



# **Examiners' Report**

## **June 2024**

**GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 02**

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## Introduction

Candidates were generally well prepared for this year's examination and were, in the main, able to respond to the range of questions set. It was interesting to see how candidates approached the challenges of different question types, with some candidates showing greater confidence with shorter answer questions (8 and 12 marks), whilst others were more comfortable with the longer answers (20 and 30 marks).

Familiar lessons remain to be learned: if a question is not attempted, no marks can be awarded, and it is not always self-evident whether an unattempted question is due to lack of time or lack of knowledge. Where higher marks can be gained, more time needs to be spent on ensuring that all the demands of the question are met. The shortest answer (8 marks) does not necessarily justify spending more than the recommended time (10 minutes), but will reap rewards from a clear focus on the most pertinent aspects of the topic rather than a rambling answer based on limited knowledge points.

The standard of responses to this paper was neither stronger nor weaker than the previous session. Frequently, candidate confidence appears to relate to specific topics rather than the paper as a whole. This may reflect teacher confidence and expertise, but perhaps, more often, candidate preferences for topics that engage their interest.

It was good to see that many candidates were clearly pleased to write at length on environmental ethics and were happy to be given the chance to respond to a question on Virtue Ethics. Many answers to the 12-mark question on the relationship between religion and morality were extremely competent, whilst many answers to the 8-mark question on Deontology were surprisingly thin.

## Question 1

Last year's report noted that the 12-mark question on Deontology revealed less candidate confidence in this topic than had previously been the case. This year, whilst candidates generally focussed on Kantian Deontology rather than Natural Moral Law (as was intended), there was still an excess of responses that were brief, lacked focus, and revealed a superficial understanding of this key area of ethical theory.

Despite having the opportunity to draw in elements from the Anthology extract, there was little evidence that candidates were able to do so. Too often, they relied on simplistic case studies (the apocryphal old lady who needs help to cross the road) rather than showing confidence in using technical language and relevant supporting examples. Kant's enquiring murderer example may seem implausible, but it is directly relevant to the issue of deontological decision making.

An 8-mark question does not require critical evaluation, and the best use of time is not to focus on the differences between deontology and other ethical theories. Centres are encouraged to ensure that their candidates are skilled in writing focussed 8-mark answers, which show how candidates can effectively narrow down the most crucial material into a concise response.

This is a tightly-focussed answer that shows the candidate's knowledge of Kant's exposition of the theory.

1 Explore the role of Deontology for an understanding of moral actions.

(8)

Deontology was developed by Immanuel Kant in his book 'Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals' which argues that our morality should be motive based. He illustrates this through the Categorical and hypothetical imperatives. The former, Kant argues, is our obligation to act by morality because 'duty' comes from the Good (i.e. 'one must do it'). By contrast, the hypothetical imperative is immoral, for it argues in order, for example, to get fueling, we must eat our dinner first. There is a means to an end, which people could be used as a means to an end. Kant ~~also~~ employs the example of a shopkeeper who gives the correct amount of change merely to boost the reputation of the shop (hypothetical). By contrast, the moral motive would be to give the correct change because it is the shopkeeper's obligation (Categorical Imperative). Kant also argues that for the realm of Ends, whereby people should be treated as the ends to our means, not the means to our end. For example, slavery, Kant formulates, is immoral, as the slaves become the means to an end, such as cotton production.



Note the use of specific, relevant and well-chosen language and examples: categorical and hypothetical imperatives, duty, means to an end, Kant's shopkeeper example, the realm of ends, era-relevant example of slavery.

Total: 8 marks



Remember: the intellectual and historical background of an ethical theory reveals far more about them than attempting to relate them to generic, superficial, modern examples.

This is another model answer that gains marks with every sentence.

Once again, marks are gained through showing solid knowledge, rather than attempting to apply the ethical theory to a rambling, anachronistic, case study.

1 Explore the role of Deontology for an understanding of moral actions.

(8)

The most prominent of deontological theories (rule based philosophy) is Immanuel Kant's theory. Deontology lies at the heart of his theory seen in his categorical imperatives: Universal Law, Formula of Humanity and Kingdom of Ends. Deontology is clearly present in the first with Kant placing strict ruling on the necessity to be able for actions to be universalisable in order to be moral.

In addition, another rule within his categorical imperatives is for an agent not to treat another as means to an end hence reinforcing the rigidity of his rule based theory. Kant's argument and influence stems from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century shift to the Enlightenment: shifting away from notions of flos towards empirical science and forming 'scientific morality'. Hence the strict nature of this influences Kant's emphasis on 'duty': something which stems from the only thing good in itself the 'good will which shines like a jewel'. Other theories such as Natural Law involve deontology in a Christian guise <sup>the Primary Precepts</sup> forming the basis of Catholic Normative guidance. Deontology remains rigid yet clear cut and therefore easily understandable in making moral decisions.



This candidate keeps a clear focus on the key aspects of the theory: the formulae of right action, universalisability, categorical imperatives, means to an end, the Enlightenment, duty, good will and a relevant, but brief, reference to Natural Moral Law.

