



Exmouth Community College



A Level Religious Studies Induction Task

Introduction

Welcome to A Level Religious Studies at Exmouth Community College. This summer is a great opportunity for you to prepare for the new academic year. The work set is directly linked to the syllabus and will give you a simple introduction to what we will be studying over the next two years. It is essential that you complete this work and bring it with you to your first lesson in September.

We look forward to meeting you all in the new academic year.

Exam board: OCR

Topics: Philosophy, Ethics and Buddhism

A Level Teachers for 2019/20: Mrs Lowe and Mrs Willcocks

Tasks:

Task 1:

Buddhism

1. Read Chapter One of 'Buddhism' by Denise Cush pages 1-4 'Introduction'.
2. Make notes on important points covered.

This text will be used throughout year 12 and 13. Chapter one will give you a brief introduction to key Buddhist beliefs and practices.

Task 2:

Ethics

1. Read the chapter about Ethics by Palmer and take notes on the different types of ethics.
2. Complete exercises 1,2 and 3 and then have a go at answering the questions at the end of the chapter.

Task 3:

Philosophy

1. Respond to the statement: 'If there were a God, there would be not evil or suffering in the world' – Try to give a number of different points of view both for and against the statement and be critical.

Due: First lesson in September

Set by: If you have any queries regarding the task set please contact Mrs Lowe on lisa.lowe@exmouthcollege.devon.sch.uk

Expected Time Commitment: 3 hours

Chapter 1

Palmer

1. What is Ethics?

All of us, at some time or other, are faced with the problem of what we ought to do. It is not difficult to think of examples. We accept we ought to help a blind person cross the road or that we ought to tell the truth in a court of law. We also recognize that we ought not to cheat in examinations and ought not to drink and drive. These 'oughts' and 'ought nots' are clear to us, although this does not necessarily mean that we always act accordingly. Because of this we also attach praise and blame to our own actions and those of others.

In all these cases we are making **moral** or **ethical** judgements. In these judgements we decide that this action is right or wrong or that person is good or bad. Ethics is, therefore, usually confined to the area of human character or conduct, the word *ethics* deriving from the Greek *ethikos* (that which relates to *ethos* or character.) Men and women generally describe their own conduct and character, and that of others, by such general terms as 'good', 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong'; and it is the meaning and scope of these adjectives, in relation to human conduct, that the moral philosopher investigates. The philosopher is not, however, concerned with merely a *descriptive* account of the attitudes and values that people hold: that 'X believes that war is wrong' or that 'Y believes that abortion is right'. That X and Y believe these things may be of interest to the anthropologist or sociologist, but they are of little interest to moral philosophers. What concerns them is not *that* X and Y should believe these things but *why* they do. Ethics, in other words, is much more than explaining what you or I might say about a particular moral problem; it is a study of the reasoning behind our moral beliefs, of the *justification* for the particular moral positions we adopt.

The study of ethics is split into two branches. First, there is **normative ethics**. Here we consider what kinds of things are good and bad and how we are to decide what kinds of action are right and wrong. This is the main tradition of ethical thinking, extending back to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and the one we are most concerned with in this book.

Then there is **meta-ethics**, a detailed account of which is given in the Appendix (page 156). Meta-ethics deals with a philosophical analysis of the meaning and character of ethical language; with, for example, the meaning of the terms 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong'. Meta-ethics is, therefore, *about* normative ethics and seeks to understand the terms and concepts employed there. For example, when I say 'Saving life is good' I might well begin a normative debate about when I should and should not do such a thing. Do I mean that all lives should be saved or only some? But in meta-ethics, I will be concerned much more with the meaning of the term 'good' within the sentence 'Saving life is good'. Is it something I can find in objects, so that I can easily detect it in some and not in others? Or, is it something I can see (like a colour) or something I can feel (like a toothache)?

In recent years, largely through philosophy's increasing preoccupation with the analysis of language, this branch of ethics has tended to dominate ethical discussion. It is held that one cannot even begin normative ethics without a prior analysis of the terms it uses. Certainly the overlap between the two is extensive, although whether meta-ethics is necessarily prior to normative ethics is an open question and the subject of considerable philosophical dispute.

