

Religious Studies

Advanced Subsidiary GCE

Unit **G572**: Religious Ethics

Mark Scheme for January 2011

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1 (a) Explain the main differences between Act and Rule Utilitarianism. [25]

Candidates might explain that Act Utilitarianism is associated with Bentham and that it applies the principle of Utility to each situation and each action. They may say that there are no moral rules except that the principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number is applied in each situation.

They may consider that Act Utilitarianism is flexible and teleological and considers the consequences of an action. They may explain how the Hedonic Calculus may be applied.

Candidates in contrasting Act Utilitarianism with Rule Utilitarianism may consider some of the main weaknesses of Act Utilitarianism: that there is potential to justify an immoral act; that there is no defence for minorities and that it is impractical to say that we should calculate the moral consequences of each choice.

Candidates may consider that Rule Utilitarianism's aim is to establish rules on Utilitarian principles that benefit all in similar circumstances. Candidates may also comment that Rule Utilitarianism is also teleological.

They may discuss the difference between strong and weak Rule Utilitarians – they may say that weak Rule Utilitarians are little different from Act Utilitarians as the rule may be broken according to circumstance.

They may say that Rule Utilitarianism is commonly associated with Mill, and exemplify this.

(b) To what extent is Utilitarianism a useful method for making decisions about euthanasia? [10]

Candidates may consider that Utilitarianism would look for the greatest happiness of all concerned: patient, family, doctor etc. They may argue that a Utilitarian would not consider the issues of the Sanctity of Life, but rather those of the Quality of Life.

Candidates might argue that a Utilitarian would need to consider each situation involving possible euthanasia separately, they may use examples to illustrate this.

Candidates might contrast Utilitarianism with a more absolute approach such as Natural Law, or with a religious sanctity of life approach that considers those involved such as Situation Ethics. Candidates could also contrast Act Utilitarianism with Rule Utilitarianism.

Utilitarianism could be contrasted with the Sanctity of Life. They could also consider the use of resources in keeping the dying alive and the importance of the exercise of personal autonomy, contrasting this with the possible lack of safeguarding the rights of the individual.

2 (a) Explain Kant's reasons for using the Categorical Imperative. [25]

Candidates might explain Kant's Categorical Imperative and its basis in his theory of ethics, rejecting emotions and consequences as reasons for making an action moral.

They might explain that, for Kant, moral precepts are rooted in rationality, are unconditional or categorical and presupposed freedom. They may explain the importance of a good will and doing one's duty.

They may contrast the Categorical Imperative with the Hypothetical Imperative, and universal concern for humanity.

In explaining Kant's reasons for defending each of the forms of the Categorical Imperative they may use examples, possibly those of Kant.

(b) 'The universalisation of maxims by Kant cannot be defended.' Discuss. [10]

Candidates may argue that Kant's theory is abstract and not easily applied to ethical situations.

They may consider that Kant's approach does not consider outcomes, that there are conflicts between duties and that there is no room for emotions, and differences in cultural norms.

On the other hand, candidates may argue that Kant's understanding of universal maxims can be defended as it gives clear criteria to know which actions are moral, it respects human life, and the idea of duty means that we will always do what is right and not be swayed by emotions and feelings. They may say that his rules are fair as they apply to everyone.

- 3 (a) **Explain how a moral relativist might approach the issues raised by abortion.** [25]

Candidates might explain what is meant by moral relativism – they may give particular examples of ethical theories which might be followed by a cognitivist moral relativist, such as Utilitarianism or Situation Ethics, or by a non cognitivist moral relativist such as emotivism or moral egoist.

They may say that a moral relativist has no absolute principles that apply to each situation, and so would not consider human life to have absolute value. They may discuss the fact that the issue of personhood is of little importance to a moral relativists, but for others being a human person is a general value.

Candidates may say that some moral relativists would look at each individual situation, consider those involved and the consequences of an abortion.

Some might suggest that moral relativists will be swayed by the traditions and culture in which they live.

- (b) **‘A relativist approach to the issues raised by abortion leads to wrong moral choices.’ Discuss.** [10]

Candidates may argue that a moral relativist approach to abortion means that there are no clear guidelines so knowing that a right choice has been made is difficult. They may say that a moral relativist may consider all the consequences or the effects on those involved.

On the other hand they may argue that a relativist approach to abortion allows for individual needs and situations to be considered such as genetic abnormalities in the foetus, the financial situation, the mental and physical health of the mother etc.

Candidates may contrast a moral relativist approach with an absolutist one that gives clearer moral guidelines.

- 4 (a) **Explain how the followers of the ethics of the religion you have studied make ethical decisions.** [25]

Candidates may consider the basis of Christian ethics in the Bible. They may discuss the ethics of Jesus, for example from the Sermon on the Mount, and the teachings of Paul in his epistles. They could refer to Divine Command Theory.

Candidates may say that the followers of Christian ethics may base their ethical decisions on the teachings of love and explain what this means in practice.

Alternatively candidates may say that followers of Christian ethics may base their decisions on an ethical theory which is followed by Christians such as Natural Law or Situation Ethics. They may give an outline of these theories and explain how ethical decisions are made.

Candidates may also discuss the role of conscience in making ethical decisions and the teachings of particular churches.

Candidates should note that Utilitarianism and Kant's theories are not religious ethics.

Candidates may discuss the way in which followers of any religion (Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism or Islam) studied make ethical decisions.

- (b) **'Morality and religion are separate.' Discuss** [10]

Candidates may use Divine Command theory to argue both ways on this question. They may say that our moral intuition is innate and God-given, or that our conscience is simply the product of our society and up-bringing.

They may argue that it is unacceptable for any religious belief to require unqualified obedience to God's commands if it means abandoning personal autonomy. They may say that the rightness or wrongness of an action comes from the action itself.

They may use non-religious ethical theories such as Utilitarianism to argue that morality is separate from religion, and is based on reason, not revelation.

On the other hand candidates may say that religion has given us moral guidelines which are universal such as 'Do not murder' and 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

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