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Examiners' Report

June 2011

GCE Religious Studies 6RS04 1B

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June 2011

Publications Code UA028679

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## **Paper Introduction**

Congratulations are due to many candidates who achieved success in their thorough understanding of the selected passage and for their commendable examination techniques. It is essential for candidates to examine the passage on the exam paper. Candidates must relate what they have learned and apply it to the extract. Examiners know there are many ways of examining a passage and there is no preferred method. What is essential is an explicit focus on the text, whatever method is used to examine it. There was evidence of some candidates inserting several paragraphs of material not linked to the question.

The division on the paper into the two assessment objectives is intended to assist candidates to structure their answers and to enable them to make sensible use of their time in the allocation of material. In most cases candidates had the required examination technique to make effective use of their material. There is no necessary requirement to follow the structured division as seen in the question. However, for candidates creating a holistic answer, there is a tendency to pay inadequate attention to AO2, especially in relation to the implications aspect of part (b).

## Question Introduction

Examiners were impressed with the strength of a number of answers. The more successful answers contextualised this extract in relation to the overall source. Candidates focused on key ideas such as the 'highest good' and critical themes such as the relationship between religion and morality. There was effective use of scholarship including reference to Aquinas, Aristotle, Bayle, Hobbes, Locke, Moore, Plato Rawls and Ross. There was a good level of understanding of ethical theories from other units such as utilitarianism and deontology, emotivism and intuitionism. Virtue Ethics was used to good effect with both the Aristotelian and the more recent versions by Anscombe and McIntyre. These successful answers displayed intelligent analysis of concepts, and terms and had a fluent and coherent style. Successful candidates made good connections with the Jamieson extract and to a lesser extent LaFollette.

The answers at the lower levels were little more than paraphrases, presenting generalised material with little reference to specific ethical theories. Those that did had little sense of how they related or differed to each other or of their chronology. More importantly, there was a limited ability to relate these various features to the selected passage. Some candidates spent more time providing an overview of the whole source with only incidental reference to the selected passage.

Candidates made wide use of a range of implications arising from this passage that included politics. More able candidates presented debates in AO2 which referred to the rejection of religious morality by Dawkins, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche and Sartre whilst less successful candidates presented partial answers paying attention to opinion or implications but not both.

In J. Schneewind's essay entitled 'Modern Moral Philosophy' Schneewind explores the extent to which we are autonomous beings. To be autonomous would mean to be self-governing and this means that we have the right to choose in each situation. Different moral theories, teleological, deontological and deontic, all try to offer us an ~~exp~~ explicit moral code in which to live by. However, the extent to which we are autonomous declines with many of these moral codes.

The extract given demonstrates that people have begun to question the theories. People are no longer living in completely religious societies like they did in the ancient times and therefore different theories are being used and all of which offer us a different amount of autonomy.

Many people in society, both now and most notably in the older ages, live centred around the doctrine of the highest good: "what life is most fully and lastingly satisfying." This means that we seek the greatest good in each situation and we must always consider the consequences therefore this is a consequentialist approach and also teleological. The view of the 'greatest

good for the greatest number' is the central doctrine to Utilitarianism. This approach was founded by Bentham in a time of revolution, where people were fighting for civil rights. His theory means that the outcome is the most important aspect and considered before virtue and the action itself. This view however has been criticised by many leading philosophers including Rawls who prefers the Kantian based ethics. The greatest good does not necessarily mean ~~the~~ the right thing to do. We need to establish what 'good' means before we can know what is right. This is a key problem with meta-ethics. ~~When following this principle we are taking away the autonomy from the community, but Bentham argued that we are still autonomous as it means we can choose the right action to take and not have it enforced on us.~~

Virtue Ethics has also been considered in this extract: 'Virtue was meant to govern one's relations with others'. Virtue Ethics is the principle that ~~as a result~~ in a situation we should do the action that involves the highest level of goodness. For

example, we do not kill because the action of killing is wrong, not because it would involve us going to prison. Hume was a great supporter of virtue as it allows us to develop for ourselves what is right and what is wrong. Although intuitionists<sup>such as F.E. Moore</sup> would state we know what is right or wrong through our instinct. We know it is wrong to kill, we didn't need to be taught it. Virtue centred ethics allows people to use their autonomy and their own beliefs to evaluate for themselves what is right and therefore using their autonomy.