From what has been said so far, it may be gathered that ethical statements are statements of a particular kind. They are not, for example, straightforward *empirical* statements, ie, statements of demonstrable fact. If we say 'Atomic weapons kill people', we are stating a simple observable fact; but if we say 'Atomic weapons should be banned', we are stating what we believe ought to happen. In the first case, it is easy to establish whether the statement is true or false; but in the second, this is clearly impossible. In this instance, we are not stating facts so much as giving a *value* to certain facts – and a negative value at that. We are expressing a point of view about a particular circumstance, which we also know is not shared by everyone. This is not to say that all propositions that give value to something are ethical propositions. We might say that 'Rolls-Royce make *good* cars' or 'That is a *bad* tyre', but we would not be attributing moral value to the cars or tyre. Similarly, in the area of art judgements (*oraesthetics*), we might speak of a '*good* painting' or '*bad* play', but usually we are not referring to the moral significance of the painting or play. All these, then, are *non-moral* uses of the words 'good' and 'bad'.

Exercise 1

How is the term 'good' being used in the following sentences? Which of these sentences are morally or ethically significant?

- a That music is good
- b Democracy is a good thing
- c He is a good footballer
- d He did me no good
- e This is a good report
- f He had a good life
- g He led a good life
- h It is good to tell the truth
- i Did you have a good holiday?
- j Take a good look
- k He has good manners
- l It is good to see you
- m God is good

2. The principles of moral action: Normative ethics

When we attempt to provide standards or rules to help us distinguish right from wrong actions or good from bad people, we are, therefore, engaged in normative ethics. In normative ethics, to repeat, we try to arrive, by rational means, at a set of acceptable criteria which will enable us to decide why any given action is 'right' or any particular person is called 'good'.

Take, for example, the rule 'Thou shalt not kill'. Opponents of the death penalty appeal to this rule to support their claim that no man, or group of men, has the right to take the life of another. Advocates of the death penalty, on the other hand, may refer to different standards: for example; that a man forfeits his life if he takes a life. Behind the question, 'Should Smith hang?' lies a debate between rival rules of moral behaviour. Having justified the rule, we then apply it to the case at hand, namely to Smith.

Normative ethics is generally split into two categories:

- a) **teleological theories,**
- b) **deontological theories.**

The philosopher C D Broad defined them in this way:

*Deontological theories hold that there are ethical propositions of the form: 'Such and such a kind of action would always be right (or wrong) in such and such circumstances, no matter what its consequences might be. . .'. Teleological theories hold that the rightness or wrongness of an action is always determined by its tendency to produce certain consequences which are intrinsically good or bad.'*¹

1. A teleological theory (from the Greek *telos*, meaning 'end') maintains, therefore, that moral judgements are based entirely on the effects produced by an action. An action is considered right or wrong in relation to its *consequences*. This view appeals to our common sense. Often, when considering a course of action, we ask: 'Will this hurt me?' or 'Will this hurt others?' Thinking like this is thinking teleologically: whether we do something or not is determined by what we think the consequences will be; whether we think they will be good or bad. Inevitably, of course, people have different opinions about whether a particular result is good or bad, and this accounts for the great variety of teleological theories. For some, an action is only right if it benefits the person performing the action. For others, this is too narrow, and the action's effects must apply to others besides the agent.

2. A deontological theory denies what a teleological theory affirms. The rightness of an action does not depend solely on its consequences since there may be *certain features of the act itself* which determine whether it is right or wrong. Pacifists, for example, contend that the act of armed aggression is wrong and always will be wrong, no matter what the consequences. Others believe we should take account of the 'motive' behind the act. If the intention of the person performing the act was to do harm, then that action is wrong quite apart from its effects, harmful or not. Or again, many argue that certain actions are right if they conform to certain absolute rules, like 'Keep your promises' or 'Always tell the truth'. It is quite possible that, in obeying these rules, you do not promote the greatest possible balance of good over evil; but for the deontologist this does not detract from the original good of your action in keeping your promise or telling the truth.

