A level Religious Studies transition work

On this document are summaries of four Normative ethics. A Normative ethic tries to give us rules to live by - normal ways of life. You then have a number of ethical dilemmas.

**Task**

**Try and apply two of the Normative ethics to each of the dilemmas.**

**1. What do you think they would say about each of them?**

**2. What would they tell you to do if you were faced with this dilemma?**

**Please don't use the same two for each of them, use all four of the ethical dilemmas at some stage in the exercise.**

Utilitarianism

An action is good if it produces the greatest number of happiness for the greatest number of people. This can be calculated through how long the pleasure will last, how pure the pleasure is, how likely it will be to lead to other pleasures, how near the pleasure is, how powerful it is, how certain the pleasure is, and how many people will experience the pleasure.

Natural Law

God has revealed a natural order to us and an action is good if it meets this natural order. Through our reason we can discover that we need to preserve life, this means we should:

1. Reproduce
2. Live peacefully in an ordered society
3. Educate children
4. Worship God

Situation Ethics

The Great Commandment in Christianity is to love your neighbour. This love is the self-sacrificing love taught by Jesus – agape. An action is good if it fulfils agape, this means that ‘good’ depends on the situation, as the most loving thing to do can change depending on the circumstances.

Kantian Ethics

An action is good only if it can universalised, this means that the same action should be taken in any circumstance. For example, it is never okay to lie as we can’t universalise not telling the truth. We also can’t call an action good if it uses someone else for your gain, no matter what the outcome might be.

1. Heinz’s wife is dying of cancer, a drug was recently discovered that will cure her but the scientist who developed it is charging ten times what it cost to make. Heinz can only get half the money but the scientist refuses all pleas. Instead Heinz breaks in and steals the drug in desperation. Should he have done that?

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1. The building you are in is on fire – in a room are one of your parent’s who is incapable of getting out unaided and a scientist who has the cure for a major disease. Who should you save – the one you love or the one who could cure millions?

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1. You are driving home from a night out when you accidentally hit a pedestrian who now looks seriously injured. You know you will probably end up going to jail if you stay as you were not paying attention properly and have been drinking. No one is around and if you leave now it is likely you won’t get found out. What should you do?

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1. Tomorrow you have a major examination and have not done any revision at all – you kept on meaning to but putting it off in order to do other things and now are really panicking as it will have an impact on your entire future. Then someone offers you a ‘cheat sheet’ which has all of the answers to the exam questions and tells you not to give it to anyone else or it’ll look suspicious. What would you do – cheat or simply try your hardest?

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1. A local shop is broken into and the owner is badly beaten up – you know it is a gang from your year at school as you saw the incident yet say nothing. Two days later another shop is broken into and this time both the owners and their child are attacked. The child is seriously ill in hospital and you are sure it is the same gang – police are positive the attacks are linked and are urgently appealing for anyone with information to come forward. What do you do?

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1. You are close to a breakthrough with a new medical treatment but to complete your work you must carry out very painful experiments on animals. Should you do that?

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1. Siamese twins are born, if nothing is done both will die however if they are separated only one will survive. Should you carry out the operation?

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1. A white couple’s son passes away, they agree to donate his body for transplants however only if his body parts go to a white recipient. Would you allow this?

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Philosophy

**Natural and Moral Evil and Suffering**

**Task**

Complete the table below.

|  | Definition | Example |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Natural Evil |  |  |
| Moral Evil |  |  |
| Suffering |  |  |

**The Bible and Evil**

The first book of the Bible is the Book of Genesis, and it tells the story of how the first human pair created by God (Adam and Eve) brought about moral evil into the world by disobeying God. The disobedience of Adam and Eve was punished by the Flood, which is a form of natural evil, so the above chapters refer to both moral and natural evil. Some Christians take these stories literally, but this is hard to defend, because the main parts of the stories of creation and the Flood were copied from myths written from the Babylonians at least one thousand years earlier, and probably nobody would take the Babylonian stories literally. The Babylonian flood story is called the Epic of Gilgamesh: it is fascinating, and you can view it online. A nice video of the story and its significance can be found here: [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pGhEu9elnA**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pGhEu9elnA)Bear in mind that a myth is NOT an untrue story: a myth is an explanation for what we see in the world. The myths of the Bible are speculation about the great mysteries of life; where did the universe come from? Where are we going? What happens when we die? Why is there so much evil in the world?

