AS Religious Studies

Ethics Revision

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The Relationship between Religion and Morality

1. The Historical link between Religion and Morality

For many people, morality is the reason they believe in God. Some religious believers claim that people have an **eschatological** interest to behave morally, whilst others, such as the **existentialists** believe that there is no punishment other than that which human beings issue to one an-other.

Some people believe that morality is entirely dependent upon religion and therefore, without religion there would be no morality. Morality depends upon a religious source of authority. Other sources of moral teachings are unreliable.

Those who believe that morality is independent of religion still may observe a link between the two. Much of the secular morality in the West is derived from Judeo-Christian ethics.

Religious leaders are expected to set a good example morally to others and there have been many who have historically been considered as heroes for their moral standpoint. Indeed, even today, religious leaders are often to first to protest about an issue they feel is immoral.

2. Divine Command Ethics

Those who accept DCE look to sacred texts to tell them how to behave morally. Examples of this are the **Decalogue** in Exodus in the Bible or the first **Surah** of the Qur'an. According to Divine Command Ethicists, God's will alone will determine what is right and wrong. All human beings must do is accept God's revelation and obey it.

The view that without God nothing would be morally impermissible is very difficult to sustain, because it does not require a belief in divine command ethics to support the view that there are clear moral prohibitions in every society and moral actions that are deemed to be particularly praiseworthy. Despite this, DCE has a lot of weighting in the ethical world, it is entirely consistent with the teachings in the Old Testament and the Qur'an. **A.G Grayling** claims: *'Sin is the disobedience to the commands of God; virtue is obedience to them…* (Grayling, 2003). What DCE does, is make very clear what is morally right and what is morally wrong. It provides a clear and consistent system of morality which any person can follow.

There are major problems with DCE as a theory though. Humans may well obey God's commands, but they may be doing it out of fear rather than out of good. The threat of eternal damnation should not, according to some philosophers be a reason to behave morally. As Kant claimed: *'A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes…it is good through its willing alone— that is, good in itself.'* (Kant, 1785).

One can also criticise DCE using The Euthyphro Dilemma:

Is what is pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved? (Plato, *Euthyphro*)

In English: Is what is good, good because God commands it to be or, does God make commands based on what is good independently of God?

If there is no morality before God, then God makes commands arbitrarily (without a substantive reason)

But, if morality exists independently of God and he commands it based on pre-existing laws, then there is no reason for the existence of God.
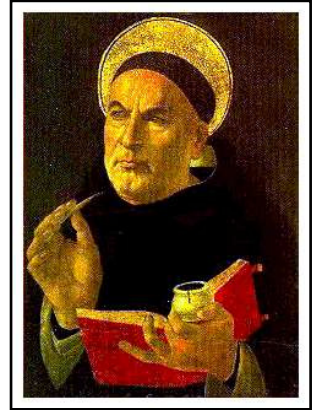
Finally, if morality is simply commanded by God, how are human beings ever meant to conceive of being able to assess whether it is morally good or not? Worship of God is, in this sense entirely passive and there is little scope for a personal relationship with God, which is at the centre of major world religions such as Christianity.

Finally, if obedience to Divine Commands is rewarded in heaven, there seems to be a dangerous inequality: many apparently Godly people are amply rewarded with material riches and happy lives in this world, whilst others endure suffering, but are waiting for their reward in the afterlife. The danger is that believers will simply claim that 'God works in ways we cannot understand'. This is often the argument given when there seems to be no rational justification for the actions of God. **Basil Mitchell** claims that these are *'vacuous statements'* (Mitchell, 1971). They have no real meaning, because they cannot provide a solution as to why good people suffer.

3.   Aquinas and Natural Moral Law

The dependency of morality on religion, need not be seen as relying solely on religious scripture. It can be seen as a dependency on the existence of God. In *Summa Theologica* **St Thomas Aquinas** argues that *'Among beings there are some more and some less good...But more and less are predicated of different things according as they resemble in their different ways something which is the maximum...so that there is something which is truest, something best, something noblest...Therefore there must also be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness and every other perfection, and this we call God.'* (Aquinas) What this means is that the goodness found in human beings reflected the perfect goodness of God.

According to Aquinas morality is worked out through revelation (as written in the scriptures) and human reasoning. Reason determines that the ultimate purpose and destiny of human life is fellowship with God. Humans naturally tend towards this destiny and should therefore live according to their design. Aquinas believed that human beings were naturally good and would never knowingly pursue evil: *'No evil can be desirable, either by natural appetite or by conscious will. It is sought indirectly, namely because it is the consequence of some good'* (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*).

Reason, according to Aquinas, identifies natural virtues: **prudence, temperance, fortitude** and **justice.** Aquinas believed that these virtues must become habitual. People should take care to avoid sinful acts becoming habitual and this means that they must take into account both the **intention** and the **act.** An act is not moral if it is only good from an exterior perspective e.g. helping an old man tend to his garden (good act), but secretly wanting money for it (immoral intention). This works the other way around: telling a lie to a friend (immoral act) in order to save him/her from emotional torment (good intention). Aquinas believed that acts are intrinsically good or bad, because when human beings act in accordance with their purpose, God is glorified.

Whether or not acts lead towards God depend on whether the action fits the purpose that people have been made for. Humans were made with a number or purposes in mind: **self-preservation**, to **reproduce**, to **acquire knowledge,** to **live in an order society** and to **worship God.** These are known as **primary precepts.** Acting in accordance with these is good, acting against them is bad. **Secondary precepts** are rulings about things that we should or shouldn't do because they uphold, or fail to uphold a primary precept. E.g. sex is only good when it fulfils the purpose of reproduction, according to Aquinas.

Aquinas' theory of Natural Law does have its strengths. It allows for human reasoning to be accounted for, which it cannot be in DCE. It is therefore a way to merge religious scripture with human reasoning. It has all the strengths of an absolutist deontology: it is consistent and provides people with a means for establishing a common morality. When one observes the world today, they may claim that morality is relative, however Aquinas' theory suggests that this may not be the case. Although actions may differ, basic principles are the same e.g. 'thou shalt not kill'. It therefore provides religious believers in the modern world, with a theory which is consistent with the morality that exists around them. What his theory also does is provide people with a concrete basis with which to be moral and a firm reason from which to refuse to step over moral boundaries. Immoral actions have consequences, and others such as equality are intrinsically good.

Many philosophers however, criticise Aquinas. **Kai Neilson** argues that human nature is not a definable concept, it is too vague. It is not self-evident as Aquinas claims it to be. He also points out that there is not a common morality across humanity, citing how the Eskimos killed members of their families who would not make it through the winter and new-born girls if there were no husbands to support them. Neilson believes that Natural Law cannot account for these significant differences.

It could be that human beings have different natures. Take for example homosexuality: Aquinas believes that homosexuality is unnatural as homosexual sex cannot lead to reproduction, but they find love and are able to express it through their sexuality. Perhaps therefore, a common natural law does exist, but it is far more complex than Aquinas thought.

Vardy and **Grosch** also criticise Natural Law. Aquinas maintains that every sexual act should not preclude the possibility of new life, to use genitals in any other way is immoral. However, is it necessary that every discharge of semen should lead to new life in order to maintain the human species? Sexual acts can be justified in the benefit they bring to the couple's relationship. Aquinas could therefore be wrong about his deductions as they may be based on an incorrect view of human life. In addition to this, it is possible that actions have more than one justified purpose: genitals could have been created for pleasure as well as reproduction.

Aquinas' theory is based on a Christian ethic using scriptural law, yet in the New Testament, Jesus opposes legalistic morality and debated against it with the Pharisees. Some ethicists, such as **Joseph Fletcher** believe that Jesus rejected this approach in favour of one overriding principle, that of agapé. **Kevin Kelly** describes morality as originating from people who are the authors and directors of any actions.

4. Kant and Deontology

Kant believed that all human beings by using reason could discern a moral law. Kant maintained that if human beings were ever going to achieve the *summum bonum* (perfect morality), they could not do it without the existence of God. Religious scripture is not needed to discern morality, according to Kant, but the existence of God is an essential postulate (key principle) for the existence of morality. Kant also claimed that we reason out morality because we have **free will**, without this God-given free will, morality would be meaningless.

Kant claimed that moral principles, which he termed **'categorical imperatives'** could be worked out by taking into consideration the universal law. Kant claimed: *'Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.'* What Kant is saying is that in order to judge whether an action is immoral, one must consider the consequences of it become a universal law (rule carried out by all human beings), if this creates moral chaos, then it is a categorical imperative. Take the example of stealing; a man wishes to steal a painting to get enough money to feed his family. He must use the following reasoning: If I steal, then stealing becomes a universal law, if stealing is a universal law then everyone could and would steal and society would break down. This means that if I steal now I am being immoral and not stealing is therefore a categorical imperative.

