

Examiners' Report

June 2025

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 02

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Introduction

It was good to see that, overall, candidates were in a position to have a strong understanding of the specification content and to have practised in examination conditions during their studies.

In the majority of cases, candidates answered all of the questions on the paper and there were fewer instances of unanswered questions or 'run out of time' messages. Consequently, it was good to see candidates keen to convey their learning and to engage with the topics they had clearly enjoyed, which gave them access to the full range of marks.

Question Q01 on contraception and Q02 on Just War were answered the most fully, whilst candidates were clearly well prepared to write about assisted dying in Q04(a) and (b).

The requirement to write at length on ethical language was a challenge for some candidates, who confused meta ethics with ethical theories, or with religious language, but the best answers were full and detailed.

The challenge of making connections with another area of their Religious Studies specification in Q04 still proved difficult for some candidates, although links with religious language and use of symbolism in the New Testament were the most commonly-drawn connections. The best of these were integrated well to essays in more than a few sentences, rather than presenting an awkward add-on mini-paragraph.

It is nevertheless still the case that some candidates overlook the need to make a connection altogether and others who do not make it clear that this is their intention. Since this element is required if candidates are to be able to access the full range of the mark scheme, centres and candidates need to incorporate making links between topics in their teaching and learning throughout the course.

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

Candidates appeared to manage their time in the examination and although some wrote more than necessary on Q01, this was far less evident than in previous examinations. Difficulties with timings were most usually evident by Q04 and as a result, a number of candidates did not write at either the length or breadth necessary to answer a 30-mark synoptic question.

Whilst candidates were generally able to make good use of scholars when required, some relied heavily on biblical and other religious references, which were often slight and simplistic and this was particularly evident in Q01.

Overall, candidates and their teachers are to be commended for their hard work and application. 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 the questions set, and it is always risky to attempt to second-guess what will be on

the paper year-on-year.

Question 1

This question required candidates to explore religious approaches to contraception and although few were completely at a loss, there was a general lack of imagination in overall responses.

As a consequence, perhaps, there was far less over-writing for this 8-mark question and this may have had a positive effect on timing later in the exam.

Candidates were broadly uniform in their approach, comparing 'strict' Roman Catholic views with 'liberal' Protestant views, including references to Natural Moral Law, biblical instructions to 'be fruitful', and, in some cases, to the beliefs of conservative movements such as Quiverful.

There was little nuance in many answers, however, and candidates missed opportunities to consider whether 'fruitful' could be interpreted in other ways than human procreation, or the use of contraception to limit the risk of hereditary conditions. Some candidates insisted on including abortion as a means of contraception, which is, obviously, a highly arguable point.

Some candidates chose to link the topic to ethical theories, most typically Situation Ethics and Utilitarianism. This worked when they avoided generic assertions and were able to link their points to religious reasoning.

1 Explore religious attitudes to contraception.

(8)

The religious attitude to contraception is that of the Roman Catholic Church, linked to Aquinas' Natural moral law. The Roman Catholic church are traditionally opposed to all forms of contraception. They argue that this goes against God's command to "Be fruitful and multiply," And goes against one of Aquinas' primary precepts, "to procreate." Another religious attitude to contraception is that of evangelical protestantism, although stances vary on the issue. Widely, they oppose the use of contraception, however agree that it can sometimes be permitted in a married relationship - within the three strands of marriage. A distinction is often made between Natural and Artificial contraception methods, natural methods ~~can~~ are more often accepted because they allow for control over when couples have children, without artificially going against God's command. More liberal protestant views reflect common secular viewpoints, arguing that contraception is moral within a loving and committed relationship because it can appeal to Agape. This links to Joseph Fletcher's situational approach, which would argue that there is a lack of love if a couple has a child when they cannot adequately provide for that child. The most loving action may be to plan when to have children out of love.

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)



A clear answer that ranges across a sufficient number of points to gain full marks without spending longer than necessary for an 8-mark response.

The candidate covers expected angles on the issue and they are able to make a subtle distinction between them, rather than focussing only on extremes.



There is no need to spend time introducing or concluding an 8-mark answer.

As this candidate demonstrates, full marks can be achieved by going straight to the point and ensuring that every sentence is potentially credit-worthy.

1 Explore religious attitudes to contraception.

→ not God's will
→ procreate

→ natural
moral law (8)

One religious attitude to contraception is that it is immoral as it prevents the creation of life. ~~Religious~~ In Genesis in the bible God urges his creation to "go forth and multiply", so that they can "fill the Earth and subdue it". Christians argue that God's plan for humanity is for them to procreate and have sex in a moral way that unifies the couple with God and the only moral place that sex can occur is within marriage. Peter Vardy ~~argues~~ ~~that liberal attitudes~~ argues in his 'Puzzle of sex' that liberal attitudes towards sex means the focus is taken away from the correct intention of sex which is to unify a couple with God.

Contraception according to Peter Vardy leads to an increase in casual sex, ^{and divorce} and decline in loving stable marriages.

The religious attitude against contraception is further supported by Thomas Aquinas' natural moral law, that argues God's law is divine and absolute, to be followed under all circumstances and derived through reason. One of the primary precepts is to "preserve life" and "create and educate offspring". Therefore many Christians are against ^{contraception} ~~pro~~ as it prevents the creation of life. An alternative religious view is liberal protestantism, that argues contraception can be used as long as the act of sex occurs within a loving and stable relationship.

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)



Another clear and focussed answer, which covers expected ground, but also hints at a fuller understanding of the topic than is required of an 8-mark answer.

