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# **GCE AS MARKING SCHEME**

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**SUMMER 2024**

**AS  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 3  
An Introduction to Religion and Ethics  
B120U30-1**

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## About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

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## **Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:**

### **Positive marking**

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme.

Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

### **Rules for Marking**

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

### **Banded mark schemes**

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

## **Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band**

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content.

Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

## **Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark**

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner.

When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

## **Awarding no marks to a response**

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

## AS Generic Band Descriptors

Band	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions [25 marks]</b></p> <p><i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i></li> <li><i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i></li> <li><i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i></li> <li><i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i></li> </ul>
5	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>21-25 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
4	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>16-20 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
3	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>11-15 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set.</li> <li>The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
2	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6-10 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set.</li> <li>The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
1	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1-5 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question.</li> <li>The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> </ul> <p><b>N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'</b></p>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No relevant information.</li> </ul>

<b>Band</b>	<b>Assessment Objective A02- Part (b) questions [25 marks]</b>  <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
<b>5</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>21-25 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>16-20 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed.</li> <li>• The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>11-15 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed.</li> <li>• Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>6-10 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed.</li> <li>• A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1-5 marks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence.</li> <li>• Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> </ul>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant analysis or evaluation.</li> </ul>

## **EDUQAS GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

### **COMPONENT 3: An Introduction to Religion and Ethics**

#### **SUMMER 2024 MARK SCHEME**

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

#### **Section A**

1. (a) **Apply Fletcher's Situation Ethics to the issue of homosexual relationships.**

**[AO1 25]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Situation Ethics is a relativist theory that will not give a definitive moral guideline about same sex relationships. Each relationship will be assessed relative to the law of agape (as pure, unconditional selfless love as opposed to other forms). This means that candidates have considerable freedom to interpret how the theory may be applied and may take a range of different approaches to their answer.
- Candidates may apply the four working principles to consider issues relating to homosexual relationships.
- For example, pragmatism – the chosen course of action must work in practice towards the most loving outcome. Candidates may point out that the position taken by some Christians that gay couples may live together but must not have a physical relationship could be regarded as immoral as it is not a pragmatic requirement and is likely to lead to frustration rather than a loving outcome.
- Personalism – candidates may explain that the choices made by different couples about how to live out an ethical relationship must be respected, and that doing the most loving thing for the people in each individual relationship is important.
- Candidates may also apply the six fundamental principles to consider ethical issues relating to homosexual relationships.
- For example, 'the ruling norm of Christian decision making is love,' – candidates may explain that this principle could lead to Christians acting out of agape rather than obedience to a narrow interpretation of certain passages in scripture when it comes to homosexual relationships.
- Candidates may explain alternative interpretations of biblical passages related to homosexuality. For example, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah may be interpreted as condemning all homosexual relationships, or as condemning any non-consensual physical relationship, or as being a condemnation of the lack of hospitality shown to strangers. Candidates may discuss these interpretations in the light of the fundamental principle.
- 'Love wills the neighbour's good, whether we like them or not.' This principle could be linked to Jesus' approach to those considered 'outsiders' in his society and candidates could explain how this approach could influence the views of some Christians towards same sex relationships.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

**(b) 'Agape is not the only intrinsic good.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 25]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Supporters of Situation Ethics disagree with this view and point to Fletcher's first fundamental principle, which is based on evidence in the Bible. For example, 1 Corinthians in which St Paul says that love is the greatest of the virtues.
- However, it could be argued that, although love is described as the greatest of the virtues, it is not the only one – faith and hope may also be seen as intrinsically good. Other relevant biblical references could be used.
- Other believers may argue that all of God's commandments are intrinsically good, as they derive from the ultimate source of all goodness.
- Therefore, following all of God's laws could be seen as good, and ignoring these laws in order to prioritise love could be seen as unacceptable.
- On the other hand, there are stories in the Bible where Jesus put aside the law in order to perform loving actions. This could suggest that love is the only thing which is intrinsically good.
- Another issue is that it is difficult to reduce the complexity of moral decision making to one single principle. If love is the only thing that is good in itself, where does this leave other important principles such as justice, wisdom and courage.
- Supporters of Situation Ethics could argue that love encompasses these other ideas, and that Fletcher explains this clearly in the six fundamental principles.
- Some critics of Situation Ethics might argue that obedience to the will of God is the only intrinsic good, and that regarding agape as intrinsically good is impractical as it relies too much on human interpretation, which is often flawed.
- However, supporters of Fletcher may argue that other ways of determining God's will can also be misinterpreted and as agape is a reflection of God's will and a mirror of his love for humanity, it must be seen as an intrinsic good.
- Another line of argument may be to consider a non-religious theory such as Utilitarianism and to argue that pleasure is the sole intrinsic good.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**



