

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

RE TEACHER \_\_\_\_\_



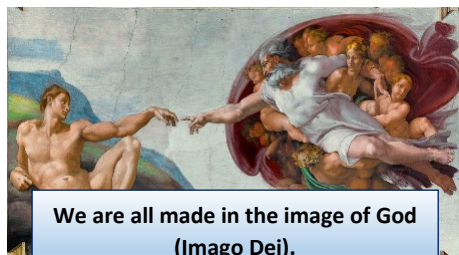
# YEAR 9 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ETHICS



## GOODNESS

1. We are always taught in RE to respect the opinions of others but does that mean that we all have it right?
2. Ethics is about moral decision making and considering how we should treat others in the world around us.
3. Some people believe that some things in life are always 'right' or 'wrong'. This is known as **absolutism**.
4. Other people believe that there is no such thing as moral truth as we live in a changing world. This is **relativism**.
5. Some ethicists believe that moral decision making should really be about what makes us happy (**hedonism**).
6. Others believe that we have a **duty** to always do the right thing even if we don't want to (**deontology**).
7. Many have disagreed with this approach and have said that our actions always depend on the **situation**.
8. Some argue that goodness comes from God and that we can see goodness in the world (**the natural law**).
9. You must decide whether it is better to **do** good things (**actions**) or to **achieve** good things (**consequences**).

## THE NATURAL LAW



We are all made in the image of God  
(Imago Dei).

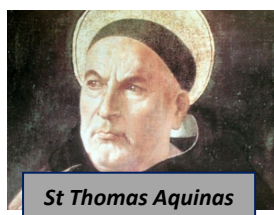
### Genesis 1: 31

'God looked at everything he had created and he was very pleased. Evening passed and morning came that was the sixth day'.

### Romans 2: 15

'The law of God is written on men's hearts'

10. Catholics believe that God created the world and everything in it therefore creation is 'good'.
11. God does not make mistakes so EVERY person has a purpose and is called '**to do good and avoid evil.**'
12. St Thomas Aquinas said that humans naturally do five things... He called these things **the five precepts**.



St Thomas Aquinas

**WORSHIP**  
**ORDER IN SOCIETY**  
**REPRODUCTION**  
**LEARNING**  
**DEFENDING LIFE**

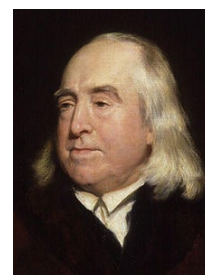
Any action we take that goes against these precepts goes against our nature and God's plan for us.

For example... Killing somebody with a gun goes against the final precept!

## UTILITARIANISM

Jeremy Bentham lived during the Enlightenment. He had just seen the French Revolution take place and did not want to see the same thing happen in England. He wanted a fair system of government where everybody had an equal say. He wanted his ethics to be useful.

*The greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.*



*Bentham believed that ethics is always about trying to make the majority happy. He believed in democracy and believed that everybody should have an equal say. Before making any moral decision Bentham argued that you should always look at the consequences. If the decision is going to bring about more pain than happiness then the action is not right. Bentham was a hedonist.*



Winston Churchill

### Operation Dynamo

In May, 1940 the Nazis swept through Belgium and France at an alarming rate. Britain had sent soldiers across to support these countries but they were caught by surprise. 300,000 British soldiers became trapped on the beaches of Dunkirk. Winston Churchill ordered his battalion of 4,000 men at Calais to march on the German army. This was a suicide mission which led to the death of every single member of this battalion. The decision was made so that the 300,000 would have time to escape. Without these men Britain may have lost the war.

**Do you think this could be an example of utilitarianism in practice?**

### KANTIAN ETHICS

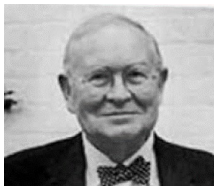
**Immanuel Kant** also lived through the **Enlightenment**. He was living in **Protestant Germany** and was horrified at the thought that ethics was all about the consequence! Kant argued that the **'ends can never justify the means'**. An evil action is ALWAYS an evil action. To Kant actions such as; killing, stealing, lying and cheating can never be justified. Kant believed that **ACTIONS** are the only thing we can control. The future is never certain so looking at consequences is bad ethics!



Immanuel Kant

- 13. Utilitarianism argues that **consequences** are the most important thing in ethics... Kant strongly disagreed!
- 14. Kantian ethics is sometimes called **'deontology'** meaning the 'study of duty'... Here **actions** are more important.
- 15. Both of these approaches to ethics can be seen to have their strengths and weaknesses.
- 16. If an axe murderer asked if you were hiding your little sister under the bed Kant would have to say yes!
- 17. If it was necessary that you be tortured and killed for the happiness of the majority Bentham could say yes!