The result is a confident response, which makes use of a range of material in a concise and professional manner.



Use of scholarship is as useful in an 8-mark answer as it is in the longer essays.

1 Explore religious attitudes to contraception.

(8)

Within Christianity, especially the Roman Catholic denomination, contraception is largely rejected because of its clash with natural law. Moreover, natural moral law holds as the first two of Aquinas' primary precepts that we should preserve life and reproduce, and so the use of natural or physical contraception aims to prevent pregnancy, the creation of life. As well as this, in Genesis, God taught Christians to 'be fruitful and multiply', showing his aim for humans to increase and add to the population. However, more liberal denominations, such as the Church of England or Methodists, may allow the use of contraception when it is used for the benefit of the mother, in certain circumstances. For example, if the mother's physical or mental is at risk, or indeed the baby's or existing children's, the use of contraception may be allowed to allow for family planning and to protect the mother from harm - such as if she were to fall pregnant she may develop life-threatening physical issues. In Islam, some Muslims also take this view - though largely forbid the use of contraception in most day to day circumstances. Christians often do not accept contraception due to its influence on people to behave promiscuously and engage in casual sexual relations. Moreover, this type of sex disregards the sacrament of marriage and does not work towards a relationship rooted in faith, and so is not accepted.



This answer is beautifully written, giving an indication of a candidate who has developed excellent examination skills.

They are able to include as much as possible without extending unnecessarily and compromising on time.

The link with ideas about marriage as a sacrament is well-made, as is the reference to Islamic views on the topic.



Answers as well-written as this are the result of hard work practising under exam conditions. Ensure that candidates are able to do this as often as time allows during the course.

Question 2

It was good to see that candidates were well-prepared to write about the Just War Theory and the questions appeared to be well-received. Interestingly, there were several approaches taken by various candidates.

The majority focussed on a broad sweep of the three key criteria – *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello* and *jus post bello* – and were able to identify strengths and weaknesses, reaching an overall conclusion as to the efficacy of the theory.

The strongest answers fitted this description, because they were more tightly-structured and remained focussed on the question. Others used the question as an opportunity to examine specific wars in relation to the theory, with many referring to the current conflicts between Ukraine and Russia and in Gaza.

It is commendable that candidates showed awareness of the application of the theory; the inherent risk was of drifting away from the complex nature of the Just War Theory.

2 Assess strengths and weaknesses of the Just War Theory.

(12)

Just War theory tries to justify war through rules put forward by Aquinas. There are rules for before war - *jus ad bello*, rules for during war - *jus in bello*, rules for after war - *jus post bellum*. By following these laws you are justifying war as it is ~~not~~ trying to name it fair.

One strength of Just War theory comes from *jus ad bello*, suggests that war should be waged by a universally accepted leader, this is good as it justifies reason for war, everybody agrees that war should be waged. However, a limitation of this is that not everybody ~~accepts~~ can agree upon a universal leader to wage war - good authority figure, for example in Islam, they recognise Jihad as a Authority that can wage war however, this is not widely accepted among the western world. Instead Nato can be seen as a just authority figure ~~as~~ as it is widely accepted by many. Another limitation is that what if this authority figure - does not act fairly and wages war without reason.

However to combat this just war theory states that war must have the principle of proportionality and ~~discrimination~~ discrimination, this is highlighted in *jus in bello*, principle of proportionality suggests that

War should be proportional eg, do not use nuclear weapons if opponent does not have any, wars should be equal, this is a strength as it means that there are less unnecessary deaths of civilians as nuclear weapons can cause a lot of damage. principle of discrimination states that you should discriminate against civilians, do not hurt civilians, again this is a strength as it reinforces that there will be less death of unnecessary and innocent civilians - less life lost, means less murder, in the Bible it states that murder is wrong, it's part of the ten commandments, by excusing principle of proportionality you ^{are} murdering less people, somewhat aligns with religious views.

However, people may argue that war can never be justified, even if made just, through the just war criteria, this argument is held by pacifists, ~~they state that~~ especially absolute pacifists, who state that war can never be morally justified, therefore is against just war theory as it states that no rules can justify war. Instead they offer that resolutions be made peacefully.

However you can argue that this view is too idealistic, there is and always be conflict in the world and as a result there will always be wars waged, and that just war theory allows for

minimal destruction through its internal nature is more realistic to use as it works with reality of societies and seeks to offer moral guidance, though just war criteria, is a positive - easier to use in the world whereas pacifism holds a too idealistic perspective.

Just war theory in its criteria of just post bellum states that there should be Confession, and punishment after war for those who broke the law, this is a strength as it holds criminals accountable for their actions, it also has real life application, as this was done after world war two where the Nazis were put on trial for their horrific actions and mistreatment of people, this is a strength as it shows real world application, it can work in daily life. However, again you can argue that it is too idealistic, this is a weakness as you cannot hold everyone accountable for crimes eg rape. Victims may not be punished or even come out with a statement, rape happens often in war. And perpetrators will never be held accountable - hard to document any bit of evidence.

In conclusion, just war theory posits a very strong argument however it can be too idealistic

(Total for Question 2 = 12 marks)



The candidate has made use of several criteria of the Just War Theory and offered clear arguments in support of strengths and weaknesses of the theory.

They have avoided drifting into a discussion of particular wars, which has enabled them to focus on general arguments for and against the theory, thus receiving credit throughout.



The candidate has made full use of their time and produced an extensive response.

It is important not to lose marks on the shorter answers because they can make the difference between grade boundaries.