**2. (a) Apply Fletcher's Situation Ethics to the issue of polyamorous relationships.**

**[AO1 25]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Polyamorous relationships are difficult to define in simple terms without the definition becoming reductive and unhelpfully simplistic. Those engaged in polyamorous relationships tend to emphasise gender equality, fidelity (in terms of keeping promises in a relationship rather than sexual exclusivity), communication, respect, trust and an avoidance of possessive jealousy.
- In terms of Situation Ethics, Fletcher rejected legalistic approaches and instead applied the principle of agape (as pure, unconditional selfless love as opposed to other forms) to all ethical decisions. Therefore, each polyamorous relationship would be considered as a separate case, in the same way as monogamous relationships, and agape should be applied in line with the working and fundamental principles.
- Each case would be assessed on its merits, relative to the law of love (relativism) and would be based on pragmatism (whether the action would lead to a loving outcome) and personalism (considering the needs of those involved) rather than judgements being made on any prior legal or moral claims.
- The basis of agape outlined in the fundamental principles would also be considered. Particularly the idea that a loving end justifies the means, that love and justice are the same, and the consideration that love applies equally to all.
- In terms of polyamorous relationships, if all those involved are fully aware of the agreements made within a relationship and this has been communicated openly and honestly in an atmosphere of trust and respect, then this would appear to meet the criteria laid down by Situation Ethics for a good action.
- As with all relationships, if there is dishonesty and lack of respect, or a focus purely on the sexual aspects of the relationship, then Situation Ethics is unlikely to see engaging in such a relationship as a good act.
- The degree to which the law prohibits such relationships may be considered as it is unlikely to be pragmatic to engage in actions which could result in serious danger for those involved should they be discovered by others.
- As Situation Ethics is a relativist approach with no fixed rules about polyamorous relationships, credit any reasonable application.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

- (b) **‘Situation Ethics provides a practical basis for religious believers to make moral decisions.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 25]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Situation Ethics may be seen as practical because it encourages people to consider the likely consequences of their actions, and it could be argued that only the consequences that have a real effect on human wellbeing.
- However, humans struggle to accurately predict the consequences of their actions which means that the theory is less practical than it first appears.
- Situation ethics allows religious believers to perform certain actions which others may regard as wrong if they lead to a more loving outcome, for example, lying to save the life of another. The relativist approach allows for different actions to be correct in different circumstances and is therefore practical.
- Many would claim that Situation Ethics is not practical for believers as it leaves it up to the individual to decide what action to take without sufficient guidance. Agape is not an easy concept to understand and humans are prone to making mistakes or being influenced by personal gain rather than unconditional love.
- Another line of argument is that Situation Ethics is practical because it allows religious believers the individual freedom to make decisions for themselves, rather than enforcing strict rules which may seem at odds with modern views of morality. One of the four working principles of Situation Ethics is ‘pragmatism’ – is this practical – will it work and lead to agape ?
- Situation Ethics is flexible as it takes into account the complexities of human life (the situation) and can take tough decisions where, from a legalistic perspective, all actions seem wrong.
- However, some people may claim it is safer for believers to follow a clear set of moral rules as this makes for more practical decision making when time is limited.
- Some religious believers would argue that certain actions are ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ in themselves and you cannot use relativism or consequentialism to argue against this. E.g. the Ten Commandments condemn adultery therefore Situation Ethics cannot be practical if it may go against these moral absolutes.
- Religious believers may argue that all should follow divine law as God is the ultimate source of moral authority and a theory that is not based on God’s law cannot work in practice.
- They may also point out that Fletcher’s examples to illustrate Situation Ethics are based on extreme circumstances and that the outcome in these cases could not guarantee to be loving (Barclay). It would be better in the vast majority of cases for believers to stick to moral norms and rules.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

