

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Unit RST4C *Topic II Ways of Moral Decision-Making*

Candidate Exemplar Work



Unit RST4C *Topic II Ways of Moral Decision-Making*

Example of Candidate's Work on Specimen Questions

- 3 (a) Explain how an ethicist would deal with issues arising from either medical research and development or business practice and economics.

(45 marks)

AO1

Candidate Response

I will firstly explain some of the major ethical issues which arise from business practice and economics. Some people think that business is all about making money to ensure that business owners and sometimes their share holders get the best return on the money that they have invested in the business. Thus managers working in the company must be able to work towards this aim and they will be rewarded accordingly. But it is also important that the company does not waste money by paying workers too much as this will eat into the profits of the company and also the company needs to be able to get as much money as it possibly can for the goods or services which it provides. The ethical issues which arise from this approach are; should a business solely be interested in making a profit should there be concerns about how this profit is made, for example should the company consider fair wages for its workers as well as its managers. Should a company only seek to get the most money for its goods and services or should it consider the customer and wider issues like providing good value for their money. Should a company have a concern for the environment in which it operates which will mean that it is not only looking at profit but at the image of the company in the community in which it operates. A similar issue would apply to employees should the company only focus upon the pay it gives to its employees or should it have a much wider consideration for the lives of its employees and even their families. Then there will be consideration for the product or service of the company what are the implications of the product within the community and then wider within the world, for example if the company produces alcohol should it simply do this without any consideration of the implications of marketing alcohol. In the UK there is considerable concern about excessive drinking especially underage drinking and thus what role should the production company play in helping to deal with this or should it simply argue that how its products are treated are the problem for the customer not the producer, thus alcoholic drinkers which are known to be popular amongst teenagers, alcopops, is fine.

Ethics and economics is all to do with what is often called macro economics and thus it is much more about governments and international organisations where there is an effect upon the whole way the economic structure works. Issues here are more focused upon how economies are managed, free market versus closed controlled markets, upon the level of social engineering which might be exerted by a government. A topical issue here would be worries about the world environment, global warming in particular. As a government should the normal market force of supply and demand be controlled through taxation. Thus by high taxation on cars through things like purchase tax, VAT and high rates of VAT on petrol along with road taxation and restrictions through road tolls and controls into cities like the London toll system the government is able to reduce the use of cars and force people onto public transport thus reducing carbon emissions and reducing the danger of global warming.

An utilitarian would deal with all these issues by applying the principle of utility, that is creating the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. They might go further and seek to apply either the Benthamite approach to this or the approach adopted by Mill, Bentham used the hedonic calculus to measure the amount of happiness or utility whereas Mill was less interested in the amount and more interested

in the quality, thus Mill writes about higher and lower pleasures. Later there were further refinements of Utilitarianism with Act and Rule Utilitarianism.

Commentary

AO1 (45 marks)

The candidate seeks to separate out business and economics and see that there are different issues which arise from the two separate approaches. This is fine as a way of dealing with the question. The business section then follows and the candidate, although adopting a rather simplistic view, does provide 5 different ethical issues. The next section then deals with economics with the suggestion that this is a macro approach, but here the candidate does not clearly identify ethical issues. It is only in the last paragraph that the candidate then tackles the central point of the question which is how an ethicist would deal with the issues and here there is no attempt to do this, rather there is simply a statement about Utilitarianism. One reason for this is that the answer is too short and the candidate has not developed what should be a third section where there is a demonstration of application to the issues identified.

A mid level 3 mark for this response.

- (b) 'In the end, decisions which involve the real world rarely consider ethical points of view since these are impractical.'

Evaluate this view.

(30 marks)

AO2

Candidate Response

Generally in the world of business and economics there is very little concern for ethics as both areas wish to control the way they operate without interference. The majority of people are not interested in ethics either religious or non-religious since they do not believe that these work. If we take the example of Utilitarianism and the alcohol production company. Applying the principle of allowing for the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people it is very clear that as a company I should certainly produce alcohol and sell it because the evidence is that the majority of people who buy and drink alcohol do not abuse it, they are not drunk in the streets and they do not become alcoholics. Rather they enjoy alcohol, it helps them to relax at the end of a day, it provides a good way of encouraging social interaction and people enjoy this, imagine going to a party where there was no alcohol! Restricting alcohol would clearly be acting against the principle of Utility, but many companies accept that there is a problem with teenage and underage drinking and thus they would reject ethics on the grounds that it does not support what they would like to do which is to behave in a way which is seen by people to be socially responsible and work with the government and society in finding ways to prevent this from happening by not simply seeking to increase the sales of alcohol regardless of who drinks it.

Commentary

AO2 (30 marks)

This response deals with a single issue from the perspective of the utilitarian approach and then the candidate adopts a single consideration that utilitarianism does not work for the issue of alcohol production. The entire last section tries to refer to the lack of ethical motivation in business, as hinted at in the question, but does so in very general and rather ambiguous terms. The candidate could have explored the rationale provided from an ethical perspective too, by discussing the point about wider society benefits from restricted alcohol supply. Again the response is very short and thus there is little debate and only a single issue considered.

Probably top of level 2 or just bottom of level 3.