



A-level RELIGIOUS STUDIES 7062/2A

Paper 2A Study of Religion and Dialogues: Buddhism

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

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Methods of Marking

It is essential that, in fairness to students, all examiners use the same methods of marking. The advice given here may seem very obvious, but it is important that all examiners follow it as exactly as possible.

1. If you have any doubts about the mark to award, consult your Team Leader.
2. Refer constantly to the mark scheme throughout marking. It is extremely important that it is strictly adhered to.
3. Remember, you must **always** credit **accurate, relevant and appropriate** answers which are not given in the mark scheme.
4. Do **not** credit material that is irrelevant to the question or to the stated target, however impressive that material might be.
5. If a one-word answer is required and a list is given, take the first answer (unless this has been crossed out).
6. If you are wavering as to whether or not to award a mark, the criterion should be, 'Is the student nearer those who have given a correct answer or those who have little idea?'
7. Read the information below about using Levels of Response mark schemes.
8. Be prepared to award the full range of marks. Do not hesitate to give full marks when the answer merits full marks or to give no marks where there is nothing creditable in an answer.
9. No half marks or bonus marks are to be used under any circumstances.
10. Remember, the key to good and fair marking is **consistency**. Do **not** change the standard of your marking once you have started.

Levels of Response Marking

In A-level Religious Studies, differentiation is largely achieved by outcome on the basis of students' responses. To facilitate this, levels of response marking has been devised for many questions.

Levels of response marking requires a quite different approach from the examiner than the traditional 'point for point' marking. It is essential that the **whole response is read** and then **allocated to the level** it best fits.

If a student demonstrates knowledge, understanding and/or evaluation at a certain level, he/she must be credited at that level. **Length** of response or **literary ability** should **not be confused with genuine religious studies skills**. For example, a short answer which shows a high level of conceptual ability must be credited at that level. (If there is a band of marks allocated to a level, discrimination should be made with reference to the development of the answer.)

Levels are tied to specific skills. Examiners should **refer to the stated assessment target** objective of a question (see mark scheme) when there is any doubt as to the relevance of a student's response.

Levels of response mark schemes include either **examples** of possible students' responses or **material** which they might use. These are intended as a **guide** only. It is anticipated that students will produce a wide range of responses to each question.

It is a feature of levels of response mark schemes that examiners are prepared to reward fully, responses which are obviously valid and of high ability but do not conform exactly to the requirements of a particular level. This should only be necessary occasionally and where this occurs examiners must indicate, by a brief written explanation, why their assessment does not conform to the levels of response laid down in the mark scheme. Such scripts should be referred to the Lead Examiner.

Assessment of Quality of Written Communication

Quality of written communication will be assessed in all components and in relation to all assessment objectives. Where students are required to produce extended written material in English, they will be assessed on the quality of written communication. The quality of written communication skills of the student will be one of the factors influencing the actual mark awarded within the level of response. In reading an extended response, the examiner will therefore consider if it is cogently and coherently written, ie decide whether the answer:

- presents relevant information in a form that suits its purposes
- is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate, so that meaning is clear
- is suitably structured and that the style of writing is appropriate.

LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Levels of Response: 10 marks A-level – AO1

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Level 5
9–10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and critical understanding is accurate, relevant and fully developed in breadth and depth with very good use of detailed and relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate. • Where appropriate, good knowledge and understanding of the diversity of views and/or scholarly opinion is demonstrated. • Clear and coherent presentation of ideas with precise use of the appropriate subject vocabulary. |
| Level 4
7–8 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and critical understanding is accurate and mostly relevant with good development in breadth and depth shown through good use of relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate. • Where appropriate, alternative views and/or scholarly opinion are explained. • Mostly clear and coherent presentation of ideas with good use of the appropriate subject vocabulary. |
| Level 3
5–6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and critical understanding is generally accurate and relevant with development in breadth and/or depth shown through some use of evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate. • Where appropriate, there is some familiarity with the diversity of views and/or scholarly opinion. • Some organisation of ideas and coherence with reasonable use of the appropriate subject vocabulary. |
| Level 2
3–4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and critical understanding is limited, with limited development in breadth and/or depth shown through limited use of evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate. • Where appropriate, limited reference may be made to alternative views and/or scholarly opinion. • Limited organisation of ideas and coherence and use of subject vocabulary. |
| Level 1
1–2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and critical understanding is basic with little or no development. • There may be a basic awareness of alternative views and/or scholarly opinion. • Isolated elements of accurate and relevant information and basic use of appropriate subject vocabulary. |
| 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No accurate or relevant material to credit. |