Kant claimed that **hypothetical imperatives** are neither moral or immoral, they are the means by which something is achieved, e.g. if I want to pass my driving test, I must have lessons. There is no moral obligation with a hypothetical imperative whereas there is with a categorical imperative. Categorical imperatives have a moral duty attached to them. They are not to be adhered to out of fear or selfishness, this according to Kant is why DCE is not a good basis for morality. People should be moral because it is their duty alone, nothing more.

There are many advantages to following Kant's deontology. It accounts for free will and human reasoning as a basis for establishing objective morality. It provides a powerful set of moral principles that prohibit acts that would commonly be considered immoral such as theft and murder. It overcomes some of the problems created by DCE, not only does it suggest that human beings can reason morality, but it also suggests that behaving in a moral way, for any other reason than duty is immoral. Obedience based on threat is not, according to Kant, moral.

Kant's theory also means that people can never be used as a means to an end in the way they can will a teleological theory. Kant claims: *'So act that you treat humanity, both in your own person and in the person of every other human being, never merely as a means, but always at the same time as an end.'* (Kant, 1797). This therefore means that justice is impartial and that justice for individuals is safeguarded by the categorical imperative. Kant's theory gives human beings intrinsic worth. We are the rational high point of creation and this means that we cannot be exploited for some greater good.

There are however, a number of criticisms of Kant's theory. The refusal to allow exceptions to our moral behaviour places severe restrictions on human beings. **Refer to the example of the Nazi Guard.** What this example also shows, is that in some circumstances duties can conflict. Another problem is with the concept of **universability**. Are any two moral dilemmas the same? How similar do they have to be to be covered by the same maxim? Should all killing be governed by the same maxim?

Teleological thinkers account for the consequences of an action, Kant does not do this. Yet if we observe the way in which people behave in society, nearly everyone has broken some form of categorical imperative such as telling a 'white lie'. One could therefore argue the complexity of morality is not accurately represented by Kant's theory.

In addition to this, his theory also assumes that human beings will reason and get the same outcome, yet many argue that morality is relative and that there are lots of different moral practices all over the world. This suggests that objective morality arrived at through reasoning does not exist.

5. Conscience

One way in which morality may be independent of religion is through conscience. However, some argue that the conscience is God-given or informed by religious teaching. In the 18th Century **Joseph Butler** wrote: *'...We have this moral approving faculty is certain from experiencing it in ourselves...whether called conscience, moral reason or Divine reason.'* For Butler the conscience directs us between self-interest and a concern for others. Butler does not see these two as conflicting and in a document written to the Vatican he explains this view. **Cardinal J.H. Newman** believed that the conscience was a means with which we know the existence of God. In the conscience we find an authority which is superior to that of our human nature, this higher authority must be according to Newman supernatural in origin.

The New Testament view of the conscience is that it is the guardian of a believer's moral health. **St Paul** wrote about the conscience, he claimed: *'...[the conscience] is universal whether man believes in God or not, and is God-given.'* He also claimed that *'...[the conscience makes us] capable of being redeemed by Jesus Christ'.* Both of these extracts are taken from the **Romans.** The Old Testament also has references to the conscience, when in Genesis human beings are referred to as being made in the image of God, this means they were created with God like qualities, one of which as a moral code.

Cogito ergo sum

Aquinas believes that the conscience is part of the Natural Law. It is the means by which we can recognise morally rational behaviour. This will eventually lead human beings to recognise God's moral law. We make logical reasoned judgements based on previous experience and on the teaching of scripture. It is therefore a continuous attempt to work out God's will and acting in the best interests of God's will. This will ultimately benefit not only those who seek it, but all humanity.

There are those who argue that the conscience cannot be associated with religious belief or belief in God. Some scholars claim that there are no assurances that the conscience is universal. There are often conflicts between individuals and society, furthermore, a person's conscience is simply their interpretation and this means that there are bound to be conflicts. **Sigmund Freud** believed that the conscience did not come from God, it is an internalised **super-ego** (our moral policeman). Freud believed that religion, far from aiding the conscience and moral development actually caused neurosis.

6. Critiques of the link between religion and morality

Some believe that moral teaching based on scripture is unreliable because sacred texts are culturally dependent on the time in which they were written. This leads to a problem in interpreting the teachings in the modern world. Others argue that it is not moral to only be good because you want to get rewarded and avoid punishment. Scholars have made the point that religious morality is derived from secular morality anyway and it is given religious origin to add to its status, meaning that if you break a moral code, you will be punished for eternity.

Some philosophers believe that there is too much pressure put on religious believers to meet unrealistic standards of morality. In addition to this, the morality set down in religious codes of practice is often counter-intuitive. This may be the reason that religious moral codes are not often used on a daily basis, but only in times of crises. Religious morality can also, according to some, prevent moral progress.

The most significant criticism comes from Plato in the form of **Euthyphro Dilemma**:

Is what is pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved? (Plato, *Euthyphro*)	In English: Is what is good, good because God commands it to be or, does God make commands based on what is good independently of God?	If there is no morality before God, then God makes commands arbitrarily (without a substantive reason)
		But, if morality exists independently of God and he commands it based on pre-existing laws, then there is no reason for the existence of God.

The sacrifice of Isaac is also significant: In the Old Testament, Abraham is asked by God to sacrifice his only son—Isaac to prove that he has faith in God. Abraham takes Isaac to be sacrificed and right before he is about to do it, God stops him and they find a ram in the thicket to sacrifice instead. The Danish Philosopher **Søren Kierkegaard** struggled with this story and asked whether it is right that a person abandon what is intrinsically good in the name of faith. In the end, he concludes that it is right. Nevertheless **John Habgood** believes that it is not: *'If morality is supposed to be universal, can it really be discounted, even under extreme pressure from God?'* (Habgood, 2000). Feminist **Daphne Hampson** has a slightly different interpretation of the story: Sarah advises Abraham against this course of action saying that God does not intend that Abraham should blindly obey him, but Abraham will not listen and so Sarah is forced to advise God to send an angel to intervene.

Job is another good example here. Job is a righteous and wealthy man and therefore an easy target for Satan. God permits Satan to do his worst, except for killing the man. Job loses everything and his friends tell him it must be because he has offended God. Job turns to God asking for forgiveness and ultimately his wealth is restored to him. Again **Habgood** comments on this: *'If only there were one to arbitrate between man and God as between man and neighbour!'*

7.   A moral case against the existence of God

R.A Sharpe claims that it is a misconception that if we were not religious we would be less moral. Sharpe refers to the Roman Catholic prohibition of contraception: *'Is it remotely conceivable that God would be interested in whether people use a condom rather than the rhythm method of contraception?'* There are many similar problems that can be cited, e.g. the Westboro Baptist Church in America set up a movement called 'God Hates Fags'. It seems counterintuitive to argue that God preaches hate. If this were the case, many religious believers would reconsider their faith.

Another criticism comes from **Nietzsche**. He believed that religion encourages a 'slave morality'. This is perhaps because religion encourages its follows to keep the next life in mind when they are in this one. Religious believers think that justice will be observed in the next life and therefore are passive in this one. **Charles Taylor** observes: *'The moment one loses confidence in God or immorality, one becomes more self-reliant, more courageous and the more solicitous to aid where only human aid is possible.'*
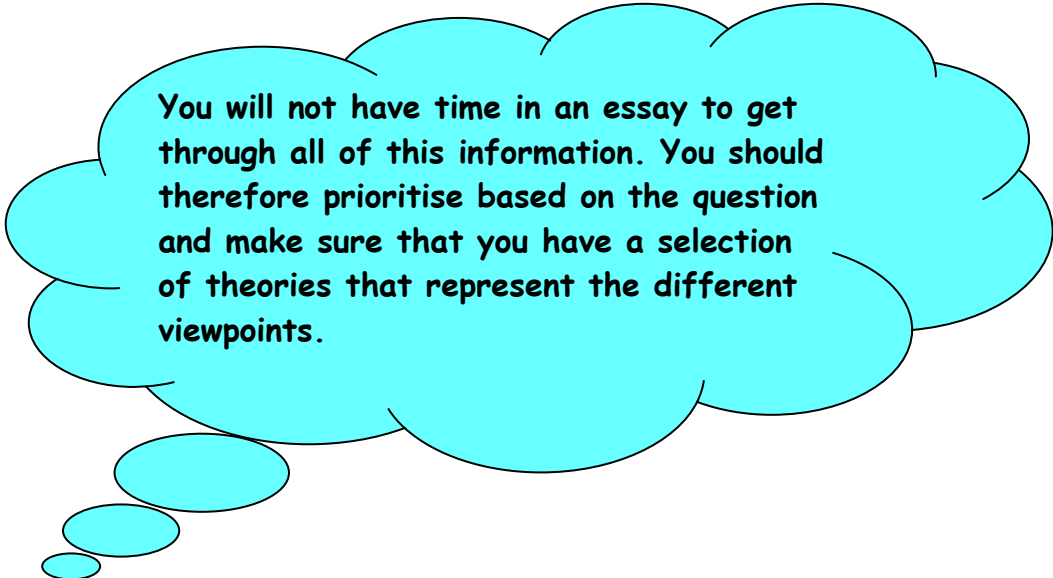
Despite all this, there has been a criticism laid at the door of atheist societies that they have created a moral vacuum and a world which revolves around materialism, a society which is a **Alasdair MacIntyre** points out 'morally bankrupt'.