### SITUATION ETHICS



Joseph Fletcher

**Joseph Fletcher** lived through the **1960s**. He saw the world moving very quickly at this time. People were turning away from governments, religions and rules. They were tired of wars and just wanted to be free! Fletcher came up with a **flexible system** of ethics called 'Situation Ethics'. He said the right thing to do is always the loving thing. He used the word **'agape'** which is love in the strongest sense of the word... This is the unconditional love Jesus taught which involves self-sacrifice. Fletcher said the most loving thing to do always depends on the situation!

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed in 1945. He was a German citizen who believed that the Nazi philosophy in Germany was deeply wrong. He used his position as a respected pastor and theologian to get close to Adolf Hitler and assassinate him. He believed this was the most loving thing to do. The assassination attempt failed and Bonhoeffer was arrested for treason. He was hung at Flossenburg concentration camp.*

*Is this an early example of situation ethics in practice?*



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

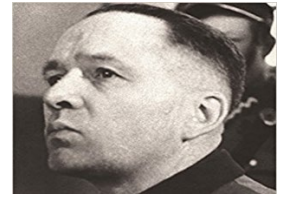
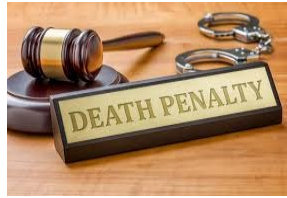
### CONSCIENCE

- 18. Conscience is that part of ourselves which knows the difference between right and wrong.
- 19. **Gaudium et Spes** states that conscience is the deepest part of us where the **'voice of God echoes in our depths.'**
- 20. Catholics believe that conscience is an important part of being human. It is how we discern God's will.
- 21. St Thomas Aquinas believed that we should all **'do good and avoid evil'**... This is known as the **synderesis rule**.
- 22. Fletcher believed that conscience is nothing to do with God... It is just us learning from the mistakes of the past.



*Jiminy Cricket in Disney's Pinocchio was given the job of being Pinocchio's conscience. He does his best to guide Pinocchio through his life but Pinocchio does not always listen! Sometimes in life we do things even though we know it is not the right thing to do. Sometimes it is difficult to know what the right thing to do actually is! It is not always easy to listen to our conscience.*

## ETHICAL DILEMMAS



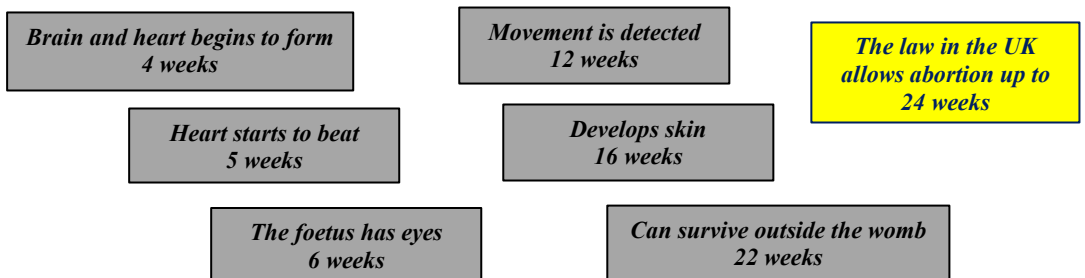
23. Many religious people believe that taking human life is wrong whatever the reason because it belongs to God.
24. Catholics believe that every **human life is sacred** meaning 'precious' and 'holy.'
25. Catholics often refer to this as **the sanctity of life argument** in ethics.
26. Every human being is made **Imago Dei** (in the image of God) meaning that every individual is loved by God.
27. Catholics believe that they have a duty to look after others, particularly the most vulnerable people in society.
28. **Catholic Social Teaching (CST)** states that all Catholics should promote **the common good** and **human dignity**.
29. Jesus said **'whatever you do to the least of my people you do to me'** (Matthew 25: 40)

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

30. Capital punishment is also known as the death penalty. It is legal in many countries for the most serious crimes.
31. Many people believe that capital punishment is a good thing. They argue this because...
  - It **removes dangerous people** from the world. This promotes the common good and makes us all safer.
  - It **acts as a deterrent** stopping people from committing serious crimes because they don't want to die.
  - It **provides justice** for people who have been seriously wronged.
32. Rudolf Hoess (the Commandant of Auschwitz) was sentenced to death by hanging at Auschwitz in April, 1947.
33. Do you think this was the right thing to do? Which of the people above would agree with your opinion?

