

## Unit 1: Foundations

### Ethics

#### 1 A study of ethical concepts:

- The relationship between religion and morality

*Candidates should consider a range of ways in which religion and morality may be related or may be considered to be independent of each other. They may draw on a diversity of views considering, for example, the possibility that morality is dependent on the existence of God as the ground of moral values, or as the guarantee of divine justice. Candidates may make connections with ideas about conscience as God-given and explore a range of religious perspectives on morality, such as Divine Command Ethics or 20<sup>th</sup> century situationalism and agapeistic views of morality. They may explore ideas about objective moral commands and the need for a personal moral commander to make morality more than an impersonal set of inexplicable demands. Candidates should not be afraid to examine the problems of conflicting religious moralities whilst still maintaining the view that religion and morality have a relationship of dependence. In opposition, candidates should consider a range of reasons why morality may not be dependent on religion, and may even be opposed to it. The Euthyphro Dilemma can offer the basis for an extended discussion of this issue. Candidates may consider the problem of religious moral positions which appear to conflict with common intuitions of morality, such as God's command to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22) or the teaching of the Westboro Baptist Church ([www.godhatesfags.com](http://www.godhatesfags.com)). The wide range of non-religious explanations of morality provide plenty of scope here, and candidates may draw on material from elsewhere in the specification to provide examples.*

- Utilitarianism

*An examination of an ethical theory as a means of solving ethical dilemmas. Social and cultural background to the theory, considering, for example, the emergence of Utilitarianism against the background of the industrial revolution, enlightenment thinking and social philanthropy. Key formulations of the theory, including the contributions of key scholars such as Bentham and Mill, and different approaches to Utilitarianism, such as the Hedonic Calculus and principles of Act Utilitarianism; concepts of higher and lower pleasures, Ideal Utilitarianism, Rule, strong and weak, Utilitarianism, and further developments of Utilitarianism, including Preference and Negative Utilitarianism. Candidates should be able to evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of Utilitarianism as an approach to applied ethics and moral decision-making, and to consider whether it is compatible with religious and secular approaches to morality.*

- Situation ethics.

*Candidates should have a knowledge and understanding of the social and cultural background to Situation Ethics and the reasons why it was promoted as a means of solving ethical dilemmas relevant to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Issues can include post World War Two feminism, Vietnam, civil rights, teenager and hippy culture, sexual liberation and rejection of traditional sources of authority. Candidates should be aware of the radical change in society which underlies Situation Ethics which was itself a genuine attempt to preserve religious morality but make it accessible to 'man come of age' (Robinson). The contributions of key scholars such as J A T Robinson and Joseph Fletcher are central to this topic and teachers are encouraged to explore some original source material. William Barclay's detailed criticism of Situation Ethics in *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (easily available second hand*

*through Amazon) offers a solid foundation for evaluation of the approach. Whilst candidates may consider some similarities with Utilitarianism, it is important that they understand the very significant differences between these approaches. Candidates may explore case studies to help consider the value of Situation Ethics in the ethical decision making process, but should not allow these to dominate.*

## 2 A study of ethical dilemmas:

- Issues of war and peace

*Candidates should be aware of the wide range of issues arising from the Just War Theory, working from Augustine's and Aquinas's approaches to Just War, but also, if they wish, referring to other attempts to refine and present the theory. They may consider its application to recent or contemporary wars in order to identify its strengths and weaknesses, whilst being careful not to overload essays with historical or political detail. Religious responses to modern warfare provide useful source material and can offer the basis for candidates to consider whether religion can ever justify war. A consideration of pacifism will benefit considerably from an examination of different motivations for pacifism, religious and non-religious, such as humanitarian and environmental reasons as well as, for example, following the teaching of Jesus. Candidates may make reference to the work of key pacifist individuals or organisations, but these should not be anecdotal, or unexamined.*

- Sexual ethics.