8.   Religious Morality and Modern Society

Although more people are becoming secular, religious morality has certainly not disappeared. Some argue that much of the morality within the Western secular world is Christian in origin anyway. Whilst others, such as **A.G Grayling** argues that this is not the case. Saving money and increasing wealth is valued in modern society, whereas Christian teachings suggest the exact opposite. Grayling also observes that in the modern world people are concerned about the environment, animal welfare and the rights of people, because they have an intrinsic worth and not because Divine will claims them to be good.

A secular ethicist may argue that human beings are more likely to be responsible if there is an absence of a God. If there is no afterlife, then this life really counts and people cannot be passive about obeying morality. In addition there is no time to make up for their sins in an afterlife, they have to live the one that they have, as morally as they can.

However, it is impossible to deny the impact of religion on morality, indeed even on secular morality and it is for this reason that it commands a great deal of respect in the modern world.

You will not have time in an essay to get through all of this information. You should therefore prioritise based on the question and make sure that you have a selection of theories that represent the different viewpoints.

Utilitarianism

1. Teleology

A teleological theory is one which is based on the purpose or the end of an action. The basis for judging an action morally is therefore dependent on the consequences of that action. Under this system of ethics, there are no moral absolutes, nothing is right or wrong in itself. Actions therefore only have an instrumental value i.e. one which is based on whether or not they aided the achievement of a particular end.

2. Jeremy Bentham: a background

Bentham was a philosopher born in East London to a wealthy conservative family. He was somewhat of a child prodigy and his father sent him to Queen's College Oxford to study. Bentham was primarily concerned with political and social reform. Much of his work, including that on Utilitarianism was influenced by his correspondence with the economist **Adam Smith**.

Bentham was not the first to propose the principle of utility, he discovered it in **Joseph Priestley's** *Essay on Government*. This motivated Bentham to create a universal theory that could be applied to all ethical situations. He believed that such a theory would help correct the inequalities that were present in his society at the time.

3. The Principle of Utility

The principle of utility means a measure of usefulness. We can propose any principle of utility we like, both Utilitarianism and Situation Ethics propose a principle of utility for judging the morality of an action. For utilitarianism, the utility principle is: **The greatest happiness for the greatest number.** As **William Frankena** claims: *'What then could be more plausible than that the right is to promote the general good— that are actions and rules...are to be decided upon by determining which of them produces...the greatest general balance of good over evil.'*

4. Hedonism and the Hedonic Calculus

Happiness is universally valued and desired in itself and therefore despite the difficulties with the principle of utility, judging an action morally by determining happiness does make sense. Hedonistic theories are centred on the idea that **happiness can be equated to what is good.** Before Bentham's theory, **David Hume** equated happiness with usefulness and like Hume, Bentham believed that good was the maximisation of pleasure and the avoidance of pain.

There is however, a notorious difficulty in defining happiness, for **Aristotle** happiness meant living well and being pious. For Bentham happiness was simply the amount of pleasure subtracting the amount of pain. A very economic way of distinguishing a human emotion. The way in which Bentham did this was by proposing the **Hedonic Calculus:**

1. **Intensity:** How deep or superficial the happiness is
2. **Duration:** How temporary or permanent the happiness is
3. **Certainty:** How sure the happiness is
4. **Propinquity:** How near or remote the happiness is
5. **Fecundity:** How likely the happiness is to recur and lead to further happiness
6. **Purity:** How free from pain the happiness is
7. **Extent:** How far the happiness-giving effects of an action will be spread.

5. Bentham's Act Utilitarianism

Bentham was writing at a time of great social and economic change. The industrial revolution had created a new working class who had moved into urban areas to get work. Bentham's theory largely met the needs of this particular group in society as it went against the poverty, overcrowding and oppression they were facing at the time. One only has to look at **Elizabeth Fry's** attempt to reform the prison system and the **Factory Acts of 1833 and 1847** to cite evidence for these changes. The changes at the time, even those after Bentham's death seemed to advocate Utilitarianism. The suffering majority were finally receiving the attention

Elizabeth Fry reading to inmates in a prison

they needed. Bentham's major objection was to Evangelical Christians who preached that poverty was a state ordained by God and could not be changed, people were simply to submit to God. He rejected the idea that God determined who would be rich and who would be poor.

Bentham believed that happiness was not a passive state, but that it must be sought after. This is a problem for religious believers who consider happiness to be a rather dubious moral goal, many religious believers have endured pain and suffering for a cause which they believe to be right. This is certainly not what is taught in Biblical scripture: *'For thy sake we are being killed all day long'.* **(Romans, 8).** Nevertheless, there is no denying the influence that Bentham's theory had and still does have on society.

6. Evaluating Bentham's Utilitarianism

There are many benefits of Bentham's theory. It seems logical that morality should be linked with the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of pain. One only needs to consider the popular support the connection received to agree with this. It also seems natural to consider the consequences of our actions when deciding what to do. As **Bowie** claims: *'Utilitarianism offers a balanced, democratic morality that promotes general happiness'.* (**Bowie, 2001**). Utilitarianism does not support individual pursuits at the expense of the majority, it is a commonsense system that is applicable to every-day moral decisions. Because it is flexible it therefore can account for the complexity of morality in society. **Consider the example of the Nazi Guard.** Utilitarianism is consistent with the system of **democracy** but not only that, one can easily envisage it being employed in a number of institutions such as hospitals.
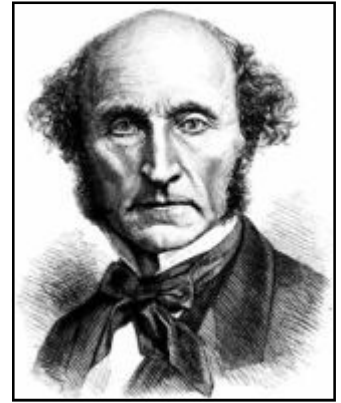
There are however significant problems with Bentham's utilitarianism. Any teleological theory encounters a problem in that it relies on the consequence of an action. They depend on accurate predictions of the future, which are not always possible. A second difficulty is measuring and defining happiness. It is very difficult to quantify pleasure and pain and what about the fact that many people think that a certain amount of pain is good? One can question whether people are motivated by pleasure, some people will endure years of suffering for something that they consider to be worthwhile.

A third difficulty concerns justice: Utilitarianism is based on a maximum-pleasure result, and it says nothing about how pleasure should be distributed. It ensures that most people receive pleasure, but guarantees nothing for minorities. **Consider the example of the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany.** The lack of equality and justice present in Utilitarianism is something that concerns **John Rawls.** The lack of justice in Utilitarianism is something which also concerns **Alasdair MacIntyre** as he claims that it can justify horrendous acts.

Vardy and **Grosch** take issue with the hedonic calculus. They claim that it is impossible for human goodness to be reduced to mere sensation. What does not follow on from the calculus is that some pleasures are intrinsically bad, sexual violence being a good example of this. As **Philip Pettit** points out: *'It would forbid absolutely nothing: not rape, not torture, not even murder'.*

7. John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism

Mill had a great deal of respect for Bentham and believed that Utilitarianism was a valid moral theory. Mill did not therefore seek to dismiss Bentham's theory, merely to develop it in an attempt to overcome criticisms that had been made. Mill was also committed to maximising the well-being of society. The main difference was that Mill maintained that feelings other than happiness alone were necessary for a good life. He claimed that things such as love, justice and truth are important as well. In order to illustrate this point, Mill distinguished between two main forms of pleasure: **higher pleasures**—these are pleasures of the intellect such as learning, honour, dignity and generosity, and **lower pleasures**—these are bodily pleasures based on instinct such as sexual activity and eating. Although Mill considered that all pleasures are present to some degree in human lives, he maintained that true happiness was achieved by cultivating the higher pleasures, for this reason **higher pleasures take precedence over lower pleasures**. He claimed: *'Few human creatures would consent to being changed into any of the lower animals, for the promise of the fullest allowance of a beast's pleasures...'* Mill maintained that happiness was to indefinable to be a concept within which a moral theory is based, this is the reason why he thought that the hedonic calculus was inaccurate. It is through trial and error that human beings are able to establish want makes them happy.

