

OCR Religious Studies A Level

Exam Code – H573

Component Codes

01 – **Philosophy** of Religion

02 – Religion and **Ethics**

03 – Developments in Christian Thought (**DCT**)



Introduction to the Course and Summer Work 2026

Bridging the gap from GCSE to A Level

Name:

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Taster Session

What is the course?



3 units = 3 x 2 hour exams



Each exam requires you to answer 3 out of 4 questions

Philosophy
Ethics
Development of Christian Thought

Ethics:	Philosophy of Religion:	Development of Christian Thought:
1. Normative Ethical theories: Natural Law, Situation Ethics, Utilitarianism and Kantian Ethics. 2. Applied Ethics: Euthanasia & Business Ethics. 3. Meta Ethics – language and ethics 4. The nature and role of the conscience 5. Sexual Ethics	1. Ancient Greek Philosophy: Plato and Aristotle. 2. Arguments for the existence of God: The Cosmological argument, The Design/Teleological Argument, The Ontological argument. 3. God and the world: Religious Experience, The Problem of Evil. 4. Theological & Philosophical Developments: Nature of God. 5. Religious Language – traditional approaches 6. 21st Century Developments	1. Augustine on Human Nature (Original sin, the fall, God's grace) and Death and the afterlife 2. Knowledge of God's Existence 3. Christian moral principles and moral action 4. Religious Pluralism and theology and society 5. Gender roles in theology and society (feminist theology) 6. Challenges to Theology: Secularism, Marxism and Liberation Theology

2 The specification overview

2a. OCR's A Level in Religious Studies (H573)

Learners take components 01 and 02 and one from 03 to 07, to be awarded the OCR A Level in Religious Studies.

Content Overview	Assessment Overview	
Philosophy of religion Learners will study: - ancient philosophical influences - the nature of the soul, mind and body - arguments about the existence or non-existence of God - the nature and impact of religious experience - the challenge for religious belief of the problem of evil - ideas about the nature of God - issues in religious language.	Philosophy of religion (01) 120 marks 2 hour written paper	33.3% of total A Level
Religion and ethics Learners will study: - normative ethical theories - the application of ethical theory to two contemporary issues of importance - ethical language and thought - debates surrounding the significant idea of conscience - sexual ethics and the influence on ethical thought of developments in religious beliefs.	Religion and ethics (02) 120 marks 2 hour written paper	33.3% of total A Level
Developments in religious thought Learners will study: - religious beliefs, values and teachings, their interconnections and how they vary historically and in the contemporary world - sources of religious wisdom and authority - practices which shape and express religious identity, and how these vary within a tradition - significant social and historical developments in theology and religious thought - key themes related to the relationship between religion and society In the context of one religion chosen from Christianity (03), Islam (04), Judaism (05), Buddhism (06) or Hinduism (07).	Developments in religious thought (03–07) 120 marks 2 hour written paper	33.3% of total A Level

Examples of questions

- Does God exist? (philosophy)
- What happens when we die? (philosophy)
- Is it right to have multiple sexual partners at the same time? (ethics)
- Would you murder a child to save a whole group of people? (ethics)
- Was Jesus nothing more than a good politician and excellent doctor? (Development of Christian Thought)
- Was Jesus a revolutionary? (Development of Christian Thought)

Is Religious Studies the right course for me?

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
• If you're interested, it's really rewarding • It's different to GCSE • It's a well regarded A Level by employers and universities • You get a qualification for arguing • Teaches you skills in analysis and critical thinking • Teaches you to understand complex ideas • Successful, small classes • Lots of jobs like it! It gives good grounding for: • Medicine, nursing & midwifery, • Social work • Government and politics, • Business • Psychology/sociology • teaching • policing, etc ...	• There's quite a bit of reading • There's quite a bit of essay writing • Only assessed by exams, no controlled assessment • There is Bible stuff (in DCT unit) • It's different to GCSE – no simple formula for answers, but very few if any quotes to learn

The M.O.R.A.L. Questionnaire

The Government welcomes you to the Ministry of Righteous Action in Life (M.O.R.A.L.). As you know, this department has been set up to look into the moral affairs of the nation. A select committee of the Righteous and the Repugnant has been chosen for their expertise in right and wrong acts.

As members of this committee, your brief is to establish the Moral Agenda for the Millennium by dividing up all actions into the Good, the Bad and the Neutral. Tick one box after each example: A if it is a good act, B if it is a bad act, or C if it is morally neutral.

- 1 A tree falls in a forest and crushes a cute deer. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 2 A killer whale toys with a seal it has half-killed – batting it into the air with its tail and catching it with its teeth. It takes twenty minutes for the seal to die. The whale leaves it to rot on the ocean floor. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 3 You deliberately step on someone's toe in a lift but pretend it was an accident. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 4 You accidentally poison your neighbour's dog. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 5 You beat your friend in an ant-killing competition (with a winning combination of bleach and boiling water). A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 6 When you were at school, you persistently bullied a classmate. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 7 A billionaire builds herself a space rocket and leaves Earth for ever. For the rest of her life none of her actions ever affect another living thing. Could any of her future actions be good or bad (A) or will they all be morally neutral (B)? A ☐ B ☐
- 8 You complete 15 passes in a 1-1 draw at a local hockey match. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 9 An orphanage is set up to help the victims of a war in an African state. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 10 A builder shouts 'Nice legs!' to a person walking past. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 11 You stop to help a blind man cross the road but fail to notice the oncoming, unstoppable juggernaut that injures you both. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐
- 12 An evil scientist releases a new biochemical into the water supply of a large city intending to kill millions of people. However, this chemical, when diluted, turns out to be a harmless cure for cancer and countless lives are saved. A ☐ B ☐ C ☐

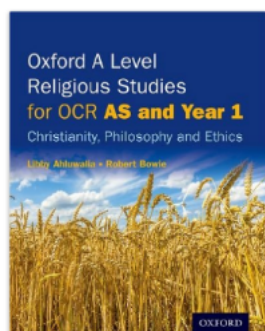
Based on these discussions what makes something right or wrong/good or bad?

- Intention or outcome?
- The way a person interprets the situation?
- Conscious decision?
- Human/animal victim?
- Number of people involved?
- Other????

