
AS Religious Studies Philosophy and Ethics Handbook

CGS

KSHSSA

SGA



AQA AS Level Religious Studies (7061)

Website: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/as-and-a-level/religious-studies-7061>

AQA AS Level Religious Studies (7061)

You are studying **Philosophy of Religion** and **Religious Ethics** and will be awarded an **AQA AS Level in Religious Studies**. The modules and their weightings are:

| AS: | Unit Code | Unit Title | % of AS |
|------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------|
| | Component 1 | Philosophy of Religion and Ethics | 67% |
| | Component 2 | Study of Religion | 33% |

Exams and Assessment

AQA AS Religious Studies (7061) – 2 Exams in Summer 2017

Component 1: Philosophy of Religion and Ethics

You will answer 2 two-part essay questions from each section. 2 hour written paper; 120 marks.

Component 2: Study of Religion - Christianity

You will answer 2 two-part essay questions. 1 hour written paper; 60 marks.

Expectations for AS Study

At AS in Philosophy and in Ethics all your teachers have the following expectations:

1. You will arrive to every lesson with all **textbooks** and this **handbook**, with **pens** and other **note making equipment** including **lined paper**.
2. **You will complete all homework set on time and with adequate levels of effort.** If you are unable to meet a deadline **you must contact** the appropriate **teacher at least 24 hours before** the **deadline** by **e-mail** and **request** an extension – the **teacher is under no obligation** to grant an extension.
Any extension is at the total discretion of the teacher.
3. **All essays** set for **homework** will be handed in with a front cover.
4. **If you miss any lessons**, for whatever reason, it is **your responsibility** to **catch up** by reading the textbook, seeing the teacher and getting copies of class-notes and hand-outs, **before the next lesson**.
5. You will keep the **checklists up-to-date** and will make **full use** of any **interventions** and **help clinics** provided.

| | AO1 | AO2 |
|--------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Component 1 – Philosophy of Religion and Ethics | 33.5% | 16.5% |
| Component 2 – Study of Religion (Christianity) | 33.5% | 16.5% |

GRADE A/B

Candidates **select** and **demonstrate clearly relevant knowledge** and **understanding** through the **use of evidence**, **examples** and **correct language** and **terminology** appropriate to the topics and course of study.

A01 (Assessment Objective 1)

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:

- Religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching
- Influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individual, communities and societies
- Cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice
- Approaches to the study of religion and belief

A02 (Assessment Objective 2)

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

Component 1 – Philosophy of Religion and Ethics

Section A: Philosophy of religion (taught at CGS/SGA)

Students must develop knowledge and understanding of the following:

- the meaning and significance of the specified content
- the influence of these beliefs and teachings on individuals, communities and societies
- the cause and significance of similarities and differences in beliefs and teachings
- the approach of philosophy to the study of religion and belief.

The term 'belief(s)' includes religious beliefs and non-religious beliefs as appropriate.

They should be able to analyse and evaluate issues arising from the topics studied, and the views and arguments of the scholars prescribed for study.

Students should also be able to use specialist language and terminology appropriately.

Questions may be set that span more than one topic.

Arguments for the existence of God

Design

- Presentation: Paley's analogical argument.
- Criticisms: Hume

Ontological

- Presentation: Anselm's a priori argument.
- Criticisms: Gaunilo and Kant.

Cosmological

- Presentation: Aquinas' Way 3. The argument from contingency and necessity.
- Criticisms: Hume and Russell

Students should study the basis of each argument in observation or in thought, the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments, their status as 'proofs', their value for religious faith and the relationship between reason and faith.

Evil and suffering

The problem of evil and suffering.

- The concepts of natural and moral evil.
- The logical and evidential problem of evil.
- Responses to the problem of evil and suffering.
- Hick's soul making theodicy.
- The free will defence.
- Process theodicy as presented by Griffin.
- The strengths and weaknesses of each response.

Religious experience

The nature of religious experience.

- Visions: corporeal, imaginative and intellectual.
- Numinous experiences: Otto, an apprehension of the wholly other.
- Mystical experiences: William James; non sensuous and non-intellectual union with the divine as presented by William Stace.

Verifying religious experiences

- The challenges of verifying religious experiences.
- The challenges to religious experience from science.
- Religious responses to those challenges.
- Swinburne's principles of credulity and testimony.

The influence of religious experiences and their value for religious faith.

Section B: Ethics and religion (taught at KSHSSA)

Students must develop knowledge and understanding of the following:

- the meaning and significance of the specified content
- the influence of these beliefs and teachings on individuals, communities and societies
- the cause and significance of similarities and differences in beliefs and teachings
- the approach of philosophy to the study of religion and belief.

The term 'belief(s)' includes religious beliefs and non-religious beliefs as appropriate.

They should be able to analyse and evaluate issues arising from the topics studied, and the views and arguments of the scholars prescribed for study.

Students should also be able to use specialist language and terminology appropriately.

Questions may be set that span more than one topic.

Normative ethical theories

- Deontological: natural moral law and the principle of double effect with reference to Aquinas; proportionalism.
- Teleological: situation ethics with reference to Fletcher.
- Character based: virtue ethics with reference to Aristotle.
- The differing approaches taken to moral decision making by these ethical theories.
- Their application to the issues of theft and lying.
- The strengths and weaknesses of these ways of making moral decisions.

The application of natural moral law, situation ethics and virtue ethics to:

- Issues of human life and death:
 - embryo research; cloning; 'designer' babies
 - abortion
 - voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide
 - capital punishment.
- Issues of non-human life and death:
 - use of animals as food; intensive farming
 - use of animals in scientific procedures; cloning
 - blood sports
 - animals as a source of organs for transplants.

Component 2 – Study of Religion (Christianity)

Students are required to study those aspects of the religious beliefs, teachings, values and practices of Christianity specified below and the different ways in which these are expressed in the lives of individuals, communities and societies.

They should develop a knowledge and critical understanding of:

- the specified material
- how the texts specified for study are interpreted and applied
- the influence of beliefs and teachings on individuals, communities and societies
- the causes, meanings and significance of similarities and differences in religious thought belief and practice within Christianity
- approaches to the study of religion and belief.

They should be able to analyse and evaluate issues arising from the topics studied, and the views and arguments of the scholars prescribed for study.

Questions may be set that span more than one topic.

Students may study any version of the specified texts, but should be aware of issues related to translation where relevant.

Quotations will not be used in questions.

Students should be able to use specialist language and terminology appropriately.

Exam questions will show a translation for any non-English terms (except for names of people, texts and schools of thought).