As we shall see, this difference between the teleologist and the deontologist is the most fundamental one in normative ethics. Simply put, the former looks ahead to the consequences of his or her actions, while the latter looks back to the nature of the act itself. It is not, however, always easy to pigeonhole our everyday decisions in this way, and invariably we find that they are compounded of both teleological and deontological elements.

1. *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1930) pp 206-207.

Exercise 2

Which of the following moral commands (which you may or may not agree with) are teleological, deontological, or both?

- a Do not drink and drive
- b Do not accept sweets from strangers
- c Do not take unnecessary risks
- d Always obey your superiors
- e Do not kill
- f Avenge wrongs done to you
- g Tell the truth
- h Never tell a lie except to an enemy
- i Love thy neighbour as thyself
- j Be ruled by your conscience
- k Never trust a traitor
- l Do not eat pork
- m Do not steal
- n Do not get caught stealing
- o Do as you would be done by

Exercise 3

Here are some examples of moral dilemmas. In each example: **1** justify your answer in relation to a particular moral principle; **2** determine whether this principle is teleological, deontological, or a mixture of both; **3** think of another situation (if you can) in which you would consider disobeying this principle.

1. Sanctions and Racism

You are Prime Minister of a country which opposes racism in Country X.

Should you impose sanctions against this country, even though you know these will seriously affect the already deprived black population?

2. The ruthless dictator

After a fair and legal election, a new President is elected in a central African state. Within a few months he reveals himself to be a ruthless and mentally unbalanced tyrant, merciless in liquidating all who oppose him. You have the power to assassinate him.

Should you?

3. The drowning men

Walking one day near the river, you hear frantic cries for help. Two men are struggling in the water and clearly drowning. With dismay you see that one is your father, whom you love dearly, and the other a famous scientist, whom the newspapers report is close to a cure for cancer.

Whom should you save?

4. The thief

Your schoolfriend says, 'I have something important to tell you, but you must keep it a secret'. You promise you will. Your friend then confesses that it was he who stole the money from the classroom. 'But this is terrible', you say. 'David has already been accused of this and is being expelled! You must tell the Headmaster at once!' Your friend refuses.

What should you do?

5. The doctor

A fifteen year-old girl comes to you as her doctor. She wants you to supply her with contraceptives. You discuss the matter with her and discover that she has never had sexual intercourse before and has never discussed the matter with her family.

Should you prescribe the contraceptives or inform her parents?

6. The sadist

The sadistic commandant of the camp shouts at you, 'Unless you hang your son, I'll hang him myself and these other prisoners as well!'.

What should you do?

7. The mayor

A shop selling pornography is about to open in your town. Local feeling is running high. Some argue that you, as mayor, have the duty to prevent the sale of such corrupting literature, others that you do not have the right to censor what people read.

What is your decision?



Questions: Normative Ethics

1. How do ethical statements differ from ordinary empirical statements? Give examples.
2. List four qualities of human character that you think are good and four that are bad. Do you think them good and bad for deontological or teleological reasons?
3. Argue for a) pacifism and b) vegetarianism from both a deontological and teleological viewpoint.
4. Tom has lived alone on a desert island all his life. How would you explain to him the difference between right and wrong?
5. Are there any moral rules which you believe all societies, despite their cultural differences, should adopt? What are they, and how would you explain their universal acceptance?