Preparation for A Level Religious Studies

Things to buy:

1. 3 folders for each component , dividers and plastic wallets. Exercise books will be available to hole punch and put into the folders!
2. Highlighter and different coloured pens.
3. If you would like your own copy of the new A level text book for use at home please buy the below textbook (link is from Amazon and first picture):
https://www.amazon.co.uk/Oxford-Level-Religious-Studies-OCR/dp/0198392850/ref=sr_1_5?dchild=1&keywords=A+level+Religious+studies+revision+OCR&qid=1624873591&sr=8-5
4. Alternately, there are separate Philosophy, Ethics and Development in Christian thought books that are also excellent and break the topics down into very easy to understand sections. A picture of the books can be seen below (second image) and a link to where you can purchase them is here:
<https://www.hoddereducation.com/religious-education-philosophy?eb=68&l=153>



See this image

Oxford A Level Religious Studies for OCR: AS and Year 1 Student Book: Christianity, Philosophy and Ethics Paperback – 1 Nov 2016
by Libby Ahluwalia (Author), Robert Bowie (Author)

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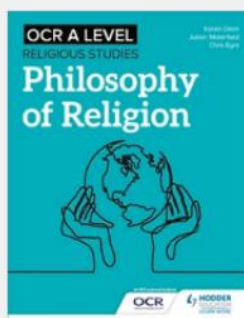
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Oxford A Level Religious Studies for OCR is a brand new course developed by renowned authors Libby Ahluwalia and Robert Bowie for the 2016 OCR specification. This textbook supports a deep engagement with philosophy, ethics and the study of Christianity using language and an approach accessible to all students. Key terms are clearly defined, and case studies and scenarios are used to give students a practical understanding of key theories and how they might be applied to the big ethical and philosophical questions of the day. The book includes a section on 'Developments in Christian Thought' to support the new requirement for a systematic study of a religious tradition. There is also dedicated support for developing students' essay-writing skills, as well as revision summaries and practice questions to ensure students feel prepared for their exam.

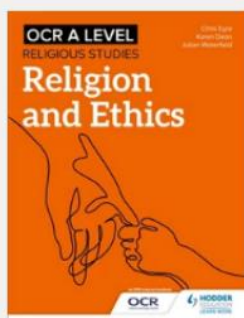


BOOKS

OCR A Level Religious Studies: Philosophy of Religion

Julian Waterfield, Chris Eyre, Karen Dean

£18.99



BOOKS

OCR A Level Religious Studies: Religion and Ethics

Julian Waterfield, Chris Eyre, Karen Dean

£18.99



BOOKS

OCR A Level Religious Studies: Developments in Christian Thought

Julian Waterfield, Chris Eyre, Karen Dean

£18.99

Information on the course

You will be assessed on evaluation points for each component. In each component exam, you will answer three (out of a choice of four) essay questions worth 40 marks each.

Here is a comprehensive list of each evaluation point

01 – Philosophy of Religion

Unit 1 (Ancient philosophical influences)	1. comparison and evaluation of Plato's Form of the Good and Aristotle's Prime Mover
	2. comparison and evaluation of Plato's reliance on reason (rationalism) and Aristotle's use of the senses (empiricism) in their attempts to make sense of reality
	3. materialist critiques of dualism, and dualist responses to materialism
	4. whether the concept of 'soul' is best understood metaphorically or as a reality
	5. the idea that any discussion about the mind-body distinction is a category error
Unit 2 (Existence of God)	6. whether a posteriori or a priori is the more persuasive style of argument
	7. whether or not teleological arguments can be defended against the challenge of 'chance'
	8. whether cosmological arguments simply jump to the conclusion of a 9. transcendent creator, without sufficient explanation
	10. whether or not there are logical fallacies in these arguments that cannot be overcome
	11. whether a posteriori or a priori is the more persuasive style of argument
	12. whether or not existence can be treated as a predicate
	13. whether or not the ontological argument justifies belief
	14. whether or not there are logical fallacies in this argument that cannot be overcome
Unit 3 (God in the World)	15. whether personal testimony or witness is enough to support the validity of religious experiences
	16. whether or not corporate religious experiences might be considered more reliable or valid than individual experiences
	17. whether or not religious experience provides a basis for belief in God or a greater power
	18. whether or not Augustine's view of the origins of moral and natural evils is enough to spare God from blame for evils in the world
	19. whether or not the need to create a 'vale of soul-making' can justify the existence or extent of evils
	20. which of the logical or evidential aspects of the problem of evil pose the greater challenge to belief
	21. whether or not it is possible to successfully defend monotheism in the face of evil

Unit 4 (Nature and Attributes of God)	22. whether or not it is possible, or necessary, to resolve the apparent conflicts between divine attributes
	23. whether Boethius, Anselm or Swinburne provides the most useful understanding of the relationship between divinity and time
	24. whether or not any of these thinkers are successful in resolving the problems of divine knowledge, benevolence, justice, eternity and human free will
	25. whether the attributes should be understood as subject to the limits of logical possibility or of divine self-limitation
Unit 5 Religious Language	26. comparison of the usefulness of the above approaches to religious language
	27. whether or not the apophatic way enables effective understanding of theological discussion
	28. whether or not Aquinas' analogical approaches support effective expression of language about God
	29. whether or not religious discourse is comprehensible if religious language is understood as symbolic
Unit 6 21st Century Language	30. whether or not any version of the verification principle successfully renders religious language as meaningless
	31. whether or not any participant in the falsification symposium presented a convincing approach to the understanding of religious language
	32. a comparison of the ideas of Aquinas and Wittgenstein, including whether a cognitive approach (such as Aquinas's thinking on analogy) or a non-cognitive approach (such as the language games concept of Wittgenstein) present better ways of making sense of religious language
	33. a comparison of the ideas of Aquinas and Wittgenstein, including: the influence of non-cognitive approaches on the interpretation of religious texts
	34. a comparison of the ideas of Aquinas and Wittgenstein, including how far Aquinas' analogical view of theological language remains valuable in philosophy of religion

02 – Religion and Ethics

Unit 1	1. whether or not natural law provides a helpful method of moral decision-making
	2. whether or not a judgement about something being good, bad, right or wrong can be based on its success or failure in achieving its telos
	3. whether or not the universe as a whole is designed with a telos, or human nature has an orientation towards the good
	4. whether or not the doctrine of double effect can be used to justify an action, such as killing someone as an act of self-defence
	5. whether or not situation ethics provides a helpful method of moral decision-making
	6. whether or not an ethical judgement about something being good, bad, right or wrong can be based on the extent to which, in any given situation, agape is best served
	7. whether Fletcher's understanding of agape is really religious or whether it means nothing more than wanting the best for the person involved in a given situation
	8. whether or not the rejection of absolute rules by situation ethics makes moral decision- making entirely individualistic and subjective
Unit 2	9. whether or not Kantian ethics provides a helpful method of moral decision-making
	10. whether or not an ethical judgement about something being good, bad, right or wrong can be based on the extent to which duty is best served
	11. whether or not Kantian ethics is too abstract to be applicable to practical moral decision-making
	12. whether or not Kantian ethics is so reliant on reason that it unduly rejects the importance of other factors, such as sympathy, empathy and love in moral decision- making
	13. whether or not utilitarianism provides a helpful method of moral decision-making
	14. whether or not an ethical judgement about something being good, bad, right or wrong can be based on the extent to which, in any given situation, utility is best served
	15. whether or not it is possible to measure good or pleasure and then reach a moral decision
Unit 3	16. the application of natural law and situation ethics to euthanasia
	17. whether or not the religious concept of sanctity of life has any meaning in twenty-first century medical ethics
	18. whether or not a person should or can have complete autonomy over their own life and decisions made about it
	19. whether or not there is a moral difference between medical intervention to end a patient's life and medical non-intervention to end a patient's life
	20. the application of Kantian ethics and utilitarianism to business ethics
	21. whether or not the concept of corporate social responsibility is nothing more than 'hypocritical window-dressing' covering the greed of a business intent on making profits
	22. whether or not human beings can flourish in the context of capitalism and consumerism
	23. whether globalisation encourages or discourages the pursuit of good ethics as the foundation of good business

