

## Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4A *Topic 1 Life, Death and Beyond*

Candidate Exemplar Work

- Candidate B



## Unit RST4A *Topic I Life, Death and Beyond*

### Example of Candidate's Work on Specimen Questions

- 3 (a) Examine religious and secular perspectives on the nature and value of human life.

(45 marks)

AO1

#### Candidate Response

There are two main areas of generalised belief categories in the world as of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, religious and secular (non-religious). Both have different segments, who all have different ideas on the nature and value of life, particularly humans.

Due to the Four Noble Truths in their religion, Buddhists see the nature of life as suffering. The Buddha said that, due to our cravings for impermanent things, we suffer because these things are eventually taken away. For example, a person craves chocolate, but when they eat the chocolate, regardless of the fact that they've had it, they suffer because the chocolate is gone, as it is not permanent. This is a very negative view on the world, and the pessimistic approach may be criticised by some who feel life is much brighter than this.

Most Christians feel the meaning of life is to love and worship God. Because God gave life to us back in the creation story featured in Genesis, they feel that the purpose of life is to thank God for the life we have been given. Although this is a simple and optimistic view on the meaning of life, some may feel that this is too simplistic for such a complex aspect like life.

Some atheists, for example evolutionists, believe the nature of life is all centred around the Darwinian concept of 'survival of the fittest'. An animal with superior genes will survive in an environment the genes are beneficial for, and reproduce and pass on these genes. Animals with inferior genes in the environment will either be killed or will be unable to attract a mate, so will be unable to pass on the genes. Though this has visual evidence, this idea has been criticised as not explaining things such as the spiritual element of life and why humans are the only animals that can, for example, make art that is visually pleasing.

Christians in some denominations believe that there defiantly is value to human life. This is because life is given by God. In genesis, it is said that God created human life. Regardless of this account of creation being written hundreds of years ago, it is still seen as relevant to 20<sup>th</sup> Century Christians.

Naturalism, a secular view, is a very modern view about the nature of life, unlike the religious scriptures. They believe that people are ruled by drives (e.g. to eat), but we have a drive to do good deeds. Tom Clark, head of the naturalist movement in America, says that there is no super natural element to life, but drives to do particular actions in certain scenarios. However, being a very new idea, there are still issues which have potential downfalls, like most attempts to explain life.

Liberal Christians may point out that there is value to life (because of God), but the nature of life is that it is survival of the fittest, fitting in with the Darwinian idea of evolution. This would complement the idea of Non-Overlapping Magisteria (NOMAs), as these Christians apply the value of life from their religious beliefs (*why* we are here) and the nature of life from science (*how* we are here). This may seem like a good idea, but some may see it as a 'pick and mix' in order to please everyone. This means they are open to criticism from both religious and secular movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Being a liberal person in my beliefs, I feel that everyone is entitled to their own idea on the nature and value of life, and until we are either given a sign by a higher being or science moves ahead to prove that there is no gods at all, then no idea is 'correct' and there will always be many ideas on the nature and value of life.

### **Commentary**

AO1 (45 marks)

Generally this response is too brief. Points are not fully developed and there is confusion between the meaning of life and nature, there are many differences between the two and thus using meaning to deal with nature often does not work.

Thus the first paragraph referring to Buddhism works but needs to be developed with further reference to the nature of life as suffering.

The next section on Christianity does not work as it is about meaning and it is debatable whether Christians believe the 'purpose of life is to thank God' anyway and thus even harder to maintain this can be true about nature.

There is a sense of random ideas in the latter part of the essay, for example, the last three paragraphs move from Christians to Naturalists and back to liberal Christians. Along with this is the fact that points often need further expansion, as with Naturalism and the point about Liberal Christians and their view of the value and nature of life needs developing to provide some clarity to the points being set down.

The last paragraph is unnecessary and adds nothing to this section.

**Level 3 (11 marks)**