Total: 8 marks

## Question 2

Many candidates clearly love this topic, and it is understandable why this is the case. There are so many excellent scholarly contributions, relevant and powerful case studies, and the opportunity to make connections with a range of specification topics. In many cases, candidates embraced them.

Weaker answers focussed on linking ethical theories with religious beliefs or generic religious teachings.

This answer offers a good example of a response that has not ranged particularly widely but has used material in a relevant and focussed manner.

2 Assess the claim that the relationship between religion and morality is independent.

(12)

Theonomy is the idea that morality is dependent on God and so therefore religion. Autonomy, however, suggests that religion and morality can be independent of religion, and it has been proposed that morality can be rooted in science instead. This claim also proposes the debate of whether a person's conscience is from God, possibly a voice of reason, or if a person's conscience is simply a ~~psyce~~ psychological process in a person's brain, completely independent of God.

Scholars such as Aquinas would suggest that religion and morality are not independent as a person's conscience is a voice from God telling them right from wrong. However, the Euthyphro dilemma poses the problem of ~~whether~~ how God knows what is moral. ~~For~~ ~~example~~ Socrates asked Euthyphro <sup>whether</sup> ~~whether~~ ~~good~~ good is good because God tells us that it is good or does God tell us what ~~is~~ is good. The first horn of the dilemma poses the problem ~~of~~ for Aquinas' suggestion that our conscience is the voice of God as suggests

that ~~the~~ ~~only~~ good is arbitrary, and poses the risk that God could make torturing others good, and because God said it was good everyone would have to do it. This leads to the conclusion that morality cannot be rooted in religion as despite the proposal that God could make torture a moral act, it is convincing to suggest that most people would agree that it is not moral and so suggests that morality may be observable in the world and some things are always immoral despite what a religious figure might argue, making the claim convincing.

Nietzsche also suggests that morality and religion are closely connected as he proposes the idea of a 'slave' and 'master' morality, being developed because of religion. He suggests that religion promotes a 'slave' morality in which religious moral people are expected to be meek and obedient for they will be rewarded by their God in the afterlife. He therefore argues that morality is rooted in religion and can be dated back to

Jewish people being slaves in Ancient Egypt, where this 'slave' and 'master' morality started. He explains that the 'master' morality is more desirable, however, and religion falsely teaches people to take on the 'slave' morality. However, it is more convincing to argue that the relationship between religion and morality is independent as despite religious teachings suggesting that faith is a requirement to be moral, there are atheists who can live moral lives without the influence of a religion or a God. Harris suggests that morality nowadays can be rooted in science instead of religion and Sharpe suggests that all religion does is corrupt morality. This one again suggests that morality is independent of religion as it is something that can be observed in the world through rationality and reason, for example, as Kant would suggest, which does not need a God or religion.

Overall, it is most convincing to agree with the claim as conscience as a voice from God is not a strong argument and overall it can be argued that morality is an objective substance in the world, and not from God or religion. (Total for Question 2 = 12 marks)



Note the candidate's well-chosen use of theonomy/autonomy, Aquinas' interest in conscience, the Euthyphro Dilemma, Nietzsche, atheism and morality, and Sam Harris.

Total: 12 marks



Using well-learned knowledge is the key to high marks!

2 Assess the claim that the relationship between religion and morality is independent.

dismiss the claim and (12)

A fundamentalist Christian would argue that the relationship between religion and morality is dependent due to divine command theory. Traditional Christian ethics views God as the only source of morality, meaning that God decides what is moral and immoral. In order to act morally, agents must follow the legislative ethics in the Bible, from sources such as the sermon on the Mount or the Ten Commandments.

However, my perspective is ~~no~~ less credible in the face of the Euthyphro Dilemma. In Plato's dialogue, we identified the paradox of believing God is the source of morality; if God is the source of morality, he could command murder and this would be moral, but if God is not the source of morality he is not omnipotent.

This Dilemma demonstrates ~~that~~ that the only plausible solution is that God does not exist, therefore meaning that morality and religion are independent, ~~as God~~ otherwise the morality commanded by God would be arbitrary; ~~therefore religion~~

The theologian Adams argued against the conclusion of the Euthyphro Dilemma by claiming that since the nature of God is good, his moral commandments must also be good. Given that humans have limited ~~therefore~~ dismissing the claim that religion and morality are independent.

understanding of God, this may lead us to question the morality behind his commandments, but since God is good by nature, we should trust his morality is good. However R A Sharpe argued against ~~the~~ the dependency of morality on religion as he believes that religion can encourage immoral behaviour, through inspiring blind obedience. Sharpe argues the unquestioning faith and obedience demanded by the Bible causes Christians to abandon ~~regard~~ human reactions to suffering - he cites the Biblical example of God asking Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, which ~~contemporary~~ in the modern era appears an unquestionably immoral command, therefore suggesting morality cannot be dependent on God.