2 Assess strengths and weaknesses of the Just War Theory.

Just ad Bellum ~~Just post bellum~~
Just post bellum⁽¹²⁾

The just war theory was created by Aquinas to solve moral conflicts when discussing a war. Aquinas came up with rules/guidelines that he said humanity/world leaders should follow when faced with conflict. He notes at Just ad Bellum this looks at the justice of war and whether war would bring justice or more conflict. He divides this into sections. The number one thing he says people should consider is the 'just cause' for war is the reason for the war necessary to engage in further conflict, ~~for example~~ and therefore needs to be discussed beforehand. For example the creation of Nato allows for this to happen as it brings down the Allied countries to come together to make a decision and settle their dispute, this is a strength as it ~~can~~ is a rational way of resolving conflict and considering the effects of the war on all countries, whether justice can be served through communication rather than conflict, however there is a weakness as not all countries would consider the cause of war and whether the cause justifies the means. For example the ~~the 9/11 attacks~~ ^{the 9/11 attacks} the war in ^{Iraq} ~~Afghanistan~~ 2003, the cause did not justify the means as this led to greater conflict making more and more civilians to lose their lives as America's attack was not rational on all levels. Furthermore Aquinas looks at 'the probability of success' how successful would it be if the war was to happen, again looking at if the cause justifies the means, this is a strength as it ^{weighs} the possibility of ~~the~~ the country ~~that~~ ^{who} wants the war to question whether it is worth the risk. If the reasoning for war is valid then the higher the probability of a win:

this also weighs how much power that a country has over the other. For example when America dropped the Hiroshima Bombs on Japan, the possibility of success was far greater as nuclear America had access to nuclear weapons and in which Japan did not. This put them at an advantage as ~~they~~ America was far more advanced to which Japan couldn't retaliate as they had no real power or the adequate weaponry to retaliate causing America to succeed. However a weakness of this is that in the discussion of success, success can only be achieved if a country has more power than the other opposition. So there is a power imbalance, meaning meaning a reason to go to war can be quite unequal ~~if the reason~~ as some countries are more equipped for war than others. Lastly, Aquinas ~~discusses~~ states that they should ~~never~~ have war as the 'last resort'. This argues that other options should be ~~weighed~~ weighed out before considering a war. For example coming to a compromise and or accepting that war won't solve their issues. This is a strength as it allows for careful consideration to be taken place. Having war as the last resort means that it would be less likely for a war to occur as many conversations would have been had. It also puts the nation's interests at the heart of their discussion and bring peace. However this could be seen as a weakness as pacifists would argue that war should never be an option and that to avoid any decision of war as they believe in handling issues in a non-violent way.

Aquinas in addition to post ad Bellum, looks at post in Bellum the issues regarding Discrimination, proportionality. He argues that a war should not be permitted as a discriminatory act that does not justify the cause.

For example when going to war the soldiers should consider that remember what the purpose of going to war is for and not to be recklessly killing innocent people. In a way is asking to try and detach from the job that they are had to do and not to internalise this as the cause for war would have a different meaning, for example in Nazi Germany. The cause for war from other countries was to stop the genocide induced by Hitler onto German Jewish people in Nazi Germany. The idea of discrimination would be if the soldiers just targeted all of the Germans even if they were not apart of it. This is a strength as it minimises harm done and focuses on the motive behind the war, however this could be seen as weak and hard to differentiate between the evil and the good. Secondly in his post in Bellum he discusses the idea of proportionality. Similarly to disarmament he ~~brooks~~ argues that people should look to minimise damage as in focus on the areas in which the war is targeted ~~and~~ and maximise the safety of lives. This is a strength as it puts human anatomy at the centre of the conflict but however is a weakness as war most likely can end up being more far spread and becomes harder to control. Lastly he discusses

Just post Bellum - this is the idea of rehabilitation, questioning if the war cause for war is worth the struggle of rehabilitating the whole country. For example after the Second world war, Britain was completely destroyed, everything lost and took years to rehabilitate. Aquinas essentially asks people to consider the thing, before the execution of a war.



A strong answer that incorporates a range of criteria from the Just War Theory and makes appropriate links to related concepts and examples of war.



Use of scholarship in the shorter answer questions will raise the credit given.

Question 3

The particular demands of Q03(a) require candidates to work confidently with the extract and this year it was evident that some candidates either did not recognise the particular extract or were hoping for something different.

Some were clearly confused by the reference to Janet Radcliffe (quoted at length by Wilcockson) whilst the weakest responses did not say anything about "third-party involvement". Those who did, however, were clear for the most part, regarding the distinction between medically-assisted dying and the assistance of a non-professional third party, such as a friend or relative, analogous with a third party who might assist a patient with daily activities.

As ever, the most disciplined answers worked systematically with the text, identifying key phrases and terminology and teasing out the key issue – that supporters of assisted dying argue that patient autonomy should legitimately and legally extend to requesting third party assistance to die.

Answers to Q03(b) demonstrated valid and valiant efforts to illustrate the debate with reference to recent debates in Parliament, religious considerations, medical and social concerns and, less successfully, by using comparative ethical theories.

Interestingly, the weight of opinion was generally against the legalisation of assisted dying, although this appeared to be based more on the effectiveness of the arguments than personal opinion.

Candidates seem to be more comfortable using Sanctity of Life and biblically-based arguments, rather than counter-arguments such as Quality of Life or patient autonomy. Many answers were lengthy and well-prepared, which is perhaps not surprising, given the coincidental timing of parliamentary debate.