Levels of Response: 15 marks A-level – AO2

- Level 5**
13–15
- A very well-focused response to the issue(s) raised.
 - Perceptive discussion of different views, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought with critical analysis.
 - There is an appropriate evaluation fully supported by the reasoning.
 - Precise use of the appropriate subject vocabulary.
- Level 4**
10–12
- A well-focused response to the issue(s) raised.
 - Different views are discussed, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought, with some critical analysis.
 - There is an appropriate evaluation supported by the reasoning.
 - Good use of the appropriate subject vocabulary.
- Level 3**
7–9
- A general response to the issue(s) raised.
 - Different views are discussed, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought.
 - An evaluation is made that is consistent with some of the reasoning.
 - Reasonable use of the appropriate subject vocabulary.
- Level 2**
4–6
- A limited response to the issue(s) raised.
 - Presentation of a point of view relevant to the issue with some supporting evidence and argument.
 - Limited attempt at the appropriate use of subject vocabulary.
- Level 1**
1–3
- A basic response to the issue(s) raised.
 - A point of view is stated, with some evidence or reason(s) in support.
 - Some attempt at the appropriate use of subject vocabulary.
- 0**
- No accurate or relevant material to credit.

0	1	.	1
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Examine the significance for Buddhists of Gautama Buddha's authority as the 'enlightened one'.

[10 marks]

Target: AO1.1: Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

One reason Gautama Buddha has significant authority as the 'enlightened one' is due to the belief that as an enlightened being he achieved complete liberation from the cycle of samsara. This is significant to Theravada Buddhists who believe that The Buddha was the first and only being in this age to have achieved this without help. The Buddha has authority as he was the one who destroyed the darkness which comes from the cycle of samsara.

Another reason for Gautama Buddha's significance as the 'enlightened one' is that as an enlightened being he has special insight and knowledge about the universe. Buddhists believe that with enlightenment, The Buddha achieved a special awareness. This gave The Buddha full insight into the truth, for example that of The Four Noble Truths. For this reason, the teachings of The Buddha have authority for Buddhists.

A final reason is that The Buddha's authority as the 'enlightened one' derives from the fact that his teachings can lead others to enlightenment. The Buddha's teachings give guidance concerning the way to enlightenment, for example through following The Eightfold Path and the monastic rules found in the Pali Canon. Following these rules can lead Buddhists towards liberation from Dukkha and freedom from the cycle of samsara.

0	1	2
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‘Buddhists should always act with good intention.’

Evaluate this claim.

[15 marks]

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

Note that answers may, but need not, be limited to the consideration of the following specification content: Good conduct: the importance of good moral conduct in the Buddhist way of life; the importance of intention.

Answers may present, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments:

Good intention is a key aspect of Buddhist moral behaviour. Acting with good intention brings about positive karmic consequences leading to positive rebirth. For this reason Buddhists should always act with good intention. However, this is not always possible due to factors in the samsaric cycle for example, the arising of the three poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance. The three poisons impact upon a person’s state of mind and their ability to make decisions with a good intention. This means that although acting with good intention is important, it is not possible for all.

For many Buddhists the most important aspect of Buddhist ethics is right intention. Intention is the driving force of action which underlines its importance. However, Buddhists may argue that acting with good intentions requires us to first follow the eightfold path in order to develop the ‘right view’, which can be done through meditation. For these Buddhists, good intentions can in fact be based on a false understanding. Therefore, it is not always possible for Buddhists to act with good intention.

The most important expression of intention for many Mahayana Buddhists is the Bodhisattva vow. This vow shows good intention for all beings to be free from samsara. However, Theravada Buddhists do not make this vow, and may instead be more influenced by a more individual approach and intention, for example arhats in Theravada Buddhism instead focus on their own enlightenment.