Richard Dawkins further makes the case that religion and morality are ~~dependent~~ independent through the examples of Biblical parenting and the relationship between religion and terror. Dawkins first argues that Biblical parenting that uses methods of scaring children ~~into~~ into accepting the Church's morality is a form of indoctrination and child abuse. If a Christian acts out of fear or desire to be rewarded in heaven, Dawkins argues this is not genuinely moral behaviour. Furthermore Dawkins uses the history of religious terrorism e.g. ~~IRA~~ IRA, Al-Qaeda, ISIS.

to suggest that religion encourages fanaticism and immoral behaviour. However Dawkins' argument is weakened by the fact that he only selects evidence that supports his argument - his citation of religious terrorism ignores the good that has come out of religious teachings e.g. Christian charities like CAFOD and Christian Aid. Furthermore religious groups are not only to blame for atrocities or acts of terrorism - a religious person could cite the USSR or Nazi Germany's human rights violations, suggesting that the reason behind actions like terrorism are not simply explained by religious doctrine.

In conclusion, it is more convincing that religion and morality are independent from each other. Whilst it is true that religious ethics can inspire moral behaviour, and the morality of divine command theory appears to be a fairly universal ethical code that ~~is~~ is moral, ~~there are~~ Sharpe and Dawkins' arguments that divine command theory and religious doctrine can inspire immoral behaviour and even cause fanaticism and terrorism demonstrates that ~~we cannot~~ religion cannot be the source of morality.



This is another strong response, which shows how much the candidate has learned and is able to apply in a focussed, detailed and well-structured answer.

Note the used of technical terminology and scholarship throughout.

Total: 12 marks



Confident use of scholarship places candidates in a strong position to achieve a high mark.

### Question 3

#### Introduction

In general, candidates were able to make an appropriate response to the extract from Aristotle's passage on Virtue Ethics.

The best answers always remained close to the extract and worked systematically through it, identifying the key points raised. In response to Question (Q) 03b, candidates were able to take different approaches. Ideally, the focus remained on Virtue Ethics, but they could compare and contrast the success of the theory with alternatives such as Situation Ethics, Utilitarianism and Natural Moral Law.

This response provides an excellent example of how to respond to the extract question.

The candidate works steadily through the extract, drawing on key phrases and ideas and showing a confident understanding of the topic.

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about the approach to morality offered by Virtue Ethics.**

*You must refer to the passage in your response.*

(10)

The first paragraph of Nichomachean Ethics describes how virtue is a 'state of character' he describes how virtuous acts do not just have good actions, but also allow the person taking them to develop into a virtuous person. Augustine understands that we must both be educated and emulate the actions of other virtuous people to become virtuous ourselves. and it is that of the virtuous man who with a virtuous state of character who is good and does 'his own work well'. This means that only a virtuous person can do his own work virtuously without emulating others.

because he has reached a virtuous state of character. Aristotle says we should all reach for this state of character in order to achieve our telos of eudaimonia.

The second paragraph describes the idea of Aristotle's golden mean. The golden mean is the virtue that falls between two vices. For example, the ~~in~~ excess vice of bluntness to the deficiency which would be lying. Similarly for cowardice and foolhardiness, one should seek to find the golden mean of courage between these two, and this may differ for people in different circumstances. e.g. a soldier's golden mean would lie closer to that of foolhardiness, giving them greater courage than someone who should be working in an office, or as a teacher.

Aristotle says that this should be 'determined by Reason'. He is inspired by Plato's idea that reason controls emotions and desires to make up the soul. Aristotle says this reason should be applied through 'practical wisdom' or phronesis'. By applying phronesis we can work out the golden mean and control our desires and emotions, so that we act in the most virtuous way.

possible. This therefore represents an approach to morality that can be worked out by the individual as well as having flexibility for different people, ~~therefore~~

(b) Analyse the reasons why Virtue Ethics may be considered the most persuasive of ethical theories.

(20)

Virtue ethics was explored by Augustine of Hippo and shares the view that to be moral we must develop our character into a virtuous being through education and emulation of other virtuous people. In any situation, virtue ethics allows you to find the most virtuous thing to do by applying phronesis (practical wisdom) to reason in order to find the golden mean. This golden mean is flexible and sits where is right for the individual between a vice of deficiency and of excess. For example, one should seek to find courage between cowardice and boldness, or truth between lies and bluntness. Virtue ethics is a very persuasive ethical theory as it is clear cut and flexible, allowing application of the theory to everyone in the world. However it has been criticised because it does not account for absolute, intrinsically wrong actions, such as adultery. According to Virtue ethics, there may be a deficiency of adultery, or an excess. Implying the best, most virtuous thing to do is to ~~have~~

commit adultery some, but not too much. This is one of the greatest critiques of virtue ethics, showing it is clearly not applicable to all situations. However, Augustine did address this issue in Nicomachean ethics. Saying there must clearly be some absolute truths, however this takes away from the positive nature of virtue ethics as a whole, as a flexible, adaptable ethical theory by the application of strict rules on top of those already there. Virtue ethics are also extremely persuasive today because they are still applicable to the modern world. Foot argues that we need virtue ethics as it is the best way to promote growth as a community as a whole. Virtue ethics takes into account that we need community to become virtuous. This modern idea is explored in the well known phrase 'it takes a village to raise a baby'. All of this shows virtue ethics is a very persuasive ethical theory.