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about third-party involvement in voluntary euthanasia.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

Barnes Assisted dying by others Tom Nicklinson (2014)

(10)

One idea illustrated in this passage about third-party involvement in voluntary euthanasia is that a third party cannot help. The passage states "The 1961 Suicide Act in the UK for instance permits personal autonomy to choose ... but forbids third party involvement". This illustrates it must be done alone and not compromising anyone else if the individual willingly wants to have euthanasia. For example, individuals may go to countries to perform this. The mar

popular destination for this includes Switzerland who permit assisted dying and even have facilities to help.

Another idea this passage illustrates about third-party involvement in ~~euthanasia~~ voluntary euthanasia is ~~understanding~~ ~~hitting~~ at the fact that since suicide due to ~~the~~ "The 1961 Suicide Act" is allowed ~~it~~ it should be allowed for patients who want someone to aid and help end their suffering. The passage states, "people who are trapped in ~~a body or~~ bodies or an institution they cannot control should be allowed to make choices freely available to the rest of us". This elucidates that since suicide is already a concept it should be extended to people who want euthanasia as their quality of life is not as good as people who are able to fully function. For example, the UK recently brought up the assisted dying debate again as it was proposed in the House of Lords. This was previously brought up by Tom Nicklinson in 2014 who had locked in syndrome and wanted

euthanasia but the UK ruled it unconstitutional which can be ~~be~~ seen as counter intuitive as the passage is illustrating.

Another idea about third party involvement in voluntary euthanasia ~~the~~ the passage states is about the quality of life. This is how well an individual can live life. The passage ~~states~~ was an example of a "housebound friend" ~~to~~ ~~the~~ and says "Why if she is in agony ~~and~~ despair, and you bring her the lethal dose she desperately wants... or you manipulate the syringe because she is too weak to do it herself." This shows that third party involvement should be allowed as if someone is suffering that much it would be a kindness to end this suffering as even though you're alive and breathing doesn't always equate to living a good life.

(b) Analyse issues arising from the legalisation of assisted dying.

✓ quality of life
✗ regret
✗ mental illness
✗ Christian (20) country
✗ secular

Assisted dying in the UK has been a controversial topic due to the recent arguments to permit it in the UK in parliament. This essay will argue for the right to receive assisted dying also known as euthanasia under the criteria of quality of life, ~~ethical~~ ~~centric~~ ~~values~~ and secularisation and severe illness.

Firstly, some may agree ~~assisted dying~~ with assisted dying due to the fact humans have autonomy and the right to do whatever they want regarding themselves. For example, J.S. Mill proposed the harm principle in his book of utilitarianism which stated humans can do whatever they please as long as it's not harming anyone else. ~~For~~, this could be seen as eating junk food everyday even though it's bad - but you are not harming anyone else which is permitted. This same logic can be used for euthanasia as you're not harming anyone by ending your own suffering due to a decrease in quality of life. ~~Therefore~~ If someone

cannot eat, breathe or sleep without pain or suffering, some may argue if living would even be worth it. However, some may also argue that this is a flawed argument as people can get better or regret it. For example, there are many cases of terminally and chronically ill patients recovering and that even though you're suffering now, humans should not be 'playing God' as this can have a knock on effect on so many other things (e.g. friends and family) and a better route would be palliative care. Overall, a legislation of assisted dying should ~~not~~ be permitted as you're not harming anyone else directly and humans have autonomy over what to do with their bodies.

Secondly, some may ~~agree with assisted dying due to~~ not agree with assisted dying as the UK is a christocentric country with core christian values that should not be abandoned. For example, the UK is based off of christian rule as the Church of England who is headed by the monarch permits it. This would mean

euthanasia clashes with the decalogue ~~and many~~
~~other~~ stating that "thou shall not kill" and
many other christian beliefs. For example,
the five primary precepts devised by Thomas
Aquinas states that our purpose ~~as~~ as humans
is to preserve life as well as worship and
the concept of ~~assisted~~ assisted dying
disbands this, as in the Bible suicide is a sin
as humans are made in the "likeness of
god" and by ~~getting rid~~ using assisted dying
this would not be worshipping god correctly.
However, this argument is flawed as
another one of Jesus' teachings ~~is~~ is
agape which is unconditional ~~to~~ neighborly
love and using euthanasia could be acting
in line with agape as ending someone's
suffering is a form of agape. Moreover,
the UK ~~is~~ is now very secular and many
people are from different faiths and
cultural backgrounds which would make ~~it~~
it democratic to legislate it while
avoiding tyranny of the majority as it
there for those who want it. Overall,
~~euthanasia~~ assisted dying should be
allowed as ending someone's suffering ~~is~~
can be seen as a form of love which is

what Jesus always supported - "love thy neighbour".

Lastly, some may agree with assisted dying in terms of severe illnesses. For example, Tim Nicklinson who took the case of assisted dying to the UK Supreme Court in 2014 had locked in syndrome which stopped him from functioning like a healthy human and limiting physical ability which takes a huge mental toll on those who are going through this. This can be seen as a severe case of need of euthanasia as quality of life is not good and many have issues with performing daily actions. However, many may be opposed to assisted dying as it could be used by people who are mentally ill or not in the right state of mind to be deciding if they really need it. ~~But an Advocate for~~ ~~specism, Peter Singer would agree with~~ ~~the right to euthanasia as he believes~~ ~~a fully grown ape should not be~~ ~~sacrificed~~ Bentham who proposed Act Utilitarianism may say it would have an

effect on people who the individual who wants to receive assisted dying may know as it would not be in line with the principle of utility as it would cause more harm on friends and family to see one take their own life. Overall, assisted dying should be a right for people in the UK due to extreme effects in cases such as Tom Nicklinson who suffered until the very end not even able to enjoy his last moments.

