclay) were the questions answered the most confidently. Whilst most candidates were familiar with Deontology, examiners were surprised to see a generally lower standard of response to this question than in previous sessions. The challenge of making connections with another area of their Religious Studies specification in Q04 still proved difficult for some candidates. Nonetheless, some excellent answers proliferated across all questions and the range of learning across centres is much to be applauded.

Candidates at the highest level drew on a range of detailed and carefully-employed knowledge to deconstruct the issues. They offered clear and sustained reasoning and formed clear judgements in relation to the question, through reviewing and analysing the strengths and weaknesses of different views.

There were some excellent examples of well-crafted and pertinent links made with other components studied. The best of these integrated them well to essays in more than a few sentences, rather than presenting an awkward tick-box add-on mini-paragraph. This element is not optional if candidates are to be able to access the full range of the mark scheme. Centres and candidates need to find a way to employ this in their teaching and learning throughout the course.

Candidates appeared to manage their time in the examination although some wrote far more than necessary on Q01 and Q02, often running into several pages of extra paper. In most cases, candidates had already provided sufficient material in their response to gain full marks, therefore the extra time and effort may have impacted negatively on other answers. Difficulties with timings were most usually evident by Q04. A number of candidates did not write at either the length or breadth justified by a 30-mark synoptic question.

Whilst candidates were generally able to make good use of scholars when required, they relied heavily on biblical and other religious references, which were often slight and simplistic.

Overall, candidates and their teachers are to be commended for their hard work and application. The majority of candidates managed their time well, and, in most cases, their knowledge was used effectively.

It remains essential that centres support their candidates by ensuring that all of the specification is covered in teaching. Candidates are encouraged not to leave out areas in their revision, because there are no alternatives to those questions set. There was a significant number of blank questions, or answers where candidates used material that was not appropriate to the question set.

Question 1

There remain some issues of time-management for candidates and centres to refine with this question.

In Q01, candidates should select material from the topic to address the question and not try to cover a 'whole topic' essay in the time and space provided. Many of the candidates who wrote for more than the time and space allowed, ran out of time on other questions; this can improve with continued centre-based practice.

Nonetheless, candidates were prepared well, to write about a leading figure in the fight for equality and although Martin Luther King was by far the most popular choice, followed a little way behind by Joni Eareckson Tada, it was good to see some other figures used. These included Mary Wollstonecraft, J S Mill, Jeremy Bentham, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. The most imaginative choice was Nancy Eiesland. This Theologian and Socialist was new to examiners but a useful contributor for candidates to consider. The occasional use of Jesus as the chosen figure was unexpected but it worked to some extent. If his role in fighting for equality is explored it is important that candidates write more than a brief overview of a few gospel episodes.

The best answers explored the contribution of the chosen figure, rather than providing a short biography. Whilst some background is useful, the answer does not have to evaluate their role. The strongest candidates understood that the way in which the relevant candidate enabled the fight for equality to move on and develop, is a useful measure of their effectiveness.

The candidate avoids giving background material that would take some of their precious ten minutes writing time.

1 Explore the contribution of one leading figure in the fight for equality.

(8)

Martin Luther King Jr. is one of the leading figures in the fight for racial equality in America in the 1960's. King Jr. contributed through his role as a minister of a church and ~~he~~ was peaceful in his approach, leading to marches and his evocative, passionate 'I have a Dream' speech. This was a successful approach as it allowed for meaningful, provocative thought by the racist opposition, as to the reason behind their prejudices whilst at the same time combatting their prejudices. Furthermore King Jr.'s speech contributed heavily to the change in social attitudes of racists, by pushing equality through the ideas of 'little boy ... little girls' he is letting people envisage the future of the country and desire equality. Moreover King Jr. used his religion to contribute to the fight, looking towards parables such as the 'Good Samaritan' to convince people to reflect and change their ideas. King Jr. was widely successful his speech now one of the most watched on youtube and regarded as a changing point. Furthermore since the 60's where ~~71%~~^{56%} of people said if a black American family moved next door they would be uncomfortable and consider moving that percentage is most recently down to 2%.



This answer achieves full marks.

This is a clear answer that shows an awareness of understanding of how Martin Luther King contributed to a change in peoples' perspectives and attitudes.

Total: 8 marks



Do not give unnecessary background material.

This answer also achieves full marks.

1 Explore the contribution of one leading figure in the fight for equality. - close (8)

Tada → disability ↗ Jesus, Church
Ireneus - soul making
David + Nephiboreph

Jodi Eareckson Tada is a disability activist who believes that she found 'Jesus in her hell'. She believes that people with disabilities are living representations of Jesus, and suffering, which need to be close to the center of the church as they represent how even during times of suffering people should have faith in God. Such as Ireneus soul making theodicy suggests that suffering is a test that allows us to develop into children of God. Tada believes her paralysis after an accident diving brought her closer to God. Unlike some people believe that the church is against disabilities (due to treatment of Lepers and Leuitians - where it is suggested people with 'blemishes' are not welcome) Tada believes the opposite, that her suffering is a gift which allows her to embody Jesus' pain during crucifixion. Tada believes seeing people with disabilities inspires others to have faith in God through times of hardship by being ^{at the center of church.}

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)



This is another clear answer that avoids background information but focusses on the implications of Joni Eareckson Tada's disability, as the inspiration for her work.