However, many other ethical theories have also been explored as the most persuasive. Situation Ethics is an ethical theory built upon the foundation of agapē, Christian love

This theory was introduced by J Fletcher who said that only one thing is intrinsically good, 'namely love; and nothing else'. Fletcher's theory explores that in any situation, you should think about the most loving action possible before deciding what to do. For example, this theory is key in addressing controversial topics including abortion and Euthanasia. For Abortion, ~~you~~ you should take actions based solely on consequences so that in your specific case, the most loving thing occurs. Fletcher also uses 4 working principles to show what is the most loving thing, positivism, pragmatism, relativism and personalism. Overall Fletcher's theory is strong as one can use the four working principles to know what is the most loving thing to do in any situation, which is also often backed up by religious texts in the Bible, where Jesus continually accepts rules and laws to do the most loving thing, e.g. breaking the Sabbath to help a crippled man. However, whilst this theory is persuasive, one can argue that it is not applicable to today's secular world as it is Christian in nature. It is built upon 'agape' - literally 'Christian love'. Furthermore, Barclay critiques the theory suggesting it is too flexible, he uses

~~examples to show that there are also~~  
critiques of Fletcher's examples that  
there is situations where everything could  
be allowed (including sacrificial adultery,  
killing of a new born baby to save others).  
However Barclay argues this is wrong because  
we all need some laws in society otherwise  
~~no~~ nothing would be ordered, especially  
because Love is subjective and everyone  
would make decisions differently.

● Finally, Natural Moral Law for many  
years has been viewed as a persuasive  
ethical theory. Introduced by St. Aquinas, the  
theory explores the idea of natural theology,  
that we can work out what is good by  
looking at the natural world to understand  
God who we should strive to be like. St. Aquinas  
introduces the idea of Precepts. Primary  
precepts of worshipping God, preserving life,  
Education, Reproduction and living in an  
ordered society are ~~the~~ what we  
must follow to achieve our telos (end  
goal or purpose). We can do this by following  
secondary precepts in our own lives, such as  
<sup>a</sup> the secondary precept for preservation of life

would be to not abort a baby. Secondary precepts can be derived through reason and offer us specific moral guidelines of how to live life. However, this theory is opposed by many today because it is focused entirely on religion, and does not support views of people today. Specifically it opposes views of homosexuality and pro choice movements. I believe that this theory is clearly not applicable today, however without it we may not have such a solid set of ethical beliefs that have influenced us over generations. For example the notion of 'do not kill', one of the 10 commandments is the foundation of our law system today, showing that this theory has still been persuasive in allowing some rules today.

overall, I believe that virtue ethics is the ~~best approach to modern~~ most persuasive theory today, as it is flexible and applicable to all situations. Natural moral law and situation ethics, in my opinion are still valued and can offer a strong foundation of ethics today, however I believe

Virtue ethics is greater because it is simple and accessible by all.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

In Q03b, the candidate begins with offering a clear analysis of Virtue Ethics before making comparisons with other ethical theories and then returns to Virtue Ethics to draw a balanced conclusion.

Q03a: 10 marks

Q03b: 20 marks

Total: 30 marks



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Focus on the extract set and work in systematic and controlled way through it.

Once again, the candidate has worked systematically through the extract, with a slightly briefer answer than the previous example.

- 3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about the approach to morality offered by Virtue Ethics.

key words

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

Aristotle begins this passage by referring to virtue as a "state of character". This state is that of 'eudaimonia' (the ultimate end goal, or telos, of Virtue Ethics that all ~~we~~ aim towards as a superior aim). Eudaimonia is a state of flourishing in which a person is able to successfully and at all times enact virtues in their life. This is able to occur because, as Aristotle states, virtue is able to "make the work...done well". By this, he means that a virtuous act is that which is done by a virtuous person. For example, a just act would be that act which would be done by a just man.

Moreover, Aristotle states that virtue both makes a man virtuous. This is, by the habit of doing virtuous acts, one becomes virtuous, and then, once virtuous is character, the person will easily almost naturally do virtuous acts.

Next, Aristotle introduces the concept of a "mean" in which virtues lie. This is the concept of the 'golden mean'. To clarify, Aristotle believes that virtues lie between two vices, those of "excess" and those of "defect". For example, courage is between cowardice and rashness and is the golden virtuous mean. We ought to take a balanced approach to our actions, Aristotle implies, neither straying too far into excess (too much) or defect (too little) of something.

Aristotle also alludes to the mean "relative to us". This means that each person may have a different 'golden mean' to strive for that will be most applicable to them. For example, a mean between drunk and sober may be tipsy for most people at a bar. However, a relative mean for someone who is going to be driving home would be to stay sober as tipsy driving would not be virtuous at all. This allows Aristotle's virtue ethics and doctrine of the mean to be more nuanced in its approach.

(b) Analyse the reasons why <sup>VE = 1113</sup> Virtue Ethics may be considered the most persuasive of ethical theories.

(20)

Virtue ethics is an agent-centred ethical theory developed by Aristotle that is focused on developing virtuous (good) moral agents and not on prescribing moral rules per se. It is a very persuasive ethical approach in that it does not get caught up in the issues faced by other normative ethical theories that are more teleological (consequentialist) and deontological (focused on the act) than virtue ethics (VE) is.