Unit 4	24. whether or not what is meant by the word 'good' is the defining question in the study of ethics
	25. whether or not ethical terms such as good, bad, right and wrong: - o have an objective factual basis that makes them true or false in describing something - o reflect only what is in the mind of the person using such terms - o can be said to be meaningful or meaningless
	26. whether or not, from a common sense approach, people just know within themselves what is good, bad, right and wrong
Unit 5	27. comparison between Aquinas and Freud: - o on the concept of guilt - o on the presence or absence of God within the workings of the conscience and super-ego - o on the process of moral decision-making
	28. whether conscience is linked to, or separate from, reason and the unconscious mind
	29. whether conscience exists at all or is instead an umbrella term covering various factors involved in moral decision-making, such as culture, environment, genetic predisposition and education
Unit 6	30. whether or not religious beliefs and practices concerning sex and relationships have a continuing role in the area of sexual ethics
	31. whether choices in the area of sexual behaviour should be entirely private and personal, or whether they should be subject to societal norms and legislation
	32. whether normative theories are useful in what they might say about sexual ethics

03 – Developments in Christian Thought (DCT)

Unit 1	1. Whether or not Augustine's teaching on a historical Fall and Original Sin is wrong
	2. whether or not Augustine is right that sin means that humans can never be morally good
	3. whether or not Augustine's view of human nature is pessimistic or optimistic
	4. whether or not there is a distinctive human nature
	5. whether or not God's judgement takes place immediately after death or at the end of time
	6. whether or not hell and heaven are eternal. Discussion of whether Hell symbolises separation from God, or is a tangible place of damnation
	7. whether or not heaven is the transformation and perfection of the whole of creation
	8. whether or not purgatory is a state through which everyone goes

Unit 2	9. whether or not God can be known through reason alone
	10. whether or not faith is sufficient reason for belief in God's existence
	11. whether or not the Fall has completely removed all natural human knowledge of God
	12. whether or not natural knowledge of God is the same as revealed knowledge of God
	13. whether or not belief in God's existence is sufficient to put one's trust in him
	14. whether or not Jesus was only a teacher of wisdom
	15. whether or not Jesus was more than a political liberator. Discuss identities such as Son of God and moral teacher
	16. whether or not Jesus' relationship with God was very special or truly unique
	17. whether or not Jesus thought he was divine
Unit 3	18. whether or not Christian ethics are distinctive
	19. whether or not Christian ethics are personal or communal
	20. whether or not the principle of love is sufficient to live a good life
	21. whether or not the Bible is a comprehensive moral guide
	22. whether or not Christians should practise civil disobedience
	23. whether or not it is possible always to know God's will
	24. whether or not Bonhoeffer puts too much emphasis on suffering
	25. whether or not Bonhoeffer's theology has relevance today
Unit 4	26. whether or not if Christ is the 'truth' there can be any other means of salvation
	27. whether or not a loving God would ultimately deny any human being salvation
	28. whether or not all good people will be saved
	29. whether or not theological pluralism undermines central Christian beliefs
	30. whether or not inter-faith dialogue has contributed practically towards social cohesion
	31. whether or not Christian communities should seek to convert people from other faiths
	32. whether or not scriptural reasoning relativises religious beliefs
	33. whether or not Christians should have a mission to those of no faith

Unit 5	34. whether or not official Christian teaching should resist current secular views of gender
	35. whether or not secular views of gender equality have undermined Christian gender roles
	36. whether or not motherhood is liberating or restricting
	37. whether or not the idea of family is entirely culturally determined
	38. a comparison of Ruether's and Daly's feminist theologies 39. sexism and patriarchy in Christianity, as it has developed in the mainstream Churches 40. whether Christianity can be changed or should be abandoned
	41. whether or not Christianity is essentially sexist
	42. whether or not a male saviour can save women
	43. . whether or not only women can develop a genuine spirituality
	44. whether or not the Christian God can be presented in female terms
Unit 6	45. whether or not spiritual values are just human values
	46. whether or not there is evidence that Christianity is a major cause of personal and social problems
	47. whether secularism and secularisation are opportunities for Christianity to develop new ways of thinking and acting
	48. whether Christianity is, or should be, a significant contributor to society's culture and values
	49. whether or not Christian theology should engage with atheist secular ideologies
	50. whether or not Christianity tackles social issues more effectively than than Marxism
	51. whether or not liberation theology has engaged with Marxism fully enough
	52. whether or not it is right for Christians to prioritise one group over another

Summer Tasks

01 – Philosophy of Religion

Time Guideline – should take between **1 hour** to **1 hour and 30 minutes** to complete.

TASK 1 TO 3

What is Philosophy (Crash Course) = https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1A_CAKYt3GY

Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology) = https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_Y3utleTPg

Introduction to arguments: =

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2ziJTHtlkc&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1VGvHzlNjuL-s4B4w7K2h3Xlqi37Q66p0idrQUnQpdrCvyDzqyDfAj0k>

- 1) Watch each of the videos one at a time. We recommend watching it once fully without making notes and then a second time to be able to write things down that you found interesting.
- 2) Summarise the main ideas of each video in no more than 3 sentences. Make sure you include subheadings in your notes.
- 3) Watch the video on how to make an argument, make notes and then complete the tasks at the end of the video.

TASK 4

MM McCabe on the 'Socratic Method' [13 minutes]

<https://podcasts.apple.com/lv/podcast/m-m-mccabe-on-socratic-method/id257042117?i=1000131585315>

If the link doesn't work, google 'Philosophy Bites' and search directly from there.

Listen to the podcast which deals with questions about what are the best ways to do practical ethics and work out how to behave? As you listen, write a list of possible answers to these questions

- a) Who was Socrates?
- b) How do we know about the life and views of Socrates?
- c) What is the socratic method? What was Socrates trying to show people through using this method?
- d) Why was the socratic method controversial to some people?
- e) What does McCabe think Socrates means when he says 'the unexamined life is not worth living?'
- f) What might be the problems with examining all aspects of life?
- g) Is there something we can learn from Socrates today? Why is questioning and reflecting important?
- h) Are there any problems? (e.g. with exams, courses).

02 – Religion and Ethics

Time Guideline – should take between **1 hour** to **1 hour and 30 minutes** to complete.

Ethics / moral philosophy is concerned with what is good for individuals and society and is also described as moral philosophy. The term is derived from the Greek word *ethos* which can mean custom, habit, character or disposition.

Ethics covers the following dilemmas:

- how to live a good life
- our rights and responsibilities
- the language of right and wrong
- moral decisions - what is good and bad?

Our concepts of ethics have been derived from religions, philosophies and cultures. They infuse debates on topics like abortion, human rights and professional conduct.

There are generally thought to be three different types of ethics:

Normative ethics: Begins by asking what things are good and what things are bad, and what kind of behaviour is right or wrong. It then makes a value judgment based on the outcome. May come from an established group or culture, i.e. Christianity or philosophical ideal. It decides how people ought to act, how moral choices should be made and how the rules apply.

Descriptive ethics: describes and compares the different ways in which people and societies have answered moral questions. It is simply a description of the situation and the choices made by people. It presents what it believes to be the facts of a situation and avoid any moral judgment or bias.