Total: 8 marks



Show understanding of the sources of inspiration for the chosen character.

Question 2

Deontology has long been a popular topic for candidates and it was a little surprising to find that it was not as universally successful this year, as in previous sessions.

The reasons for this appeared to be two-fold. Firstly, several candidates seemed unfamiliar with Kantian Deontology and used other ethical theories to answer the question, with varying degrees of success. When Situation Ethics or Utilitarianism were chosen, inevitably responses were unsuccessful.

Secondly, those who did write about Kantian Ethics seem to have less ready access to the range and depth of material than candidates have previously demonstrated. This may be due to a perceived lack of text book support for this topic. Centres are referred back to the previous specification textbook for A2, which contains extensive and relevant material on this topic.

When candidates were confident about the material, the essays flowed, and it was good to see technical terms used accurately, and an interest in, and engagement with, the topic. There are so many fascinating aspects of Deontology to consider – the categorical imperatives, formulae of right action, duty, *prima facie* duties, good will, the *summum bonum*, and many more. It was disappointing to see opportunities lost to assess these in detail.

Nevertheless, candidates who were well-versed in the topic wrote at length on the subject – maybe even for too long – and in many cases, achieved full marks with ease.

2 Assess the role of Deontology in moral decision making.

Deontology is most commonly associated with ⁽¹²⁾ ~~Immanuel~~ Immanuel Kant. Kantian ethics/deontology wishes to create a universal and objective form of ethics, free from emotion, consequences and religion/faith. Instead the theory is based upon good will, reason and duty.

Some would argue that it is quite a strong approach for making moral decisions as it ensures the protection and justice of the individual. In universalising a law/maxim (the first formulation), deontology makes sure everyone is treated equally. For example the maxim 'one must try all innocent individuals in court' cannot be universalised and therefore protects the rights of the individual.

Additionally, it removes emotion from moral decisions only focusing on reason. This ensures that decisions are built on rationality rather than driven by emotion or feeling such as love in situation ethics. This ultimately makes it useful in providing a clear-cut approach to moral decisions.

However, one might argue that remaining ~~emotion~~ ^{emotion} is impractical. We live in an emotive world where we are

naturally driven by our emotions. It is unreasonable to suggest that we shut off our emotions when ~~we~~ facing moral dilemmas. In stating the only motive of worth is good will, actions out of love or sympathy for family and friends becomes invalidated and so the theory is ^{arguably} ineffective.

Furthermore, the formulation of universalisability does not necessarily equate to morality. If a law can become universal, it does not mean the law should be universal. For example, lying shouldn't be universalised as it is arguably immoral. Whilst Kant would aim to solve this by stating only laws to do with morality should be universalised, we are not competent judges of ~~which~~ morality to decide the right laws.

Lastly, deontology does not consider the diversity of human nature. We all have different inclinations and needs and so a universal, ruled system ~~of~~ of duty would arguably cause greater unhappiness. We all have different tolerances and so the most suitable ethical approach would be relativistic rather than absolutist.

One may counter this by stating that in solely acting out of duty we remove our natural

inclinations and therefore do not assume what is good for us is good for everyone else. However, critics of this approach would not find this substantial in practice, as it is impossible to consistently deny our emotions.

In essence, deontology has its strengths as an ethical system for morality. It doesn't wish to calculate the consequences such as utilitarianism and instead focuses on having a good intention and duty, so we become better individuals. In theory, a system based on rationality would seem ^{to be a} perfect solution, allowing us to make logical choices. In the formulations of universalizability and treating people as ends not only means, the approach becomes substantially stronger as it doesn't run the risk of treating people as if they don't have inherent value. However, in practice the approach/role of deontology is not as full proof. Deontologists ignore our natural tendencies to act out of emotion (part of human nature) and fails to recognize the morality of other actions such as love or friendship. This therefore makes the approach too rigid for modern society, restricting our ability to consider how we want to act and only following a ~~term~~ series of tests.



This answer achieves full marks.

This response is a good model of where the best candidates took this question and is on target from the first sentence.

The answer is:

- rooted in Kantian Deontology
- full of accurate technical language and concepts
- takes the reader through a coherent process of assessment and critique

Excellent

Total: 12 marks



Use Kantian Deontology in a question about Deontology.

Keep Natural Moral Law for a question on Natural Moral Law.

2 Assess the role of Deontology in moral decision making.

(12)

Kant's categorical imperative asserts that morality lies in the intention of an act rather than its consequence like with ~~an~~ utilitarian approaches (particularly Bentham's act utilitarianism). This is a strength of deontology, in which the morality of the moral agent is actually being tested rather than relying on a possible outcome (the 'goodness' of an action is more certain). However, good intention may lead to bad consequences, seen through Kant's example of the axe murderer: the good intention to not lie may lead to someone being killed by an axe murderer. The categorical imperative also prioritises human rights by asserting that you cannot use somebody as a 'mere means to an end' as all humans are of themselves an 'end'. This puts human rights as more important in comparison to Bentham's utilitarianism which always includes pain in the minority so to achieve the "greatest happiness for the greatest number". However, Mill's harm principle would provide sufficient emphasis for human rights as the "individual is sovereign" and must not cause harm to others.