Sources of wisdom and authority (taught at CGS/SGA)

- The Bible: different Christian beliefs about the nature and authority of the Bible and their impact on its use as a source of beliefs and teachings, including the Bible as inspired by God but written by human beings.
- The Church: the different perspectives of the Protestant and Catholic traditions on the relative authority of the Bible and the Church
- The authority of Jesus: different Christian understandings of Jesus' authority, including Jesus' authority as God's authority and Jesus' authority as only human; implications of these beliefs for Christian responses to Jesus' teaching and his value as a role model with reference to his teaching on retaliation and love for enemies in the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:38-48.

God (taught at CGS/SGA)

- Christian Monotheism: one God, omnipotent creator and controller of all things; transcendent and unknowable; the doctrine of the Trinity and its importance; the meaning and significance of the belief that Jesus is the son of God; the significance of John 10:30; 1 Corinthians 8:6
- God as Personal, God as Father and God as Love: the challenge of understanding anthropomorphic and gender specific language about God: God as Father and King, including Christian feminist perspectives.
- The concept of God in process theology: God as neither omnipotent nor creator.

Self, death and afterlife (taught at CGS/SGA)

- The meaning and purpose of life: the following purposes and their relative importance: to glorify God and have a personal relationship with him; to prepare for judgement; to bring about God's kingdom on earth.
- Resurrection: the concept of soul; resurrection of the flesh as expressed in the writings of Augustine; spiritual resurrection; the significance of 1 Corinthians 15: 42-44 and 50-54.
- Different interpretations of judgement, heaven, hell and purgatory as physical, spiritual or psychological realities; objective immortality in process thought.

Good conduct and key moral principles (taught at KSHSSA)

- Good conduct: the importance of good moral conduct in the Christian way of life, including reference to teaching about justification by works, justification by faith and predestination.
- Sanctity of life: the concept of sanctity of life; different views about its application to issues concerning the embryo and the unborn child; the just war theory and its application to the use of weapons of mass destruction.
- Dominion and stewardship: the belief that Christians have dominion over animals; beliefs about the role of Christians as stewards of animals and the natural environment and how changing understandings of the effects of human activities on the environment have affected that role.

Expressions of religious identity (taught at KSHSSA)

- Baptism: the significance of infant baptism in Christianity with particular reference to the Catholic and Baptist traditions; arguments in favour of and against infant baptism.
- Holy Communion: differing practices associated with Holy Communion, and differing understandings of Holy Communion and its importance, in the Catholic and Baptist Churches; different Christian understandings of the significance of Jesus' actions at the last supper, Luke 22: 17-20.
- The mission of the Church: developments in Christian ideas of 'mission' from the early 20th century to today.

Reading List

Holiday Reading

Hansell, N. *The Sage Train: Philosophy comes to life* ISBN: 9789340846841

Gaarder, J. *Sophie's World* Pheonix ISBN-10: 1857992911

Magee, B. *The Story of Philosophy* DK ELT/Schools ISBN-10: 0751333328

Thompson, M. *Teach Yourself Ethics* Teach Yourself ISBN-10: 0340926961

Vardy, P. *The Puzzle of Ethics* Fount ISBN-10: 0006281443

Essential Reading

Bowie, R. *Ethical Studies* Nelson Thornes ISBN-10: 0748780793

Bowie, R with Frye, J. *AQA Religious Studies: Ethics* Nelson Thornes ISBN-13: 9780748798193

Oliphant, J. *AQA Religious Ethics for AS and A2* Routledge ISBN-13: 9780415549332

Vardy, P. and Vardy C. *Ethics Matters* SCM Press ISBN-13: 9780334043911

Dialogue Articles – Found in the Ethics and Philosophy Department

Wider Reading

Geisler, N. *Christian Ethics* Baker Academic ISBN-10: 0801038790 (Jan 2010)

Glover, J. *Causing Death and Saving Lives* Penguin ISBN-10: 0140134794

Hoose, B. *Christian Ethics* Geoffrey Chapman ISBN-10: 0826449689

Macquarrie, J. (Ed.) *A New Dictionary of Christian Ethics* SCM Press ISBN-10: 0334022045

Norman, R. *Ethics, Killing and War* Cambridge University Press ISBN-10: 0521455537

Palmer, M. *Moral Problems* Lutterworth Press ISBN-10: 0718830512

Peters, T. *Playing God* Routledge ISBN-10: 0415942497

Pojman, L. *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong* Wadsworth Publishing Co Inc ISBN-10: 0534551815

Singer, P. *Practical Ethics* Cambridge University Press ISBN-10: 052143971X

Singer, P & Kuhse, H. *Bioethics –an Anthology* WileyBlackwell ISBN-10: 1405129484

Singer, P. *Rethinking Life and Death* Oxford Paperbacks ISBN-10: 0192861840

Smart, J & Willams, B. *Utilitarianism: For and Against* Cambridge University Press ISBN-10: 052109822X

Wilcockson, M. *Issues of Life and Death* Hodder Education ISBN-10: 0340957751

Website

<http://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/> - This is an excellent site for revision notes, activities and articles.

Transition Work - Ethics

Ethics and Philosophy is all about thinking about and digesting new material. You should read the article 'The Death of Morality – Morality is a culturally conditioned response' (below) before the start of the course in September.

Make notes on the following:

- The difference between Objective and Relativist methods of making decisions - make sure you have an example for each
- Whether morals are emotionally based
- The case for Moral Objectivism – is it better than relativism?
- Which decision making system do you prefer?

Be prepared to discuss your findings in September.

Use the Handbook to research other theories and issues over the holidays.

The website <http://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/> is full of articles and ideas for you to explore.

The Death of Morality

Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response

Jesse Prinz argues that the source of our moral inclinations is merely cultural.

Suppose you have a moral disagreement with someone, for example, a disagreement about whether it is okay to live in a society where the amount of money you are born with is the primary determinant of how wealthy you will end up. In pursuing this debate, you assume that you are correct about the issue and that your conversation partner is mistaken. Your conversation partner assumes that you are making the blunder. In other words, you both assume that only one of you can be correct. *Relativists* reject this assumption. They believe that conflicting moral beliefs can both be true. The stanch socialist and righteous royalist are equally right; they just occupy different moral worldviews.

Relativism has been widely criticized. It is attacked as being sophomoric, pernicious, and even incoherent. Moral philosophers, theologians, and social scientists try to identify objective values so as to forestall the relativist menace. I think these efforts have failed. Moral relativism is a plausible doctrine, and it has important implications for how we conduct our lives, organize our societies, and deal with others.