## ABORTION

34. Abortion is defined as the **termination of a pregnancy**... This involves the intentional destruction of a foetus.
35. To many people abortion is just the destruction of a few living cells... It only has the **potential** to be a person.
36. For others an abortion is nothing less than the killing of a vulnerable person... The killing of an unborn child.
37. Catholics believe that **life starts at conception**... **'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you'** (Jeremiah 1: 5).
38. Some Christians believe that abortion can be justified in certain situations such as rape or in extreme poverty.
39. The Catholic Church believes that abortion can never be justified.



## ARGUMENTS FOR

*It has been said that 'an acorn is not the same thing as an oak tree'. A foetus is not the same thing as a person. Some argue that even if the foetus is a person then abortion might still be the most loving thing to do. What about the rights of the mother to do whatever she wants with her own body? What about the quality of life that the baby will have? What about health implications for the mother and the baby? Research the 'Phoenix Abortion Case.'*

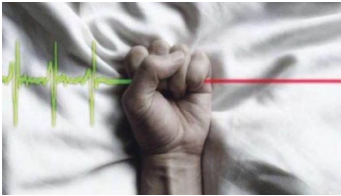
## ARGUMENTS AGAINST

*A teenager and an adult are not the same thing but a person is always a person! Why should your location, your appearance or your age affect whether you are a 'person' or not? All people have a right to do what they want with their bodies unless it causes harm to themselves or to others. Abortion is clearly an example of harm to others. Who are we to decide whether a person's life is going to be worth living or not? Why should somebody else decide?*

# Key Terms

Abortion	The deliberate termination of a pregnancy.
Absolutism	The belief that there are moral truths and that some things are always right or wrong.
Capital Punishment	The death penalty inflicted upon a person by the state for the worst crimes.
Conception	The point of fertilisation. The point at which human life begins for a Catholic.
Consequentialism	The belief that ethical decision making should always focus on the consequences.
Conscience	The part of our consciousness that understands the difference between right and wrong.
Deontology	The belief that ethical decision making should always focus on our actions.
Ethics	The study of moral behaviour and of decision making between what is right and wrong.
Euthanasia	The taking of a human life in order to reduce pain and suffering... Said to be 'mercy killing'.
Foetus	An unborn human being more than eight weeks past the point of conception.
Gaudium et Spes	A Catholic Church document on how Catholics should act in the modern world.
Hedonism	The belief that ethical decision making should always be about happiness.
Relativism	The belief that there is no such thing as moral truth or absolutes.
Sanctity of Life	The belief that human life is holy (sacred) as it comes from God.
Situation Ethics	The belief that ethical decision making should always be based upon the situation.
Utilitarianism	The belief that ethical decision making should bring about happiness for the majority.

## EUTHANASIA



Noel Conway recently died from motor neurone disease at the age of 71. He lost his appeal through the Supreme Court to change the law on euthanasia in 2018.

Euthanasia means '**happy death.**' It is the process of ending a person's life early in order to relieve them of pain and suffering. It is sometimes referred to as '**mercy killing.**'

Many terminally ill people in desperate situations believe that it should be their own decision to end their own life. They argue that they are the only ones who truly understand their pain. Some organisations such as '**Dying with Dignity**' have argued that keeping a person in a state of pain is similar to torturing them.

All forms of **active euthanasia** continue to be **against the law in the UK** today. This includes **voluntary and involuntary**. Turning off a life support machine is an exception to this as it is considered **passive**... Do you agree?

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST EUTHANASIA...

### Sanctity of Life Argument

All life belongs to God.  
It is not for us to take it.  
'Thou shalt not kill.'

### Medical Argument

It is not fair to put that level of responsibility onto doctors  
See the Hippocratic Oath!

### Psychological Argument

A person must be able to show that they are of 'sound mind' to make this type of judgement...  
The vulnerable are often not 'Compos Mentis'.

### Slippery Slope Argument

Where else could this lead?  
Where do we draw the line?  
Are we accepting suicide?

## Stretch yourself further...

### Should the law change...?

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021 the BMA decided to change its position (formally of strong opposition) to a position of **neutrality**. Those doctors who actually work in end-of-life care and best understand the issues continue to vote overwhelmingly against euthanasia but they are no longer the majority within the BMA as a whole. Do you think those in other areas of medicine should have an equal say? Former Archbishop of Canterbury **George Carey** and **Rabbi Jonathon Romain** have also dropped their opposition claiming '**there is nothing holy about dying in agony**'.

### Consider different views on this topic...

<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/ethics/end-of-life/physician-assisted-dying>  
[https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/christianethics/euthanasia\\_1.shtml](https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/christianethics/euthanasia_1.shtml)  
<https://www.bmj.com/content/374/bmj.n2094.full>  
[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19800505\\_euthanasia\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19800505_euthanasia_en.html)  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-57441095>

Approximately 84% of people living in Britain would support the practice of euthanasia for the **terminally ill**.