The principle of universalifiability is significant in Kantian deontology and allows for actions to become less subjective and relative, meaning that morality does not become flexible. This can be both a strength a limitation as on the one hand, it provides a clear 'duty' or 'obligation' for everyone to follow, making morality a set standard or absolute. Conversely, in ~~at~~ situations when what appears to be

moral is no clear (or it can be relative), then flexibility would be more beneficial. For example, murder should not be universalisable, but if taking a utilitarian approach, it may be permissible if one life could ~~save~~ save the lives of many others. This, however, raises the problem of whether some lives are more important than others.

W. D. Ross expands upon Kant's categorical imperative of duty by finding that at points, certain duties are 'trumped' by others which are of greater importance. For instance, the obligation to save your family is greater than your obligation to save a group of strangers, raising the question: how can we know which duty to follow if there are conflicting obligations? W. D. Ross proposes that there are intuitive 'prima facie' duties (at face value) which makes themselves clear to the moral agent in the situation.

Some may find this approach weak as it does not apply both reason and practice like with Kantian deontology, instead using only intuition and non-cognitive approaches. A. J. Ayer criticised non-cognitivist approaches to ethics, claiming that for it to be meaningful, it must be verifiable (something which is not possible with emotions, thoughts or feelings).

Similarly, Hume criticises the 'is-ought' fallacy in which one moves from 'is' to 'ought' without clear justification and includes some "missing ~~pred~~ predicate". Kant falls short of this problem, without reasoning why obligations are chiefly good.

Many prefer consequentialist approaches to ethics as you can directly see whether it was a morally acceptable act or not, but deontology allows morality to come before the act, helping in some cases to prevent immoral consequences. Overall, deontology is a strong approach to moral decision making as it provides clear duty, development of the ~~inter~~ good / pure intention of the moral agent and an emphasis for human rights. Although, it has its limitations, it ~~does~~ appears to be more practical than the hedonic calculus of ~~a~~ act utilitarianism or the moral chance of ~~consequent~~ consequentialism.



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Examiner Comments

This answer also achieves full marks.

It is another example of a candidate who has this topic completely under their control.

The reader is sign-posted through the answer and the range of language and concepts used are the hallmark of a candidate who has been exposed to exactly the right material and who is able to use it with confidence.

Total: 12 marks



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Examiner Tip

Underlining of scholars' names is not essential but it is very helpful for the reader.

Question 3

William Barclay's critique of Situation Ethics offers an accessible and highly comprehensible text for candidates with which to engage. So much of the text welcomes a response and enables the candidate to draw on their wider knowledge of the theory, without straying away from the set extract in Q03(a). As an ethical theory that invites analysis, Situation Ethics is open to a range of approaches, enabling candidates to make connections with other areas of the specification and other papers they are studying for the qualification.

Responses to Q03(a) were mixed, which reflected the techniques candidates had available to them to clarify the extract. The question asked candidates to clarify concepts of good and bad that were thoroughly referenced in the extract. The best answers would inevitably be those that used the prompts from the extract. Whilst it may be helpful to include wider aspects of Situation Ethics to clarify the ideas within the extract, they should not be at the expense of a clear focus on the extract.

Q03(b) invited some very confident answers, but again, the best responses were rooted in an in-depth knowledge of Situation Ethics, rather than taking a broad-brush to compare some familiar concepts, such as the appeal to agape, with other ethical theories. There is no substitute for knowing the details, technical terms, important concepts and scholarly contributions associated with the theory.

When we talk about ethics, we mostly mean a series of rules and laws and principles by which we act and which tell us what to do. Mostly we take it that ethics classifies words and actions into things which are good and things which are bad, and we take it that the goodness and the badness belong to the thing as such. On the whole this is meant to simplify things and to make life easy. It means that we have got, so we think, a series of prefabricated rules and laws and principles, which we accept and apply. It saves us from the difficult and the often dangerous task of making our own judgments and deciding things for ourselves. But ... Fletcher's basic principle is that there is nothing which is universally right or universally wrong; there is nothing which is intrinsically good or intrinsically bad. Goodness and badness ... are only things which happen to actions in different situations; they are only descriptions of things in different circumstances; they are not properties, they are predicates.

(Source: adapted from *Ethics in a Permissive Society*, by William Barclay, Collins, 1971, Chapter 4, Situation Ethics, Edexcel Anthology)

Joseph
Fletcher

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about ideas of good and bad.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

Barclay begins by establishing what we usually mean by ethics, 'rules and laws and principles' that are established in order to make life easier for us and rule out the danger of decision making. Ethics is seen to classify things that are good and bad intrinsically and that things are either good or bad and the action that is being classified had good or bad attached to it, not being used as a describing word.

