

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H573


For first teaching in 2016

H573/02 Summer 2019 series

Version 1

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates. The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report. A full copy of the question paper can be downloaded from OCR.

Paper 2 series overview

The Religion and Ethics paper introduces candidates to a range of both religious and secular ethical theories as well as looking at some key debates within the field. The paper assesses knowledge and understanding (40%) and analysis and evaluation (60%)

The most successful candidates tended to

- engage with the topics they are studying
- focus directly on the specific question being asked.
- focus more on the argument; the structure of their essays was often AO2 driven.
- used the introduction and conclusions of essays to show what was being argued (see exemplar 1 below for an excellent introduction that the candidate was able to follow through)

The questions on the whole allowed candidates to do this and there were many good responses.

Key point call out

Candidates need to be aware that 60% of the marks are for AO2. Responses where ideas are described/explained in detail and analysis/evaluation is tagged on for a few lines at the end of each paragraph are unlikely to access the higher levels.

Where candidates were less successful, candidates tended to

- write about the topic as a whole on occasions using what felt like pre-prepared formulaic answers
- overly focus on AO1 at the expense of AO2.
- demonstrate a lack of planning and thought – often evidenced through very long and unstructured answers. Clear paragraphing would help the examiner in these cases.

Candidates generally managed their time well; there were fewer scripts with very short or missing third questions this year. Some candidates achieved excellent marks without additional booklets being required. Where additional booklets are used, numbering of these booklets would help examiners as they are not always in the right order by the time the examiner sees them on screen.

Exemplar 1

Utilitarianism essentially does not help with business ethics. It does indeed provide valuable examination and application of 'the greatest good for the greatest number,' and Act Utilitarianism provides a situationalist approach to addressing ^{ethical} business issues, which is more adaptable than theories such as Kant's. Moreover, Rule and preference Utilitarianism ~~it~~ build on Act with an emphasis to ~~to~~ put stakeholders first, and would advocate 'good ethics' in business. However, from the perspective of capitalist businessmen, ~~the~~ the utility principle of seeking pleasure over pain can be manipulated, and ~~its~~ Utilitarianism is unhelpful in providing clear ethical instructions that can be easily applied.

Question 1

1* 'Natural law provides the best approach to sexual ethics.' Discuss.

[40]

This was the most popular question on the paper. The vast majority of candidates were able to make at least a reasonable attempt at this question. In some cases this was limited to the primary precept of reproduction. Better responses developed the primary precepts and were able to explain clearly how various secondary precepts relevant to sexual ethics may be derived.

Strong responses were often able to locate Natural Law within a context of the four tiers of law and where Biblical material was used, this was explicitly stated as an example of divine law. Poorer responses were often unable to make such a distinction: biblical material was given but with an assumption that Catholic ethics, the Bible and Natural Law were effectively one and the same thing.



AfL

It is worth spending time establishing the relationship between Natural Law as an ethical theory and Christianity specifically Roman Catholicism as these concepts are currently conflated in many candidates' minds.

In terms of the argument presented, many candidates demonstrated that Natural Law presents a potentially troubling approach to sexual ethics in light of an increasingly liberal and secularised society. There was good use of the idea of telos and the issue of the naturalistic fallacy to challenge natural law. Some evaluations were limited to the objection that Natural Law was outdated and religious often without any development or reflection on these points. A better section of evaluation is seen in Exemplar 2 below.

Other ethical theories were often used well as a contrast to Natural Law. Situation ethics was the most popular contrast followed by Mill's non-harm principle. Kantian ethics was not always clearly applied. Some answers contrasted or juxtaposed theories rather than directly evaluating which tended to prevent access of the higher AO2 levels. Better responses used the theories to make evidenced judgements. More limited responses tended to describe three or four ethical theories and only really begin to assess or evaluate towards the end of the essay. A further difficulty that some candidates got into was failing to give sufficient focus to natural law, with whichever ethical theory they felt most confident on dominating the essay.

Most candidates managed to sustain relevance but a significant number of candidates wrote at length about abortion which was tangential to the question.