## Section B

3. (a) **Examine Mill's Utilitarianism as a teleological/deontological hybrid.**

[AO1 25]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Mill's development of utilitarianism attempts to address the criticisms levelled at Bentham's Act Utilitarianism, for example that pleasure cannot be measured in quantitative terms and that not all pleasures are equal.
- It retains teleological aspects, in that the end goal is still the greatest happiness for the greatest number, but it changes the focus slightly in order to attain this in a more holistic way, which leads to some of the more deontological aspects.
- In terms of pleasure, Mill focuses on the quality, rather than the quantity. Higher pleasures associated with the intellect are worth more than lower pleasures associated with the body. Therefore, while lower pleasures are sometimes necessary for survival, the principle of utility should be fulfilled through a greater balance of higher pleasures looking in the broadest sense at the 'interests of man as a progressive being.'
- Mill's 'harm principle' works towards securing the principle of utility in its broadest sense as it prevents people from seeking pleasure through the pain of others, while allowing maximum individual freedom to pursue happiness – 'the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others' (On Liberty).
- This means that, while judging actions according to the consequences for all involved is still important, certain rules may be needed to prevent harm, particularly when this is in the interests of a majority.
- The principle of utility can therefore be fulfilled through creating 'rules' based on past experience rather than judging each action individually. For example, the rule 'do not murder' would create the greatest overall happiness in society, even if it may not create happiness in an individual case. This means that each action does not have to be judged using the hedonic calculus and makes utilitarianism easier to apply in practice.
- Mill is seen by many scholars as a 'weak' Rule Utilitarian, in that the rules offer good general guidelines but may be broken in extreme circumstances to better serve utility. This makes Mill's version of Utilitarianism a teleological and deontological hybrid.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

**(b) 'Utilitarianism promotes moral behaviour.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 25]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- If morality is linked to pleasure, as supporters of Utilitarianism would claim, then it would appear that Utilitarianism promotes moral behaviour as it offers a democratic way to ensure that the majority gain pleasure.
- However, Act Utilitarianism could be accused of allowing a minority to suffer as long as the majority are happy. It allows the many to prioritise their own happiness over the well-being of the few, which does not appear to promote morality.
- Candidates may point out that examples of immoral behaviour from a majority can often derive from inaccurate application of the hedonic calculus rather than from an inherent flaw in the theory itself, however this does suggest that the theory may be too open to misapplication.
- Alternatively, it could be argued that the 'rule' form of Utilitarianism is more likely to promote moral behaviour. Mill was a social reformer and was very wary of the 'tyranny of the majority' so included safeguards such as the 'harm principle' to ensure that only moral behaviour is promoted.
- Alternatively, it could be argued that the focus on pleasure does not always lead to ethical actions, and that Utilitarianism could easily be used to promote immoral behaviour as a result.
- Some actions which cause pleasure could be regarded as highly immoral by religious believers, who may argue that God's laws and teachings are the only genuine source of morality.
- However, Mill's move to focus on the quality of pleasure rather than the quantity may help to address this point as the immoral actions which may concern believers are often related to the 'lower' pleasures.
- Utilitarianism could be seen to promote moral behaviour because it allows the situation to be taken into account and does not lead to the 'immorality of morality' (Miller) where a strict rule-based approach can lead to injustice.
- Weak Rule Utilitarianism in particular may promote moral behaviour as it has the dual benefit of fairness, in that similar actions are treated in similar ways, but also flexibility.
- However, it could be argued that the element of human judgement required in both Act and Weak Rule utilitarianism will lead to the promotion of immoral behaviour as humans are not able to predict consequences accurately or make decisions wisely.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