Therefore ethics usually provides us with 'prefabricated rules and laws and principles'

that are ready to go for all situations, that just need to be accepted and applied.

However, on the other hand, Joseph Fletcher offers a different view in regards to ethical decision making. His basic principle states that unlike the usual view that ethical situations are either intrinsically good or bad, he believes the opposite, stating that nothing can be and that instead the words 'good' and 'bad' are only being described as descriptions.

Goodness and badness are only what come of different situations, they cannot be intrinsic in a situation to begin with.

Fletcher's theory therefore leads us to the debate of whether 'goodness' and 'badness' are truly real predicates as they cannot be defined, good and bad are subjective to the person judging them and therefore can't be defined. This makes Fletcher's argument all the more convincing.

Fletcher's argument here is seen as much more convincing than the predetermined moral decision making as it explains the true meaning of good and bad and how actually things can't be decided to be good and bad intrinsically.

By Fletcher saying that they are just predicates he is saying that by definition they are different person to person and that they are descriptions that vary from person to person.

Fletcher's version of situation ethics is seemingly more flexible and resembles natural moral law as it focuses more on personal opinion of a situation in contrast to just having an 'intrinsically good or bad situation' and following the predetermined rules set out for said situation. It lets the person use their own judgement skills to figure out what to do and to label the situation as whatever lines up with their morals.

(b) Analyse the view that Situation Ethics fails to offer a convincing morality.

(20)

Situation ethics seems to have little flexibility in regards to decision making. It comes from a Christian perspective and provides rules and guidance for the person who is making the decision in regards to whether the situation is intrinsically good or bad.

It is focussed on doing the most loving thing 'agape' however the most loving thing is extremely subjective and therefore something extremely loving to one person may not translate as extremely loving to the next therefore it is clear to vary from person to person.

Although it takes into regards morality, and agape it is still very clear that situation ethics is very constrictive and does not vary from person to person in regards to their personal feelings, it just establishes rules for

Situations that are intended to be followed.

This can be useful if you are in a situation of which you don't know what to do and are therefore left with a difficult decision to react to on your own.

However, not all situations that you are likely to face in your lifetime are covered by situation ethics and therefore sometimes it can appear as outdated and not useful when making ethical decisions morally.

Furthermore, morality differs from person to person depending on their background, upbringing and personal beliefs therefore although agape is a good blanket idea that conforms to the ideology of most people in society, it is correct to ~~state~~ state that it will not conform

with everyone and make the most loving decision in every situation, especially those that have not got a moral solution ready.

For some people something that they believe is very moral and correct, is deemed as immoral and wrong by situation ethics and vice versa, making the solution immoral against their own idea of 'morality' and 'agape'.

Natural moral law on the other hand is an updated version of situation ethics which is also Christianity based but instead is more flexible and therefore could be deemed as more useful in modernized society.

Natural moral law uses the 5 primary precepts to determine if something is moral. Live in society, education, reproduction, spreading the

word of God.

Natural moral law therefore is much more useful in offering a convincing morality

In conclusion, it is correct to state that situation ethics fails to provide a convincing morality as agape cannot be defined and is instead subjective from person to person therefore making it impossible to establish a set of rules that will agree with everyone's moral compass. Furthermore, situation ethics is heavily based off of Christian ideology therefore not making it suitable for anyone not following the faith.



In their answer to Q03(a) the candidate offers a straightforward clarification of how Fletcher understood the concepts of goodness and badness. Their understanding is clear although they could have taken greater advantage of the extract.

In Q03(b), again, this candidate also shows a solid understanding of the concepts of Situation Ethics and takes advantage of their knowledge of Natural Moral Law to draw a critical comparison.

Q03(a): 9 marks

Q03(b): 18 marks

Total: 27 marks

Situation Ethics shares much with New Testament ethics and it is reasonable that candidates should be able to make reference to these connections.

When we talk about ethics, we mostly mean a series of rules and laws and principles by which we act and which tell us what to do. Mostly we take it that ethics classifies words and actions into things which are good and things which are bad, and we take it that the goodness and the badness belong to the thing as such. On the whole this is meant to simplify things and to make life easy. It means that we have got, so we think, a series of prefabricated rules and laws and principles, which we accept and apply. It saves us from the difficult and the often dangerous task of making our own judgments and deciding things for ourselves. But ... Fletcher's basic principle is that there is nothing which is universally right or universally wrong; there is nothing which is intrinsically good or intrinsically bad. Goodness and badness ... are only things which happen to actions in different situations; they are only descriptions of things in different circumstances; they are not properties, they are predicates.