Meta-ethics: sometimes called philosophical ethics, attracts a great deal of interest today. It is concerned with what do we mean when we use words such as 'good', 'bad', 'right' or 'wrong'. It explores the meaning and function of moral language.

Identify the kind of ethical approach that these phrases fit best explaining why.

1. Adultery is wrong because God's law forbids it.
2. When you say euthanasia is wrong, you're only saying you don't like it.
3. In some Muslim communities men may take a number of wives, while in most Christian communities only one wife is permitted.

Why is it important to understand meta-ethics before getting to grips with normative ethical theories?

Deontological ethics: concentrates on moral rules that can't be broken. For deontological ethics, the important thing isn't the result or the consequence of the action but the action itself. Deontological ethics is concerned with the nature of the acts themselves and it is the action which is the defining feature of importance in moral decision-making. Deontologists maintain that acts are right or wrong in themselves (they are intrinsically right or wrong) because some absolute law perhaps laid down by God, or because they go against some duty or obligation. A deontologist might say that murder is wrong the very act of murder is intrinsically evil. Pacifists claim that all physical violence is wrong, and many religious groups maintain that certain acts are inherently sinful. Deontologists have advantage of being able to take strong moral positions on certain actions such as abortion. On the other hand they are not flexible enough to take account of special circumstances or culture groups with different religious perspectives on life. Example of this is absolutism and some religious ethics

Summarise deontological ethics in no more than 50 words:

Teleological ethics is concerned with the ends or consequences of actions. The word telos is Greek for 'end'. Teleological theories, sometimes known as **consequentialist**, hold up the link between the act and the consequence as extremely important in moral decision-making. A teleological theory maintains that the rightness or wrongness of an action is decided by the consequences of an action is decided by the consequences that it produces. For a teleological ethical thinker, the end justifies the means. If my action causes pain and suffering then it is bad. If my action causes happiness and love, then it is good. The action isn't good itself (not intrinsically **good**), but **by virtue of the result**. You decide the rightness of an action by judging the end that it produces so this is the key in moral decision making.

In this type of ethical formulation stealing or lying is right if it leads to a better situation afterwards – for example, if the theft feeds a starving family. Qualities such as love, honesty and kindness are not good in themselves. They are only good in an instrumental way because they cause good results. Two teleological theories are **utilitarianism**, which values actions that produce the greatest amount of happiness and well being for the just people, and **situation ethics**, which values the most love filled result.

Summarise teleological ethics in no more than 50 words:

Are these statements teleological or deontological?

- “We should permit the abortion because she is too young and poor to have a child”.
- “you should help your mother because it is your duty”
- “Its ok to steal if you are starving”
- “If you tell her the truth she will be really upset”
- “Whatever you say, you must tell the truth”

Make a list of 3 deontological moral statements and 3 teleological statements.

- What sort of criteria would you use to judge the ends of an action?

Teleological

Deontological

Do Moral Truths exist?

Moral Truth -- The Correspondence Theory of Truth

A statement is true when it corresponds with reality. In other words, a statement is true if it matches up with the way the world really is. This is the *common* definition of truth that we all know. It is only when we come to *moral* truth that people change the definition.

Moral Truth – Subjective Truth vs. Objective Truth

What is the best flavor of ice cream? The claim, “Chocolate ice cream is delicious” can be true for me but false for you because it is a *subjective* claim of truth. This claim is not really about the ice cream, but about me, the subject. Subjective truths are personal, private, and individual [think of *ice cream*].



What if I said, “Chocolate peanut butter ice cream treats diabetes”? Can this be true for you but not true for me? No, because it is an *objective* truth, a reality in the external world we discover and cannot change by our feelings. Objective facts are what they are, regardless of how we feel or think about them [think of *insulin*].

Here are the key questions:

Are morals subjective (like ice cream preference) or are they objective (like insulin)?

Examples of subjective truths are:

-
-
-

Examples of objective truths are:

-
-
-

Ethical Absolutism

An ethical absolute is a moral command or prohibition that's true for ALL TIMES, in ALL PLACES and in ALL SITUATIONS.

- Things are wrong from *an objective point of view*. Not just from *your perspective*.
- Things that are right or wrong CANNOT CHANGE. It is true for all time.
- It is UNIVERSALLY BINDING.

So...

According to moral absolutism, there are eternal moral values applicable everywhere.

This is a popular stance for those who believe in a God who establishes moral order in the universe.

This ethical system is easy and simple to apply. E.g. a crime is a crime, regardless of circumstances.

Absolute ethics allows us to make judgements based upon the actions of others – we can say the Holocaust was absolutely wrong. Therefore, absolute ethics allows courts of law to exist and to maintain order.

Ethical Absolutism is a command that is true for all time, in all places and in all situations.

It is an **Objective** principle.

According to the ethical objectivist, the truth or falsity of typical moral judgments does not depend upon the beliefs or feelings of any person or group of persons.

Where do absolute laws come from?

1. For a **theist** the answer is simple – they come from God.
2. For the agnostic or atheist the answer is more complicated – they just see a **a priori** in nature.

Most religions have moral absolutes which they see as having been set by the deity or deities.

These absolutes are unchanging and perfect; for example the Ten Commandments.

Key Words:

- a priori ("prior to")
- Theist (Belief in the existence of a God or gods)



Ethical Relativism

The theory that there is no single moral standard which is equally applicable to all people at all times.

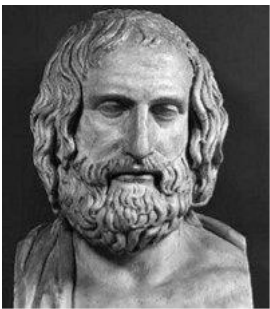
There is no single code or standard, there are many.

It does not just mean people have different opinions about morals but that there is no single moral code.

There is a difference between what people think and what is true. The relativist says there is no single truth.

Relativist views:

The ancient Greek philosopher Protagoras:



'there is no truth in anything beyond the way it seems. There is NO objective knowledge, because all knowledge depends on the perceptions of the person'.

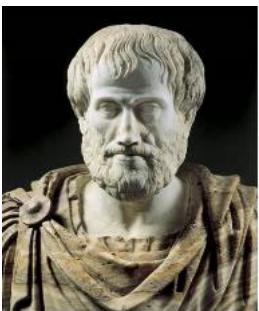
There is NO objective truth. Truth is only true for you, or true for me. Things are good or bad relative to our perceptions. Take snow for example. For children snow is amazing! You wake up rushing to the window hoping that school will be cancelled, but when you learn it isn't you are still thrilled at the prospect of a massive lunch time snow fight! From my perspective, snow means a treacherous journey to school

followed by 4 lessons of over excited, soaking wet kids.

Each view is relative to each person's perspective. If I argue "the snow is frustrating" and somebody else argues "the snow is fantastic" who is correct?

We are both saying things that are true, because what we are saying is true for ourselves. **This is a RELATIVISTIC view – there are no universally valid moral principle.**

The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle:



Aristotle's ethics were collected in a 4thC BCE book *Nicomachean Ethics*, also presented a RELATIVISTIC view.