In conclusion, the points for the right to legislate assisted dying is one stronger ~~is~~ due to the justification of the UK as well as arguments for not being able to live life to full abilities like others can making life difficult for those who suffer.



In part (a), the candidate makes good use of the extract, working through it systematically and making connections with the law and contemporary examples. They keep to the question throughout.

Note that the mis-spelling of Tony Nicholson's name is not penalised because it is clear to the reader to whom the candidate is referring.

In part (b) the candidate raised many useful and relevant issues including:

- patient autonomy
- the harm principle
- unforeseen future effects
- religious values
- cultural diversity

The conclusion flows logically from the discussion.



Use the extract in your answer to part (a). Candidates who ignore the content of the extract will struggle to answer the question set.

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about third-party involvement in voluntary euthanasia.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

Euthanasia is a form of suicide, when an individual chooses their low quality of life is making their life not worth living anymore, so decide to end it through medical procedure (E.g. / Lethal injection). The passage begins by re-iterating how individuals have the "personal autonomy to choose" to euthanise themselves, but cannot act upon such choice without "third party involvement" - exposing a minute impracticability in the issue. Janet Radcliffe goes on to respond, raising the problem with "voluntary Euthanasia" in the current political

Claim of the UK is not to allow for a patient to make the choice itself, but more to feel that third party involvement (from friends or relatives) is forbidden legally. Radcliffe goes on to argue how suicide is a performable option for those of us who are mentally and physically fit, but those suffering from health problems - trapped in "bodies or inhibitions they cannot control" are not able to perform the act of suicide themselves, meaning the need third-party support. However, third-party support is forbidden, exposing a great deal of inequality as those who are seemingly not in need of euthanasia and suicide are unable to do it, due to third party involvement being a prosecutable offence, whilst we as fit & individuals would be able to make the choice of committing suicide tomorrow if we wished. Radcliffe goes on to expand on this hypocrisy saying that just because one is in a disabled or vegetative state, they are not afforded the same liberties, in terms of the fulfilment of needs, they receive as any other individual. Radcliffe highlights this injustice with an example of a friend not being questioned if you take them shopping (to satisfy their need for friendship), or ~~take~~ cook them a meal (to satisfy their need for hunger), but when a friend's only need and desire is a lethal injection not

removed by the hospital or institution to which, suddenly a friend is under ~~constant~~ threat of being criminally prosecuted - solely for satisfying the needs of a friend, life is due in all the other examples Radcliffe provides.

Overall, Radcliffe elaborates on the implications and hypocrisy of UK euthanasia laws regarding third-party involvement, as he sees it as a desire in need of satisfaction (ending one's agony and terminal suffering), no different from the desire a friend may satisfy by cooking you a meal - a desire of hunger. However, not ~~both~~ but acts are punished and treated equally under UK law, which Radcliffe argues is a great hypocrisy.

(b) Analyse issues arising from the legalisation of assisted dying.

(20)

Assisted dying, otherwise known as euthanasia, occurs when an individual decides their quality of life is below a certain personal threshold, that it is no longer worth living anymore. Thus, they decide to end their life through medical procedure. The legalisation of this has sparked various responses from the Christian community, which is with their guiding principle being that the inherent value of human life as God gives. Furthermore, Kantian ethics adopts a similar valuing of human life, as all rational creatures with inherent and innate value as part of a 'Kingdom of Ends'. However, these absolutist, deontological theories (Natural law and Kantian Ethics) fail to recognise the delicacy of issues such as ~~the euthanasia act~~. Thus, flexible and situational theories, like Joseph Fletcher's Situation Ethics, provide a more balanced, reflective ethical response to issues arising from euthanasia.

Thomas Aquinas championed his theory of Natural Law upon the grounding that the world has a divine, inbuilt purpose of supporting humans in reaching their telos (purpose), which is a relationship with God. To ~~enact~~ that this telos is

reacted, Aquinas created five absolute, deontological primary precepts - which are to be followed in all situations: 1. Preserve life 2. Foster an ordered society 3. Educate 4. Worship God 5. Reproduce. For Aquinas, any action to the contrary of these primary precepts is wrong and immoral, as it results in us distancing ourselves from God - contradicting to achieving our telos. Therefore, euthanasia would be considered wrong and immoral in the view of Aquinas, and natural law theorists, as it directly contradicts the preservation of life, and potentially contributes to a disordered society, by fostering a "culture of death". Aquinas does allow for secondary precepts - the contextually sensitive application of primary precepts. However, since euthanasia is, by definition, the ending of a life, no contextually relative secondary precept will be found to justify it.

Perhaps the most flawed ~~area~~ aspect of Aquinas' approach to assisted dying is that in its nature, it is far too absolutist and deontological. Natural law ignores the personal situations an individual may be in, such as daily ageing, and does not place as authority on individuals to allow them to choose their own

way of conducting their life. Thus, it^{is} massively unhelpful in its use as a response to the legalisation of assisted dying, as it is an entirely personal issue one is suffering - and unable to be judged in terms of absolutist, deontological fixed rules and commands.

However, herein lies the strength of natural law, being its absolutist nature. One could argue that legalising euthanasia contributes to a "culture of death" - desensitizing the general public to death itself, and making it seem like a rather trivial issue. However, by Natural Law's absolutist, deontological nature it prevents a society and culture from slipping into dangerous relativism - justifying assisted dying, from where more significant forms of life termination may be justified, such as the severely mentally disabled. Natural Law prevents such detrimental progress from happening - and a desensitized society too easily justifies horrific procedures.