Exemplar 2

One may argue that Natural Law is valid for atheists as it is also based on what is natural and this seems appropriate for most people, in line with their natural inclinations. However, what makes ~~it~~ homosexuality unnatural. ~~It~~ Sexuality is not a choice but a genetic, biological inclination and therefore surely it should be classed as natural. Furthermore, even if it were unnatural, Aquinas' ~~premise~~ indication that anything is unnatural is morally wrong is clearly incorrect as there are many natural things we could not classify as 'good', for example cancer. Additionally there are unnatural things that do not seem wrong, for example prosthetic legs etc. Therefore Aquinas' approach to sexual ethics is based on an incorrect premise that what is natural is good, ~~as there is evidence~~ (as he believes homosexuals should remain celibate). Not only is this unethical but there is clear empirical evidence that not all natural things are good.


Question 2

2* Assess the view that utilitarianism does not help with business ethics.

[40]

The level of response to this question depended on the extent to which the specific nuances of different varieties of utilitarianism were understood. Poorer responses tended to identify utilitarianism with a vague idea of promoting happiness. Exemplar 3 was typical of some of the less precise approaches. More successful responses were able to explain and apply several types of utilitarianism: Mill's non-harm principle in particular was used to good effect. Where Peter Singer's preference utilitarianism was used, candidates had some understanding of what this is but struggled to develop or apply it.

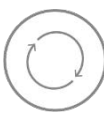
The application of Utilitarianism was varied in quality. Some poorer responses took the view that utilitarianism would want maximum profit assuming that this and happiness would be the same thing. Better responses were able to explore a range of issues in business ethics including whistleblowing and globalisation: these two issues were covered successfully. The idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) was not always clear in candidates' minds. Friedman's rejection of CSR was used well by some who were able to locate him within a political context, yet some mistakenly equated his views with utilitarianism

	<p>Misconception</p>	<p>Utilitarianism is unlikely to focus solely on profit and to suggest this shows a weakness in understanding. Utilitarians would need to consider various pleasures and pains (Bentham) or fully consider preferences and interests (Singer) These would extend beyond the purely financial.</p>
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This question although similar to question 1 as an applied ethics question was not typically done as well. Fewer candidates were able to show a detailed grasp of both the application of the theory and the specific ethical issues in business. Hence there were fewer high level responses as either the understanding of utilitarianism or business ethics was relatively weak.

In terms of evaluation of utilitarianism, the tyranny of the majority was used to good effect and this often led candidates to be able to successfully argue that Mill's version of utilitarianism would be an improvement upon Bentham. Kantian Ethics, particularly treating persons as ends, was often used in evaluation. The question was not a comparison question so it was vital that candidates tied this material in using it to advance a position with regard to utilitarianism. Poorer responses offered Kant as a contrast without tying back to the question. In some cases there was more material on Kant than on Utilitarianism.

Examples were effective where used and helped develop both understanding and evaluation. Where examples were not used, candidates often struggled to present clear evaluative points. The Rana Plaza disaster, Ford Pinto case, and VW emissions were popular examples

	<p>AfL</p>	<p>In applied ethics questions such as the one above, examiners are looking for an understanding of the ethical theory, awareness of issues within the applied ethics topic and how the theory is applied to the topic. Although we are not legalistic or prescriptive in terms of the exact balance, high level responses tend to feature each of these elements. It is worth thinking about structure on applied ethics questions and practicing similar essays in class.</p>
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Exemplar 3

Utilitarianism may breed bad ethics within business, though, as many companies use poorly maintained and poorly treated sources for their products. Many factories, largely in Asia, produce a huge quantity of goods sold in the UK and the conditions of these factories are generally severely lacking in terms of health and safety. In terms of utilitarianism, however, the happiness of the customer and business owner are in the majority and so the harm, which can include death, that comes to these factory workers would be considered ethically acceptable.

In this circumstance utilitarianism would not be good at helping business ethics as it may cause

allow and justify more harm than good.

Overall I think that, ^{utilitarianism} ~~as a business ethics~~ may not be the most helpful in business ethics, it can prevent some of the harm that could be generated from risky business. It does however have the fault of allowing poor conditions for some on the basis of a larger majority reaping the benefits and so I would argue that especially in cases dealing with working conditions and human rights another ethic should be utilised.

Question 3

3* 'The terms good, bad, right and wrong reflect only what is in the mind of the person using them.'
Discuss. [40]

This was possibly the least popular question on the paper. There were some excellent and focused answers. Most were confident in explaining and applying the three positions on the specification to the question correctly using terms such as cognitive and non-cognitive. These responses recognised that emotivism was the theory most likely to agree with the quote in the question and developed Ayer's Verificationism and Stevenson's emotivism to good effect. Exemplar 4 below is a good example of a detailed treatment of Emotivism where AO1 and AO2 are weaved together fluently.