(Source: adapted from *Ethics in a Permissive Society*, by William Barclay, Collins, 1971, Chapter 4, Situation Ethics, Edexcel Anthology)

3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about ideas of good and bad.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

This passage, from William Barclay's 'Ethics in a Permissive Society', relates to Fletcher's theory of Situation ethics, and how Fletcher regards the nature of morality relative to intrinsic moral value, a concept not present in Fletcher's consequentialist/teleological, non-absolutist theory. Barclay begins by laying out the groundwork of deontology, and how generally within ethics we regard morality as predetermined and objective, which thereby create a set of prefabricated (to us) rules by which one may live their life. This structuring of things into brackets of objective morality,

Barclay claims, it is merely 'to make life easier'
so that we all accept & apply the same
general rules. Barclay then writes at
one of his critiques of Fletcher's situation
ethics in the phrase "it saves us from the difficult
task of making our own judgements and
deciding things for ourselves", for which
Barclay's corresponding critique of Fletcher
is that situation ethics is impractical
in its asking of us to be the impartial
judges (cf. Barclay's Ultimatum) and judge
for ourselves the 'over need' regarding
every action. Furthermore, Barclay goes on
again to comment on Fletcher's situation
ethics as being teleological, and being "robust
which is intrinsically good or intrinsically bad".
Barclay claims that in Fletcher's theory
'good' and 'bad' are only things 'which
happen to actions' in different situations.
Therefore contrasting the consequentialist nature
of situation ethics as it disregards
objective morality for a system in
which the 'ends justify the means' and
so, any action can be justified so long
as it is the most loving one, even, for
example, the murder of children. Barclay then

claims at the end of the goblet that
goodness and badness 'are not properties,
they are predicates', ~~meaning that, as~~
calling attention once again to the fact that
in Fletcher's theory goodness and badness are
considered to be subjective and descriptors of
an action ~~not~~ due to its consequences and
yet, according to Barclay they are objective
moral claims in themselves - predicates.

(b) Analyse the view that Situation Ethics fails to offer a convincing morality.

(20)

Situation Ethics is one of many teleological, non-absolutist ethics which claims to provide a system of morality for its followers, similar to Utilitarianism, and more specifically, Singer's Preference Utilitarianism; Although it was coined by Joseph Fletcher as a more flexible ~~ethic~~ alternative to Christian ethical decision-making, it is my view that it goes too far and becomes an ethic of overly permissive consequentialism.

Situation ethics, based on the principle of Agape, uses agapeic love to consider the consequences of each action relative to 'love's need'. However one of the main criticisms of this theory is that the principle of agape, based on the counsel of perfection and Jesus' words from Matthew 22 to love your neighbour, is far too general on which to base an ethical system. Fletcher fails to adequately define ~~the~~ agapeic love in contrast to other forms of love, and how this relates to God and his benevolence &

epistemic distance. Furthermore, due to the generality of the principle of Agape, one can justify almost any proposed action by claiming it's done out of love (according to love's need). This theory also goes too far as a re-reading of Christian ethics as it allows for actions & consequences contrary to God's revealed theology through scripture, for example adultery and ~~the~~ premarital sex could be permitted. Situation ethics ~~is~~ therefore fails in my view to offer a convincing morality.

Similarly, Situation ethics is most comparable to ~~the~~ Peter Singer's Preference Utilitarianism, which considers ~~the~~ all sentient beings to be of moral consideration, and seeks to satisfy the preferences of as ~~many~~ many people possible given a probable decision. A strong critique of both of these theories is that, in decision making, one is faced with the possibility that there is always something one could do to satisfy more preferences or better meet love's needs, and thus one cannot ever stop in the endeavour to fulfil the principle

of agony, unless to fulfill it is in fact impossible for humanity.

In my view, Natural moral law provides a contrasting view to Fletcher's Situation ethics, and provides an ~~abstract~~ deontological opposition to Consequentialism. Natural Law is a Thomist theory ~~of~~ which comes a priori (via reason alone) as a result of God's eternal law. It provides us with the five primary precepts (Preserve life, ordered society, worship God, Education, Reproduction), from which one can interpret secondary precepts which are more specific for leading our lives, (eg. preserve life → do not kill/murder). However, St Paul claims in Romans that ~~the~~ God's love is on the hearts of all people, whether Jew or Gentile, and according to Aquinas all people must follow the Natural Law, as it can be rationally interpreted from God's creation. Thus those who do not are damned in the afterlife, even if they had no concept of Christianity. Thus, in turn, forms another criticism of Natural Law, namely that

it is far too rigid regarding its precepts and awareness of the theory via rationality. I must claim, then, that Natural Law does also not provide a convincing morality, despite its strengths.

An ethical theory that may bridge the gap between virtuous ethics and Natural Law, is that of Aristotle's virtue ethics, or which Natural Law was based during the medieval scholastic movement. Virtue Ethics, however, appears to Emulation, ~~Other~~ Education, and experience to provide a person with the ability to differentiate between the excess and defects of a specific virtue, which one must emulate to become virtuous via the golden mean. Aristotle's virtue ethics provides in my view a solid base for morality, which is ~~not~~ both socially, and individually focused via the only intrinsic good of eudaimonia, or flourishing, for both the self and polis, and avoids the problems of both overly permissive and overly rigid theories via the concept of the golden mean.

Therefore, I must conclude that Aristotle's virtue ethics provides a more convincing morality than the Situation ethics of Joseph Fletcher, but not that Situation ethics provides no convincing morality at all.