Altho, this absolutist strength is undermined by the Doctrine of Double Effect - an aspect of Natural Law which argues that immoral acts may be permitted, so as long as the consequences are 1. Foreseen but unintended 2. Do not outweigh the bad consequences 3. Be the last resort. Assisted dying does not have the purpose of directly ending

life, but instead ending agony and suffering, meaning it could be justified under Natural Law - preventing Aquinas' condemnation of assisted dying being effective.

Emmanuel Kant argues that we must always perform our 'duty', which is 'what we ought to do'. This duty can be ascertained through use of our reason, and is irrespective of our inclinations, consequences, emotions, and situation. Due to the importance of reason in Kant's ethical system, being the groundwork human function, we are all intrinsically valued as human beings, due to our ability to reason. This is expressed in his third categorical imperative: Kingdom of Ends, which argues that we should all treat each other, and be treated, as the intrinsically valuable creatures we are, able to reason. This would act to forbid euthanasia, being the deliberate action of termination of an intrinsically valuable life. Furthermore, Kant's first categorical imperative: the universal law, argues an action cannot be justified if it cannot be universalised. For obvious reasons, assisted dying does not align with categorical imperative 1 or 3. Thus, Kant would forbid euthanasia on these grounds. Lord Denning provides a dissenting perspective.

on Kant's use of categorical imperative 3 to forbid euthanasia. Davis argues that patients in a vegetative, irrational state are unable to reason, and excluded from the kingdom of ends. Thus, ~~can't~~ categorical imperative 3 cannot be used to prevent euthanasia.

However, Kant's use of the universal law is ~~entirely~~ persuasive and intuitive. For it makes complete sense that an action should not be morally permissible if it cannot be universalized - for if not everyone is capable of performing it, why should a single person be.

Altogether, this does not reflect the ^{native} ~~sense~~ at the heart of assisted dying. Patients do not want to die, but the agony they are subject to due to agonising, terminal illness has made their life so unbearable that they feel it would be less painful to be dead. Thus, the universal law shouldn't be applied to ~~either~~ assisted dying as it is never going to be universalized, as not everyone requires it - only ~~extremely~~ those with an extremely poor quality of life. Thus, it is ridiculous in its use of being applied to the assisted dying debate.

Amidst the deontological theories, Joseph Fletcher provides an adequate response to the debate

in his situation ethics - arguing that agape love (self-sacrificial, unconditional love) should be the ruling norm of Christian decision making. Fletcher places humans above rules in terms of importance, and argues that situations ought to be made situationally, not prescriptively. We should always seek to perform the most loving option - how best to demonstrate agape love. Therefore, it may be more loving to permit the legalisation of assisted dying than not, as the wellbeing and life quality of people is more important than following rules, like Aquinas' natural law.

A strength of this approach is that it encapsulates and recognises the extremely delicate and personal situation of euthanasia - allowing individuals the autonomy and flexibility to make their own, personal choices in life - irrespective of certain ethical system recommendations they ~~may~~ may not even subscribe to. Whilst some Christians would argue that this contradicts teachings of 'image dei', situation ethics is based upon Jesus' teachings of love in the New Testament, and therefore has a religious credibility.

~~I~~ In conclusion, deontological theories fail in their response to euthanasia - not recognising the delicacy of the situation.

(Total for Question 3 = 30 marks)



An excellent response, which is clearly related to the extract and systematically works through it to answer the question. The use of the analogy between shopping, cooking and assisted dying is perfectly drawn-out.

In part (b), the candidate approaches the question through the use of ethical theories. This is not an inherently better approach, but the way the candidate has ensured that the topic of assisted dying remains in focus is excellently done.

The use of a new idea in the final paragraph enables additional credit.



The anthology can be used in answers to any question on the paper as well as the dedicated Q03.

Question 4

Candidates have largely understood ethical language, which was historically a less-popular topic.

In this exam, many essays proved most successful and an increasing number made relevant links to a world religion, particularly Buddhism.

Weaker answers relied on some unhelpful strategies, such as interpreting ethical language as ethical theory, leading to a largely irrelevant answer.

Other less successful answers demonstrated a lack of knowledge of meta ethical theories and generated what seemed to be a spontaneous answer that addressed some issues, more by luck than judgement. A small number wrote about religious language, presumably an error they realised too late.

However, there were many good answers that offered a sound understanding of:

- the naturalistic fallacy
- the is-ought gap
- intuitionism
- motivism
- the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive language

Scholars such as David Hume, G E Moore and A J Ayer were referenced frequently, and more extensive essays included ideas from C L Stevenson, R M Hare, J L Mackie and even Jean-Paul Sartre.

It was pleasing to see that ideas from wider philosophical schools are making their way into this paper, with candidates referring to error theory and moral queerness and confidently using terms such as 'truth apt' and 'mind independent'

4 Evaluate the view that ethical language is meaningless.

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 my essay I will conclude that ethical language is indeed meaningless. Although I will talk about, Nihilism and Intuitionism talking about how ethical ~~debat~~ language is meaningful. Whilst countered by Emotivism and Prescriptivism with less convincing arguments of that of Nihilism and Intuitionism. I will synoptic look to the Philosophy of Religion side of the course and say how through language comes from Wittgenstein and his picture theory ethical language can be seen as meaningful.

Ethical Nihilism believes ethical language is cognitive and meaningful and that we can observe the world around us to determine ethical issues we should follow.

An example of this is Bentham and utilitarianism

how we can observe pain and pleasure, the two sovereign masters, and they determine what should be right and wrong. This is strong as it allows for meaningful ethical debate about obvious right and wrong we all clearly know such as random genocide being wrong.