8. Mill's Rule Utilitarianism

Mill believed that in order to safeguard justice, we should not enter every situation using the hedonic calculus, rather, the moral rules which we are governed by should be worked out by using the principle of utility. For example: it would not create any happiness if murder was legal and happiness is generally maximised by maintaining that murder is wrong, therefore the rule is *'murder is wrong'.* The rules may not always be inherently and absolutely true, but they are useful tools in evaluating our actions and they have instrumental value in themselves.

Mill subdivided Rule Utilitarianism into two categories: **weak rule utilitarianism**—is when rules are present, but there may well be legitimate exceptions to them, whereas **strong rule utilitarianism**—is when the rules are decided based upon the principle of utility, but there are to be no exceptions. **This type of utilitarianism is teleological in method (how the rules are decided), but deontological in practice (the rules are absolute).**

9. Evaluating Mill's Utilitarianism

Mill's utilitarianism has succeeded in accounting for the vagueness of happiness as a concept. Mill's distinction between higher and lower pleasures does explain how pleasure which people see as intrinsically bad is immoral. Mill has successfully argued why it is immoral to make people suffer for the pleasure of the majority. This links in with Mill's work on the **harm principle**. *'The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over another member of a civilised community against his will, is to prevent harm to others'.*

Mill has also overcome the issue of justice. With rule utilitarianism, there is a sense of justice are there are moral rules which if broken can be seen as immoral. This is particularly the case with strong rule utilitarianism where a person cannot make an exception with these rules. This prevents, not only the persecution of a minority, which Bentham's utilitarianism fails to do so, but also prevents moral rules from being broken if this will create pleasure for a particular majority at any one time. This theory has the certainty of a deontological one, there is not the worry about being able to predict the consequences of an action at any one time as there are rules we can refer to which govern our moral behaviour.

There are still a number of problems associated with Mill's utilitarianism. **Henry Sidgwick** points out that not only can it be very difficult to distinguish between higher and lower pleasures, but also difficult to distinguish between one higher pleasure and another. He pointed out that if reading Shakespeare and listening to Bach are both higher pleasures, there is nothing distinct about either of them. Where do those pursuits which are intellectually and physically demanding, such as martial arts fall?

W.D Ross also has a significant criticism of utilitarianism which Mill's theory cannot overcome and that is one of any theory which relies upon a single equation. Life's ethical dilemmas cannot be reduced to a simplistic calculus or principle.

10. Modern applications of Utilitarianism: Was it successful?

In recent times rule utilitarianism has been overtaken by **preference utilitarianism**. This means that people's preferences are satisfied rather than trying to give them the greatest amount of pleasure. This form of utilitarianism is associated with **Peter Singer** and **R.M Hare.** It is certainly easier than relying on pleasure which is notoriously difficult to define. Anyone can adopt preference utilitarianism, because anyone can express preference, regardless of whether they have experienced it or not. Sometimes preferences may be seen as duties and this is some attempt to link teleology with deontology.

　　Another form of utilitarianism is known as **negative utilitarianism.** This seeks to promote the least amount of harm or pain, or to prevent the greatest harm to the greatest number. Proponents of this theory argue that it is more effective, because there are more ways to create harm than there are to create pleasure. However, critics suggest that it may simply result in the justification of using the fastest and least cruel method of killing a person rather than arguing that they should not be killed.

　　Some argue that no form of utilitarianism is effective because it does not take into account *prima facie obligations* (personal relationships). We will nearly always give preferential treatment to those we love yet utilitarianism requires that we see people as an amount or as equal and disregard out feelings towards them. Furthermore, utilitarianism needs to defend itself against claims that it is totally impractical because it allows people to be treated as a means to an ends.

Ultimately utilitarianism served to created a theory of morality that is unified. It offers a means for approaching ethics in a systematic way, and although much is made of the conflict between utilitarianism and deontological ethics, in practice, they will usually arrive at the same conclusion.

Situation Ethics

1. The background to Situation Ethics

Traditionally Christian ethics has been deontological in approach. In the 1960s an alternative approach emerged. It was not exclusive to Christian ethics and could be used by secular ethicists as well, however it is obviously Christian in origin. In 1966 **Joseph Fletcher** wrote *Situation Ethics*. It is important to understand the context within which he wrote this. The 20th Century had witnessed enormous social change; the equality of women in the work-place and ideologically, the peace movement and rise of pacifism as a result of the Vietnam War, the equality of ethnic minorities and the sexual revolution.

These changes were not supported by all, in 1964 the British Council of Churches reaffirmed its position on sexual relationships—that they were only appropriate within marriage. They emphasised the importance of retaining traditional family values. In 1964 **J.A.T Robinson** published his book *Honest to God* in which he questioned the conservative view of God that was held by the Church at the time. This caused quite a stir before Fletcher had even published his book and ultimately, Robinson's book was deemed anti-Christian.

2. Agapé

Fletcher used New Testament dialogues between Jesus and the Pharisees to illustrate old versus new morality. The Pharisees used the Torah to provide an explanation for every situation, whereas Jesus went back to first principles. The example of Jesus intervening to save a woman charged with committing adultery is a good example of this: *'He who is without sin, cast the first stone at her.'* (**John 8:7**). Jesus was not using the law of the time as written in the scriptures as his guidance, but was acting out of the basic principle of love and compassion for his fellow human. Situation Ethics is about using love and compassion as guidance not a pre-packaged rule.

Robinson used this idea when referring to divorce. Traditionally marriage is seen as a supernatural bond which is wrong to break. *'Those who God has joined together let no man put asunder'.* (**Matthew, 19**). Robinson believed that this kind of thinking was outdated and potentially damaging. He believed that people should do what best served love and not what accorded with tradition. Robinson is not advocating divorce, but rather addressing it situationally.

Agapé is a particular kind of love and it is based on the principle of *'Love thy neighbour'* it is unconditional love that every person has for their fellow human beings, regardless of their personal relationships with them. **Situation Ethics requires people to best serve agapé**. No action is right or wrong in itself, it is judged based on whether it is the most loving thing to do or not.

3. Situation Ethics vs. Legalism and Antinomianism

In his book *Situation Ethics,* Fletcher identified 3 different approaches to morality. The first was the legalistic approach. This was a conservative rule based morality, DCE being a good example of this. The second was antinomianism which was the opposite of legalism with no maxims whatsoever, each individual moral situation should be treated as a new one. Situation Ethics is a mid-way between these two, there is not a set of maxims for every situation as there is in legalism, but there is an overriding principle, that of agapé which must be served, thus making it more than antinomianism.

Situation Ethics is therefore a teleological theory based on the Biblical teachings about unconditional love: *'Great love has no man than this, that a man may lay down his life for his friends'* (**John, 15**). The crucifixion is the best example of the love shown by Jesus in that he sacrificed his life out of love for humanity to save them from their sins.

Be careful: Situation Ethics is not Utilitarianism adapted.

4. Principles and Presuppositions

Fletcher proposed 4 presuppositions to situation ethics:

1. **Pragmatism:** demands that the proposed course of action should work. It's success or failure should be judged according to the principle.
2. **Relativism:** Rejects moral absolutes. Fletcher states: *'Christians cannot go on trying to lay down the law.'* (**Fletcher, 1966**).
3. **Positivism:** recognises that love is the most important criterion of all expressed in the teaching
4. **Personalism:** demands that people should be put first.

The ethos governing Situation Ethics is based on 6 principles of agapé.

1. **Love is always good:** There is no action or moral rule which is good in itself, an action is only good insofar as it brings about agapé: *'Only one thing is intrinsically good; namely love: nothing else at all.'* (**Fletcher, 1963**).
2. **Love is the only norm:** This was at the centre of Jesus' teachings, there were others that were considered useful, but love was to be the norm that provided a solution to all moral issues: *'The ruling norm of Christian decision is love: nothing else.'* (**Fletcher, 1963**).
3. **Love and justice are the same and love is justice distributed:** Fletcher claimed that justice is giving everyone their due, the one thing that everyone is due is love and love and justice are therefore the same. Justice settles how love is to be applied to every person in every situation, it cannot be distributed through laws: *'Love and justice are the same, for love is justice distributed: nothing else.'* (**Fletcher, 1963**).
4. **Love is not the same as like and always wills the neighbour's good:** Agapé is not conditional upon whether we like someone or not, it is unconditional love that we must have for every person regardless of how we feel about them: *'Love wills the neighbour's good, whether we like him or not'* (**Fletcher, 1963**).
5. **Love is the only means:** Situation Ethics is a teleological theory and is therefore focused on consequences, therefore anything can be justified as long as it brings about the most loving outcome: *'Only the end justifies the means, nothing else.'* (**Fletcher, 1963**).
6. **Love's decisions are made situationally:** every situation is different and there is no way of knowing in advance whether something will be right or wrong, the situation ethicist must be prepared to enter every moral situation afresh: *'Love's decisions are made situationally, not prescriptively'* (**Fletcher, 1963**).