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Examiner Comments

In Q03(a) the candidate focusses on the concepts of intrinsic goodness and badness as required by the question, but also shows their wider understanding of the theory. They use technical language and show a clear awareness of the relevant scholarship.

In Q03(b), the candidate steers a careful path between analysing the key ideas of Situation Ethics in order to answer the question, and comparing with Virtue Ethics in order to establish how far Situation Ethics offers a convincing morality.

Q03(a): 9 marks

Q03(b): 19 marks

Total: 28 marks

Question 4

The 30-mark question is the high point of the examination, offering candidates the opportunity to show the extent of their learning and understanding.

Sanctity of life is clearly a topic that candidates were pleased to evaluate. Material was drawn from a wide range of sources and candidates showed great engagement with applying the principle to different topics, including abortion, euthanasia, PGD and stem-cell treatments.

Use of sacred texts raised the level of many answers, and those that were able to employ scholarship to their answers showed great insight to the contemporary dilemma of sanctity or quality of life. Ethical theories were naturally useful to candidates, although they were not necessarily the key to the best answers. Some wise candidates made use of Michael Wilcockson's article from the anthology, to good effect.

Links made between elements of the specification can be made in many ways, some more subtle than others, but it is important that candidates show the examiners that they are aware of connections between their areas of study. It is useful for centres to practise this with candidates during their course.

4 Evaluate the importance of the concept of the sanctity of life in medical ethics.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Religion and Ethics have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Philosophy of Religion
- New Testament Studies
- Study of a Religion.

(30)

In this essay, Sanctity of life debates will be explored showing it to be an outdated view point, as following Singer's argument that quality of life is much more important. This will be explained through the use of abortion and euthanasia, as examples.

In abortion, one of the primary reasons for people to favour it becoming illegal is on a basis of sanctity of life. This is a concept which follows because God made all humans imago Dei (in his likeness) and enshrined us with souls, this then means we each hold inherent value and worth. From this only God can decide when someone dies and to take a life is to commit one of the most abhorrent sins. For arguments, in this we can view abortion as many theists will believe

that a foetus has a right to live, as Marquis argues that all foetuses have the 'right to their future' which starts from the day of conception. For Catholics, this opinion holds as they also believe life begins at conception and, in turn, because of the sanctity of life it then means that ~~within~~ the foetus cannot be aborted as this is murder. This then can lead onto the argument of personhood, as from conception the foetus is viewed as a person but do they actually fit the criteria. For ~~Fletcher~~ Fletcher, he lays out that a person is someone with a sense of time, can communicate, and can be rational; but from these can we ~~as~~ actually say that ^a foetus meets these. Because under UK law a foetus can be aborted from conception up to 24 weeks, as at this point all the main parts are developed and we know them to feel pain. But before this point the foetus isn't even always a foetus, as after 14 days ~~then~~ ^{from conception} ~~then~~ it's pre-embryonic ~~is~~ which means that it only consists of a few cells that are

dividing. This blastula or zygote (dependent on which line you look at it) has no mental capability or resemblance to a human or person, so why then does it deserve to have a life if it vastly inhibits the mother's life. If she was a rape victim, who is but a child herself, then ~~she shouldn't~~ ^{why should} the sanity of a couple cease stop her from aborting it. The psychological trauma of their action must be horrific ^{and her avails of} and is ^{like what you feel} too much pain for a woman to go through, and this synoptically links to the problem of evil. As if God were all loving and all powerful then he wouldn't allow unnecessary evil to occur, especially such unnecessary evil as forcing a child to birth a child as a victim of rape.

Thompson uses a thought experiment to explore this further, saying if a ^{Woman} ~~Victim~~ ^{was} kidnapped and then found herself to be hooked up to a famous violinist and told that he only needs to use her kidneys for 9 months, and then they can both leave. This situation is horrific and an abuse of her freedom, she did not ask for this and it's ultimately up to her

to decide whether she can ~~op~~ unplug herself or not, she holds no moral responsibility in this scenario. But this doesn't work as an argument against the sanctity of life because the violinist must already have a debilitating condition, and it's very different when it comes to an actual child. A foetus is completely² dependent on the mother, but this is in most scenarios of the woman's free choice. If it's not then churches like the Church of England will ~~prohibit~~ allow for an abortion. But for most Catholics, you should only be ~~be~~ having sexual relations in marriage so if you end up pregnant it's not that bad of a situation. This, however, is very unrealistic for modern society which views sex as an almost commodity and no longer is sex only for married, heterosexual couples. So overall, this doesn't work and ^{it has been} ~~it has~~ ~~been~~ shown that abortion cannot and doesn't support sanctity of life, as abortions are sometimes necessary and a bunch of cells aren't a person, and so aren't sacred.

The conversation however, is very different when it comes to euthanasia. Peter Singer

emphasises a quality of life in their instance saying that if a person is living but not truly able to do anything, they no longer need to survive as their quality of life is so low. This is emphasising that if it comes to a point where you are not able to do anything and are only being ~~kept~~ kept alive by machines there's ~~then~~ then no point to be alive.