Cannibals and Child Brides

Morals vary dramatically across time and place. One group's good can be another group's evil. Consider cannibalism, which has been practiced by groups in every part of the world. Anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday found evidence for cannibalism in 34% of cultures in one cross-historical sample. Or consider blood sports, such as those practiced in Roman amphitheatres, in which thousands of excited fans watched as human beings engaged in mortal combat. Killing for pleasure has also been documented among headhunting cultures, in which decapitation was sometimes pursued as a recreational activity. Many societies have also practiced extreme forms of public torture and execution, as was the case in Europe before the 18th century. And there are cultures that engage in painful forms of body modification, such as scarification, genital infibulation, or foot binding – a practice that lasted in China for 1,000 years and involved the deliberate and excruciating crippling of young girls. Variation in attitudes towards violence is paralleled by variation in attitudes towards sex and marriage. When studying culturally independent societies, anthropologists have found that over 80% permit polygamy. Arranged marriage is also common, and some cultures marry off girls while they are still pubescent or even younger. In parts of Ethiopia, half the girls are married before their 15th birthday.

Of course, there are also cross-cultural similarities in morals. No group would last very long if it promoted gratuitous attacks on neighbours or discouraged childrearing. But within these broad constraints, almost anything is possible. Some groups prohibit

attacks on the hut next door, but encourage attacks on the village next door. Some groups encourage parents to commit selective infanticide, to use corporal punishment on children, or force them into physical labour or sexual slavery.

Such variation cries out for explanation. If morality were objective, shouldn't we see greater consensus? Objectivists reply in two different ways:

Deny variation. Some objectivists say moral variation is greatly exaggerated – people really agree about values but have different factual beliefs or life circumstances that lead them to behave differently. For example, slave owners may have believed that their slaves were intellectually inferior, and Inuits who practiced infanticide may have been forced to do so because of resource scarcity in the tundra. But it is spectacularly implausible that all moral differences can be explained this way. For one thing, the alleged differences in factual beliefs and life circumstances rarely justify the behaviours in question. Would the inferiority of one group really justify enslaving them? If so, why don't we think it's acceptable to enslave people with low IQs? Would life in the tundra justify infanticide? If so, why don't we just kill off destitute children around the globe instead of giving donations to Oxfam? Differences in circumstances do not show that people share values; rather they help to explain why values end up being so different.

Deny that variation matters. Objectivists who concede that moral variation exists argue that variation does not entail relativism; after all, scientific theories differ too, and we don't assume that every theory is true. This analogy fails. Scientific theory variation can be explained by inadequate observations or poor instruments; improvements in each lead towards convergence. When scientific errors are identified, corrections are made. By contrast, morals do not track differences in observation, and there also is no evidence for rational convergence as a result of moral conflicts. Western slavery didn't end because of new scientific observations; rather it ended with the industrial revolution, which ushered in a wage-based economy. Indeed, slavery became more prevalent *after* the Enlightenment, when science improved. Even with our modern understanding of racial equality, Benjamin Skinner has shown that there are more people living in *de facto* slavery worldwide today than during the height of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. When societies converge morally, it's usually because one has dominated the other (as with the missionary campaigns to end cannibalism). With morals, unlike science, there is no well-recognized standard that can be used to test, confirm, or correct when disagreements arise.

Objectivists might reply that progress has clearly been made. Aren't our values better than those of the 'primitive' societies that practice slavery, cannibalism, and polygamy? Here we are in danger of smugly supposing superiority. Each culture assumes it is in possession of the moral truth. From an outside perspective, our progress might be seen as a regress. Consider factory farming, environmental devastation, weapons of mass destruction, capitalistic exploitation, coercive globalization, urban ghettoization, and the practice of sending elderly relatives to nursing homes. Our way of life might look grotesque to many who have come before and many who will come after.

Emotions and Inculcation

Moral variation is best explained by assuming that morality, unlike science, is not based on reason or observation. What, then, is morality based on? To answer this, we need to consider how morals are learned.

Children begin to learn values when they are very young, before they can reason effectively. Young children behave in ways that we would never accept in adults: they scream, throw food, take off their clothes in public, hit, scratch, bite, and generally make a ruckus. Moral education begins from the start, as parents correct these antisocial behaviours, and they usually do so by conditioning children's emotions. Parents threaten physical punishment ("Do you want a spanking?"), they withdraw love ("I'm not going to play with you any more!"), ostracize ("Go to your room!"), deprive ("No dessert for you!"), and induce vicarious distress ("Look at the pain you've caused!"). Each of these methods causes the misbehaved child to experience a negative emotion and associate it with the punished behaviour. Children also learn by emotional osmosis. They see their parents' reactions to news broadcasts and storybooks. They hear hours of judgmental gossip about inconsiderate neighbours, unethical co-workers, disloyal friends, and the black sheep in the family. Consummate imitators, children internalize the feelings expressed by their parents, and, when they are a bit older, their peers.

Emotional conditioning and osmosis are not merely convenient tools for acquiring values: they are essential. Parents sometimes try to reason with their children, but moral reasoning only works by drawing attention to values that the child has already internalized through emotional conditioning. No amount of reasoning can engender a moral value, because all values are, at bottom, emotional attitudes.

Recent research in psychology supports this conjecture. It seems that we decide whether something is wrong by introspecting our feelings: if an action makes us feel bad, we conclude that it is wrong. Consistent with this, people's moral judgments can be shifted by simply altering their emotional states. For example, psychologist Simone Schnall and her colleagues found that exposure to fart spray, filth, and disgusting movies can cause people to make more severe moral judgments about unrelated phenomena.

Psychologist Jonathan Haidt and colleagues have shown that people make moral judgments even when they cannot provide any justification for them. For example, 80% of the American college students in Haidt's study said it's wrong for two adult siblings to have consensual sex with each other even if they use contraception and no one is harmed. And, in a study I ran, 100% of people agreed it would be wrong to sexually fondle an infant even if the infant was not physically harmed or traumatized. Our emotions confirm that such acts are wrong even if our usual justification for that conclusion (harm to the victim) is inapplicable.

If morals are emotionally based, then people who lack strong emotions should be blind to the moral domain. This prediction is borne out by psychopaths, who, it turns out, suffer from profound emotional deficits. Psychologist James Blair has shown that psychopaths treat moral rules as mere conventions. This suggests that emotions are necessary for making moral judgments. The judgment that something is morally wrong is an emotional response.

It doesn't follow that every emotional response is a moral judgment. Morality involves specific emotions. Research suggests that the main moral emotions are anger and disgust when an action is performed by another person, and guilt and shame when an action is performed by one's self. Arguably, one doesn't harbour a moral attitude towards something unless one is disposed to have both these self- and other-directed emotions. You may be disgusted by eating cow tongue, but unless you are a moral vegetarian, you wouldn't be *ashamed* of eating it.