Fletcher developed Situation Ethics by referring to a range of cases that could not be resolved by referring to moral rules. One of these examples is the case of **Mrs Bergmeier** who deliberately asked a Russian prison camp officer to make her pregnant so she could be released and return to her family in Germany, as Fletcher termed it **sacrificial adultery.** Another case that Fletcher cited was that of patient in a mental hospital in 1962 who was raped by a fellow patient. The father requested that the hospital perform the abortion, which they would not do as it was against the law at the time. Fletcher argued that in this case abortion would have been the most loving action.

5. Evaluating Situation Ethics

One of the key advantages of Situation Ethics is that it provides an alternative Christian ethic which is consistent with the Gospel representation of Jesus. There are many examples of when Jesus broke religious laws because he felt that love was better served by doing so. Because it is teleological Situation Ethics is flexible in nature. It takes into account the complexities of human life. **You could make reference to Nazi Guard** scenario here. It is for many liberal Christians a theory which characterises the importance of agapé and allows for a more progressive view of Christianity, one which did not say that certain actions are always immoral such as abortion, homosexuality and divorce.

There are notable critics of **Fletcher's** Situation Ethics, perhaps the most well-known is **William Barclay.** Barclay adopted a conservative view of Christian ethics and had a number of objections to Fletcher's theory: He observes that the cases that Fletcher uses are extreme ones and questions therefore its use in day-to-day moral decision making. *'It is much easier to agree that extraordinary situations need extraordinary measures than to think that there are no laws for ordinary everyday life'.* (**Barclay, 1971**). Barclay also claims that Fletcher puts too much emphasis on being free from the rules and the decision making process that goes with it. If it were the case that agapé could always be fairly dealt out then rules would become redundant, since this is not the case, then rules are entirely necessary. Barclay claims that the law is important because it clarifies our experience, it is a means by which a reasonable life is determined, it defines immorality, protects society and has a deterrent value. Barclay also explains that we are rarely able to make a truly free choice, that there are too many constraints such as our environment, which means that freedom is no more than an illusion. **Most importantly Barclay believes that the law ensures that human beings do not make an artificial distinction between public and private morality.**

Another key critic of Situation Ethics is **Susan Howatch.** Howatch claims that the concept of agapédescribed in Situations Ethics does not relate to the reality of moral decision making. Ethical theories are idealistic whereas morality is realistic, rarely do our lives correspond to the principles set down in a moral theory.
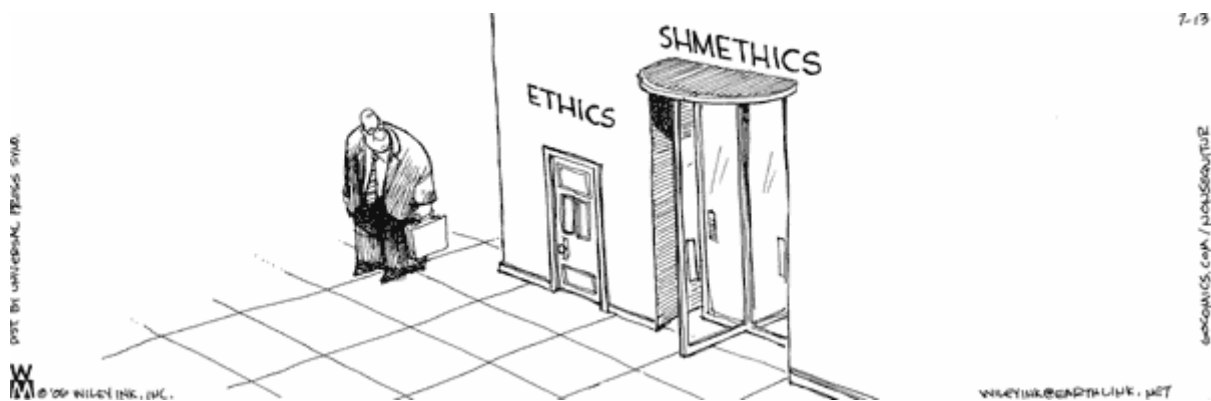
There are a number of important weaknesses to Situation Ethics. Because it is teleological it relies on an ability to predict the consequences of our actions. As has been explained rarely does real life conform to principles, let alone to our predictions. It is therefore individualistic and subjective. In addition to this Situation Ethics also encounters the problem of right intention and wrong outcome: all it relies on is for people to act out of agapé. There are no moral rules about how one should do this. This means that a person may believe they are acting out of agapé when they are not. Take the example of a new mother who has post-natal depression and commits infanticide, because she believes that the world is too cruel a place for her children to live in and they are better off dead. She is acting out of agapé, because she is doing what she thinks is the most loving action, yet the outcome is far more disturbing. This is a possibility with any theory that is suitably vague, a criticism often made of situation ethics.

Some critics focus on Fletcher's use of Jesus as an example. Although he claimed unconditional love was af the utmost importance, he also reaffirmed the 10 Commandments and indeed never broke any of them during his lifetime. This is more consistant with the conservative view of Christian ethics.

6.   A future: Proportionalism?

It is easy to dismiss Situation Ethics because of the problems it has as a teleological theory, yet we must not underestimate the fact that some of the key developments in modern morality are a direct result of Situation Ethics, such as racial, sexual and gender equality. It is also an important theory because of the nature of its governing principle, which is why it is popular with many liberal Christians today. Yet it is this same overriding principle which some have termed as idealistic as **Reid and Tyler** claim: *'Perhaps the reality of situation ethics exposes is not that moral judgements should be made stiuationally, but that sometimes we wish they could.'* (**Reid and Tyler, 2006**).

Perhaps an answer can be found in the ethical theory known as **Proportionalism**. This is an attempt to merge deontological and teleological theories together, in much the same way as Rule Utilitarianism. Proportionalism can be used to determine the right course of action by weighing up the good and the necessary evil caused by the action. As a result, Proportionalism aims to choose the lesser of evils. It can be summarised by **Hoose's** explanation: *It is never right to go against a principle unless there is a proportionate reason which would justify it"* (**Hoose, 1987**).

Sexual Ethics

1. The history of sexual ethics

Ancient Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras believed that an ideal life was one in which people abstained from physical pleasures in order to spend time on intellectual pursuits. The world was divided into the physical and the spiritual, this is known as **dualism**. A person's soul is imprisoned in their body and physical activities such as sex keep it trapped there.
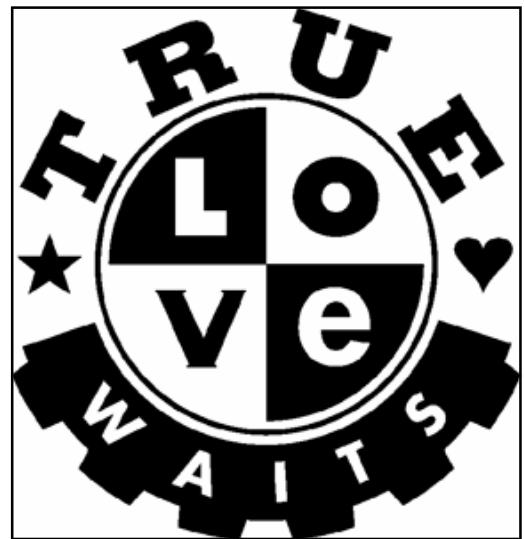
In the 21st Century, there are many different attitudes to sex. Some see sex as positive because it provides physical gratification, whether a person is in a relationship or not. Adultery is still considered to be immoral, but it is not a crime like some of the other Biblical teachings are. Many claim that the Western World is paradoxical because on the one hand it encourages sexual freedom, whereas on the other it has witnessed a sharp rise in STIs, sexual crimes and teenage pregnancy.

2. Christianity and sexuality

In the past Christian philosophers have portrayed sex in a negative way, teaching that it is sinful, except for the purposes of reproduction. The fact that **Jesus** led a celibate life also influences Christians as being an ideal state, in order to be able to devote time to God.

Other Christians follow **St Paul's** view that whilst celibacy is desirable, if people cannot control their sexual urges, then the appropriate context is marriage.

Celibacy is still desired by some Christians today: monks and nuns must stay celibate, as must Roman Catholic priests. In addition to this there have been a number of evangelical Christian organisations which have been set up to try to get teenagers to remain celibate such as True Love Waits and The Silver Ring Thing. Christianity today teaches that marriage is the appropriate context for sexual relationships and there is emphasis placed on the link between sex and love *'Love finds expression in the lover's bodily union...'* (**Marriage and the Church's Task 1978**).