0 2 . 1

Examine the influence of pluralism on Buddhist relations with other faiths.

[10 marks]

Target: AO1.2: Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

Some Buddhists are influenced by the pluralist teachings of Ashoka, who believed that all religions shared a common positive essence. Ashoka encouraged tolerance and understanding of other religions. This means today, many Buddhists actively work to encourage interfaith dialogue. In Edict 12 Ashoka states that he values above all the 'growth in the essentials of all religions' because this helps to illuminate the Dharma.

For some Buddhists the principle of skilful means influences relations with other faiths. For these Buddhists the concept of skilful means suggests that Buddhist teachings and practices are temporary and do not have absolute truth. For this reason, some Buddhists may consider that all faiths may be expressing some aspect of truth in their teachings.

Nichiren Buddhists may reject the idea of pluralism. These Buddhists believe that the Lotus Sutra contains truth and is the only way to freedom from Dukkha. Following the teachings of the Lotus Sutra is the only effective way to develop Buddha nature. This may influence Nichiren Buddhists to reject the teachings of other faiths.

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‘Buddhism is no longer a source of truth and moral values.’

Evaluate this claim.

[15 marks]

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

Note that answers may, but need not, be limited to the consideration of the following specification content: Challenges of secularisation including: the replacement of religion as the source of truth and moral values; relegation of religion to the personal sphere; the rise of militant atheism: the view that religion is irrational.

Answers may present, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments:

Traditionally, Buddhism is observed and practised within communities. In some parts of the world, this is no longer the case because religion is now largely considered to be a private matter. Each person finds their own source of truth and moral values. However, religious communities which offer a source of truth and moral values still play an important role in some societies. In Thailand, Buddhism plays a significant role in culture and society. Buddhists often join the monastic Sangha for a short time to learn the values and teachings of Buddhism. This shows that Buddhism is still a source of truth and moral values.

In recent years militant atheists have gained attention by claiming that science and philosophy show religion to be a bad influence on society. They claim that religions are based on untruths and are the source of social unrest and conflict. They call for people to set religion aside to base moral values on secular ethical systems. However, some Buddhists argue that Buddhism is a philosophy rather than a religion. Engaged Buddhists explain that Buddhism seeks to bring about peace rather than unrest in the world, and is a good source of moral values.

Some people claim that Buddhism is not based on reason, and is therefore irrational, so cannot act as a source of truth and moral values. People today should instead look to science and secular philosophy to make sense of the world, and to determine how to live well. However, the Dalai Lama has claimed that science is ‘Buddhistic’ and believes that Buddhism is not irrational because it is based on reason and experience of the world. This means that Buddhism can be a source of truth and moral values for everyone.

0 3 . 1

‘Philosophy cannot support belief in religious sources of authority.’

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1.4: Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including approaches to the study of religion and belief. (10 marks)

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study. (15 marks)

Material related to AO1 and AO2 may be presented discretely or holistically within the answer. Markers must read the whole of the response before either mark is awarded.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

AO1

Buddhism

There is a range of Buddhist sources of wisdom and authority. Buddhists may focus on The Buddha and the Pali Canon alongside ideas about ultimate reality.

Philosophy

This can be approached in a variety of ways. For example, philosophy may challenge belief in the existence of ultimate reality as a source of authority with reference to the weaknesses of arguments for the existence of God, and to the problem of evil. It may also question the role of religious experiences, the value of miracles and the use of religious language in and by sources of authority.

Maximum Level 3 for answers that do not include both Buddhism and philosophy.

AO2

Answers may present, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments:

Philosophy may argue that Buddhist belief in the authority of The Buddha has no foundation. This is because the authority of The Buddha is supported by religious experiences and sustained by his teachings, and knowledge revealed at enlightenment. Science has demonstrated that religious experiences may have physical or emotional causes and therefore cannot support the teachings of The Buddha. However, secular Buddhists take a rational approach to The Buddha's teachings, removing aspects which cannot be empirically proven. This approach is in line with a scientific approach and as such philosophy can support the authority of the Buddha's teachings.