Ethical language being meaningful as in Naturalism also gives us synthetic a posteriori knowledge of what is right and wrong as you can witness what is good in the world. Such as through testing people's brain to see ^{how} they react to pleasure and pain through dopamine release. This gives us ^{real} facts we can use to determine the correctness of an ^{action} ~~before~~.

Naturalism is another example of a reductionist approach to ethics, as we observe the world to give us moral right and wrong.

This is strong as it gives humans a direct set of rules to follow through looking at the world around us and avoids all problems associated with antinaturalism such as complete destruction of the world.

around us and the allowance of heinous acts that are obviously intrinsically wrong.

However Nihilism does come at some clear weaknesses as shown through the guillotine and how you cannot jump from 'is' to 'ought'. So, just because the world around us is this way doesn't mean it ought to be. This discredits nihilism as it removes all the direct facts we can use to include in our ethical debates due to them not being 'ought' to be the case.

Ethical Intuitionism discovered by G.E. Moore and used by Kant believes ethical language is meaningful but isn't discovered through the world around us yet through our own rational knowledge and intellect to determine the right action.

This is strong as it clearly accepts a person's rationality and treats us as intelligent creatures. This allows for debate about ethical topics to be meaningful because we are all rational creatures. This means ethics can be discussed and is important to the

progression of man, which it clearly is, due to its significant meaning.

Intuitionism also allows for differences in ethics as we see it. A massive lecture to individualism as it there are direct goods and bads out there on the world only that is there not a set notebook we all agree on. Intuitionism counters this as we can all use our rational mind differently to come to completely different outcomes. And our previous experience and education can have an impact on how you view ethical language and debate.

Another argument to why ethical language is meaningful is through the large impact it plays and has on humans day to day lives. Therefore it must be meaningful and worth discussion due to the mass impact it has on people's lives and the world around us.

Kant's ~~other~~ ethic uses intuitionism and says people can unlock morality through use of reason alone.

~~It~~ This is protective of the people and therefore

Shows when considering if ethical language is meaningful as Kant's ethic is prescriptive and doesn't allow people to be exploited through morally bad actions such as slavery.

In this paragraph I will use a synoptic link to the Philosophy of Religion side of the course. Wittgenstein developed the theory of language games and says all language can be meaningful if playing the correct language game. In this case the ethical language game this is a strong argument as it allows for ethical language to be treated as meaningful and therefore worth discussion and debate. It is also strong as it does not allow for frankly irrelevant questions to be asked when playing the ethical language game such as is it verifiable as you should be asking whether it is right indeed. Wittgenstein also developed the picture theory. This states that language is only here to paint a picture in your mind and if you can picture it, it's meaningful. Ethical language can obviously be pictured as everyone can picture whether an action is right or wrong in their mind. So overall, Wittgenstein would agree that ethical language is meaningful as

but as you were playing the ethical language game.

Emotivism developed by DD Ayer and added to by Stevenson believe ethical language is not meaningful.

This is because it is not truth apt as it is impossible to reply true to an ethical statement in the eyes of Ayer meaning that ethical language is non-cognitivist and therefore seeing ethical language as not meaningful.

Ayer also believes ethical language is just an expression of emotion and that saying murder is wrong is equivalent of saying 'boo to murder'. This is a strong argument as it explains why there are so many ethical theories out there because there is no true good and bad out there and all comes from people's feelings whether an action is good or bad in their mind.

However, this oversimplifies ethics as normative ethical theory producers would argue that they do not just think boo bad action but have

direct reason and cause to use certain ethical language.

So Stevenson adds to Emotivism and says they are not just expressions of emotions yet ethical commands that people are ordered to follow.

Yet, this is still non-cognitive and therefore still treated as meaningless due to Ayer believes. Jones But that only things a priori and analytic or a posteriori and synthetic are meaningful.

Which is strange as there a definite fact we can all agree on so has a clear base for us to think about.

developed by Hare

Prescriptivism is another theory believing ethical language is meaningless due to it being non-cognitive and therefore, decisively meaningless.

Prescriptivism ~~also~~ is strong as it explains why there are many ethical theories and nobody can agree on one single normative ethic and why it is correct due to Prescriptivism being anti-realist.

Prescriptivism also avoids Hume's guillotine and how you cannot jump from an is to an ought. Through explanation of how people see the world and their experiences helping change their ethical views. So, Prescriptivism is a strong

theory which combats the idea of ethical language being meaningless.

In conclusion I believe ethical language to be meaningful. Although needing to play the ethical language game to bypass the idea of Ayer that all non-cognitive facts are completely meaningless and should be thrown away. Ethical language plays a huge ~~role~~ role on society and affects peoples lives greatly dependant on which ethical code they decide to follow. Also how ethical language plays a large part in developing law and human rights shows its clear meaningful nature. All normative ethical theories believe ethical language to be meaningful be it Bentham or Kant. There are objective facts we observe in the world around us about ethics shown through the dopamine release when a person experiences pleasure. Whether that decides we should all seek pleasure and avoid pain is up to debate due to contradictory evidence on use of your rational mind overall showing why ethical language is deeply meaningful.



A full answer, which covers a wide range of issues relating to ethical language.

Use of scholarship, argument and counter-argument, and clear referencing back to the question and to the thesis laid out in the first paragraph, leads this answer to full marks. This is assured by the clear and unforced link to Language Games (Philosophy of Religion).