He argued that we should seek a midway approach of behaviour between two extremes. Human circumstances are infinite and it is not possible to have a general rule which will cover every situation. Moral rules hold for the most part, but there are times when they won't.

An absolutist may hold the view that killing is ALWAYS wrong. However a relativist may argue that killing may not have been wrong if it was done in self-defence.

Cultural Relativism

Many anthropologists, including William Graham Sumner, believe that moral rules are expressions of culture and nothing more. There is nothing absolute or universal about morality.

There's no way of deciding between one set of moral rules and another, because there's no objective measure. What is right and wrong depends upon the perspective of the group. Therefore we cannot judge the conduct of other societies, we need to be tolerant.

This is called **CULTURAL RELATIVISM**.

In 2005, 25 year old Bibi Amina was publicly executed in Afghanistan for adultery.

In 2009 Tiger Woods was exposed for committing adultery and received a severe telling off from his wife.

What does this suggest about moral rules and culture?

Summarise the differences between absolutism and relativism

<i>Absolutism</i>	<i>Relativism</i>

Use the information on the next page to help you fill in these tables.

Absolutism: Strengths and weaknesses

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>weaknesses</i>

Relativism: Strengths and weaknesses

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>weaknesses</i>

Inflexible	makes it hard to criticise horrific acts like those of the Nazis
It puts rules before people	People need rules and society cannot function without laws
Sometimes the end does justify the means	What do you do if two relativists disagree?
It is elitist and intolerant of other cultures and societies	It can't take into account the circumstances of a situation
It explains the different values that people hold and encourages diverse cultural expressions	It prohibits a dominant culture from enforcing itself over others simply because 'we're right and they're wrong'
It is a flexible ethical system that can accommodate the wide diversity of lifestyles found in the modern world.	Provides a fixed ethical code by which to measure actions
Gives clear guidelines of behaviour that reinforce a global view of the human community	One country may judge the actions of another country as wrong and act on that judgement

Explain how an absolutist and a relativist may respond to each of these statements:

It is morally wrong to have an abortion.

Capital Punishment is morally wrong.

It is morally wrong to torture people.

It is morally wrong to have more than one wife.

If you believe that a certain thing is wrong, should you try to persuade others not to do it?

Essay Question:

'Moral absolutism cannot be justified.' Discuss.

In your essay you should include the following:

- An introduction stating what the statement means and your overall opinion on it.
- An explanation of what moral absolutism is.
- Examples of moral absolutism put into practice (apply it to 2-3 moral scenarios) and for each discuss whether it is a good/justified approach to that situation.
- Refer to strengths and weaknesses when applying absolutism to the situations.
- Refer to Philosophers who may support or oppose absolutism.
- Consider if there is a better option than absolutism.
- Give an overall conclusion about whether absolutism is justifiable in any situations.

03 – Developments in Christian Thought (DCT)

Time Guideline – should take around **2 hours** complete.

For the summer work, you are making a headstart on Unit 1a. Keep these notes safe, as we will be using them in the first few lessons of DCT.

The content you need to know is here.

1. Insight <i>Beliefs, teachings and ideas about human life, the world and ultimate reality</i>		
Topic	Content	Key Knowledge
Augustine's Teaching on Human Nature*	• Human relationships pre- and post-Fall • Original Sin and its effects on the will and human societies • God's grace	• Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 3 (the Fall) including: ◦ the state of perfection before the Fall and Adam and Eve's relationship as friends ◦ lust and selfish desires after the Fall • Augustine's teaching that Original Sin is passed on through sexual intercourse and is the cause of: ◦ human selfishness and lack of free will ◦ lack of stability and corruption in all human societies • Augustine's teaching that only God's grace, his generous love, can overcome sin and the rebellious will to achieve the greatest good (<i>summum bonum</i>)

To cover this content, read through the information on the next few pages and complete the tasks in the Activities box (6 tasks per page).

1.1 Is Augustine's teaching on a historical Fall wrong?

Before the Fall



Aim

Understand the story of the Fall and Augustine's interpretation of it.



Starter

If earth were perfect, describe what life would be like. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of this earth?



Meet the thinker

Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430) was from the North African part of the Roman Empire and became Bishop of Hippo. He is seen as one of the most influential early Christian writers and thinkers of all time. He converted to Christianity in his early 30s, having been married, had a mistress and established himself as a teacher; for example, his writings contain one of the earliest references in Christian theology to *creation ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing).



According to the account in Genesis 1–2, God created a perfect world, carefully ordered, and made humans as the pinnacle of his creation, made in his 'image and likeness' (Genesis 1:26). Adam and Eve enjoyed a harmonious relationship with each other and with God and they had everything they needed in the Garden of Eden. The only things God asked of them in Eden was that they did not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and that they take care of creation (the Christian term for this is *stewardship*). Adam and Eve lived in complete obedience to God, there was nothing that would threaten them – Augustine said that there was perfect harmony between the human body, human will and reason.

A key way to describe the relationship that Adam and Eve had is friendship. The two were married as friends and they enjoyed a friendship with God as well as all of creation. They could reproduce but sex was not driven by lust but by friendship. The human will, for Augustine, was a balance between the powers of self-love and generous love and in the Garden of Eden, the two were in harmony.

The Fall

Genesis 3 describes the Fall of humankind:

- The serpent assures Eve that she will not die if she eats of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.
- Eve eats the fruit and gives some to Adam. They realise that they are naked and make coverings for themselves.
- Adam and Eve hide from God who is walking in the garden because they are naked. God asks what they have done and realises that they have eaten from the forbidden tree.
- God curses the serpent and condemns him to crawl on the ground and be the enemy of people.

Key quote

'And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil."' (Genesis 3:22)

- God punishes the woman by saying that childbirth will be painful and that she will be ruled over by her husband and she will desire him.
- God punishes the man by saying that he will have to work hard to produce crops all his life.
- God banishes Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and places an angel to guard the garden.

For Augustine, this moment was the turning point for humanity. The perfection of the Garden of Eden was lost and the harmony between body, will and reason disappeared into imbalance. The will is corrupted and so all of human nature as we see it now comes from this moment. The realisation that they are naked at the moment of eating the fruit is significant. Augustine sees this nakedness and the shame and lust that comes from it as being a sign that the will is no longer in harmony because it is nakedness that drives lust – when selfish love overtakes generous love. When the woman is punished, she is told that she will desire her husband and so married relationships will no longer be about friendship in a pure sense but lust in a corrupted sense.

Analyse and evaluate

Augustine's teaching on a historical Fall is wrong	Augustine's teaching on a historical Fall is not wrong
It does not make sense to say that Adam and Eve were tempted because if Augustine is right that everything was perfect and they were created perfectly, they should not even have been able to think about disobeying God.	Some Christians find it useful because it explains how things are, such as the dominance of men, the significance of lust and the broken relationship with God.
A textual analysis of Genesis 1–3 suggests different authors. If there are different authors, then the account is less likely to be literally true.	The Fall, if understood literally, challenges God's nature; for example, why God would create a world with imbalance, evil and suffering in it.
Evidence from evolution, for example, discredits the Genesis account in its entirety (because humans evolved over time, rather than being created ready-made) and the existence of the Garden of Eden – which itself cannot be found with an angel guarding it.	However difficult it is to believe that the Fall is literally true, the story's influence on Christianity is so far-reaching that it perhaps needs to be taken seriously. The account can have use to Christian thought even if it is not taken literally.