VE is persuasive because it is successfully able to circumvent the issues faced by post-enlightenment normative ethical theories that attempt to 'solve' ethics and prescribe rules that will match every scenario. For example, J.S. Mill's Rule Utilitarianism attempts to do just this by looking to rules like the 'greatest happiness principle'. A key issue of this is that it relies on guesswork about how much happiness an act will produce after it is done. Furthermore, Rule Utilitarianism tends to be persuasive because it seems ~~more~~ intuitively wrong to put a calculable value on human lives as in the famous trolley problem. This appears to dehumanise people and make them almost dispensible for the good of the majority. However, VE moves past this issue of treating people as disposable since Aristotle places an

intrinsic value on all individuals as rational beings who have a dispositional ability to develop moral virtues (such as temperance and patience) through practice and habit). Furthermore, VE is convincing in its agent-centred nature. Whilst Mill's theory is focused on actions and their consequences, VE is built around people. This is an attractive view for scholars such as A. MacIntyre who feel modern ethics has become too focused on the ~~individual~~ 'solitary ethics' and has lost a sense of community between people. Additionally, a key persuasive area of VE is that the developing of moral characters will logically lead to a greater number of moral acts being done than the prescribing of ethical rules to immoral ~~most~~ agents (that most people are). To explain, Barclay noted how "man has not yet come of age" in his critique of Situation Ethics. If Barclay is correct, then it seems logical to stop prescribing ethical laws to these imperfect people that are clearly doing little to strengthen their moral maturity. Instead, it seems logical to mould these people into more fine-tuned, virtuous moral agents who will do just acts because they are just people, and so forth. By focusing on developing moral agents, VE is more persuasive than Rule Utilitarianism and appears to be a ~~strong~~ persuasive solution to humanity as imperfect decision-makers.

Virtue Ethics is also persuasive because it identifies an end goal to aim for that will make people happy, thus providing an incentive for moral behaviour. Aristotle calls this "state of character" 'eudaimonia' - a state of flourishing in which a person is able to successfully and always carry out virtuous acts. Aristotle believes that being moral can be an enjoyable experience for people and this makes VE a very attractive and persuasive ethic. This is more persuasive than Kant's deontology that prompts agents to disregard their emotions and act on reason alone. An abandonment of emotion in ethics seems wrong given that, realistically, emotions do play a role in ethical decisions. Take Kant's case example of whether to save your father or a scientist, who knows the cure for a terrible disease, from drowning. Kant's preference for the latter appears cold and robotic almost, and that it is not an accurate representation of how humans make moral choices. Conversely, VE acknowledges emotions in morality and, even if they ought not be followed, Aristotle is more realistic in his understanding of humans and emotions, making VE more persuasive on the grounds that the journey to morality being enjoyable for it an attractive concept and that Aristotle presents humans more accurately than Kant, as feeling beings with emotions.

It could be argued that VE is not persuasive because it offers no help on what to do when two virtues conflict, or a dilemma is at hand. For example, a friend who has struggled with anorexia in the past asks if her new dress makes her look 'big'. On assuming the dress does, does one choose to be honest, or tactful in their response? However, VE can solve this issue. Firstly, an agent who is virtuous and has developed in both tactfulness and honesty would be able to see which to opt for here since Aristotle believes that a virtuous person does virtuous acts. Secondly, one needs to take intention into account. Philippa Foot - a modern proponent of VE - argues that the courage of a bank robber is not virtuous (despite courage usually being a cardinal virtue) due to the internal motivation behind it. Similarly, although honesty is a virtue, ~~it~~ it appears to be more satisfactory than tactfulness, with the motivation of sparing feelings, is the best option here. Thus, VE is able to solve moral dilemmas by taking motivation into account and helping developed moral agents to act virtuously. VE is still persuasive despite challenges posed by moral dilemmas.

Overall, VE appears to be more persuasive than Kantian deontology and Mill's Rule Utilitarianism, and has

demonstrated its ability to cope with real life moral dilemmas. Thus, VE may have a case as the most persuasive ethical theory.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

In Q03b, the candidate has moved between Virtue Ethics and other ethical theories in order to draw a clear conclusion about the persuasiveness of Virtue Ethics.

Q03a: 9 marks

Q03b: 19 marks

Total: 28 marks



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

The thrust of the question is Virtue Ethics: keep that in focus.

## Question 4

This question offered candidates the opportunity to write in detail about a topic that has not been set previously as a 30-mark question on this paper. They were clearly ready and willing to do so.

The best answers were able to draw on religious and secular theories in order to respond to the question and were confident with both.

Less-successful answers were generic and superficial in their choice of material — possibly relying too heavily on GCSE resources. They did not make connections with another area of their study, as is always required of the 30-mark question.

The 30-mark answer should be the jewel in the crown of a candidate's examination. This answer shows how much effort is made to gain full marks.

- 4 Evaluate the view that environmental ethics must take into account the importance of religious teachings about the natural world.

YES. a/c.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Philosophy of Religion
- New Testament Studies
- Study of a Religion.