Other responses read like a pre-prepared overview of meta-ethics which only occasionally explained how these theories might relate to the statement in the question, these responses tended to be pre-occupied with meaningfulness rather than whether terms reflected what was in the mind. These essays often started with Naturalism and worked through intuitionism before arriving eventually at emotivism.

Whilst most candidates understood the three theories, a significant minority explained emotivism as deciding what is right and wrong by emotions which implied that emotivism was a normative theory or a cognitive theory of meta-ethics rather than a non-cognitive explanation of moral statements

There was good assessment of the relative merits of each position with candidates arguing that emotivism had the danger of making ethical debate insignificant whilst naturalism suffered from an is-ought gap. Some more successful responses also broadened out the debate beyond the three main theories and used Mackie's error theory and issues of cultural relativism to advance their argument

Explanations of Moore's intuitionism were conflicting; some candidates argued that for Moore, the terms good, bad, right and wrong were only reflective of the mind of the person using them. This seemed to be misguided and led candidates down a path of arguing that Moore was an anti-realist and non-cognitivist, which was not what Moore intended. Where candidates recognized the potential issues associated with the use of intuition, in order to argue in favour of the statement, irrespective of what can be known of goodness through the intuition, the analysis tended to be successful.

The vast majority of candidates recognised this as a meta-ethics question. Some didn't see this as meta ethics but managed to address the question through normative theories, however this was rarely done to good effect.

	<p>AfL</p>	<p>The question is an exact quotation from the specification yet some candidates did not recognise the topic intended. It is worth familiarising candidates with the exact wording of the specification for each topic so that they are clear on what they are being asked. An examination paper is an examination of the specification for that component.</p>
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Exemplar 4

Emotivism ~~was~~ is the idea that moral terms or judgements are not more than an enjoining of emotions. Derived from A.J. Ayer, and the verification principle of the logical positivists, it can be seen that meaningful statements must either be

Question 4

4* To what extent is Freud's psychological approach to conscience the most helpful approach? [40]

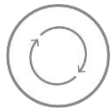
Most candidates were able to explain the roles of the Id, Ego and Super-ego. There was some confusion at times around which of these was the conscience or whether they were all parts of the conscience. There was also some conflation of the technical terms conscience and consciousness which muddled candidates' explanations of the layers of the mind in Freud's theory. Exemplar 5 below was not an untypical type of response.

Psycho-sexual development was well understood by some but was not always linked to the question. Some candidates became side-tracked into lengthy descriptions of the Oedipus complex rather than the key aspects of Freud's view. Other responses were less successful as the candidate developed general discussion of Freud's views on religion rather than focusing on the question.

Some candidates used Aquinas' views skilfully to critique Freud ensuring that even when writing on Aquinas, the paragraph explicitly used the information to assess Freud. Less successful responses focused on other theories often many. Some candidates were more comfortable talking about Aquinas and Newman than they were on Freud. Comparison with Aquinas was generally successful but often there was juxtaposition rather than evaluation. This led to a feeling amongst examiners that some formulaic Aquinas v Freud answers had been pre-prepared.

There was often good analysis regarding issues around falsification or Freud's views or the validity of the empirical evidence Freud presents. Poorer answers often gave the limited response that Freud is good for atheists as he doesn't require belief in God.

There is no requirement to use thinkers who are not named on the specification with some candidates producing excellent answers using Aquinas and Freud. That said, there was also good use of Dawkins on evolutionary conscience and Piaget and Fromm to give qualified support for Freud and to perhaps suggest ideas that would be even better. Freudian analysis of conscience development gave rise to important ideas from thinkers such as Fromm or Piaget, so whilst Freud's arguments are generally discredited now; they paved the way towards valuable insights about the nature and role of conscience in moral decision-making.

	<p>AfL</p>	<p>Explanations of Freud's views were not always expanded or in depth. At times this seemed to be an issue with knowledge – candidates have not learned Freud in depth – at other times there were issues with technique as candidates devoted too much time to the other thinkers.</p>
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Exemplar 5

		Freud has an a psychological idea
		of conscience which looks at the
		id, ego and super ego. Freud says
		the id and the ego are part of
		the subconscious mind and the super ego
		is part of the conscious mind. The
		id is the part of the mind where our
		desires lie, like lust or violence. The ego is
		more or less the opposite. The super ego
		is is like a ref referee between these
		two and is the conscious which we

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