**Task …**

Use a Bible – you can access one online at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) Read through the Genesis 1-3. Make a list below of the different examples of moral and natural evil. (Make sure you reference each point.)

| Moral Evil | Natural Evil |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

The biblical authors believed that everything is under God’s control, so God must create evil as well as good (Isaiah 45:7) ***“7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things”***, although it remains a mystery as to why evil can strike good people as well as bad (as in the book of job). In the New Testament, St Paul argues that evil can be overcome by having faith in Jesus, because by having that faith, God counts them as righteous and members of the God’s Kingdom (Romans 3:21-31) **“21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;**

**22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:**

**23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

**24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:**

**25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;**

**26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**

**27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.**

**28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**

**29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:**

**30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.**

**31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”**

To some extent, the Bible explains evil as caused by Satan, so 1 John 5:19 states that:

**“We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one.”**

The Book of Revelation identifies Satan as the Serpent in Genesis 3 who tempts Eve to disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden. Revelation 12:7-9 talks of an apocalyptic war in heaven between Michael and his angels and the evil forces of …

**“The great dragon … that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world…”**

Christian writers have explained that God allows the Devil to be an evil influence in the world because creation has been given free will. Just as humans can cause evil by their own free choices, Satan used his own free will to rebel against God and to corrupt humans. Luke 4:1-13 explains that Jesus was tempted by the Devil to choose evil over good. The idea is that humans are free to choose between good and evil is at the heart of the ‘Free Will Defence’.

**“And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,**

**2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.**

**3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.**

**4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.**

**5 And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.**

**6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.**

**7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.**

**8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**

**9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:**

**10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:**

**11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.**

**12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.**

**13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.”**

**Task**

Research on the internet about the Free Will Defence – what is it about? How does it fit in with defending the presence of Evil and Suffering in our world?

[The problem of evil and the free will defence](https://www.alevelphilosophy.co.uk/handouts_religion/ProblemEvilFreeWill.pdf)

Sources of Wisdom and Authority

25% of the marks at A level will come from knowledge and understanding of Christianity. A further 25% relies on being able to show how Christianity interacts with Philosophical ideas. In order for you to get an idea of what knowledge you will need, this week’s passport work looks at sources of wisdom and authority in Christianity. By this we mean, where a Chrsitain would turn for guidance and rules for living.

There are two tasks, both based on these websites:

[The Bible as a source of wisdom and authority – A Level Philosophy & Religious Studies](https://alevelphilosophyandreligion.com/eduqas-wjec-religious-studies/eduqas-wjec-christianity/the-bible-as-a-source-of-wisdom-and-authority/)

[The relative authority of the Bible and Church](https://alevelphilosophyandreligion.com/aqa-religious-studies/aqa-christianity/the-relative-authority-of-the-bible-and-church/)

[Presentation - Jesus Christ - Philosophical Investigations](https://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/jesus-christ/) (a powerpoint presentation with some video links)

**Remember that this is A level material, so we are not looking for a full understanding. Just to get a sense that you are thinking along the right lines. Feel free to use other websites/books if you need to.**

**Task**

Answer the following questions for each source of wisdom and authority.

|  | Bible  | Church | Jesus |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| How does this help Christians to understand God’s message? |  |  |  |
| How does this allow a Christian to become closer to God? |  |  |  |
| Is there any conflict in seeing this as a source of wisdom and authority? Explain your answer. |  |  |  |

**Task**

Explain below which of these three you think is most important as a source of wisdom and authority. Don’t forget to give reasons for your answer.