3. Libertarianism and Sexuality

The libertarian view is that sexual acts are moral if both persons are over the legal age limit and consent. There is a lot of importance placed on **free-will**:sexual crimes such as rape, and paedophilia are immoral because in the case of sexual crimes, consent is not given and in the case of paedophilia, children are too young to give informed consent. Adultery would also be considered immoral if any deception had occurred and the same can be said for any sexual act involved deception.

Libertarians use **J.S.Mill's** harm principle: people are free to do as they please, as long as they do not cause harm to others. The advantage of this is that it allows consenting adults to do as they please, meaning that offence is not caused and happiness is increased. It is conducive to a tolerant lifestyle. The problem with this approach is that free-will and consent are often limited, a person may agree to have sex to stay in a relationship when they don't really want to be.

4. Utilitarianism and sexuality

Utilitarians maintain that sex is permissible if it occurs between two consenting adults in private. This means that nobody is offended and the partners are able to increase their own happiness. Most moral arguments about the importance of safe sex are utilitarian because safe sex decreases the amount of potential harm done to society through the spread of STIs. Sexual relationships that involve harm and deceit should be avoided as they lead to more harm than good.
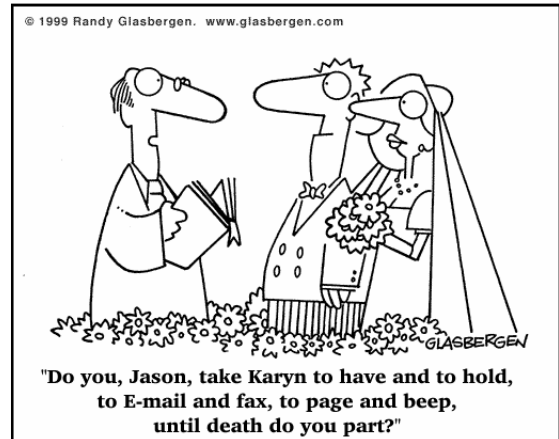
5. Feminism and sexuality

Feminist critics have argued that Christian attitudes to sexual relationships are traditional and outdated because they are based on notions of the woman as the child bearer and submissive to her husband. Socially constructed sex roles make it difficult for women to identify their sexual desires. Women will only be equal when they are free from male dominance. Most sexual crimes are committed by men, which is often why feminists criticise liberal views of sexuality, because they assume that there is equality between the sexes.

6. Marriage

Christians believe that marriage is ordained by God, and that a man and woman make a binding commitment to be with one another exclusively until death of one of the partners: *'a man will leave his father and mother and will be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh'* (**Genesis, 2:24**). The purpose of a Christian marriage is twofold: fidelity and support on the one hand and procreation on the other. Within a marriage a husband is the head of the wife and she must be submissive to him and in turn he must love and honour her. This hierarchy within marriage has been the source of much controversy because it suggests inequality between husband and wife.

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"Do you, Jason, take Karyn to have and to hold, to E-mail and fax, to page and beep, until death do you part?"

However Christians point out that Christ's headship of the Church was one of love and sacrifice and this is how the husband should behave and not an issue of dominance of one partner over another. In turn a woman should show respect for her husband, not because she is inferior to him, but out of love for him.

7. Divorce

There are disputes among Christians about the way in which we should interpret New Testament teachings on divorce. *'What God has joined together, let not man separate'.* (**Matthew, 19:6**). Jesus supported this teaching and claimed: *'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.'* (**Mark 10:11-12**). However, Jesus is also quoted as saying that divorce in the case of unfaithfulness is a permissible exception.

Various Christian scholars have written about the issue of divorce. **Selwyn Hughes** argues that divorce need not be the inevitable end of a marriage, rather than a Christian should seek forgiveness and reconciliation. Christian denominations agree that ideally marriage should be for life, but vary in how rigorously they apply Biblical teaching. The Roman Catholic church forbids divorce, whereas in other denominations it is a matter for one's individual conscience and the discretion of the Church leader. **Secular ethicists** on the other hand argue that there are many ways in which a marital bond can be broken and that it is unreasonable to allow a person to suffer within a marriage. In his book *Honest to God* **John Robinson** argued that Christian attitudes needed to change. Robinson believed that much of Christianity was based on laws which people assumed were handed down from God and in the modern age, these rules needed to be adapted. He said that marriage being seen as an absolute ordained by God is unrealistic and most people cannot live up to this ideal. He explained that the moral teachings of Jesus were not to be seen legalistically. Pre-marital sex and divorce could not be according to Robinson, inherently wrong, the only thing that could be, was a lack of love. As he claimed: *'For nothing else* [except love] *makes a thing right or wrong'.* (**Robinson, 1963**).

8.   Homosexuality

Homosexuality is a term which applies to men and women who have sexual feelings for the same sex. In the UK homosexuality is predominantly tolerated and it is a crime to be homophobic. It is estimated that around 10% of the UK population is homosexual. Homosexuality has been a human rights issue for many years due to it being illegal in many countries (in the UK until 1976) and also the prohibition of homosexual marriages, it is only in the last few years that Civil Partnerships now hold equal weighting with marriages. There is also the issue that some people believe that homosexuality is a sin and this has caused problems for equality and tolerance.

The causes of homosexuality are unclear. **Sigmund Freud** claimed that it was related to repressed sexuality during childhood, whilst others believe it is based on a parent – child relationship. With the discovery of genetics, some scientists have claimed to identify a gene which is linked to homosexuality. In contemporary society it is generally accepted that homosexuality is not a conscious choice, yet whether it is based on a genetic predisposition or on a subconscious social environment remains unknown.

Christians are deeply divided over the issue of homosexuality. Some use **Natural Law** to argue that homosexuality is immoral because it can never lead to reproduction. Many Roman Catholics believe that homosexuality is contradictory to the will of God: *'In sacred scripture homosexual acts are condemned as a serious depravity and presented as a sad consequence of rejecting God'*. (**Roman Catholic Church, 1975**). This does not mean that Roman Catholics are encouraged to discriminate against homosexuals, far from it. They are told to show respect and sensitivity. **Homosexuality itself is not wrong, Catholics believe putting it into practice is, however, it is not their place to judge**. As a result homosexuals are encouraged to seek a life of chastity.

There are many critics of the Roman Catholic view; **Burton Leiser** (**1997**) argues that if we take the view about sex for the purposes of reproduction to its logical conclusion, then sex between an elderly married couple would also be considered immoral, as would sex between a married couple who were unable to have children. **Kate Saunders** and **Peter Stamford** argue that the Roman Catholic viewpoint encourages intolerance towards homosexuality and that the Church acts in a discriminatory way, particularly when considering gay couples' rights to adopt. Arcigay a charity supporting gay rights argues that the Church's view may contribute to the violence and intolerance inflicted on gay people in Italy, where more than 150 are murdered each year. (**Reid** and **Tyler, 2006**).

For other Christian denominations, the fact that homosexual people exist is testament to God having created them that way and they are therefore, just as accepted into the Church as heterosexual people. The **Church of England** does not recommend the physical expression of homosexuality, but does acknowledge that a long-term, loving and monogamous homosexual relationship is acceptable. Homosexual relationships are preferred over promiscuous ones and this is the reason that in **1998** the Church of England officially accepted homosexual relationships and welcomed homosexual people into the priesthood. There is still however much controversy within the Church of England as to how far homosexuality should be tolerated. **The Archbishop of Canterbury Dr. Rowan Williams** said: *'This has been a time of open and painful confrontation in which some of our bonds of mutual trust have been severely strained'*. In 2003 a split within the Church occurred: the Liberal Churches of the West maintained that homosexuality was acceptable, whereas the more traditional Churches in Africa believed it is immoral, indeed in Nigeria it is illegal.

There are several passages within the Bible that condemn homosexual practices. It is considered that the only sexual relationship that God approves of is a heterosexual married relationship, the result of which is reproduction: *'Be fruitful and increase.'* (**Genesis, 9:1**). In the Old Testament, homosexual practices carried with them the penalty of death: *'If a man lies with another man, the way one lies with a woman; that is detestable. They must be put to death'* (**Leviticus, 20:13**). In the New Testament, St Paul disagreed with homosexuality: *'Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders … will inherit the Kingdom of Heaven'*. (**1 Corinthians 6:9-10**). Some such as **D.S Bailey** suggest that these teachings are based on ancient traditions and are therefore not relevant today, whilst others take these teachings to worrying extremes as the Westboro Baptist Church have done.