Bibliography: Normative Ethics

* denotes text referred to or extracted in main text

- Billington, Ray *Living Philosophy* (London & New York: Routledge, 1988) A wide-ranging discussion of normative theories, coupled with contemporary issues.
- Brandt, R B *Ethical Theory: The Problem of Normative and Critical Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959) Review of all major normative theories.
- Broad, C D *Five Types of Ethical Theory** (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1930).
- Frankena, William K *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973) A textbook, although not easy.
- Gowans, Christopher W (ed) *Moral Dilemmas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) Standard anthology.
- Grassian, Victor *Moral Reasoning* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981) Combines analysis of normative theories with discussion of contemporary moral problems.
- Hospers, John *Human Conduct* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972) An excellent introduction to major theories.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair *A Short History of Ethics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968) A history from the Homeric age to present day.
- Purtill, Richard *Thinking about Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976) A short but imaginative introduction.
- Raphael, D D *Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) A short introduction.
- Taylor, P W (ed) *Problems of Moral Philosophy* (Belmont, Calif: Dickenson, 1967) Substantial extracts, with introductions.

CUSH

INTRODUCTION

What is Buddhism?

Buddhism is one of the major religious traditions of the human race. It was estimated¹ that in the nineteenth century, Buddhism was a major influence on 40% of the world's population, and even after the upheavals of the present century, its adherents are estimated at about 500 million. Historically speaking, as far as this particular world is concerned, the Dharma (truth, teaching) was first proclaimed 2,500 years ago in India, where it continued to be a major influence until the twelfth century CE.² Countries where Buddhism has been traditional include Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Vietnam. Several of these countries, such as Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Sikkim and Bhutan, still have a majority of the population loyal to Buddhism. In Japan, Buddhism flourishes alongside other religions, and even in the countries which have become communist there is evidence that the religion is still important to many people, for example in China, Laos and Tibet. In this century, especially the second half, people in 'Western' countries (ie America, Europe and Australasia) have taken an interest in Buddhism, and the number of adherents in these countries is growing year by year. 'Buddhism' is a Western term; it means the religion of the *Buddha* (enlightened one), a person who has woken up to the truth about life. Buddhists themselves usually describe their religion as the *Dhamma* (teaching) or *Buddha-dhamma*.

Buddhism is unique among the major world religions in that it is not based upon belief in a personal God, but on human experience and human potential. It is usually counted as a religion because it puts forward a goal for human life which transcends the material world that we perceive with the senses and presents life as having meaning and purpose that implies certain truths and ways of behaving. It is a very rich and varied tradition and has never had a set creed or list of beliefs to which all Buddhists subscribe, or centralised authority to enforce them. It has never been tied up with one particular nationality or culture and as it has spread to different countries and cultures, it has adapted and developed a variety of forms suited to a particular time and place. It has never demanded sole allegiance, and

in many Buddhist countries followers of Buddhism also continue practices and customs from local religious traditions. In the opinion of Guy Claxton, 'Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Buddhism in Tibet, and Buddhism in Japan are as different on the surface as Christianity, Judaism and Islam'.³

This rich diversity of Buddhism reflects the attitude of the Buddha and his followers to what religion is for. It is not a matter of doctrines and commandments, but of finding practical ways for enabling spiritual progress to be made, by different people in different circumstances and at different rates. The Buddha stressed that his teaching was not to be taken as something sacred in itself, but as a means to an end. In one passage, he compares the *Dharma* (Buddhist teaching) to a raft that serves to carry a person from one side of a dangerous river to another, but which has then served its purpose and should be left behind. 'Using the analogy of a raft, I have shown you the Dharma as something to leave behind, not to take with you' (*Majjhima Nikaya* 1.134). The Buddha also stressed that any teachings, including his own, were not to be blindly accepted with faith and reverence, but should be tested out in experience. 'Do not go by hearsay, what is handed down by others, by what people say, or by what is stated in traditional teachings. Do not go by reasoning, or inferring, by argument, nor by reflection on an opinion, nor from respect for a holy teacher...' (*Anguttara Nikaya* 1.188). In other words, religion is not just something to believe in or discuss, but something to try out to see if it works, if it makes you a better person or takes you nearer to your spiritual goal. The Buddha's invitation was to come and see for yourself (*ehipassiko*). In the rich variety of teachings and practices that make up what we call Buddhism, the true teaching is to be distinguished as follows 'if these teachings lead to dispassion, detachment, decrease of materialism, simplicity, contentment, solitude, energy, and delight in good not evil... of these teachings you may affirm "this is the Dharma, the Master's message"' (*Vinaya* 2.10).