Philosophers may argue that Buddhist sources of authority depend on belief in Nirvana. Nirvana is often considered to be unexplainable and beyond understanding. For philosophers for example, Ayer, this means that they cannot be verified and have no authority. However, Buddhists may argue that Nirvana can be verified through meditation, which is similar to Hick's eschatological verification. Therefore, philosophy can support the Buddhist belief that Nirvana is a source of authority for Buddhists.

Philosophy may argue that the Buddhist belief in the authority of the Pali Canon is unsustainable because the religious language of the Pali Canon is largely meaningless. Since much of the Pali Canon may be considered non-cognitive, it cannot convey meaning, and therefore cannot have authority. However, philosophers such as Hare and Wittgenstein have shown that non-cognitive language may be meaningful, or it may be seen as symbolic, as discussed by Tillich, or analogical, as shown by Aquinas. Therefore, philosophy can support belief in the Pali Canon as a source of authority.

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‘Buddhists cannot accept the truth claims of other religions.’

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1:4: Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including approaches to the study of religion and belief. (10 marks)

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study. (15 marks)

Material related to AO1 and AO2 may be presented discretely or holistically within the answer. Markers must read the whole of the response before either mark is awarded.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

AO1

Buddhism

There may be consideration of Edict 12 of Ashoka on attitudes to other faiths; Buddhist attitudes to religious pluralism with reference both to diversity within Buddhism and diversity between religions, including the views of Nichiren Buddhism.

Philosophy

Philosophy may challenge any religious truth claims by considering the challenges of verification and falsification principles to the meaningfulness of religious language. Religious truth claims based on religious experiences may be challenged by science or because they cannot be verified. Students may also consider the value of miracles and claims about life after death.

Maximum Level 3 for answers that do not include both Buddhism and philosophy.

AO2

Answers may present, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments:

Nichiren Buddhists take an exclusivist position, claiming that their tradition holds the true teachings of Buddhism. For these Buddhists, the Lotus Sutra contains the essence of Buddhist teachings. Following these teachings will lead to freedom from Dukkha. Any truth claims which contradict this view must therefore be rejected. However, other Buddhists may agree with Wittgenstein, that most religious truth claims are better understood as context-specific language games or as skilful means. These ideas are meaningful within each religious faith community, and cannot be rejected or accepted outside the context.

Buddhists may take an inclusivist position and argue that those of other faiths may still accumulate karmic merit through positive intentional actions. Any truth claims which contradict right intention are mistaken and may be rejected. However, this view fails to respect the beliefs of other faiths. Other Buddhists may embrace the diversity of faiths in society, seeing the good in all religions. For example, some may follow the example of Thich Nhat Hanh who saw Martin Luther King Jr as a Bodhisattva. Religious pluralism is a feature of modern secular states, and many Buddhists live alongside other faiths without needing to reject or accept their truth claims.

Buddhists may argue that the Pali Canon and Sutras give an insight into reality. For example, the Four Noble Truths give clear guidance about the alleviation of Dukkha. This means that the truth claims of other religions which do not agree with these are wrong. They do not offer freedom from samsara, and as such must be rejected. However, some Buddhists may follow the example of Ashoka who took a pluralist view. Edict 12 states the Emperor honours those of all religions and that he 'values growth in the essentials of all religions' because this helps to illuminate the dhamma. Therefore, no truth claims should be rejected.

0 5 . 1

‘The conscience is the best guide for Buddhists to make decisions about embryo research.’

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and ethical studies.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1:4: Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including approaches to the study of religion and belief. (10 marks)

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study. (15 marks)

Material related to AO1 and AO2 may be presented discretely or holistically within the answer. Markers must read the whole of the response before either mark is awarded.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

AO1

Buddhism

Buddhist responses to issues raised by science with reference to genetic engineering may be considered. There may be reference to Buddhist teaching about ahimsa and its application to issues concerning the embryo and the unborn child. Good conduct: the importance of good moral conduct in the Buddhist way of life; the importance of intention.

Ethics

Answers may focus on the value of the conscience as a moral guide, and may refer to differing ideas about the nature of conscience. There may be some consideration of Divine Command Theory. They may also consider normative ethical theories and how they may be applied to embryo research.