(30)

As the environment suffers, humanity has discussed a number of ethical responses. While specific religious teachings and interpretations have been harmed, this is not to say religious teachings themselves do not have valuable things to say about the environment. In order to properly understand the natural world in an ethical sense, it is imperative that religion is considered. Not only is it perhaps the root of the culture that has caused climate change, but ~~the~~ christian ethics also are the foundations of the western world that ought to fix it. Environmental ethics must understand religion - even if to condemn it - in order to unravel the natural world.

Before engaging in the nuances of christian interpretation, it is worth ~~the~~ laying out the two core environmental

teachings found in the Bible: stewardship and dominion. Genesis 2 asks humanity "till the earth and keep it" and look after God's perfect creation. (Perfect according to Augustinian theology). This forms the foundation of the Judeo-Christian concept that humanity is here, in part, to care for the Earth. Stewardship is certainly a useful concept insofar as it encourages an othercentric mindset such that humans genuinely care for God's creation. By contrast, the concept of dominion is more dubious. ~~The~~ Genesis 2 has Adam name God's creation, and Genesis 1 explicitly tells humanity they have dominion over the earth. This is certainly more anthropocentric and permeates Christian philosophy - most blatantly Tennant's anthropocentric teleological argument for the existence of God. Having said this, dominion needn't imply power to do what we wish, nor does it detract from the inherent value of God's creation. When stewardship and dominion hold hands, they can be useful companions in environmental ethics.

While scripture itself has important and

~~dominated by~~ predominantly positive things to say about environmental ethics, perhaps christianity itself, as an institutionalised system of beliefs, has historical culpability. L. White clearly believes this, writing christianity simply is to blame for climate change. It is certainly true that christian cultures ~~is~~ (the developed western world) have not been conscientious enough about the natural world. It is true they have misinterpreted a theocentric religion as anthropocentric, putting too much weight on human rationality ~~and~~ which led to intense industrialisation and consumerism, however white is perhaps incorrect to be so sure it is the inherent faults of the religion.

Weber has a far more nuanced - though equally anti-religious - ~~paper~~ argument for where the blame falls: protestant work ethic. As the protestant tradition is not sacramental, the emphasis becomes far more tangible. In other words, ~~the~~ the believer's aim and purpose in this life shifts from the sacraments to society: work. Weber

pins down how Christianity lost sight of its core environmental values of stewardship and dominion, highlighting how historical industrial gain, driven by protestant work ethic, ~~has~~ has created anthropocentrism and an environmental crisis. Without understanding this ~~to~~ ~~set~~ ethical relationship between the natural world and ~~the~~ Christianity, it is not possible to create a better relationship.

This 'better relationship' is exactly what the ~~so~~ ~~of~~ catholic church today is attempting to do. Pope Francis wrote an encyclical, *Laudato Si*, which seems to advocate a melange of secular and christian ethics in that it looks to shallow ecology (which will be explored in more detail later). The pope writes how the ~~of~~ Planet is slowly becoming a "pile of rubbish", and we owe it to our children to improve the state of our world. This is surely a valuable argument, which contains not only truth but power.

Despite the positive ~~the~~ <sup>core</sup> message and the

potential impact of religious teachings, there are of course secular perspectives on environmental ethics. Though they effectively stand alone, they are not all incompatible with religion - indeed in their strongest form they can include both secular and religious ideals.

A first secular theory is Shallow Ecology. As I briefly said earlier, this is certainly ~~to~~ compatible with Christian ethics. Shallow ecology attributes value to the Earth due to how humanity benefits from it. For instance, we must preserve trees so we can breathe oxygen; we must protect plants because their medicinal properties benefit us. Shallow ecology's strength lies in this, though anthropocentric, it is certainly persuasive as it ~~clearly~~ gives everybody personal incentive to act. Perhaps it is for this reason Pope Francis utilises shallow ecology in *Laudato Si*, it is persuasive despite not calling for enough ~~of~~ a change.

Deep ecology is certainly most drastic however perhaps "drastic" and extreme measures are ~~not~~ necessary. Arne Naess

advocates deep ecology, which requires a change in mindset towards biocentricity. Immediately it appears as if religion may take issue with this, as Christianity and Judaism attempt to be theocentric, however theocentricity surely results in the same conclusion. Noëss claims we must protect the environment not because it is in our interests to do so, but because the ~~planet~~ environment has intrinsic value. This is surely the very same conclusion to Christianity. As discussed in the philosophy course, the traditional solution to the problem of evil is the Augustinian theology. Augustine asserts ~~the~~ God's creation is perfect, and was created as perfect ex nihilo. It is the privation of ~~the~~ goodness which leads to evil. This idea of the privation of goodness is the basis upon which Christian morality is built: natural moral law. Aquinas looks back to perfect nature in order to find morality, the very same perfect nature Noëss attributes as intrinsically worthwhile. Should we not combine Augustinian ideas to deep ecology, we are left with the

question "why is nature intrinsically valuable? Under what authority?" Naess cannot well respond to this. He can look to E. Burke's sublime, he can call upon Romanticism to describe the intrinsic beauty of nature, yet this is not the same as calling nature intrinsically valuable because it is good.