Another key aspect of the extract is the religious link to what is morally right. "Christianity taught that the highest good is only attainable through salvation." This implies that to be a completely moral person we must follow the strict views of a religion. For Christians this would involve the Divine Command Law such as "Do not commit adultery." Later on in the essay Schneewind outlines and discusses the use of Thomistic Natural Law in moral reasoning. This requires humanity to follow the primary

and secondary precepts already outlined by Thomas Aquinas. To be moral people we must follow the ~~rules~~ laws of God. This process went through changes over the following centuries, by people such as ~~John~~ Grotius, to allow it to be more easily applied. If we understand in then we should it to those who don't. This way of making decisions is absolute and is part of deontology. But, as the extract explains, religion is becoming less important in society and we now live in a more secular community. G.F. Boon also has viewed this as an important factor. This can be viewed by things such as shops opening on 'holy days'. If religion is now not as important does that mean we that Natural Moral Law is now an out of date theory to use? In addition to this, if we are following the rules of God ~~and~~ we are limiting our autonomy as we are being forced into accepting God's rule. Plato famously argued whether ~~things are good because God~~ ~~said~~ things are good so we follow it or things are good because God's says things are good because



they are good or whether things are good because God said it.

Despite societies becoming more secular we still have many God given commandments as laws in society such as 'do not kill' is now 'it is illegal to murder!' ~~Nietzsche~~ <sup>Grotius</sup> argued that ~~we~~ we should limit our autonomy to allow for human security. This is the view that we should be following the laws. Hobbes said that we should use our autonomy to build a social contract in which we should use our autonomy to agree upon. In addition to ~~that~~ this Nietzsche states we also need a sovereign ruler. Nietzsche stated that virtue doesn't account for justice - that is ~~right~~ <sup>just</sup> is not necessarily that is fair and ~~right~~ <sup>right</sup>. This can be viewed in Butler's example of the Miserly Millionaire in which a poor woman who could not afford to pay and feed her child would be forced to give back the money despite the millionaire not noticing the difference. This demonstrates the issue of using such theories as virtue.

Another idea put forward is the idea of the common sense morality.

This states that we learn things as a child and therefore we know what to do in a situation as we have developed an understanding of what is considered 'right' and 'wrong'. For example, we know to look both ways when crossing the road. It is common sense when we are faced with a new problem we must use our autonomy to do what we believe to be right.

An alternative theory could be Kantian Ethics. This is an absolute theory that requires us to do the same thing in all situations. Killing is wrong therefore we should not kill a foetus ~~therefore~~ thus abortion is wrong. This is a view supported by Paul. Kant believed we are fully autonomous but how can this be if we are forced to follow such a strict rule of forcing our duty to reach the summum bonum? ~~that~~

b). The passage states that we still need to decide for ourselves what the right course of action to take is and what theory we believe would be the best in ~~each~~ <sup>a given</sup> situation. I agree with the view that religious teachings have less significance in society now and we should follow a theory of virtue ethics which is expressed in the passage.

Natural Moral Law teaches humanity that all which is natural is good. It is based on the view that life is a way of showing God how much we respect him and therefore we must obey his commands. However, it is evident from society today that religion does not have as much value now as it ~~does~~ did then. This, most arguably, is a result of advances in science so therefore alternative answers. If people no longer believe in God then they are less likely to follow some of the teachings. Our autonomy can be limited by following these strict principles. In addition Divine Command ethics offers many religious principles that we must follow.

Many of these are now present in our laws which we are forced to accept. We need such laws as we are in a society where we will do anything to protect ourselves from death, as outlined in the essay. Therefore a social contract is required. But it is one which we must agree to be good, not one which is dictated by religion.

In addition to this is a Christian principle of ~~love~~ <sup>developed by Joseph Butler</sup> agape. We should always do the most loving thing in a situation. In some the most loving thing to do might be to end the life of a suffering terminally ill patient. But this could take away that person's autonomy.

Utilitarianism is a principle that requires us to do the greatest good for the greatest number. As stated by Bentham, but is the greatest good always what is right? For example, the Nazi regime thought that the mass extermination of Jews was for the greater good of an Aryan race - do this mean that it was

right? Of course not. Utilitarianism allow for extreme measures at the expense of those who is the minority and their autonomy. In addition, what does good actually mean. S. A. Burns identified 36 different definitions, but which of them is being used in this situation? Ultimately it is an unreliable use of theory as we do not objectively know the outcomes and it conflicts with the minorities' autonomy. It was rejected by Rawls.

Virtue is an ethical theory that can demonstrate how to use our autonomy effectively. The extract states that it governs our relationship with us. If we are good to ourself then this can be projected outwards. We can use our autonomy and freedom to judge by our own set of standards to find the good mean and therefore see what is the right thing to do.