*An examination of a range of issues associated with sexual ethics, including marital, non-marital and extra-marital sex, homosexuality and divorce. Candidates should consider these issues from religious and secular perspectives, including the contribution of religious texts and teaching. Related issues such as abortion or the availability of IVF to heterosexual and homosexual couples/individuals may be considered as long as the specific link with sexual ethics is made clear. Appropriate links to relevant ethical theories such as Situation Ethics may be considered. Candidates should be able to discuss whether issues of sexual ethics should be assessed from absolute or relative ethical positions and draw conclusions about ways of making moral decisions regarding issues of sexual ethics. Contributions from the work of any appropriate scholars are encouraged, and can be drawn from relevant religious, ethical and philosophical approaches to issues of sexual morality.*

## Unit 3: Developments

### Ethics

#### 1 A study of ethical concepts:

- Critiques of relationship between religion and morality

*It is reasonable for candidates to draw on material that they have used at AS, but naturally it needs to be developed at an appropriate level for A2. The Euthyphro Dilemma, introduced at AS, can be examined in more depth, opening up consideration of its implications for God's nature, the relationship between the omnipotent God and an external source of goodness, the problems raised by God as the ground of moral values, and/or what it means for God to be good. Candidates may refer to the works of key scholars such as Freud (morality as the product of upbringing and parental controls), Nietzsche (religious morality as slave morality), or the views usefully discussed by R A Sharpe (*The Moral Case Against the Existence of God, SCM*). John Habgood's book *Varieties of Unbelief (DLT)* also offers useful material for this topic. Candidates may consider some case study material which exposes the problems of deriving morality from religion, conflicting religious moralities, and religious moral systems which may be counter-intuitive, absolutist or non-universalisable. Candidates may offer a critique of one or more forms of the moral argument, bearing in mind that they should not spend too long unpacking these arguments.*

- Deontology, natural moral law, virtue ethics – key concepts, strengths and weaknesses.

*An examination of the key features of these approaches to ethical decision-making; the contributions of key scholars such as Kant, W D Ross, Aquinas, Hoose, Aristotle, and MacIntyre; an understanding of philosophical foundations of these theories, in terms of absolute, relative, teleological and deontological principles; an evaluation of the efficacy of these theories for ethical decision-making, including consideration of their religious and cultural influences at the time of development and for the modern day. Candidates should be able to draw evaluative conclusions about their relative strengths and weaknesses.*

#### 2 A study of selected problems in ethics:

- Meaning and definition of ethical terms with reference to 'is-ought' and debates about 'good', emotivism

*An examination of the naturalistic fallacy and associated scholarship such as that of David Hume and G E Moore; solutions to the problem of the fallacy, including Intuitionism and non-naturalistic approaches to ethics. Other considerations about the use of the term 'good' as functional, descriptive, realist or anti-realist; the background to emotivism within philosophy of language, including the contributions of key scholars, such as A J Ayer and the logical positivist school; ethical claims as subjective and non-factual claims which express opinion and provoke the hearer. Candidates should be able to evaluate these approaches with reference to their relative strengths and weaknesses, drawing on ethical theories by way of illustration and comparison; a consideration of the role of emotivism within religious ethics and whether it provides a satisfactory explanation for the expression of ethical ideas.*

- Objectivity, relativism, subjectivism

*Candidates may discuss these issues in relation to specified ethical theories (without repeating material between questions) or in more general terms. They should be fluent with specialist language relevant to these approaches to ethics and be able to evaluate their relative strengths and weaknesses. Candidates may make reference to case studies to illustrate these approaches, but they should be evaluative rather than narrative. Candidates may consider the status of moral*

*knowledge, morality as opinion or feeling based, whether there can be an ultimate moral truth or source of moral truth, cultural relativism, religious ethics as absolute or relative, ethical pluralism. There are many legitimate approaches to this topic, although candidates should take care not to repeat chunks of material from other questions.*

- Justice, law and punishment.

*Candidates may also approach this question from many legitimate angles and need not be afraid of making connections between the three ideas. For example, what they learn about justice will inevitably overlap with punishment and they can be direct about making links. Candidates are free to chose theories of justice, law and punishment from any source which offers scope for debate and academic comment, and they need not be committed to religious approaches to these issues although such approaches offer a good range of material on which to base a discussion.*