All this being said, deep ecology has a flaw: it is unrealistic. ~~But~~ Humanity is not ready for the drastic measures Naess puts forwards (self-sufficiency, isolated communities, abandoning economic growth). Even should the Pope and religious authority advocate such changes, it is doubtful they will go ahead. Deep ecology may show us what we ought to do, a perspective religion helps with, however it is ~~unrealistic~~ sadly unrealistic.

~~By~~ There exists one more secular ethical theory. Unlike the ~~two~~ previous two, the Gaia Hypothesis cannot take into account the importance of religion. Yet it does ~~state~~ <sup>ring</sup> true in places. Lovelock wrote that the Earth is a <sup>self-regulating</sup> ~~system~~ system, <sup>which he</sup> ~~called~~ called Gaia. Immediately this is not helped by religion as it seems almost Parthestic (indeed the Cornwall Alliance dubbed it so). On the contrary, perhaps "God's creation"

and "Gaia" seek the same truth. The true deviation occurs when Lovelock asserts Gaia will kill us in order to balance out her ecological system - he does not explicitly use the language of disease, however the sentiment is the same and the idea that humanity is a disease the earth will kill takes its root in the Gaia hypothesis. Christianity cannot reconcile the rational soul, and ~~the~~ *imago dei* with such a <sup>bleak</sup> ~~catastroph~~ conclusion. This is not to say Lovelock has not predicted well what may happen if we do not become biocentric culturally, only that such a ~~its~~ conclusion is not compatible with Christian ethics.

To conclude, it is important to take into account religious teachings when talking about the environment. Not only ~~do~~ they reveal how we have become so culturally <sup>opposed</sup> ~~to~~ the natural world (which is necessary self-awareness to become more harmonious with nature) but they help a biocentric model in ~~to~~ an abstract sense, explaining why the earth is so valuable. Not to mention practically, Pope Francis is a powerful voice who can sway many, as seen with Laudato Si.

(Total for Question 4 = 30 marks)

TOTAL FOR SECTION C = 30 MARKS



This is a full, detailed, and wide-ranging response, showing confidence with religious and secular responses to environmental ethics.

Note the effective linking with philosophy of religion by way of the anthropic principle (design argument).

Total: 30 marks

4 Evaluate the view that environmental ethics must take into account the importance of religious teachings about the natural world.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Philosophy of Religion have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Philosophy of Religion
- New Testament Studies
- Study of a Religion. - interpretation? use synoptic links?

(30)

Environmental ethics is concerned with the preservation, protection and conservation of the world and environment. This includes ~~nature~~ nature itself, animals (non-human), and our attitudes towards the use of the planet.

one important fundamental religious teaching about the world involves the notion of a soul and eschatology. In the Gospel, specifically Luke's gospel, the theme of the Kingdom of God is preached, ~~the~~ one interpretation of which (future eschatology) involving the notion of resurrection, the parousia and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven. There are two key features of religious belief that has an impact on the environment here: resurrection and souls, and an eternal kingdom of God replacing the current world.

~~Begin the teaching~~ of the belief in the second <sup>coming</sup> ~~coming~~ of Christ, the imminent ~~parousia~~ destruction of earth, potentially the ~~resurrection~~ among other varied teachings

depending on the denomination all indicate the temporary nature of this world. If these teachings are to be believed, there is no reason to conserve the planet <sup>or</sup> focus on protecting endangered species, if everything will be recreated in ~~the~~ God's beautiful kingdom, where the wine will flow and everyone will live in God's glory. This could lead to those who believe in such ideas using the planet instrumentally for their own needs - via shallow ecology - and only maintaining it for the sake of human progress until the imminent arrival of the kingdom of God.

The notion of a resurrection leads us to consider the role of the soul and dualism in the topic of conservation. It is believed that humans were made in the image of God, and that we each have a soul that will be raised in the resurrection along with our ideal bodies, wherever those will be. This is a very anthropocentric view, since little merit is given to the souls of animals - Peter Singer would argue that Christianity is fundamentally speciesist in this regard, and that it teaches that due to our specialness as humans, we can do whatever we want to lesser beings. This would not promote animal conservation, and could result in animal cruelty due to the belief that animals are effectively automata, as ancient and some modern theologians believe.

However, this is not the case for all Christian teaching. St Francis of Assisi, for example, promoted loving nature because it is God's creation and brings us close to God. This could be interpreted as an early advocacy for 'deep ecology', a term coined by Arne Naess, suggesting that everything natural is intrinsically valuable and that we ought to see this natural dignity, respect it and not abuse it. St John Chrysostom argued that we should love animals as they are 'of the same origin as ourselves', that is, ~~partners~~ creations of God, ~~there~~ there should be love for their intrinsic value.

This being said, another less supportive view of conservation is the interpretation of the Genesis passage about man having 'dominion' over 'every creeping and crawling thing'. This is interpreted by some to mean that we, as humans, have a God-given right to rule over nature and use it as we see fit. Francis Bacon agreed, claiming that science should have dominion over nature. However, others interpret dominion to mean responsible stewardship - that is, caring for the environment and every creature within it as God cares for us - after all, we are made in His image.