Some ethicists argue that whilst homosexuality is an important issue, it is not one for ethical concern. **John Harris** (**1984**) claimed that sexual relationships and sexuality are issues of etiquette rather than ethics. He maintained that homosexuality does not cause harm to a society as a whole and such relationships are therefore a matter for the private domain only.

Others believe that the moral issues lies within homosexual practices. They accept that sexual orientation is not a choice, but believe that acting on it is. **Mark Bonnington** and **Bob Fyall** suggest that the solution is a loving same-sex relationship that does not involve sexual activity.

9.   Pornography

Pornography comes from the Greek word *pornographos* meaning 'writing of the harlots'. Pornography is widely available in the modern world due to technological advancements and in Britain tolerance of sexual explicitness is increasing. Generally religious people oppose the production of pornography, because it is associated with violence, encourages addiction, promotes the exploitation and subordination of women, demeans a loving relationship between husband and wife and does nothing to bring people closer to God. Some sociologists argue that there is a link between pornography and violent crime, many serial killers have cited pornography as an impetus for their violent crime. Christians believe that human beings are made in the image of God and should treat each other with respect. This means avoiding pornography which promotes exploitation, violence and addiction. In the past Christians have focused particularly on the exploitation of women in the pornographic industry. They claim that the industry is a lucrative one and has no interest in the welfare of those employed by it. Many women turn to this industry out of desperate circumstances. They also argue that it can be damaging to the sacred bonds of a marriage; **Claire Wilson-Thomas** and **Nigel Williams** (**1996**) claim that pornography can change the sexual dynamics in a married relationship and in some cases have introduced violence. Christians also view pornography as dishonouring your body: *'Do you not know your body is a temple…? Therefore honour God with your body'.* (**1 Corinthians 6:18-20**).

War and Peace

1.   The Nature of War

War is usually defined as hostilities between peoples with the aim of inflicting as much damage on the enemy as possible. Warfare has changed dramatically over time; in the past it used to be large armies fighting one another, whereas modern warfare is typified by a small number of specialised troops using high-tech weapons. The late 20th Century and the beginning of the 21st Century has also seen a rise in 'terrorism' as a form of warfare. The world spends far more on weapons than it does on education and there have been numerous calls for countries to act in a more ethical way.

2.   The Bible, Religion and War

In the Old Testament God encourages people to fight for him against his enemies. War in those times was brutal and cruel: *'Joshua spared no one, everyone was put to death. This is what the Lord God of Israel had commanded.'* (**Joshua, 10:40**). God's ultimate aim was to bring about a holy people who could carry on his purposes. However, nations were warned about relying on military strength and were ordered to leave fighting to God: *'Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.'* (**Isaiah, 2:4**).

In the New Testament, war is described as a spiritual battle against evil. St Paul told people that they must be prepared to engage in direct conflict. On the other hand Jesus refused to engage in any form of conflict: *'Put your sword back in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.'* (**Matthew, 26: 52-54**). He also encouraged people to repent and seek forgiveness rather than engage in violence. Paul confirms this when he states that people should submit themselves to the will of God alone. (**Romans, 13:1**). These teachings of non-violence in both the New and the Old Testament are supported by modern Christians. **Millar Burrows** writes that nations should not treat each other with distrust, but instead try to show love and compassion when dealing with others. (**Burrows, 1964**).

For a religious believer there is a growing concern about man's ability to wage war using weapons of mass destruction. As a result of this, war involves whole civilizations and has the potential to annihilate the human race. Today people are far more likely to question the legitimacy of war than they once were and often religious believers are at the forefront of this criticism. Questions were raised over how ethical the wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Yugoslavia were. This is largely because modern warfare affects civilians to such a great degree.

3.   The Just War

Augustine put forward two conditions in which a war can be waged: if it is declared by a legitimate authority and if there is a just cause. **St Thomas Aquinas** developed these principles and since then they have been added to, there are now a total of 9 principles.

When it is right to go to war: *jus ad bellum*
1.   <u>War must be in a just cause:</u> A war is only justified if the reason for this war is sufficiently moral. It should be to put right a wrong, or to prevent a wrong from happening, for example to save or protect human rights. It should be defensive and not aggressive. A defensive war is however problematic, because one assumes that the defender is always right, whereas this does not account for intervention to prevent human rights abuses.

2. <u>War must be declared by the proper authority:</u> A war can only be declared by a government or ruler of a state: *'...war must be declared by those who have a responsibility for public order, not by private groups or individuals'.* (**Catholic Bishops of America Pastoral Letter, 1983**). In recent times some have argued that the only legitimate authority is the United Nations rather than governments of individual countries.

3. <u>There must be a just intention to go to war:</u> The intention must be as just as the cause. These might include restoring peace as **Aquinas** states: *'For the advancement of good and the avoidance of evil'* Wars fought with an unjust intention often lead to further violence.

4. <u>Comparison of justice:</u> Both sides should be compared and should have a just reason to take up arms

5. <u>War must be a last resort:</u> war should only be undertaken after all negotiations, arbitration and non-military sanctions have been exhausted.

6. <u>There should be a reasonable likelihood of success:</u> War creates an enormous amount of suffering and is entirely pointless if nothing can be gained from it. Peace and justice should be restored afterwards. The problem with this is that sometimes it is necessary to fight a larger force to protect innocent people and it implies that smaller nations can never fight larger ones.

7. <u>Proportionality:</u> There must be a proportion between the injustice before the war and the suffering as a result of the war. Excessive or disproportionate violence should be avoided: *'The damage inflicted... by the war must be proportionate to the good expected by taking up arms'* (**Catholic Bishops of America Pastoral Letter, 1983**).

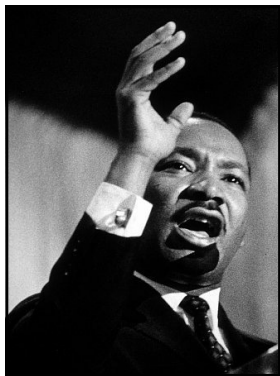**Conduct in war:** *jus in bello*
1. <u>There should be proportion between the injustice being fought and the suffering as a result of the war:</u> The cause of justice must not be upheld by unjust means. *'Unless one can justify the actions necessary to wage war, one cannot justify the conduct of war'* (**Robert Holmes, 1992**).

2. <u>Proportionality must be exercised:</u> The use of weapons must be proportionate to the threat and only minimum weapons used.

3. <u>War must be discriminate:</u> Civilians should not be targets and intentional killings of civilians is prohibited. This is set down in the *Geneva Convention* and some modern weapons are designed to avoid civilians, that said, many weapons factories are deliberately placed in civilian areas. In addition it is often too difficult to distinguish between non-combatants and legitimate targets.

Many have criticised the Just War Theory for a number of reasons. Pacifists believe that it allows war to occur in some circumstances, and this is wrong because all war is unjust. Allowing conditions where war can be fought also makes it more likely that war will be fought. Perhaps the most common criticism is that it is unrealistic on many counts, the principles are very difficult to enforce and there is no guarantee that comes with the principles to ensure that they will be applied correctly. Anyone can use the Just War principles to claim their war is justified, both sides will claim their cause is legitimate, yet both sides cannot be valid. It only works if the parties are interested in ethics with regards to warfare, terrorists are not interested in remaining ethical. Members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) argue that nuclear weapons make the Just War Theory unworkable. Critics also point out that these moral standards are too high to be associated with war. **Peter Vardy** claims: *'To adhere to the Just War conditions a state has to maintain an impossible high standard...'* (**Vardy, 1994**).

4.   Pacifism

A pacifist is someone who believes that any form of violence is immoral. There are different types of pacifism: There is **absolute pacifism** which is the belief that it is never right to take part in war because the killing of human beings can never be justified. There is **relative pacifism** which is the belief that violence is wrong, but that sometimes it is the lesser of two evils. **Selective/ nuclear pacifism** opposes the inclusion of weapons of mass destruction in warfare. Finally there is **active pacifism** which means actively involving oneself in political protest against violence.
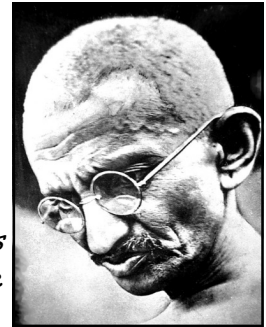
During a war a pacifist is likely to be a **conscientious objector**. This does not mean that they won't play a part in the war, a lot of conscientious objectors choose to work as medics on the front line to help those injured during a war. Others will campaign and demonstrate against the use of violence. Many Christians are pacifists because they believe that violence directly contradicts the teachings of Jesus, who not only showed no evidence of violence throughout his life, including the fact that he didn't resist his crucifixion, but he also preached against violence: *'But I say to you: do not resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also'.* (**Matthew, 5:39**). There are many references to Jesus' pacifism throughout the Bible: he never rebelled against Roman occupation, as mentioned he did not resist his crucifixion, he did not advocate tax avoidance and civil disobedience, he forgave those who crucified him and promised peace: *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.'* (**Matthew 5: 1-12**). A particular group that associate themselves with Christian absolute pacifism are the Quakers. They believe that war is a waste of life and resources and that disputes can be solved in peaceful ways.