4. (a) **Explain the following challenges to Divine Command Theory:**

- (i) **The arbitrariness problem**  
**and**
- (ii) **The pluralism objection**

[AO1 25]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Divine Command Theory sees God as the origin and regulator of morality – what is good is what God says is good.
- The arbitrariness problem derives from one of the ‘horns’ of the Euthyphro dilemma proposed by Socrates which questions whether God’s commands can be moral if they are simply based on whim.
- As Frankena points out: ‘if God were to order the exact opposite of what we generally take him to have ordered or of what we take to be right, then, by the hypothesis in question, this would be what we ought to do.’
- There are examples in the Bible in which God appears to command actions which appear immoral by other standards. For example, commanding Abraham to sacrifice his son.
- William of Ockham argued that humans could steal or kill, which would be against human law, but these acts would be seen as morally good if done by Divine Command.
- This shows a disconnect between what humans generally perceive to be good and what appears to be commanded by God and therefore causes a direct challenge to Divine Command Theory.
- The objection related to pluralism considers the problem of determining what exactly is commanded by God. In different religious ethical systems there appear to be very different demands made on humans and it is unclear whether there is any single ‘right’ set of commands which can definitively be claimed as ‘divine’.
- While it could be argued that the ethical systems of many religions have a common core centred around a conception of the golden rule, there are distinct differences which could be illustrated.
- For example, in Islam, divorce is permitted under certain circumstances whereas in Roman Catholic Christianity it is not.
- There are also different interpretations of moral codes within religions, for example in Christianity the command ‘you shall not kill’ is interpreted in a strictly pacifist way by some believers and as a clear anti-abortion statement by others.
- Also, there are some believers who claim very specific interpretations of texts as divine commands and act on these in a way which is contrary to the majority response within a religion. While this would appear to be a straightforward issue of misunderstanding, the holy texts have examples of times in which God appears to command specific actions which go against the more general principles that are commanded at other times.
- This leads to the question about whether the commands given in scripture are universal or specific to a particular context. Again, there tends to be disagreement within religion about which interpretation is correct.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

- (b) **‘The challenges to Divine Command Theory clearly show it is not a good ethical theory.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 25]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- On the surface, Divine Command Theory would seem to be a good ethical theory as it is based on the commands of an objective, omniscient being who is not subject to the bias and emotional responses of human beings.
- If God created and cares for all of humanity, then surely, he would give humans a clear system indicating how to behave.
- However, the Euthyphro dilemma indicates the problem with this – does God only command goodness or is everything commanded by God good? If the first ‘horn’ of the dilemma is rejected due to the limits it imposes on God’s power, then the problem remains about the arbitrariness of God’s commands.
- The arbitrariness problem does seem to have evidence from scripture behind it as there are numerous examples of actions which appear to be commanded by God, but which go against human standards of morality and therefore suggest it is not a good ethical theory.
- Robert Adams’ modification to Divine Command Theory could be used to counter this point. He argues that the Euthyphro dilemma does not cause a problem if we are mindful of the benevolence of God. A loving God would not command arbitrary or cruel actions.
- However, Bagginis would argue that Adams simply shifts the debate from God’s actions to his nature and does not solve the problem.
- In terms of pluralism, the conflict between different religions over which ethical actions are commanded by God clearly shows issues with Divine Command theory.
- It could be argued that this is down to the limited nature of humans, either to recognise that one theory is clearly correct, and the others flawed, or that all interpretations have a degree of truth and that conflicting claims are simply related to human inability to perceive the bigger picture.
- However, it could be argued that a ‘good’ ethical theory should not be open to this level of misinterpretation.
- Candidates could also consider the issue of different interpretations within a religion, for example, the debate within Christianity about same sex relationships.
- Debate within religions about which commands should be recognised as universal and which time specific could suggest that Divine Command theory is not a good ethical theory as it is not clear cut and is too open to biased interpretation.
- Candidates may argue that any theory which requires obedience rather than reason is not a good approach as it denies an important aspect of humanity and may leave humans unable to act morally in situations where there are no specific commands.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**

5. (a) Explain Aquinas' Natural Law as a form of moral absolutism.