There remains the question of whether environmental ethicists ought to take any of this into account. Given

the wide range of ~~ideas~~ religious teachings, the ethicists' responsibility to take their importance into account depends on whether they themselves believe in a God, and if not, how widespread and influential these religious teachings are on environmental ethics. The ethicist must understand that a large population of the world is exposed to such teachings, in their varying environmentally-friendliness, and that even atheists in the western world have grown up in a capitalist society, which promotes the guilt and shame of individualism, and in protestation, which will have instilled values of anthropocentrism in the majority of westerners. This, along with ideas about humans being responsible for sin, and the disconnection between 'nature' and 'us', means that environmental ethics must consider the religious-borne view that humanity is distinct from nature, and that our lives are separate from the world.

We isolate ourselves in cities as a result of the predominant teachings of Christianity, separate ourselves from our gods and nature. James Lovelock would agree that this is not in line with Gaia Theory, the theory that the earth is effectively one organism, in that it is self-sustaining while humans aren't tipping the balance. The Cornwall Alliance would call this pantheistic and heretical to see the earth as a sort of god-like entity of Gaia, but this is not Lovelock's point. We are all interlinked and

interdependent, and religious teachings tend to err on the side of shallow ecology rather than this form of deep ecology. The sheer ~~pre~~ prominence of religious or even religious views in the world means that in environmental ethics, sustainability will only be pursued for the sake of man, as with waste management, as with recycling.

Environmental ethicists could, however, reject the importance of religious teaching about the natural world, since many rely on old, disproven concepts ~~and~~ of dualism and non-sentient animals, and could instead advocate for further education in science, evolution and climate change. Richard Dawkins would agree that religion and religious teaching are holding humanity back from progress due to the outdated and false nature of their views - such as fundamentalism, who argue that the world was created 6000 years ago and that fossils were planted by God as a test. This is an extreme example, and Dawkins can be accused of strawmanning religion, but this is one argument for the rejection of the importance of religious teachings.

One religious teaching that is not necessarily about nature but can be applied to nature and often is, is situation ethics. This is a theory developed by Joseph Fletcher preaching about 'agape', love, and how we ought to

always of the most loving thing. Although it depends on who and what we spread our gaze to, the religious teaching here based on Jesus' doctrine could advocate deep ecology, ~~sheer~~, if we subscribe to the notion of non-human animals being sentient, then the most loving thing to do would be to not destroy their habitats. This way, religious teachings about love can be applied to the natural world and result in conservation.

One final teaching about the natural world that is compatible with science and could provide a middle path for believers and environmental ethicists alike is process theodicy. This could also be compatible with Gaia theory, except it suggests that God has a dipolar relationship with the world and that He is like the soul and nature is the body. When we hurt nature, God suffers as we would if we were to be cut. Therefore, this religious teaching about nature, ~~is~~ <sup>developed</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>inspired</sup> by Whitehead and Griffin, promotes valuing nature as ~~an~~ since it is the creation of God, but since he suffers when nature suffers - this makes nature holy, and thus intrinsically valuable.

Overall, environmental ethics ought to take into account religious teachings about the natural world, because ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~that~~ many believers and non-believers have been excluded

to such ideas, and thus they persist in the collective  
mind of human, even in <sup>the</sup> a secular world of today.  
They Environmental ethics ought to challenge the  
deeply embedded notion of anthropocentrism and the  
consequences this has for our collective views about  
nature. Additionally, the widely held concept of a  
soul and lack of sympathy and empathy for animals,  
despite the teachings of certain <sup>Saints</sup> combined with  
belief in evolution, <sup>renders</sup> <sup>intrinsically appreciative</sup> attitudes to nature hindered  
by centuries of ~~un-~~ ingrained dualism.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Although this answer is shorter than the previous response, it is sophisticated, scholarly and concise.

The link with New Testament studies is excellent.

Total: 30 marks



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Ensure candidates have practised making links with all the topics across the whole specification.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Some candidates were still inclined to over-write for the 8 – and 12-mark questions, which subsequently restricted the time available for the 30-mark question
- Centres must ensure that candidates have access to the whole specification so they can answer all questions set
- Scholarship, technical language and supported evaluation continued to mark out the strongest candidates
- Candidates must be prepared to write at length for the 30-mark question and show awareness of connections between areas of the unit and the specification
- Choose relevant scholarly and specialist material specifically tailored to address the question as set. This is particularly important for Q01 where candidates need to focus their response to the marks and space available
- Read the question thoroughly and reference it throughout, to sustain the focus within the answer
- Practice writing to time on a regular basis
- Be mindful of the use of the command words (assess, analyse and evaluate), by offering an assessment of, or verdict on, a stance, and not to merely present an alternative view, eg 'some scholars disagree' without demonstrating relevant reasoning as to why some scholars disagree
- Ensure scholars are used accurately in respect of the ideas ascribed to them. Support points made with examples and relevant detail rather than generic examples
- Make the synoptic link explicitly clear in Q04. Convincing synoptic links are usually more than a sentence or two in content and draw attention to the issues being linked

## **Grade boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>