In some cases, the moral emotions that get conditioned in childhood can be re-conditioned later in life. Someone who feels ashamed of a homosexual desire may subsequently feel ashamed about feeling ashamed. This person can be said to have an inculcated tendency to view homosexuality as immoral, but also a conviction that homosexuality is permissible, and the latter serves to curb the former over time.

This is not to say that reasoning is irrelevant to morality. One can convince a person that homophobia is wrong by using the light of reason to draw analogies with other forms of discrimination, but this strategy can only work if the person has a negative sentiment towards bigotry. Likewise, through extensive reasoning, one might persuade someone that eating meat is wrong; but the only arguments that will work are ones that appeal to prior sentiments. It would be hopeless to argue vegetarianism with someone who does not shudder at the thought of killing an innocent, sentient being. As David Hume said, reason is always slave to the passions.

If this picture is right, we have a set of emotionally conditioned basic values, and a capacity for reasoning, which allows us to extend these values to new cases. There are two important implications. One is that some moral debates have no resolution because the two sides have different basic values. This is often the case with liberals and conservatives. Research suggests that conservatives value some things that are less important to liberals, including hierarchical authority structures, self-reliance, in-group solidarity, and sexual purity. Debates about welfare, foreign policy, and sexual values get stymied because of these fundamental differences.

The second implication is that we cannot change basic values by reason alone. Various events in adulthood might be capable of reshaping our inculcated sentiments, including trauma, brainwashing, and immersion in a new community (we have an unconscious tendency towards social conformity). Reason can however be used to convince people that their basic values are in need of revision, because reason can reveal when values are inconsistent and self-destructive. An essay on moral relativism might even convince someone to give up some basic values, on the ground that they are socially inculcated. But reason alone cannot instill new values or settle which values we should have. Reason tells us what is the case, not what ought to be.

In summary, moral judgments are based on emotions, and reasoning normally contributes only by helping us extrapolate from our basic values to novel cases. Reasoning can also lead us to discover that our basic values are culturally inculcated, and that might impel us to search for alternative values, but reason alone cannot tell us which values to adopt, nor can it instill new values.

God, Evolution, and Reason: Is There an Objective Moral Code?

The hypothesis that moral judgments are emotionally based can explain why they vary across cultures and resist transformation through reasoning, but this is not enough to prove that moral relativism is true. An argument for relativism must also show that there is no basis for morality beyond the emotions with which we have been conditioned. The relativists must provide reasons for thinking objectivist theories of morality fail.

Objectivism holds that there is one true morality binding upon all of us. To defend such a view, the objectivist must offer a theory of where morality comes from, such that it can be universal in this way. There are three main options: Morality could come from a benevolent god; it could come from human nature (for example, we could have evolved an innate set of moral values); or it could come from rational principles that all rational people must recognize, like the rules of logic and arithmetic. Much ink has been spilled defending each of these possibilities, and it would be impossible here to offer a critical review of all ethical theories. Instead, let's consider some simple reasons for pessimism.

The problem with divine commands as a cure for relativism is that there is no consensus among believers about what God or the gods want us to do. Even when there are holy scriptures containing lists of divine commands, there are disagreements about interpretation: Does "Thou shalt not kill?" cover enemies? Does it cover animals? Does it make one culpable for manslaughter and self-defence? Does it prohibit suicide? The philosophical challenge of proving that a god exists is already hard; figuring out who that god is and what values are divinely sanctioned is vastly harder.

The problem with human nature as a basis for universal morality is that it lacks normative import, that is, this doesn't itself provide us with any definitive view of good and bad. Suppose we have some innate moral values. Why should we abide by them? Non-human primates often kill, steal, and rape without getting punished by members of their troops. Perhaps our innate values promote those kinds of behaviours as well. Does it follow that we shouldn't punish them? Certainly not. If we have innate values – which is open to debate – they evolved to help us cope with life as hunter-gatherers in small competitive bands. To live in large stable societies, we are better off following the 'civilized' values we've invented.

Finally, the problem with reason, as we have seen, is that it never adds up to value. If I tell you that a wine has a balance between tannin and acid, it doesn't follow that you will find it delicious. Likewise, reason cannot tell us which facts are morally good. Reason is evaluatively neutral. At best, reason can tell us which of our values are inconsistent, and which actions will lead to fulfillment of our goals. But, given an inconsistency, reason cannot tell us which of our conflicting values to drop, and reason cannot tell us which goals to follow. If my goals come into conflict with your goals, reason tells me that I must either thwart your goals, or give up caring about mine; but reason cannot tell me to favor one choice over the other.

Many attempts have been made to rebut such concerns, but each attempt has just fuelled more debate. At this stage, no defence of objectivism has swayed doubters, and given the fundamental limits mentioned here (the inscrutability of divine commands, the normative emptiness of evolution, and the moral neutrality of reason), objectivism looks unlikely.

Living With Moral Relativism

People often resist relativism because they think it has unacceptable implications. Let's conclude by considering some allegations and responses.

Allegation: *Relativism entails that anything goes.*

Response: Relativists concede that if you were to inculcate any given set of values, those values would be true for those who possessed them. But we have little incentive to inculcate values arbitrarily. If we trained our children to be ruthless killers, they might kill us or get killed. Values that are completely self-destructive can't last.

Allegation: *Relativism entails that we have no way to criticize Hitler.*

Response: First of all, Hitler's actions were partially based on false beliefs, rather than values ('scientific' racism, moral absolutism, the likelihood of world domination). Second, the problem with Hitler was not that his values were false, but that they were *pernicious*. Relativism does not entail that we should tolerate murderous tyranny. When someone threatens us or our way of life, we are strongly motivated to protect ourselves.

Allegation: *Relativism entails that moral debates are senseless, since everyone is right.*

Response: This is a major misconception. Many people have overlapping moral values, and one can settle debates by appeal to moral common ground. We can also have substantive debates about how to apply and extend our basic values. Some debates are senseless, however. Committed liberals and conservatives rarely persuade each other, but public debates over policy can rally the base and sway the undecided.

Allegation: *Relativism doesn't allow moral progress.*

Response: In one sense this is correct; moral values do not become more true. But they can become better by other criteria. For example, some sets of values are more consistent and more conducive to social stability. If moral relativism is true, morality can be regarded as a tool, and we can think about what we'd like that tool to do for us and revise morality accordingly.

One might summarize these points by saying that relativism does not undermine the capacity to criticize others or to improve one's own values. Relativism does tell us, however, that we are mistaken when we think we are in possession of the one true morality. We can try to pursue moral values that lead to more fulfilling lives, but we must bear in mind that fulfillment is itself relative, so no single set of values can be designated universally fulfilling. The discovery that relativism is true can help each of us individually by revealing that our values are mutable and parochial. We should not assume that others share our views, and we should recognize that our views would differ had we lived in different circumstances. These discoveries may make us more tolerant and more flexible. Relativism does not entail tolerance or any other moral value, but, once we see that there is no single true morality, we lose one incentive for trying to impose our values on others.