[AO1 25]

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Moral absolutism is the view that universal ethical standards apply to all actions, regardless of context. An action is either right or wrong.
- Natural Law can be seen as a form of moral absolutism as it establishes universal principles based on four inter-related sets of laws which Aquinas believed governed the universe:
- These laws are based on God's eternal law which is absolute and unchanging, and which is revealed through scripture and understood through reason to give a basis for the creation of human laws.
- Natural Law involves the application of reason to work out the God-given purpose of humans on Earth (primary precepts) and to create fixed rules which will aid people in fulfilling that purpose (secondary precepts), thus showing that Natural Law has both teleological and deontological aspects.
- The ultimate purpose of humans is to establish a right relationship with God, and therefore to gain eternal life. From this ultimate purpose, it is possible to use reason to establish primary precepts – our God-given purposes in life which identify the moral absolutes by which humans should live.
- The primary precepts are: to worship God, to live in ordered societies, to reproduce, to learn and seek knowledge and to preserve innocent life (both the life of the individual themselves and the life of others.)
- Secondary precepts are rules derived from the primary precepts which give more detailed guidance about which actions are 'good' in that they fulfil the purpose of a human. These should be regarded as absolute rules, unless it becomes clear that reason has been incorrectly applied in the creation of the rule (as humans are fallible).
- For example, from the absolute primary precept 'to preserve innocent life', the secondary principle 'do not murder' could be deduced by reason. Again, from the absolute primary principle 'live in ordered societies', the secondary precept 'do not steal' could be deduced. Candidates may offer a range of different secondary precepts based on their chosen primary precept.
- Candidates may explain that there is a degree of flexibility in Natural Law through the principle of double effect, where a secondary precept may be broken if it is the unintended side effect of another good action. In absolutist terms, the unintended side effect would still be morally evil, but it may be the lesser of two evils.
- Candidates may also refer to 'real' and 'apparent' goods or 'interior' and 'exterior' acts, when defining the theory as a form of absolutism.

**This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.**

**(b) 'For those who do not believe in God, Natural Law is meaningless.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 25]**

**Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.**

- Aquinas' Natural Law is based on a hierarchical set of laws deriving from God as the ultimate Creator. Without a belief in such a God, there is no basis for the Eternal law which underpins natural law.
- Candidates need to refer to the beatific vision as the ultimate purpose of Natural Law for religious believers. Atheists are unlikely to believe in any ultimate purpose for human beings and therefore the belief that a good action fulfils the purpose of the agent is a non-sensical concept.
- However, with the exception of the primary precept 'worship God' the remaining precepts could be worked out using reason without a belief in God. A theory which works towards humans fulfilling a purpose gives meaning to life and a clear grounding for ethical behaviour.
- This point could be developed with reference to Aristotle, whose work forms the origin of Aquinas' theory without requiring belief in a creator God.
- Candidates could argue that Natural Law is based on reason rather than revelation and so is accessible to atheists. A reliance on reasoned argument rather than faith is often characteristic of the atheist position.
- However, the ultimate purpose of using reason in Aquinas' Natural Law is to achieve a right relationship with God (beatific vision), and this is not something atheists would see the need for.
- Natural Law may be seen as meaningless for atheists as it can be used to justify some rules which are fairly unpalatable in the modern secular world. For example, Natural Law would argue that abortion is wrong as it breaks the primary precept of preserving life. While a small number of cases may be justifiable under the principle of double effect, many atheists would see a far wider range of cases as morally acceptable.
- The cultural bias of Aquinas' primary precepts could also be questioned by atheists. His concept of an ordered society would be at odds with secular views about equality, which would lead to the rejection of fixed hierarchies.
- However, it could be argued that Natural Law offers clear structure and moral guidance which is lacking in modern society, and this clarity could be appealing for atheists even if they do not accept the divine origin of the eternal law upon which it is based. They may accept the concept of universal human rights even if they would not agree that they were God-given.

**Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.**