Maximum Level 3 for answers that do not include both Buddhism and ethical studies.

AO2

Answers may present, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments:

Some people take the view that the conscience is the faculty of reason and wisdom. The Buddha emphasised the importance of reason and wisdom, and therefore these are the best guide to decision making on any subject, including embryo research. The Buddha tells his believers to test teachings, which could mean that reason should be used to make decisions. However, some Buddhists may prefer to base decisions on the teachings of the Pali Canon, written by those who have the wisdom of enlightenment. These teachings are therefore a better guide to decision making.

Some Buddhists may apply teachings about compassion and the alleviation of unnecessary Dukkha, in a similar way to Utilitarianism. This would make the conscience the best guide because it produces the most compassionate outcome for decisions about embryo research. However, other Buddhists may consider that Buddhist teaching about ahimsa means that any outcome which involves the death of an embryo is unethical, so the conscience may be a poor guide for decisions about embryo research.

Some Buddhists may see the conscience as an expression of Buddhist teachings, for example, right view and good intention. These are important aspects of Buddhist ethics, which may be developed through practice over time. This is similar to non-religious theories about conscience, for example Kohlberg's socialised moral development. For this reason, the conscience must be the best guide to decision making about embryo research. However, other Buddhists may argue that scientific research interferes with life and karmic consequence, for example altering the DNA of an embryo. This might involve making changes that have been determined by previous karma. If the conscience appears to allow that, it is mistaken. This means the conscience cannot be a good guide for decisions about embryo research.

0 6 . 1

‘Neither Buddhism nor ethical theories deal effectively with issues of animal life and death.’

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and ethical studies.

[25 marks]

Target: AO1:4: Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including approaches to the study of religion and belief. (10 marks)

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study. (15 marks)

Material related to AO1 and AO2 may be presented discretely or holistically within the answer. Markers must read the whole of the response before either mark is awarded.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

AO1

Buddhism

There may be consideration of, Ahimsa different Buddhist view about the treatment of animals. Good conduct: the importance of good moral conduct in the Buddhist way of life; the importance of intention.

Ethics

There may be consideration of the application of Natural Moral Law, Situation Ethics and Virtue Ethics to issues of non-human life and death.

Maximum Level 3 for answers that do not include both Buddhism and ethical studies.

AO2

Answers may present, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments:

Some Buddhists may allow blood sports. For example, Burmese and Chinese Buddhist festivals sometimes include cockfighting. Buddhists may argue that humans have a greater capacity for understanding than animals. This may mean that it is worse to kill or harm a more complex and developed being. This is consistent with Natural Moral Law which sees animals as a lower order of creation than humans, but conflicts with modern attitudes towards animals. Therefore, neither deals effectively with blood sports. However, most Buddhists apply the first precept to the issue of blood sports. In a similar way, Natural Moral Law sees blood sports as morally wrong if they lead humans to be cruel to one another. Thus, both may agree with modern attitudes, and deal effectively with the issue of blood sports.

Situation Ethics is an ethical system which fails to deal effectively with the use of animals in scientific procedures. Situation Ethics sees these procedures as a way to maximise agape love by saving human lives. In a similar way some Buddhists may consider testing on animals an act of compassion towards humans. This could conflict with some modern ideas about animal testing, so neither deals effectively with the issue. However, Buddhists say that compassion should be applied to all beings, including animals. Both Situation Ethics and Buddhists may consider the most loving or compassionate outcome of scientific procedures for animals and humans, so they may deal effectively with this issue.

Neither Buddhism nor Virtue Ethics deals effectively with the issue of using animals for food. Both fail to offer clear guidance on this issue. Within Buddhism there are varied opinions about eating animals. Aristotle's Virtue Ethics places animals lower on the hierarchy of souls, which means they can be used for food. However, many modern Buddhists would abstain from eating meat due to the first precept, and some modern approaches to Virtue Ethics may consider ethical veganism as an expression of the virtues of compassion and fairness. Therefore, both Buddhism and Virtue Ethics may deal effectively with the use of animals for food.