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Jesse Prinz is a Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at the City University of New York. His books include *Gut Reactions*, *The Emotional Construction of Morals*, and *Beyond Human Nature*.

Transition work - Philosophy

Ethics and Philosophy is all about thinking about and digesting new material. You should read both of the following articles 'The Divine Attributes' and 'Two puzzles about omnipotence' (below) before the start of the course in September.

Make notes on the following:

- Outline the key attributes of God
- Whether you agree with Augustine's idea that to think of God is to 'attempt to conceive something than which nothing more excellent or sublime exists'
- Omnipotence and the paradox of the stone
- Omnipotence and supreme goodness

Be prepared to discuss your findings in September.

Use the Handbook to research other theories and issues over the holidays.

The website <http://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/> is full of articles and ideas for you to explore.

The Divine Attributes

At the heart of philosophy of religion is the concept of God. There are many concepts of God around the world, and different religions have different views on the nature of God. However, almost all agree that God is 'maximally great' – that nothing could be greater than God. This is the conception of God we will start with. But we develop it more narrowly, and the properties of God we will discuss are those which Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – the three great monotheistic traditions – have thought central. Even more narrowly, we will only look at how the debate over God's attributes has been understood and developed in the Western Christian tradition. We start with the thought that nothing could be greater than God. Another way this thought has been expressed is that God is perfect. Augustine says that to think of God is to 'attempt to conceive something than which nothing more excellent or sublime exists' (*On Christian Doctrine*, Book I, Chapter 7). Some philosophers claim that God is the most perfect being that could (not just does) exist. The idea of perfection has often been linked to the idea of reality. The view is that what is perfect is more real than what is not. Perfection has also been thought to involve complete self-sufficiency, i.e. not to be dependent on anything; and not to lack anything. Again, this connects with being the ultimate reality: that which is not the ultimate reality will depend on that which is, and so not be perfect. So God is traditionally thought of as the ultimate reality – the ground or basis for everything that exists.

GOD AS PERSONAL

Before turning to the attributes of God listed in the syllabus, we may ask why these properties have been thought to belong to God. Part of the answer is that many religions have thought that God is 'personal'. Properties that essentially characterize a person include intellect and will. The intellect is characterized by rationality and knowledge, the will by morality, freedom and the ability to act (power). (Some philosophers argue that to lack either intellect or will is to lack perfections – things without either intellect or will are not as great as things with intellect and will. Certainly we prize these abilities very highly. So to be perfect, God must have both intellect and will, i.e. be personal.) Intellect and will are properties of mind. If God is a person, he is so in virtue of being a mind. Being perfect, if God is a mind, then he is a perfect mind. He will have perfect intellect and perfect will. Perfect intellect involves perfect wisdom, perfect rationality and perfect knowledge (omniscience). Perfect will involves perfect goodness and perfect power (omnipotence). However, if God were a person, he would be very unusual. As the most perfect possible being, God cannot become more perfect; nor can God become less perfect, as then he would not be the most perfect being pos-

sible, and so not God. So unlike other persons, it seems that God cannot change. Persons also have bodies. But the most perfect being can't have a body, at least literally.

1. Anything made of matter changes over time.
2. Anything made of matter has parts.
3. Whatever has parts depends on them for its existence.
4. If God were made of matter, God would change and depend on his parts.
5. Being perfect, God can't change and God doesn't depend on anything for his existence.
6. Therefore, God can't be made of matter.

For these reasons, philosophers have said God is personal rather than a person, that is, God has attributes essentially associated with being a person, but God is not a person, because he does not change and does not have a body.

OMNISCIENCE

Perfect knowledge is usually taken to mean 'omniscience'. The most obvious definition of omniscience is 'knowing everything' (Latin *omni-*, 'all'; *scient*, 'knowing'). But we need to remember that God is the most perfect possible being, and perhaps it is impossible to know everything. For example, if human beings have free will, then perhaps it is not possible to know what they will do in the future. So let us say for now that omniscience means 'knowing all the truths that it is possible to know'. Omniscience is not just a matter of what God knows, but also of how God knows. Aquinas argues that God knows everything that he knows 'directly', rather than through inference or through understanding a system of representation (such as language or thinking in terms of propositions) (*Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 14, Article 5, 6). Other philosophers disagree, and argue that if God doesn't know all true propositions, then there is something that God doesn't know; so God has propositional knowledge as well as direct knowledge.

OMNIPOTENCE

Power is the ability to do things. As perfect, God will have perfect power, or the most power possible. The most obvious definition of omnipotence is 'the power to do anything' (Latin *omni-*, 'all'; *potent*, 'powerful'). But does 'anything' include, for instance, the logically impossible? Could God make $2 + 2 = 5$? Could God create a married bachelor? Some pious philosophers have wanted to say yes – logic is no limit on God's power. However, there is simply no way we can meaningfully say this. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 25, Article 3 Aquinas argues that the correct understanding of God's omnipotence is that God can do anything possible. What is impossible is a contradiction in terms – the words that you use to describe the impossible literally contradict each other. So any description of a logically impossible state of affairs or power is not a meaningful description, because it contains a contradiction. What is logically impossible is not anything at all.

Thus, the limits of the logically possible are not limitations on God's power. Even if God can't do the logically impossible, there is still nothing that God can't do.

SUPREME GOODNESS

There are two ways of understanding perfect, or supreme, goodness. If goodness just is perfection, then saying God is perfectly good is just to say that God is perfectly perfect – or the most perfect possible being. There is more than one way to be perfect (including, as we've seen perfect power and perfect knowledge), and God is perfect in all ways. This is a metaphysical sense of 'goodness'. The other sense of 'goodness' is the moral sense. In this sense, 'God is perfectly good' means that God's will is always in accordance with moral values. Plato and Augustine connect the two understandings of perfect goodness. What is perfect includes what is morally good; evil is a type of 'lack', a 'falling short' of goodness. If evil is a 'lack' or 'failure', what is morally good is more perfect than what is not.

ETERNAL AND EVERLASTING

Being perfect, God is self-sufficient, dependent on nothing else for existence. If something brought God into existence, God would be dependent on that thing to exist. If there were something that could end God's existence, then God is equally dependent on that thing (not exercising its power) to continue to exist. If God depends on nothing else, then nothing can bring God into existence nor end God's existence. And so (if God

exists) God's existence has no beginning or end. There are two ways in which this can be expressed. If God exists in time, then God's existence is everlasting – God exists throughout all time. If God exists outside time, then God's existence is eternal – God is timeless. In this case, God has no beginning or end because the ideas of beginning and end only make sense in time – something can only start or stop existing in time. God is not in time, so God cannot start or stop existing.

TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

These two interpretations of the relationship of God to time can be understood in a broader context of the relation of God to creation. The idea of transcendence marks the way God is very different from creation. First, God is 'outside' or 'goes beyond' the universe. Since God is self-sufficient and also traditionally said to be the creator of the universe, clearly God is not reducible to the universe. Second, God is not spatial or physical as the universe is, and many philosophers argue that God is eternal, transcending time. Third, while God is personal, he has intellect and will in quite a different way from persons. However, emphasising God's transcendence can make it seem that God is very remote from us. The claim that God is immanent marks the close connection between God's existence and the existence of everything else. For example, it is said that God is omnipresent, i.e. that he exists everywhere – in everything that exists, God is 'there'. In being everywhere, God knows everything from the 'inside'. Some thinkers also argue that God is everlasting, immanent in time and so in human history, giving a sense that we work alongside God in producing what is morally good. Immanence without transcendence – God as wholly immanent – would lead to 'pantheism', the view that God and the universe are the same thing. It would also lead to a denial of God being personal – since the universe isn't. So transcendence is necessary for the traditional conception of God; immanence is necessary to prevent that God being impossibly remote from us.

Two puzzles about omnipotence

If God is the most perfect possible being, then each of the perfections attributed to God must be possible, and the combination of the perfections must also be possible. Both of these requirements lead to difficulties. In this handout, we consider two puzzles about omnipotence.

OMNIPOTENCE AND THE PARADOX OF THE STONE

Mavrodes, 'Some puzzles concerning omnipotence' Can God create a stone that he can't lift? If the answer is 'no', then God cannot create the stone. If the answer is 'yes', then God cannot lift the stone. So either way, it seems, there is something God cannot do. If there is something God can't do, then God isn't omnipotent.

George Mavrodes argues that this famous paradox makes a faulty assumption: it presupposes the possibility of something logically impossible. The claim that someone, x, can make something that is too heavy for x to lift is not normally self-contradictory. However, it becomes self-contradictory – logically impossible – when x is an omnipotent being. 'A stone an omnipotent being can't lift' is not a possible thing; as a self-contradiction, it describes nothing. So 'the power to create a stone an omnipotent being can't lift' is not a possible power. If God lacks it, God still doesn't lack any possible power.

Alternatively, here's a slightly different solution. Suppose we allow that God can lift any stone, but cannot create a stone that he can't lift. But given that there is no limit on God's power of lifting stones, there is, in fact, no limit on God's power of creating stones. So God lacks no power related to lifting or creating stones. On either solution, the paradox does not show that God lacks any possible power. So it is no objection to God being omnipotent. Savage, 'The paradox of the stone' Wade Savage raises the following objection to Mavrodes' argument. Mavrodes uses the concept of an omnipotent being to argue that 'a stone that an omnipotent being cannot lift' is a self-contradiction. But the paradox is trying to show that the concept of an omnipotent being is self-contradictory. To bring this out, we should phrase the argument like this (p. 76):

1. Either x can create a stone which x cannot lift, or x cannot create a stone which x cannot lift.
2. If x can create a stone which x cannot lift, then, necessarily, there is at least one task which x cannot perform (namely, lift the stone in question).

3. If x cannot create a stone which x cannot lift, then, necessarily, there is at least one task which x cannot perform (namely, create the stone in question).
4. Hence, there is at least one task which x cannot perform.
5. If x is an omnipotent being, then x can perform any task.
6. Therefore, x is not omnipotent.

If the concept of an omnipotent being is self-contradictory, then an omnipotent being cannot exist. If we assume that an omnipotent being can exist, then we beg the question against the paradox.

However, Savage argues that there is a solution to the paradox. Although he doesn't notice it, it is the same solution as Mavrodes' second solution. (3) is false. For clarity, let's substitute God for 'x'. 'God cannot create a stone which God cannot lift' only means that 'if God can create a stone, then God can lift it'. This does not entail that there is something that God cannot do. God can create a stone of any size and can then lift that stone. There is no limitation of God's power here.

OMNIPOTENCE AND SUPREME GOODNESS

The second puzzle concerns the coherence of saying that God is both omnipotent and perfectly, or supremely, good.

1. To commit evil is to fail to be supremely good.
2. If God is supremely good, then God cannot commit evil.
3. Therefore, if God is supremely good, there is something that God cannot do.
4. Therefore, God cannot be both supremely good and omnipotent.

Here are three possible solutions:

1. God has the power to commit evil, and he can will it, so he is omnipotent. However, he always chooses not to, so he is supremely good.
2. There is no distinct 'power to commit evil', because 'evil' doesn't name a distinct act. To commit evil, God would have to do something, e.g. hurt someone unjustifiably. God has all the powers to bring this about – there is no power he lacks to do whatever the evil act would be – but chooses not to act in that way.
3. Aquinas argues that there is no distinct 'power to commit evil', because evil is not a 'something', but an absence of good (*Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 25, Article 3). Asking whether God can commit evil is like asking whether God can fail. Being 'able' to fail is not a power; failing demonstrates the lack of power to succeed. There is no 'power to commit evil' as committing evil is the result of the lack of power to do good. As God does not lack the power to do good, God cannot commit evil.