To conclude, the extract states that we must find our own seriousness as Christians no longer holds such a valuable part in our life anymore. This can be seen in the declining number of people attending church. Therefore

religious principles do not hold as much merit so we should therefore use our own autonomy and judgement. I believe that Aristotle's virtue ethics, like Hume, is the most convincing theory to use and we should therefore use it when making moral decisions. Natural Moral Law cannot be of high significance anymore as it is based on the central doctrine of worshipping God and atheists such as Richard Dawkins would state that this therefore proves the theory as invaluable due to the <sup>decrease in</sup> ~~high~~ number of theists. Society would not be able to function efficiently if laws, such as obeying God, were forced upon us for the basic fact of changing beliefs in the current secular society.



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**Examiner Comments**

This is the whole answer and represents good practice.

**Assessment Objective 1**

The candidate manages the whole answer very well as seen in the appropriate allocation of material for both AO1 and AO2. There is a systematic and explicit examination of the selected passage and the candidate presents a critical examination of the source as evidenced in the range of related material and this shows an understanding of the text. There is effective use of relevant ethical theories from other units such as Virtue Ethics from 6RS03. The standard of the candidate's understanding is seen in the way there is discrimination of the relative importance given to various points. As far as the passage is concerned a key aspect is the relationship between religion and morality and this is stressed by the candidate. There is commendable use of scholarship and the candidate shows a proficient use of key ethical concepts.

**Assessment Objective 2**

The candidate is successful in AO2 because of the range of material used in evaluation and debate, including a debate about the problems of Utilitarianism. The line of reasoning of this candidate is that Virtue Ethics is the most convincing theory. This answer draws out a number of key implications arising from this passage.



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**Examiner Tip**

Successful candidates display an ability to perform well across a considerable range of content and examination techniques. This candidate has a uniformly high standard of work throughout the answer.

The Schneewind article looks at the question of where morality comes from. It addresses the views that morality comes from the Hobbesian idea of social contract theory. It also looks at the ideas of Hume, that morality comes from an innate desire to do good and the absolutist idea of Kant that morality simply comes from doing our duty.

The article begins by dealing with the meta-ethical question of what <sup>constitutes as</sup> good. This links to the euthyphro dilemma, which questions whether something is good because God loves it, or whether God loves something because it is good. The article also refers to the highest <sup>good</sup> pleasure. For Bentham the highest pleasure was pleasure and the utilitarian idea of making the most people happy. In the view of Aristotle the highest good was the eudaimonia, the idea of human <sup>flourishment</sup> ~~flourishing~~ and betterment, that the highest good is being the best person you can be. In Kant's opinion the highest good is simply carrying out 'your duty' and 'treating others as they want to be treated.' In Utilitarianism Mill addressed the idea that there are high

er and lower pleasures and in order to know the greatest good you have to ask someone who has experienced both to be able to decide what the best moral action to take is.

The article then goes on to look at the three stages of morality. The first stage of morality that the article refers to is simple command theory. This is the Machiavellian idea that people act out of fear and obedience. In Machiavelli's 'The Prince', he argued that in order to be respected you had to be feared and if this meant deceit then it did not matter as long as you were obeyed. This idea challenges the idea of why we act morally by arguing that we act morally due to the fear of consequence if we do not. The second stage of morality referred to in the article is 'self-governance'. This is supported by Locke and Rousseau who claim that the individual is sovereign; that mankind has the ability to make rational decisions, <sup>they can</sup> see how their action is either morally right and wrong and have the ability to decid-



dit if it is the best ~~value~~ action to take. This view is a reductionist view of morality. The third stage of morality is the constructionist view of public morality. This idea is supported by communitarianism, through thinkers such as Joseph Raz. Public morality claims that morality is not simply about the individual and how an action affects oneself, but it is about how a moral decision feeds into and affects ~~the~~ ~~morality~~ society.

The idea of public morality is supported by Aquinas' Natural Moral Law who argued for the primacy of the community over the individual. Aquinas claimed that it is not about how an action affects me, but it is how it affects society. Aquinas claims that we should abandon the individual and simply address the collective.

Schneewind also looks at the historical stages of morality in the article. It looks at the reaction to simple command theory, the idea of self-governance resulting in

morality and the rejection of the individual in public morality. The article looks at how we can find moral truth, decide on what is good. In order to find moral truth George Hegel ~~was~~ created the idea of a synthesis. Hegel took a thesis and an antithesis and tried to work the two opposing ideas together, taking the positive points of each to create a coherent universally applicable moral truth. Schreier tries to move away from the Hobbesian antithesis that morality comes from divine command and Locke's view that we act morally due to God and the state of nature and instead addresses the idea of why we act morally if we are not told what to do. This leads to Hume who argues that we do good as it is a simple innate desire that we have within. Hume believes that we simply act on passion and desire This is, however, criticised as it is questioned as to why our morality is so focused on helping others. Shaftesbury responds by trying to prove ~~several~~ that there is something positive about human nature; Shaftesbury claims that we automatically reject things that

will harm our neighbours and this is why we act morally.