There are no frills about this answer. It demonstrates clarity and understanding. This is exactly what is needed,

4 Evaluate the view that ethical language is meaningless.

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 view that ethical language is meaningless is taken up by ~~ethic~~ moral anti-realists. Nietzsche states that "there is no such thing as moral phenomena, only a moral interpretation of phenomena" meaning that the values we are raised with reflect how we see the world, thereby making ethical statements subjective, or essentially meaningless. Therefore, I think that, by using Nietzsche's argument for perspectivism, that ethical language is meaningless, as ethical statements ~~are~~ make objective judgements based on subjective interpretation of the world.

On the other hand, ethical naturalists ~~such as G.E. Moore~~ argue that goodness or badness can be realised through discovery / observation of the natural world. This therefore means that there is a physical reality to ethical

language. Moore argues that 'goodness' is unlike any other property, and we cannot define it, but rather we know it through our intuition, similar to the colour yellow. Therefore, ethical language such as 'murder is wrong' does have meaning, because we immediately know the ~~true~~ truth of the statement through our intuition. Because of this view, I disagree with the view that ethical language is meaningless.

~~Moreover, Brimmer argued that religious language from scripture is~~

Moreover, Ayer argued that ethical language is essentially emotive because its function is to 'arise feelings, provoke emotion and stimulate action'. ~~Due to this~~ He argues this through pointing out how ethical language such as "eating animals is wrong" ^(for example) cannot be verified analytically (through logic) or synthetically (through experience), thereby making it meaningless. Because of this I agree with the view that ethical language is meaningless because there isn't any verifiable proof of ethical

claims.

On the other hand, Brimmer argued against Ayer's verification principle, especially when tied to religious language, by ~~pointing~~^{arguing} that art, music and poetry can have meaning for people, despite not being ~~the~~ verifiable analytically or synthetically. Therefore, applied to ethical language, it can still have a very real meaning despite not being objectively verifiable cognitive, or verifiable through logic or experience. Because of this, I disagree with the view that ~~religious~~^{ethical} language is meaningless; much like religious statements, they can have a very real subjective meaning or impact on a person's life.

Moreover, prescriptivism is another non-cognitive / anti-realist view of ethical language. It holds that moral statements such as "~~do not kill~~ killing is wrong" tell others how to act, though there isn't any truth to these moral claims. ~~Just as~~ Because of this, prescriptivism has been seen as a "boo hurrah" theory, as it holds that ethical language only has the function of telling

does what is right or wrong, rather than having any objective truth. This means that ethical language when applied to major catastrophes such as the holocaust, e.g. "the holocaust was bad" don't hold any truth and, rather only tell people how to feel.

~~This is clearly not the case~~ However, most people agree that genocide is ^{intrinsically} ~~objectively~~ bad; ~~without being told that in some~~ therefore, cases, most would agree that there is an objective truth to ethical language.

Because of this, the concept of prescriptivism is usually disregarded; it reduces catastrophes to a "boo", and this is an insensitive approach to ethical language.

Therefore, I disagree with the view that ethical language is meaningless, as there's a common sense about what events are intrinsically bad/evil.

~~However, there~~ On the other hand, there have argued that normative claims in the context of ethical language commit the naturalistic fallacy, for example, act utilitarianism holds that "nature has placed mankind under the governance of two

sovereign masters: pleasure and pain," (Bentham), and because of this, we ought to prioritise the maximum amount of pleasure, and the lowest amount of pain when making ethical decisions. Some argue that by going from an ~~objective~~ objective, empirical observation from the world (that pleasure and pain ~~it~~ dictate behaviour), Bentham commits a naturalistic fallacy by assuming that because ^{this is how} ~~these are~~ we appear to act, we ought to make ethical decisions this way. ~~the~~ This is a naturalistic fallacy because Bentham goes from an objective observation, to a subjective (moral) command. Therefore, because all ethical language is derived from observation from the natural world, we cannot make the inductive leap to moral commands. Due to this, I agree with the view that ~~the~~ ethical language is meaningless; there is a logical problem involved with normative ethical claims.

In conclusion, I think that ethical language is meaningless, as it's the by-product of our environment; it's therefore subjective, as Nietzsche suggests, and because all ethical statements make an inductive leap

by going from objective observation, to a subjective interpretation. Despite that, I still think that Brümmer's argument defending religious (and ethical language by proxy) is effective at outlining the meaningful impact that unverifiable language can have on an individual, however, ~~there~~ it is still ~~as the p~~ neglects the problem of the objectivity of ethical (and religious) statements, therefore it's not a convincing argument, so I ultimately agree with the view that ethical language is meaningless.



Another full and detailed essay, which is different in style altogether, but also highly effective. The candidate writes very well, so the essay is clear, pleasing and easy to engage with.

Some less familiar scholars are employed and the candidate draws back full-circle from introduction to conclusion. The link to religious language is less explicit, hence the overall mark is in Level 5, but it does not reach full marks.



It is always a pleasure to read an essay that makes use of a range of interesting scholarship.

Paper Summary

1. Candidates were able to address a range of topics with confidence. There were no repeated obvious gaps in knowledge, which suggests that the specification is being taught effectively.
2. Candidates are performing more successfully on previously unpopular topics, such as ethical language.
3. Answers on applied ethical topics will continue to benefit from wider use of scholarship.
4. Candidates generally seemed to manage timing better this year, with fewer candidates over-writing on the 8-mark question to the detriment of the 30-mark question.
5. Effective study of the anthology is key to achieving top grades and 10-mark answers will be most successful when the candidate is able to work directly with the text, rather than using it as a catalyst to discuss something else.

Grade boundaries

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