Activities

Core

- 1 Describe Augustine's view of the harmony in the world before the Fall.
- 2 How does Augustine understand the relationship between Adam and Eve?
- 3 Outline the account of the Fall of Adam and Eve in 100 words.

Stretch

- 4 Read the full text of Genesis 3. Pick out key phrases that support what you have learned in these pages.

Challenge

- 5 Research further arguments for and against the literal truth of the Genesis stories and add them to your notes.
- 6 Research Augustine's views on friendship and pick two key quotations to add to your notes.

1.2 Is Augustine's teaching on Original Sin wrong?



Aim

Learn about Augustine's views on Original Sin and how it affects humans today.



Starter

What do we inherit from our parents? What have we inherited from our grandparents' grandparents' grandparents?



Which aspects of us are inherited?



Key terms

Original Sin – used to refer to the first sin of Adam and Eve that is passed on to humans through reproduction
Concupiscence – humanity's inclination to sin and to be influenced by lust, desires and selfishness

The effects of the Fall

Augustine thought that as the Fall was a turning point for human history, the effects of the Fall have been felt by all humans since. This is the idea of Original Sin – the idea that with the first sin, all humans have been tainted through inheriting from earlier generations, right back to Adam and Eve, and so they deserve the same punishment that Adam and Eve received.

Although friendship can clearly still exist, Augustine believed that it was a struggle to maintain because the will has become corrupted and tries to pull people away from goodness as they become affected, especially by lust. The word used for a lack of control over our desires, especially lust, is concupiscence. Augustine believed that this rules human will now: it takes over the human will so that choices are warped and we tend to choose our own selfish desires over unselfish ones. Indeed, although Augustine celebrated friendship, he would never meet with a woman on his own to avoid the effects of lust.

In Christian thought, many Protestants believe that the Fall has entirely corrupted human nature and this cannot be dealt with by humans alone. Catholics believe that human nature has been weakened and people must struggle against concupiscence. The key difference is that Protestants believe that concupiscence is the sin itself that we all have; Catholics believe that it is what causes sin. In this way, these Protestants are closer to Augustine than Catholics.

Augustine believed that the effects of the Fall could be seen in the way different people treat each other, in the control that lust has and the fact that a man's body cannot control his desires. As every act of sex is driven by concupiscence, Original Sin is passed on through sex and so every human since Adam and Eve has been born in a state of sin.

Paul outlines the nature of concupiscence in his letter to the Romans. The will is clearly weakened by the effects of the Fall – Paul writes about how he is driven to make the wrong choices because of concupiscence that is inside him and over which he has no control.

Augustine himself was affected by the issue of sex. Before he became a Christian, he had experienced sexual freedom. This has perhaps had an impact on his approach to concupiscence. He had many female friends and did not see women as less equal than men but simply as less



Key quote

'I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ... it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.'
 (Romans 7:15–18)

1.2 Is Augustine's teaching on Original Sin wrong?

dominant, which is why he believed women should be ruled by men in the home – echoing the punishment of Eve at the Fall.

Augustine said that 'human nature is without any doubt ashamed about lust – and rightly ashamed' (*City of God*). By talking about concupiscence as part of human nature, Augustine is reaffirming that it comes to each person from birth. In this way, Original Sin is often described as being 'contracted, not committed'. Augustine spoke of the idea of the 'double death' of humans – the first death is shown in the relationships that have been destroyed at the Fall and the second death is the one we all go through by being mortal again as a result of the Fall.



▲ The Fall

Analyse and evaluate

Augustine's teaching on Original Sin is wrong

Even if the Fall were true, it is unfair for humans today to be affected by the actions of two people so long ago.

Augustine's teaching on Original Sin has its origins not in truth but in Augustine's own struggles with sex and relationships.

Evolution demonstrates that humans have emerged from many ancestors and so Original Sin cannot have come out of the sin of Adam and Eve.

Augustine's teaching on Original Sin is not wrong

The idea of concupiscence links well to our experience of temptation and explains why all humans are affected by it so strongly.

The idea of our physical desires being in such control of us is shared by some psychologists, strengthening Augustine's view.

Original Sin explains well why God allows humans to commit atrocities in the world and yet still remains a God of love because it shows the centrality of free will.

Activities

Core

- 1 What did Augustine think the effects of the Fall were on humans?
- 2 Explain, with examples, the idea of concupiscence.
- 3 Outline what is meant by the term 'Original Sin'.

Stretch

- 4 Does it matter if Genesis is taken symbolically? How would Christian thought today be affected?

Challenge

- 5 Read all of Romans 7. How does Paul deal with the effects of concupiscence?

- 6 Look at the arguments in the table above and from your class notes. Decide which view is the strongest and which is the weakest and develop them into two paragraphs. Try to discuss within these paragraphs what makes the points strong or weak.

1.3 Is Augustine right that sin means that humans can never be morally good?



Aim

Understand the human will and whether humans can ever make the right decisions.



Starter

Look at this picture. Is the baby good or evil? At what stage are they able to do things that are 'naughty'? What, if anything, will determine whether they are good or not in life? At what point do they become sinful?



The human will

We have seen that the human will changed from a state of harmony with selfish love and generous love in balance to one that is broken and divided. After the Fall, caused by human pride, Augustine believed the will to be divided and tearing humans apart between what they know they should or shouldn't do and what they want to do. Even living a pure and chaste life, a human will be affected by concupiscence. This led Augustine to reject the idea that humans are completely free and he ended up with a hardened view of predestination.

His view on predestination leaves humans quite powerless: all they can do is push through their lives and hope that they are part of God's chosen people. God's willingness to choose some people is expressed in his grace. Free will was originally given by God at creation, when humans were made in his image. However, the will has been entirely corrupted by the Fall along with all other relationships and is the cause of human selfishness.



Key terms

Predestination – the idea that God chooses specific people to bring them to salvation
Grace – God's complete, generous love, given to us though we do not deserve it, seen primarily in his giving of his son, Jesus Christ to save people from their human nature

God's grace

The effects of the Fall mean that, for Augustine, humans cannot restore their broken relationship with God on their own. Augustine believed that harmony could only be restored through the direct action of God – his grace. This is his free gift of his love to humanity who are completely undeserving. God's grace is shown in the death of Jesus on the cross – the 'second tree' that made up for the sins committed by Adam and Eve at the 'first tree'.

Humans continue to turn away from God, even those who have had faith in God's grace, but this for Augustine is a result of Original Sin despite the ongoing outpouring of his grace through the Holy Spirit. God's generosity continues in his willingness to allow some to go to heaven, which is the Garden of Eden given back to those who deserve it.