Glossary

| <u>Term</u> | <u>Definition</u> |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>A posteriori</i> | A statement which is knowable after experience |
| <i>A priori</i> | A statement which is knowable without reference to any experience. |
| <i>Abortion (procured Abortion)</i> | The termination of a pregnancy by artificial means. |
| <i>Absolute</i> | A principle that is universally binding. |
| <i>Absolutism</i> | An objective moral rule or value that is always true in all situations and for everyone without exception. |
| <i>Act Utilitarianism</i> | A teleological theory that uses the outcome of an action to determine whether it is good or bad. |
| <i>Active euthanasia</i> | The intentional premature termination of another person's life. |
| <i>AI (artificial insemination)</i> | The injection of sperm into a woman. |
| <i>Analytic statements</i> | Statements which are true by definition. |
| <i>Anthropocentric</i> | An approach to the environment that places human interests above those of other species. |
| <i>Apparent good</i> | Something which seems to be good or the right thing to do but which does not fit the perfect human ideal. |
| <i>Aretaic ethics</i> | Another name for Virtue ethics, from the Greek word, arête, which simply means any kind of excellence or virtue. |
| <i>Assisted dying/suicide</i> | When a person takes their own life with the assistance of another person. When the other person is a doctor, it is called physician-assisted suicide. |
| <i>Authoritarian conscience</i> | Our sense of moral right and wrong formed in us by authority figures whom we want to obey |
| <i>Autonomous moral agent</i> | Someone who can make a moral decision freely; someone who is totally responsible for their actions. |
| <i>Autonomy</i> | Self-directed freedom, arriving at moral judgement through reason. |
| <i>Benevolence</i> | Butler saw this as wanting the well-being of others. |
| <i>Biocentric</i> | An approach to the environment that considers the biological nature and diversity of the Earth to be of supreme importance. |
| <i>Biodiversity</i> | The variety of living things on Earth. |
| <i>Blastocyst</i> | A fertilised egg at about four to five days of development. |
| <i>Cardinal Virtues</i> | Originated in Plato – prudence, justice, temperance, courage. Added to with three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. |
| <i>Categorical Imperative</i> | A command to perform actions that are absolute moral obligations without reference to other ends. |
| <i>Celibacy</i> | Not having sexual relations with another person. |
| <i>Christian Realism</i> | The belief that Christianity may use violence to bring about the Kingdom of God and secure peace on Earth. |
| <i>Cloning</i> | A form of genetic engineering by which a plant, an animal or a human is created with the same genetic identity as another. |
| <i>Compatibilism</i> | The belief that it is possible to be both free and determined, as some aspects of our nature are determined, but not our ability to make moral decisions. |
| <i>Conscience</i> | Our sense of moral right and wrong. |
| <i>Conscientia</i> | The actual judgement or decision a person makes which leads to a particular course of action based upon those principles. |
| <i>Consciousness</i> | Awareness of self as an independent being, the ability to feel pain and pleasure. |
| <i>Consequentialism</i> | The rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by its consequences. |
| <i>Consequentialist</i> | Someone who decides whether an action is good or bad by its consequences. |
| <i>Conservation ethics</i> | The ethics of use, allocation, protection and exploitation of the natural world. |
| <i>Copernican Revolution</i> | Belief that the solar system revolves around the sun. |
| <i>Cultural Relativism</i> | What is right or wrong depends on the culture. |

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| <i>Deep ecology</i> | An approach to environmental ethics that sees all life forms as of value and human life as just one part of the biosphere. It rejects anthropomorphism. |
| <i>Deontological ethics</i> | Ethical systems which consider that the moral act itself has moral value (e.g. telling the truth is always right, even when it may cause pain or harm). |
| <i>Descriptive relativism</i> | Different cultures and societies have differing ethical systems and so morality is relative. |
| <i>Determinism</i> | The view that every event has a cause and so, when applied to moral decision, we do not have free will. |
| <i>Divine Command Theory</i> | Actions are right or wrong depending on whether they follow God's commands or not. |
| <i>Divine Law</i> | The Bible – this reflects the Eternal Law. |
| <i>Doctrine of double effect</i> | An action where the main intention is to do good, but which may have a bad side-effect. The good intention makes the right action. |
| <i>Dominion</i> | The Judaeo-Christian idea that humans have a special place in the natural world and have responsibility for it. |
| <i>Duty</i> | A motive for acting in a certain way which shows moral quality. |
| <i>Ecosophy</i> | A word formed by contracting the phrase 'ecological philosophy'. It refers to philosophies which have an ecocentric or biocentric perspective such as deep ecology. |
| <i>Embryo</i> | The developing bundle of cells in the womb up to eight weeks' gestation. |
| <i>Emotivism</i> | A theory which says that moral statements are just expressions of feelings. |
| <i>Ensoulement</i> | The moment when the soul enters the body – in traditional Christian thought this was at forty days for boys and ninety days for girls. The Church now believes that life begins at conception. |
| <i>Eternal Law</i> | The principles by which God made and controls the universe which are only fully known by God. |
| <i>Ethical naturalism/ Ethical cognitivism</i> | A theory that moral values can be derived from sense experience |
| <i>Ethical non-naturalism/ Ethical non-cognitivism</i> | A theory that ethical statements cannot be derived from sense experience. |
| <i>Eudaimonia</i> | The supreme good for humans. |
| <i>Euthyphro Dilemma</i> | The dilemma first identified by Plato – is something good because God commands it or does God command it because it is good? |
| <i>Feminism</i> | A way of thinking that seeks to emancipate women in society and give them equal opportunities. |
| <i>Foetus</i> | An organism in the womb from nine weeks until birth. |
| <i>Gaia Hypothesis</i> | A theory of James Lovelock. |
| <i>Gender</i> | Cultural and psychological characteristics which determine whether a person is male or female. |
| <i>Genetic engineering</i> | The technology involved in cloning, gene therapy and gene manipulation. |
| <i>Geocentric</i> | An approach to the environment which considers the geological nature and diversity of the Earth to be most important. |
| <i>Germ line engineering</i> | Changes in the parent's sperm or egg cells with the aim of passing on the changes to their offspring. |
| <i>Golden Mean</i> | The balance of extremes of virtues and vices. A balance between <i>excess</i> (having too much of something) and <i>deficiency</i> (having too little of something). |
| <i>Good will</i> | Making a moral choice expresses a good will. |
| <i>Hard determinism</i> | The belief that people do not have any free will and that all moral actions have prior causes. This means that nobody can be held morally responsible. |
| <i>Harm principle</i> | The belief that an act or consequence is morally permissible if no harm is done. |
| <i>Hedonic calculus</i> | Bentham's method for measuring the good and bad effects of an action. |
| <i>Hedonism</i> | The view that pleasure is the chief 'good'. |
| <i>Hippocratic Oath</i> | Written in the fifth century BCE, it became the basis for doctors' ethics. Other promises now replace it, but it is specifically against abortion. |
| <i>Holistic</i> | An approach to the environment that considers a range of factors, including the importance of balance within the ecosystem. |
| <i>Human genome</i> | A map of the human genes. |
| <i>Hypothetical imperative</i> | An action that achieves some goal or end. |