^{Grover} ~~White~~ explores bioethics and explains how difficult it is as an area of ethics, as each case is very different and this is why we cannot pass mass legislation; then when we bring in theistic ethics it becomes even more confusing in the sense that a whole other layer of nuance is added. Euthanasia is the doctors acting in such a way that ends a patient's life, there's many distinctions that have to be made; such as active euthanasia is the direct action which leads to their death, and passive euthanasia (which is legal) is where you remove the necessary medication or machinery keeping the patient alive. This can be both voluntary (asked for by the patient) and involuntary, when regarding patients unable to make

decisions of that capacity, such as dementia patients or people severely disabled. For sanctity of life arguments, they continue to state euthanasia is always wrong and this goes into Wilcochson's essay. In this 3 principles are explored, firstly acts and omissions where an act is an action and omission is not doing something. For the Catholic Church not acting is seen as bad as acting, meaning that in regards to passive euthanasia a life is still being ended with the intention to kill the patient, so it's still a moral evil as it's breaching sanctity of life. But if you instead apply the doctrine of double effect and weaken sanctity of life, ~~we should~~ ^{doctors can} go forth and give patients medication which relieves their pain and the foreseen but unintended circumstance is that it increases the likelihood of dying. This then allows people to die with dignity and not have to continue to suffer. But if we favoured quality of life arguments we would instead be arguing for the people to be allowed

to justice with dignity without all the
just confusion of the doctrine of the
double effect. And what's really the
difference between a foreseen unintended
outcome and a intended outcome, as
you know both are going to happen
and if you believe in sanctity of life
then it's ultimately reduced down
anyway. Wilcochson goes so far as
to say that doctrine of the double effect
is just very open to abuse and can
ultimately lead to ~~anyone~~ ^{families convincing} ~~being~~
people to go through ~~extraneous~~ ^{with it for the sake}
of it. This then continues as we
go onto to explore Wilcochson's
proportionate and disproportionate
means, and this explores whether
it is hopeful saying a proportionate
mean gives hope that it'll lead to
benefits whereas a disproportionate
means has very little hope of working
and leads onto extraordinary means
of survival. This is something sanctity
of life also disagrees with, however,
because extraordinary means are
keeping someone alive unnaturally which

is something which undermines God's power to choose when we die, and just prolongs pain and suffering. In this sense quality of life and sanctity of life agree as both see that at the point where extraordinary means are being used the person is ultimately not living. Singer, however, does extend this by showing that quality of life is all that is needed, for euthanasia sanctity of life either prolongs pain or does the same actions as that of quality of life. But this then shows quality to be better as it's secular and not as medical and antiquated as sanctity of life arguments, which only occur to make humans feel like they are special in the world when we are really just animals.

Therefore, in conclusion, sanctity of life has ^{been} shown to be a weak ^{concept} ~~method~~ in medical ethics and overall be unnecessary in modern ethics. In terms of both abortion and euthanasia the sanctity of life is overwhelmed by quality and only furthers moral

(Total for Question 4 = 30 marks)

wrongs such as rape by refusing abortions and entices pain for people who will die anyway.

TOTAL FOR SECTION C = 30 MARKS

TOTAL FOR PAPER = 80 MARKS



This is a detailed, insightful and sophisticated answer, showing a strong grasp of the topic.

Total: 30 marks

4 Evaluate the importance of the concept of the sanctity of life in medical ethics.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Religion and Ethics have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Philosophy of Religion
- New Testament Studies
- Study of a Religion.

(30)

The importance of sanctity of life can be seen by the arguments made by it in cases such as abortion or euthanasia. To measure its importance we must compare it to opposing arguments and see if it is a stronger argument. As we will see the sanctity of life argument is ~~very much~~ weaker than other arguments such as quality of life and autonomy, therefore we can argue its importance is not ~~quite~~ very significant.

The sanctity of life argument is pushed by Christianity and natural law due to its main support being in biblical texts. Some of these include the creation story, where man was created, "Imago dei", or the 10 commandments where it states "thou shalt not murder". These texts provide a root idea behind the sanctity of life argument as it creates the idea that life is God given, and therefore only God should take it away. The strength of this support largely depends on how you interpret the bible, as fundamentalists

would argue this is clear evidence that God has commanded us to protect the sanctity of life. Natural law also argues for a strong sanctity of life through its primary precepts. One of them is to protect life, which helps to put more value on life as a sacred thing. Both of these views provide a case for a strong sanctity of life where we must value life as a God-given gift and therefore should protect it. This creates a strong argument for sanctity of life in medical ethics, where the view would argue against abortion and euthanasia as we are taking away God's gift. This importance is undermined as there are some arguments that argue for a weak sanctity of life. ~~Set~~ Situation ethics would argue for a weak sanctity of life as they argue there are no universal principles to carry over to all situations, but that we should apply the principle of ~~agape~~ to all circumstances. They argue instead of sanctity of life we should see it as respect for life, where we can take it away if it is a loving action. Natural law also undermines its sanctity of life position with the doctrine of double effect. Arguably if we do an action with good intentions but unavoidable consequences we can still do it. This can be applied to some forms of euthanasia where the intention is to alleviate suffering. Arguably these contradictions of weak sanctity

at life and the doctrine of double effect undermine the sanctity of life argument. The implication of this is that the sanctity of life argument is less coherent and convincing, making it a weaker argument in medical ethics, and therefore reducing its overall importance.