Key term

Summum bonum – the highest good

For Augustine, the idea of the highest good or *summum bonum* is available for those who have faith in God and those whom God has chosen. There is a similarity between Augustine's view of the *summum bonum* and Plato's Form of the Good (examined in the Philosophy of Religion paper) because in Plato's thought it is ultimate goodness that cannot be found perfectly in this world. Augustine thought of the *summum bonum* as a state of absolute and eternal happiness which can only be achieved through being in God's presence (and in a restored relationship with God). It is not the same as heaven: it is the state a person is in when in heaven, a state that God has and God can bring humans to only by his grace – it cannot be bought. Thus, grace overcomes sin and humans' rebellious will.



Tip

Different thinkers use the idea of the *summum bonum* differently and so you should make sure you treat it as a technical term rather than overusing it in your writing.

Analyse and evaluate

Augustine is right: sin means that humans can never be morally good

Free will is a precious gift from God and must be preserved. As humans continue to use it badly, they are never able to be morally good.

As true goodness, the *summum bonum* is perfection, humans will always fall short of this – they will lack some goodness.

It is wrong to object to the idea that humans can never be morally good on the basis of God's love because the fault lies with humanity.

God's love entails justice and God's grace saves people even though they are undeserving, just because God loves his people; it does not make people morally good.

Augustine is not right: sin does not prevent humans from being morally good

Even in Augustine's own thought, God's grace has a real impact on people. This means that humans can, with God's help, be morally good.

The Catholic view of concupiscence as being only an inclination to sin, rather than innate moral corruption means that humans can choose moral goodness.

The idea that God is all-loving suggests that humans would not be condemned to a life of place of moral badness.

The Catholic Church also distinguishes between types of sin – immorality does not come from 'everyday' (venial) sins but from serious (mortal) sins.

Activities

Core

- 1 Use your notes from the whole topic so far to summarise Augustine's view of the will in under 100 words.
- 2 Explain the idea of God's grace in Augustine's thought.
- 3 What does Augustine understand by the *summum bonum*?

Stretch

- 4 Make a list of strengths and weaknesses of Augustine in general, drawing on the Analyse and evaluate boxes as well as your own notes and thinking.

Challenge

- 5 Evaluate the statement: 'Even with the idea of God's grace, Augustine's views are too harsh'.
- 6 Beyond this course but fundamental to a higher understanding of Christianity is an understanding of the Catholic and Protestant views on grace and justification and how they differ. Research this further and create a 'key points' sheet to use for reference throughout the course.

1.4 Is there a distinctive human nature?

Human societies

Augustine felt that the Fall affected humans as individuals but that this led on to a sense of corruption and a lack of stability in all human societies: societies, of course, are made up of groups of fallen humans, each being drawn in different directions by concupiscence. The harmony of the society in the Garden of Eden (where politics and leadership were not required) no longer exists and direct relationship with God (who provided in the garden all the leadership that was needed) cannot shape daily life.

Augustine thought that the State is a just punishment for fallen humanity. It has the power to give orders, to punish, to kill, to fight and encouraged (in his time) slavery. At the same time, the State provides some order for fallen humanity, who are pulled in many directions. Augustine wrote of two cities – the earthly city, governed by material forces, which is where those condemned to hell exist and the heavenly 'City of God' where those who are chosen exist. Humans are members of either one or the other, chosen by God, and whichever city a person is a member of, the State exists to try to maintain control during life otherwise concupiscence will take hold and society would collapse.

Within societies, all people aim for peace.



Aim

Evaluate the concept of 'human nature' in the context of societies as a whole.

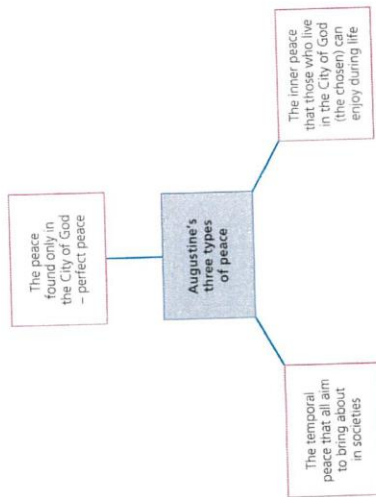


Starter

Look back at the Starter at the beginning of the chapter (page 2). Would you change your answers based on the work you have done on Augustine?

Key quote

'The people of Christ, whatever be their condition – whether they be kings, princes, judges, soldiers, or provincials, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female – are enjoined to endure this earthly republic, wicked and dissolute as it is, that so they may by this endurance win for themselves an eminent place in that most holy and august assembly of angels and republic of heaven, in which the will of God is the law.' (Augustine, *City of God*, 2.19)



This final type of peace is a difficult balance, brought about by the State but which still has material benefits in mind (such as the peace that is the end point of war) – so it is a further sign of the overall corruption of societies. The chosen must always aim for the higher forms of peace. Augustine said that States are run by those who are trying to establish the law of God. People must always obey these rulers and be prepared to be punished for their disobedience. The Church is an institution that is earthly, too. If a State becomes a Christian one, this does not immediately make the State into the City of God – that decision, which is God's alone, is decided at an individual level, not an institutional one.

1.4 Is there a distinctive human nature?

Thus, Augustine's view of human societies can be summarised as:

- the Fall breaking human relationships with each other and God
- the banishment from the Garden of Eden leading to a new form of leadership
- Original Sin and concupiscence driving forwards human behaviour
- the need for political authority and institutions to maintain order and promote earthly peace
- the ultimate aim of the City of God containing a different form of peace
- the City of God only being able to be accessed by those who have been chosen by God.

The Fall, for Augustine, explains all aspects of human nature on both an individual and a societal level.

Analyse and evaluate

There is a distinctive human nature

Augustine would argue that there is a distinctive human nature and that this has changed at the Fall. It is seen in the actions of individuals and societies.

Some suggest that the distinctive human nature is separated by characteristics of men and those of women – men are assertive, women are passive and so on.

Scientists (including those who are Christian) might argue that built into human beings is the desire to survive and flourish – seen in evolution.

There is not a distinctive human nature

Psychologists, such as Freud, might argue that there is not a distinctive human nature because humans are governed by memories and feelings repressed into our unconscious minds.

Existentialist thought rejects the idea of there being a basic human nature – we build who we are (our essence) through our choices and decisions.

As many societies and states are different, it could be argued that there is no distinctive human nature.

17th-century philosopher, John Locke argued that at birth, all people are born with a 'tabula rasa' – a blank slate and all our influences build us up to be different individuals – so we are not born with a common human nature.

Some Christians might argue that each individual needs to develop their own relationship with God in different ways – there is no one right way to be a human as long as we use our individual gifts and talents as best as we can to live life to the full.

Activities

Core

- 1 Create a flow chart to show Augustine's view of the corruption of human societies before and after the Fall.
- 2 Outline Augustine's views on peace.
- 3 Augustine said that there is a distinctive human nature, seen in both individuals and societies. Give two examples for each that illustrate his view.

Stretch

- 4 How much of Augustine's view of human nature relies on a literal Fall and the concept of

predestination? Can his views survive a symbolic interpretation of Genesis?

- 5 Evaluate the statement: 'Men and women are in essence evil'. Try to use examples from everyday life to support your points.

Challenge

- 6 Research further at least two of the scholars mentioned in the Analyse and evaluate box to enhance your notes on human nature.

1.5 Is Augustine's view of human nature pessimistic or optimistic?



Aim

Understand the debate between Augustine and Pelagius.