Hobbes' psychological egoism, claims that all moral actions are ultimately self-interest. For example, we help an old lady across the road to get a 'good feeling'. Hobbes argues that morality is based on a social contract of *quid pro quo*, doing something good in order to receive something in return and that this is the foundation for all morally good actions. This idea is criticised however for being too simplistic as it is argued that self-interest cannot lead to continuous virtuous behaviour.

The article also looks at the idea that if morality cannot be explained on a religious basis then it may be explained by simple rational and reasoned actions. This view is supported by John Rawls and his veil of ignorance. Rawls argued that all moral decisions should be made as if people have no culture, race, religion or gender and that morality should be based

on pure reason with no acknowledgement of cultural heritage. This idea is supported by Kant who argued that emotion, desire and passion should not be accounted for in moral decision making.

However, Rawls' idea of rational morality is criticised by communitarians who claim that it is simply ridiculous to think that moral decision making can be based entirely on reason and that we can forget our cultural heritage; it is simply unrealistic.

This shows the complicated nature of ~~the~~ morality and what is morally good. If ~~exists~~ morality is not sourced from divine authority, it cannot solely be the product of reason as Kant and Rawls suggest; however it cannot simply be <sup>the result of</sup> self interest and acting on desire and emotion as is supported by Hobbes and Hume.

The article suggests three implications for morality if we can no longer view reli-

given as the basis for morality. The first implication is that we use applied ethics such as justice, authority and the law and just war theory. This uses the ideas of forgetting hypothetical ideas and simply acting for the situation, doing the most loving thing. The ethical theory claims that if you have to lie about the intention of your action then it is wrong. This opposes Machiavelli's idea of simple command theory, that it is good to deceive and that people act morally out of fear. The article then goes on to look at morality being based on communicative ethics, that we should simply act on what is best for the community. The problem with using this as a basis for morality is that we cannot always anticipate what society will want. The final implication that the article looks at is that morality would be based on virtue ethics. This is the idea of two thousand years ago and Aristotle who claimed that ethics should be personistic. Aristotle claimed that we should place ourselves on a scale between efficiency and

excess when making moral decisions and see what moral action is best to take. For example, Milo is an athlete and therefore needs to eat seven meals, <sup>as he</sup> needs to have energy to sustain his training; however, I am not an athlete and therefore should not eat seven meals as I will simply get fat. <sup>therefore he should act differently to Milo.</sup> The idea of going back to ideas of two thousand years ago supported by Aristotle/MacIntyre.

None of the ethical theories that are referred to are new, however, the fact that we are constantly ~~repeating~~ reviewing the ideas, shows how ~~we~~ we are determined to find ~~the~~ an alternative source of morality other than religion. I support the idea of morality being based on the philosophical basis of virtue ethics. The fact that we still return to Aristotle's ideas <sup>when</sup> ~~for~~ looking for reasons, <sup>as to</sup> why we have morality shows its strength in arguing why we act morally without the absence of religion.



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Examiner Comments

This answer illustrates some of the problems of combining both AO1 and AO2 together because insufficient attention is given to the various demands of AO2.

The standard of work in part (a) is quite good. There is a close examination of the selected passage. Part (a) is a full answer which combines detailed exposition of the text together with links to related scholars and theories. Although the candidate does not refer to part (a) or part (b) in their answer there appears to be AO2 material from the bottom of page 6 onwards. The candidate considers three implications and these are pertinent to AO2. However, the candidate does not systematically focus on the full demands of AO2. Part (b) begins by asking: 'Do you agree with the ideas expressed? Justify your point of view...'. Towards the end of the answer the candidate begins to consider these demands but it is virtually too late to develop these ideas. The implications for understanding religion and human experience can be found, but they are not appropriately developed. Overall, this candidate performs well in AO1 but the material for AO2 could be improved by a better focus and development of the material.



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Examiner Tip

The division into (a) and (b) is in the question to help candidates structure their material in the time available. This division enables candidates select and manage their material in order to provide a full answer to the various demands of the paper.

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Order Code UA028679 June 2011

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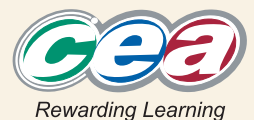
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