Another important argument in medical ethics is the quality of life argument. This is in opposition to the sanctity of life argument as it argues it can be permissible to end life if it has poor quality. This is because it makes a distinction between being alive and living, where all humans are alive but not everyone is truly living. This can be applied to cases of abortion where the baby would be severely handicapped. It will bring them less pain due to the minimal quality of life they have. This can also be applied to euthanasia where people with extreme illness are not truly living, just being kept alive. The quality of life argument is extremely strong in the case of euthanasia, however has opposition in cases of abortion. It can be slightly undermined by the pro potential person argument, where it can be argued abortion robs a baby of their potential life unfairly as they do not get a say in the matter. This argument is not strong however

due to the fact that potential life may be very painful due to disability. Therefore the quality of life argument is stronger than the potential person argument as the cases it is used in are cases where disability will impact the child's life. Therefore the quality of life view is very coherent due to the fact it has no significant weaknesses in both cases of abortion or euthanasia. When compared to the sanctity of life argument we see it is more coherent due to its lack of internal contradictions. It therefore is also a stronger argument due to how it is more coherent. The implications of this is that the quality of life argument is more important than the sanctity of life argument in medical ethics due to how it is a stronger argument without internal contradictions, therefore reducing the importance of the sanctity of life argument.

A final important argument in medical ethics is the right to freedom. This is applied differently in abortion and euthanasia but are both opposed to the sanctity of life argument. In cases of abortion the freedom argument is the freedom of the women to have bodily and reproductive autonomy. It is argued the women should have the right to an abortion as it is her body and she has the right

to autonomy. This is shown by Regius' and his violinist example, and is used in cases of unwanted pregnancies. There is an opposition to this argument in that an abortion goes against the new babies right to life. It can be argued the baby is human at the moment of conception and therefore has the same rights and protections as us. However this argument is undermined by Warren, who argues a ^{fetus} ~~they~~ does not meet the criteria to be classed as a person, therefore they do not have the same rights as us. The implications of this is that the freedom argument is strong in the case of abortion. In the case of euthanasia the argument is not so strong. It is based on Mill's harm principle, where we should be free to do self-interested actions if we do not harm anyone else. It can be argued a patient should have full bodily autonomy and could opt for euthanasia as it will not cause harm to anyone else. However this argument is weaker due to how it has a contradiction. Mill does not specify whether this extends to mental harm. If it does we see this as an argument against euthanasia as it would cause mental harm to others such as family members. Therefore the freedom argument is not as strong in euthanasia as it has a contradiction within it causing it to be less coherent. The implications of this

is that the freedom argument is strong in abortion but weaker in euthanasia, meaning its importance varies. In comparison to the sanctity of life argument we see it is overall more coherent. In abortion it is comparatively more stronger due to its lack of internal contradiction, however in euthanasia both arguments are comparatively weaker than the quality of life argument. However on the whole we see the right to freedom argument is stronger than the sanctity of life argument, making it a more important argument, therefore this reduces the importance of the sanctity of life argument.

This links in to my studies at the new testament and ways to interpret the bible. The sanctity of life comes from a fundamentalist viewpoint where they take the bible as the literal word of God. My point to texts such as 2 Timothy 16 to show this. On the other hand Bultmann would argue the bible is made up of myth and allegory. It is important to demythologise it as we can get symbolic meaning from the bible. Both propose a compromise situation where he argues the bible is not the literal word of God but the reported word. therefore we must not take it literally but should still see it as God's word.

Overall as shown the importance of sanctity of life in medical ethics is not ~~very~~ significant. This is because in comparison to other arguments it is weaker. The sanctity of life argument contains internal contradictions with the weak sanctity of life and doctrine of double effect. These undermine the overall coherence of the argument making it weaker. When compared to other arguments such as quality of life and right to freedom, we see it is weaker, especially in abortion, as these arguments do not contain the same level of significant contradictions. This comparison results in the sanctity of life being a weak argument when compared to its opposition, undermining its importance. The implication of this is that in medical ethics the sanctity of life argument is not ~~very~~ important due to ~~the~~ its weakness in relativity.



The candidate explores a range of issues within medical ethics, responding to the question with confidence and including interesting links to the New Testament.

Links or connections do not have to be extensive, but they do have to be clear. This essay offers a helpful example of how this has been well prepared by the candidate.

This response lies within the top assessment level.

Total: 27 marks

Paper Summary

Based on their performance in this examination, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Candidates were generally confident and well prepared
- Some candidates were still inclined to over-write for the 8 and 12 mark questions, which subsequently restricted the time available for the 30-mark question
- Centres must ensure that candidates have access to the whole specification so they can answer all questions set
- Scholarship, technical language and supported evaluation continued to mark out the strongest candidates
- Candidates must be prepared to write at length for the 30-mark question and show awareness of connections between areas of the unit and the specification

Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