Starter

Does Augustine's approach actually end up leading people to being immoral?



Tip

Pelagius is not on the syllabus but the debate that he had with Augustine illustrates Augustine's key teachings well.



Meet the thinker

Pelagius (c. 360–c.418) was a British theologian who clashed with Augustine over free will, Original Sin and grace. He was declared a heretic (someone whose beliefs are against the teachings of the Church) by the Church.

A dialogue

Read the dialogue between Rick and Vic below. How do Pelagius's views about human nature compare with Augustine's?

Vic: Hello, Rick. I hear that you would like to rediscover the ancient heresy of Pelagianism. You aren't alone – some Christians don't like my Augustinian interpretation of humanity.

Rick: Hi, Vic. No, I think by condemning these views a really interesting debate was stopped dead in its tracks.

Vic: What's your big issue with Augustine, then? I mean, his views came right out of the Fall, that is the very start of the Bible!

Rick: Yes, but leaving aside the fact that there are plenty of reasons not to accept something just because it's in the Bible, I think it's a pretty pessimistic understanding of human nature – to say that it's permanently damaged by the Fall. How else can humans ever be holy?

Vic: Just look at humanity. Look at the way they act! They are incapable of avoiding sin!

Rick: You say that and I agree that you see sinfulness in all around you but, let's face it, it's theoretically possible for people to be good.

Vic: No, you miss the point of Original Sin. We are all affected by Adam and Eve's decision and this is all ours to bear.

Rick: No, no. God can only create people perfectly. We are all created in the same state as Adam. We are responsible for our own sin – we become sinners not at birth but when we actually sin.

Vic: But it's humans creating people by having sex, which is lust-driven. Look at infant deaths – God wouldn't allow them, right? So it's a further sign that all, including babies, are in a state of sin.

Rick: And that's just making God into something he is not – he is not completely unloving such that he allows babies to die at random. The key is free will here. Humans choose God and God's way – or they don't.

Vic: I think that downplays God a bit. We deserve nothing and God gives anything he chooses. Look at the parable Jesus taught of the workers in Matthew 20. God rewards however he pleases, not because of what they've done.

Rick: Oh, I could quote The Sheep and the Goats back – Matthew 25. But you are saying that humans are entirely powerless except for God's grace. That's bonkers. What's the point in us existing? Grace is here to help us – look at the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives – look at our reason – those things given by God. He has set us up to be free.

Vic: Jesus came to restore the relationship for those whom God chooses. It is all in God's hands.

Rick: I'm never going to persuade you, am I? We can never skip ahead and ask God in heaven!

Vic: You're just too soft. Let's face reality.

Analyse and evaluate

Augustine was an optimist

Augustine's teaching on grace shows that he is an optimist: grace is entirely undeserved.

Heavenly peace is a reality and something that can be achieved. The Christian must always live life in the hope that they are one of the chosen.

The Church helps Christians on their journey and is an institution there to guide people on earth towards the *summa bonum* as well as earthly peace.

Augustine was a pessimist

We are tainted from birth through no fault of our own.

There is little opportunity to develop away from our state; there is no escape: free will is downplayed and hell is a certainty for some.

He believed that through life we are driven by concupiscence which is a negative force that controls us.

Activities

Core

- 1 What did Pelagius believe about human nature and Original Sin?
- 2 Outline Pelagius's views on grace.
- 3 In your view, what are the three most significant differences between Augustine and Pelagius?

Stretch

- 4 Do you think Pelagius should have been silenced by the Church? Give reasons for your answer.
- 5 Does it matter that some Christians disagree with Augustine? Give reasons for your answer.

Challenge

- 6 Debate the statement: 'A true Christian should never accept Augustine's God'.

A-Level Religious Studies – Wider Reading list

This is not what you MUST read, but gives you a list of books to extend your learning. This list is good to have handy for your frees / independent study.

Philosophy of Religion Reading List

General Books on Philosophy

- The Puzzle of God* by Peter Vardy
- The God Delusion * by Richard Dawkins
- God Matters* by Charlotte Vardy and Peter Vardy
- Philosophy A Graphic Guide * by Dave Johnson and Judy Groves
- 50 Philosophy Ideas by Ben Dupre

Recommended books by OCR

- The autobiography of Saint Teresa * by Saint Teresa
- Consciousness; an introduction by Susan Blackmore
- The Blind Watchmaker* by Richard Dawkins
- Principles of Philosophy by Rene Descartes
- Idea of the Holy by Rudolf Otto
- An Introduction to Plato's Republic * by Julia Annas
- The Concept of the Mind (Penguin) by Ryle Gilbert
- God, Freedom and Evil by Alvin Plantinga
- Intro. to the Philosophy of Religion by Brian Davies
- The Question of God by Michael Palmer

Other Sources of Information

- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato/>
- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ancient-soul/>
- www.teachphilosophy101.org
- www.reddit.com/r/philosophy
- www.philosophybites.com
- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato/>

Religion and Ethics Reading List

General Books on Ethics

- The Puzzle of Ethics* by Peter Vardy
- Ethical Studies * by Richard Dawkins
- Ethics Matters* by Charlotte Vardy and Peter Vardy
- A very short introduction to Ethics* by Simon Blackburn
- Teach Yourself Ethics by Mel Thompson

Recommended books by OCR

- Catechism of the Catholic Church by Geoffrey Chapman
- Situation Ethics – The New Morality by Joseph Fletcher
- Causing Death and Saving Lives (Penguin) by John Glover
- Practical Ethics by Peter Singer
- Business Ethics by Andrew Crane
- Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill
- Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith by The Catholic Church
- Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong by Louis Pojman
- The Four Loves by C.S Lewis
- Physics (Oxford World's Classics) by Aristotle

Other Sources of Information

- <http://www.ftse.com/products/downloads/F4G-Index-Inclusion-Rules.pdf>
- www.peped.org
- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aquinas-moral-political/>

Christianity Reading List

General Books on Developments in Christian Thought

- The Shack* by William Young
- The Story of the Book by Terence Copley
- Christianity – A Very Short Introduction* by Linda Woodhead
- Teach Yourself Christianity by John Young
- History of Christianity by Nick Page

Recommended books by OCR

- Confessions by Saint Augustine
- Catechism of the Catholic Church by Catholic Church
- Christian Theology* by Alistair McGrath
- Institutes of the Christian Religion by John Calvin
- Shadow of the Galilean* by Gerd Theissen
- City of God * by St. Augustine
- A Theology, The Basics * by Alistair McGrath
- SCM Study Guide to Ethics by Neil Messer
- Death and Eternal Life by John Hick

Other Sources of Information

- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aquinas-moral-political/>
- <http://www.ftse.com/products/downloads/F4G-Index-Inclusion-Rules.pdf>
- www.sacred-texts.com/chr/barmen.htm
- www.religioustolerance.org

A-Level Religious Studies – Competition Opportunities

<https://royalinstitutephilosophy.org/news/think-essay-prize/>

<https://www.mindsunderground.com/philosophy-competition>

<https://www.johnlockeinstitute.com/essay-competition>

Worth looking into these as there are cash prizes available to winners!