There are other Christians who believe that sometimes violence is justified, they may take a **relative or selective pacifist** view, emphasising the importance of avoiding the *'shedding of innocent blood'.* (**Leviticus, 17:11**). Force must only be used to protect human beings and not for any other reason. In recent years there has been much focus on the immorality of nuclear weapons. The Church of England has stated: *'the use of nuclear weapons cannot be justified...In our view the cause of right cannot be upheld by fighting a nuclear war.'*
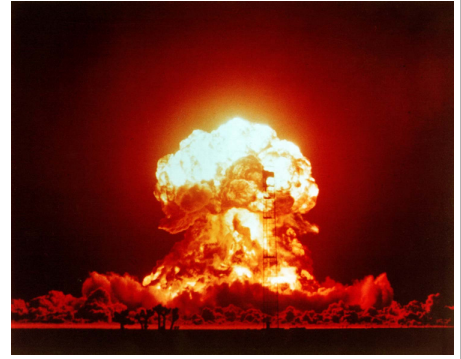
In addition to various religious and political groups, there have been some notable figures who have supported pacifism. The two key people are **Martin Luther King** and **Mahatma Ghandi**. They aimed for non-violent conflict, which involved converting your opponent away from aggression. It was about giving them a 'face-saving' way out rather than humiliating them. Both **King** and **Ghandi** cited New Testament teaching about the pacifism of Jesus as a moral reason why people should not engage in violence.

There are many critics of pacifism who claim, as the Just War Theory is also accused, that pacifism is unrealistic. Particularly absolute pacifism; it rules out the means for fighting a cruel aggressor in order to protect innocent civilians. The potential ramifications of this, had it happened in WWII if the Allies had not fought Hitler, would be massive. Pacifism cannot be a national policy, because any nation that declares it will not fight leaves its civilians vulnerable to attack. Many argue that it is a moral obligation to protect innocent civilians against attack. **Peter Vardy** claims that, in theory, the United Nations should be the only political body which has the right to declare war, however this is tinged with the fact that it would only work if the UN were unbiased, which is implausible at present.

5.   The morality of warfare

One real dilemma about the morality of warfare is the ethics of the international arms-trade. There are many different viewpoints on this matter: those in favour of the arms trade argue that the selling of arms is a legitimate business practice. They claim that selling weapons is not immoral, but using them to kill is. Another argument in favour, is that if one nation have access to arms, then it is right that others are allowed to do the same. An economic argument which supports the arms trade is that it generates income and employment within a particular country, and if they were not made in that country then other countries would benefit from an arms trade. Some believe that nuclear weapons should only be available to politically stable and democratic states and unstable nations should not have nuclear weapons capabilities. Interestingly enough, the West sold huge amounts of weapons to Saddam Hussein before the gulf war making him a powerful enemy. Those against the arms trade argue that selling arms is immoral, because not only does it indirectly contribute to killing, but it also contributes to an arms race. **Roman Catholic Bishops** traditionally argued that proportionality should be applied when purchasing weapons, with the introduction of nuclear weapons, they now believe that proportionality is lost, therefore buying and selling nuclear weapons is immoral. (**Reid and Tyler, 2006**). Those against nuclear weapons are greatly concerned with the increased developments in nuclear enrichment going on in the Middle East, not to mention in the Western World. Nuclear weapons are not the only weapons of mass destruction; chemical and biological weapons can have catastrophic effects. One of the reasons that the UK and the USA invaded Iraq was because they believed that Saddam Hussein had weapons of this nature, indeed he had used them on his own people in the past. Some claim that the only solution to the arms race is to decommission weapons of mass destruction: *I think it's not only desirable, but essential that we eliminate nuclear weapons'.* (**Schnell, 1998**).

As well as the use of weapons, there is much debate as to what aspects of a war can be justified. There is an argument as to whether war is justified only as a defensive strategy and the problems this could create. It is also incredibly difficult to establish a 'just cause' as **Peter Vardy** notes: *'One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter…'* (**Vardy, 2002**). There are also disagreements over aggression. In modern warfare there are different types of aggression: economic aggression, where one state asserts its monetary power over another, people can attempt to incite a minority to rise up. In addition, there is much controversy over what constitutes a legitimate target: could it be anything that contributes to the war effort, such as a water plant or energy supplier? If this is legitimised then a next stage is civilian targets such as hospitals. Whether civilian institutions are targeted or not, civilians will suffer in a war, even if it is only sanctions that are used. Finally, there is the issue of blame: should it be held against everyone who participated? Or simply those directly involved? **Peter Vardy** claimed: *'Those who remain silent and inactive in the face of injustice are morally culpable'.* (**Vardy, 1994**).

6.   The changing nature of warfare

Throughout history, religion has had its **Holy Wars**. These are ones where religion is the driving force. Armies in a Holy War believe that God is on their side. Critics of this view point out that the concept of a Holy War contradicts nearly all religious teaching. Holy Wars usually have three characteristics: they are about the achievement of a religious goal, they have authorisations from a spiritual leader, there is a spiritual reward for those who take part. The aim of a Holy War might be to spread a particular faith, avenge wrongdoing to a religious people. Historically the Church has declared many Holy Wars, such as the Crusades. More recently, some Muslim groups have declared *jihad* against those they claim are the enemies of Islam. It is important to realise that **Islam is not inherently violent**. The most important *jihad* is the struggle that a believer faces to maintain his/her faith and not to give in to temptation. It is a symbolic struggle against evil and it is not consistent with killing. If there is a chance to avoid war, a Muslim must morally take it. Today Holy Wars may not actually be about religion at all, but about globalisation, inequality and oppression.

Another change in the nature of warfare is what is considered to be a war crime. They are considered to be the worst crimes under international law. Recently there have been a number of leaders charged with war crimes, Serbian leader **Slobodan Milosevic** was charged with masterminding 'ethic cleansing' that killed thousands. War crimes are defined by the **Geneva Convention** and include: planning or initiating a war of aggression, committing atrocities against a person or property, inhumane treatment, rape, extermination or enslavement of civilians, murder or torture of prisoners, hostages and civilians and wanton destruction of cities towns and villages.

Some of the worst war crimes ever committed have been acts of **genocide.** Genocide is the deliberate attempt to destroy people from a particular identity or ethnicity. There have been many genocides throughout history: Shoah—the Nazi Holocaust of Jewish people, gypsies, the mentally and physically disabled and homosexuals, the Rwandan massacre in 1994 where 800 000 Tutsis were slaughtered by the Hutus and the ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia between 1992 and 1995. **Pope John Paul II** said of the Holocaust: *'May it serve today and for the future as a warning: there must be no yielding to ideologies which justify contempt for human dignity on the basis of race, colour, language or religion.'*

The link between religion and morality

(i) Examine the views of scholars concerning the view that morality and religion are linked. (28 marks)

(ii) Comment on the view that religion and morality are not linked. (12 marks)

(i) Describe the link between religion and morality (28 marks)

(ii) Comment on some philosophers' rejections of this link (12 marks)

Utilitarianism

(i) What are the main advantages of utilitarianism? (28 marks)

(ii) identify the problems of utilitarianism. To what extent do these problems make utilitarianism unacceptable? (12 marks)

(i) Outline the key features of utilitarianism? (28 marks)

(ii) Comment on the view that utilitarianism is an impractical theory of ethics. (12 marks)

Situation Ethics

(i) Examine the key features of situation ethics. (20 marks)

(ii) Outline the main weaknesses of situation ethics. How far do they lead to a rejection of the theory? (20 marks)

(i) For what reasons may situation ethics be regarded as a useful ethical theory? (28 marks)

(ii) Outline the main weaknesses of situation ethics. To what extent do these undermine the theory? (12 marks)

Sexual Ethics

(i) Examine the differences in ethical and religious views concerning homosexuality. (28 marks)

(ii) To what extent may these differences reflect changes in social and cultural practices? (12 marks)

(i) Outline the views that there are no rights and wrongs in sexual ethics. (28 marks)

(ii) To what extent, if any, is it reasonable to claim that sexual ethics should be related to religious beliefs? (12 marks)

War and Peace

(i) Examine the conditions laid down in the Just War Theory. (28 marks)

(ii) Comment on the view that these conditions can never justify war. (12 marks)

(i) Examine what is meant by just war and pacifism. (28 marks)

(ii) To what extent is pacifism compatible with a just war. (12 marks)