It might be helpful, before entering the complexities of the Buddhist tradition, to give a brief summary of the basics that most Buddhists share, and the major divisions into which Buddhism falls. This is bound to be oversimplified, but it is offered in the spirit of the raft - something that might help you to begin your understanding of Buddhism, but which should be thrown away once you've made further progress. In fact this applies to the whole of this book!

Some Basic Teachings of Buddhism

- * Buddhism is about the quest for true happiness and peace for all beings.
- * Life as most people live it is unsatisfactory, there is much suffering in the world, and nothing lasts.
- * Much suffering is caused by the ignorance and selfishness of people, who are filled with greed for things that neither last nor bring real happiness, with hatred and with deluded beliefs.
- * Like other things, human beings are continually changing. One of the deluded beliefs is in a 'real me' (self or soul) that never changes. This constant change applies from minute to minute, day to day and life to life.
- * While we remain ignorant and deluded, when one life ends, another life will begin in the world of suffering. Thus most Buddhists believe in rebirth.
- * The developments in our lives, and from life to life are the results of our own thoughts and actions. We make our own happiness and unhappiness.
- * There is a way out of rebirth into an unsatisfactory world. If we can eliminate greed, hatred, delusion, selfishness and ignorance, by acting morally, training the mind and discovering the truth, there is an alternative state, nirvana, of perfect wisdom and peace. This is very difficult to imagine, and is understood and described in different ways by Buddhists, but basically involves perfect happiness and peace, understanding of life and unselfish love. It is the state Buddhists believe was achieved by the Buddha in the experience known as 'enlightenment'.

You may or may not feel, already, that some of these teachings relate to your own experience of life.

Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism

For convenience, people tend to divide the rich variety of Buddhism as it exists today into two main categories *Theravada* (pronounced Teravada) and *Mahayana*.

Theravada (the way of the elders) is followed in the more southern countries of Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. It is thus sometimes called 'Southern Buddhism' or 'Pali Buddhism', after the language of its scriptures. Mahayana (the great vehicle) is an overall term for the many varieties of Buddhism practised in the more

northern and far-eastern countries. These can be usefully subdivided into Northern or Tibetan Buddhism, followed in Tibet, Mongolia, Sikkim, Bhutan, and North-Western China; Eastern Buddhism, followed in the rest of China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Tibetan Buddhism is represented in four main tradition - Nyingma, Sakya, Kargyu and Gelug. Among the better known varieties of Eastern Buddhism are *Zen*, *Pure Land* and *Nichiren* Buddhism. 'Western' Buddhists tend either to follow one of the traditional Southern, Northern or Eastern varieties or else choose what they find helpful from the various traditions, forming their own variety of Buddhism (e.g. the Western Buddhist Order). This follows the pattern that occurred as Buddhism spread from India to other countries and cultures in the past (e.g. China), and reflects the practical orientation of Buddhism.

Buddhist technical terms exist in many different languages, including Sanskrit, Pali (the two classical scriptural languages) Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan. I tend to use the term which has become most common amongst Western and specifically English Buddhist usage eg the Sanskrit 'nirvana' rather than the Pali 'nibbana', but the pali 'anatta' rather than the Sanskrit 'anatman'. As you can see from these examples, the two classical languages are sufficiently similar for an accurate guess to be made when coming across an unfamiliar spelling. To avoid confusion, in the text and glossary, technical terms will be followed in the Glossary, and where appropriate in the text, by a letter or letters to indicate their language of origin as follows:

C = Chinese	P = Pali	E = English
S = Sanskrit	J = Japanese	Sn = Sinhalese
K = Korean	T = Tibetan	M = Mongolian
Th = Thai		

1. by Rhys Davids in 1877, quoted by Bechert and Gombrich (1984)
2. The letters CE and BCE which appear after dates in this book denote Common Era and Before Common Era. These are considered preferable in Religious Studies to AD and BC as they avoid the specifically Christian claims contained in these abbreviations.
3. Claxton 1989