

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Candidate Exemplar Work:

Unit 1B: *Religion and Ethics 2*

Candidate's Response to *Natural Law*



**GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION
ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY**



**RELIGIOUS STUDIES UNIT B
RELIGION AND ETHICS 2**

RSS02

EXAMPLE OF CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

For this paper you must have:

- an 8-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 15 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is **RSS02**.
- Answer **two** questions.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 90.
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- In each question, part (a) tests your knowledge and understanding, while part (b) tests your skills of reasoning and evaluation.
- You will be marked on your ability to use English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

RSS02: Religion and Ethics 2 – *Natural Law*

- 1 (a) *Explain Aquinas' ethical theory of Natural Law.*

(30 marks)

AO1

Aquinas used the theory of Aristotle to work out how we should behave. According to Aristotle, the most important thing in what we do is the final end, which is why we do an action. So the final end of humans is reason and morality, because they are the things that are unique to humans. Animals have some sort of reasoning, but they cannot think about morality. The tiger doesn't ask if it's right to hunt the deer he wants for dinner.

Aquinas added this idea (about final ends) to Christian teaching about right and wrong in order to form Natural Law. The main thing in it is that we all have the same human nature, because we were all made by the same God to the same design, and design includes being moral. God must therefore expect the same from all of us, so there must be natural laws that we have to obey. Aquinas said we were confused about the difference between real and apparent goods, and that we must only follow intrinsic goods. Aquinas said that we must follow primary and secondary precepts. Secondary precepts come from primary precepts, and many of the ones Aquinas talked about were about sexual ethics, because so many of the problems we have are to do with these matters.

Every act of sex has to lead to the possibility of having babies, otherwise it is wrong. For that reason, abortion and contraception are wrong because they deliberately stop you having babies. The only time you can have an abortion is under Aquinas' principle of double effect, where as long as your first intention is to obey the primary precept, you cannot be blamed for any consequences that might appear good to you. So for example if the mother might die if she has a baby, then she can have an abortion, since she intended to get pregnant, but could not be blamed if for example she gets an ectopic pregnancy, because then it is just one life against another. So God is the final end of our moral activity, because if we do right, we are following God's laws.

This theory is criticised because Aquinas may have been wrong about the final end. How do we know that God intended sexual activity just to have babies? It may have been intended to make people have loving relationships. Aquinas' theory believes that God exists, but what if you don't believe that God exists? People also reject it because it is too harsh: we need to have contraception in today's world, otherwise in time we will become overpopulated.

Commentary

The answer provides an overview of Natural Law ethics, and includes a range of information. The development of the essay varies, and at some points could have benefited from an example.

Some of the more obvious points where the answer could have been developed include:

* Paragraph 2, the link is not made between the opening paragraph, which talks about the importance of the final end for Aristotle, and the use of that concept by Aquinas. Instead, the candidate talks about the basis of Natural Law in our common human nature. As a matter of fact the candidate does make the connection at the end of paragraph, by pointing out that God is the final end of our moral activity, although the link is not made very clearly. Aquinas believed that the only final end available to all humans is fellowship with God.

* Paragraph 2: there is no explanation / example of real and apparent goods, or of intrinsic good. The terms are accurate but not explained. Similarly, secondary precepts are explained, but primary precepts are not.

* Paragraph 3: There is no explanation of how we get from double effect to God as the final end. There is nothing wrong with the comment, but it hangs in the air rather.

The final paragraph falls into a fairly common error by providing evaluation rather than explanation. It does show that the candidate is aware of problems with Aquinas' account of Natural Law, but it does not really answer the request to *explain* it.

The answer clearly covers key ideas and facts (Level 5), and there is some development of the concept of a common human nature being the basis for the operation of Natural Law. The explanation of secondary precepts and of double effect also shows some development. The style of writing matches at least the descriptor for Level 5, and it makes good use of the specialist vocabulary of Natural Law: *final end, (common) human nature, real and apparent goods, intrinsic good, primary and secondary precepts, and double effect*. Given the connection with Aristotle as Aquinas' source, the treatment matches the Level 6 descriptors of: "fairly thorough / mostly accurate and relevant" (although there is some irrelevance at the end) / "Understanding demonstrated through evidence/examples".

The answer may be awarded a mark in the middle range of Level 6. If, instead of writing the concluding evaluation, the candidate had explained some of the material in paragraph 2, the essay could have reached Level 7.

Level 6: 26 marks