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| <i>Incompatibilism</i> | The belief that determinism is logically incompatible with free will. Thus some incompatibilists will say that determinism is a fact and so we are not free, but most take the opposite view that free will is a fact and so determinism is false. |
| <i>Instrumental value</i> | Something's value lies in its usefulness for others. |
| <i>Intellectual virtues</i> | Characteristics of thought and reason – technical skill, scientific knowledge, prudence, intelligence and wisdom. |
| <i>Intrinsic value</i> | Something's value lies in itself. |
| <i>Intrinsically good</i> | Something which is good in itself, without reference to the consequences. |
| <i>Intuitionism</i> | A theory that moral truths are known by intuition. |
| <i>Involuntary euthanasia</i> | This term is used when someone's life is ended to prevent their suffering, without their consent, even though they are capable of consenting. |
| <i>IVF (in-vitro fertilisation)</i> | The procedure by which sperm and eggs from a couple are fertilised in a laboratory dish (in vitro = in glass; test-tube babies). |
| <i>Jus ad bellum</i> | Justice in the decision to wage war. |
| <i>Jus in bello</i> | Justice in the conduct of war. |
| <i>Jus post bellum</i> | Justice in the ending of the war. |
| <i>Just War Theory</i> | The belief that war is morally justified if it meets certain criteria. |
| <i>Kingdom of Ends</i> | A world in which people do not treat others as means but only as ends. |
| <i>Law</i> | Objective principle, a maxim that can be universalised. |
| <i>Libertarianism</i> | The belief that determinism is false and people are free to make moral choices and so are responsible for their actions. |
| <i>Logical positivism</i> | The view that only those things which can be tested are meaningful. |
| <i>Maxim</i> | A general rule in accordance with which we intend to act. |
| <i>Meta-ethics</i> | The analysis of ethical language. |
| <i>Moral absolutism</i> | There is only one correct answer to every moral problem. |
| <i>Moral objectivism</i> | Truth is objectively real regardless of culture. |
| <i>Moral relativism</i> | There are no universally valid moral principles and so there is no one true morality. |
| <i>Moral virtues</i> | Qualities of character such as courage, friendliness, truthfulness. |
| <i>Natural Moral Law</i> | The theory that an eternal, absolute moral law can be discovered by reason. |
| <i>Naturalistic fallacy</i> | The claim that good cannot be defined. |
| <i>Normative ethics</i> | A term used to describe different moral codes of behaviour; rules by which we make moral decisions (e.g. Utilitarianism, Natural Moral Law, Kantian ethics, Virtue ethics). |
| <i>Ordinary and extraordinary Means</i> | According to Natural Law moral duties apply in ordinary situations. A patient may refuse certain treatments on the grounds that they are 'extraordinary' (i.e. over and above the essential). |
| <i>'Ought implies can'</i> | The idea that someone cannot be blamed for what he could not do, but only for what he was capable of doing but did not do. |
| <i>Pacifism</i> | The belief that violence is wrong. |
| <i>Passive euthanasia</i> | Treatment is either withdrawn or not given to the patient in order to hasten death. This could include turning off a life-support machine. |
| <i>Personhood</i> | Definition of a human being as a person – having consciousness, self-awareness, ability to reason and self-sufficiency. |
| <i>Phronesis (practical wisdom)</i> | According to Aristotle the virtue most needed for any other virtue to be developed. Balancing self-interest with that of others. Needs to be directed by the moral virtues. |
| <i>Predestination</i> | The belief that God has decided who will be saved and who will not. |
| <i>Preference Utilitarianism</i> | Moral actions are right or wrong according to how they fit the preferences of those involved. |
| <i>Prescriptivism</i> | A theory that ethical statements have an intrinsic sense so other people should agree with the statement and follow it. |
| <i>Primary precepts</i> | The fundamental principles of Natural Moral Law. |
| <i>Proportionality</i> | In war, weapons should be proportionate to the aggression. |
| <i>Purpose</i> | The idea that the rightness or wrongness of an action can be discovered by looking at whether or not the action agrees with human purpose. |

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| PVS (persistent vegetative state) | When a patient is in this condition, doctors may seek to end their life. The relatives have to agree and usually the patient must be brain-stem dead. |
| Qualitative | Looking at the quality of the pleasure. |
| Quality of life | The belief that human life is not valuable in itself; it depends on what kind of life it is. |
| Quantitative | Looking at the quantity of the happiness. |
| Queer theory | The idea that there can be no fixed rules about what is or is not a legitimate sexual relationship. Being queer is the freedom to define oneself according to one's nature. |
| Real good | The right thing to do – it fits the human ideal. |
| Realism | Normal moral rules cannot be applied to how states act in times of war. |
| Relativism | Nothing may be said to be objectively right or wrong; it depends on situation, the culture and so on. |
| Rule Utilitarianism | Establishing a general rule that follows utilitarian principles. |
| Sanctity of life | The belief that human life is valuable in itself. |
| Secondary precepts | These are worked out from the primary precepts. |
| Self-love | Butler, thought of this as wanting the well-being of self or enlightened self-interest, not selfishness. |
| Sentience | The ability to feel pleasure and pain. |
| Sex | Biological characteristics that determine whether a person is male or female. |
| Shallow ecology | The Earth is cared for to make conditions better for humans. |
| Situation ethics | The morally right thing to do is the most loving in the situation. |
| Slippery slope | This means that when one moral law is broken others will also be gradually broken and there will be no moral absolutes. |
| Soft determinism | The belief that determinism is true in many aspects, but we are still morally responsible for our actions. |
| Somatic cell engineering | Changes in somatic (body) cells to cure an otherwise fatal disease. These changes are not passed on to a person's offspring. |
| Stem cell | A 'master' cell that can become any kind of material. |
| Stewardship | A way of interpreting the use of dominion, which sees humans as caretakers of the natural world. |
| Subjectivism | Each person's values are relative to that person and so cannot be judged objectively. |
| Summum bonum | The supreme good that we pursue through moral acts. |
| Super-ego | Freud's idea is that the super-ego reinforces ideas of correct behaviour implanted in us when we were young. |
| Synderesis | Aquinas' idea of what he termed 'right' reason by which a person acquires knowledge of basic moral principles and understands that it is important to do good and avoid evil. |
| Synthetic statements | Statements that may be true or false and can be tested using experience or senses. |
| Teleological | Moral actions are right or wrong according to their outcome or teleos (end). |
| Teleological ethics | The morally right or wrong thing to do is determined by the consequences. |
| Theory of justice | Principles underpinning law. Two main theories: right of the individual (Thomas Hobbes), and rights of the community (Marx, Rawls). |
| Therapeutic cloning | A method of producing stem cells to treat diseases such as Alzheimer's. |
| Universalisability | If an act is right or wrong for one person in a situation, then it is right or wrong for anyone in that situation. |
| Utilitarianism | Only pleasure and the absence of pain have utility or intrinsic value. |
| Utility | The theory of usefulness – the greatest happiness for the greatest number. |
| Viability | Where a foetus is considered capable of sustaining its own life, given the necessary care. |
| Vices | The direct opposite of virtues – habitual wrong action. |
| Virtue | Habitually doing what is right – being good requires the practice of a certain kind of behaviour. |
| Voluntary euthanasia | The intentional premature termination of another person's life at their request. |
| Zygote | A 'proto-embryo' of the first two weeks after conception – a small collection of identical cells. |

