

Year 11 – Philosophy & Ethics Revision Notes - ‘Good and Evil’

Key concepts in Good and Evil

Good-That which is considered morally right, beneficial and to our advantage.

Evil-That which is considered extremely immoral, wicked and wrong.

Forgiveness-To grant pardon for a wrongdoing; to give up resentment and the desire to seek revenge against a wrongdoer.

Free will-The ability to make choices voluntarily and independently. The belief that nothing is pre-determined.

Justice-Fairness; where everyone has equal provisions and opportunity.

Morality-Principles and standards determining which actions are right or wrong.

Punishment-A penalty given to someone for a crime or wrong they have done.

Sin-Deliberate immoral action, breaking a religious or moral law.

Suffering-Pain or distress caused by injury, illness or loss. Suffering can be physical, emotional/psychological or spiritual.

How do people make moral decisions?

Making **moral** decisions is not a straightforward, risk-free process. We all have a **conscience**, which helps us to assess the right choice to make when reviewing a situation. Many believe we make moral decisions through:

- Our **past experiences** allow us to learn the rightness and wrongness of our actions
- The **law** offers us strict guidance for our behaviour.
- Many consult **religious leaders or community elders** for advice and guidance
- Religious believers also look towards their **religious teachings**
- Many look to prophets such as **Muhammad** or other individuals within religions **eg Martin L. King**

What are the two common forms of morality?

Absolute morality - when a person has a principle such as ‘it is wrong to kill’ and never alters it. They apply this principle or moral standard to all situations, no matter what the context or circumstance. Within Christianity, Catholics and Quaker Christians adapt this approach as Quakers believe war is wrong on all accounts.

Relative morality - when a person holds a moral principle but is prepared to adapt or adjust it in certain situations. This person might believe that, if it reduces suffering in the future, killing in war might be necessary. Church of England would be considered relative moralists, as well as Humanists.

What causes crime? The causes of crime are complex. A range of causes include: Mental health, Media, Peer Pressure, Unemployment, Drug/Alcohol Addiction, Poverty & Poor Parenting

What are the aims of punishment?

DETERRENCE - Punishment should put people off committing crime.

PROTECTION - Punishment should protect society from the individual and from further crimes as well as the criminal from themselves.

REFORMATION - Punishment should help to change the individual for the better

RETRIBUTION - Punishment should help a victim get revenge on the criminal and to make them suffer.

REPARATION - Punishment should compensate the victim(s) of a crime and repair the damage done

VINDICATION - Punishment exists to prove the authority of the law and to remind people without law and order there would be chaos

Punishment and utilitarianism

The utilitarian theory of punishment is about punishing offenders to discourage, or ‘deter’, future wrongdoing. Laws and prison should be used to maximise the happiness of society. Small numbers of criminals suffer punishment in order to benefit the large numbers of people in society.

‘It is the greatest good to the greatest number which is the measure of right and wrong.’ Jeremy Bentham. Tasks

What does Christianity teach about justice & punishment?

Christianity is a religion of forgiveness, and does not support the idea of retribution. Many Christians do believe in justice, therefore forgiveness and punishment should go together. Christians try to follow the example of

Jesus who forgave those who betrayed him. Many Christians support punishment practices which lead to forgiveness, for example **restorative justice** programmes in prisons. Similarly, Jesus taught compassion '*love thy neighbour*' and not revenge and because of this many Christians have been actively involved in prison reform to ensure that people are treated humanely in prison. They also believe that it is important to recognise and address the causes of criminal behaviour, as a means of restoring social justice and preventing crime. Most Christians also firmly believe that punishment should enable a person to reform. Some Christians have become prison chaplains so that they can help prisoners to reform effectively. However, some Christians might follow the teaching of '*an eye for an eye*', meaning that retribution might be okay in extreme cases.

'But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream' Amos.

What does Islam teach about punishment and justice?

Although forgiveness is very important, so is the need to protect society (ummah) and keep law and order. Punishment is therefore seen as central to justice and essential in keeping people from straying from what is good and just. 'Shari'ah' law outlines both the rules to live by and the punishments if these laws are broken. Many punishments are designed to deter as well as protect society from further wrongdoing, for example: cutting off a hand for theft, or a receiving a beating in full view of the local community. For Muslims, punishment has nothing to do with removing sin as only Allah can forgive – it is a way of keeping law and order. Muslims do hope, however, that offenders will repent, reform and seek forgiveness.

'Indeed, God orders justice and good conduct and giving [help] to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.' Qur'an

Prison Chaplains:

Traditionally, a chaplain is a minister, such as a priest, pastor, rabbi, imam or community member of a religious tradition. They provide counselling to inmates, supporting them through their rehabilitation and seeing to their spiritual & religious needs. Fear, loneliness, guilt, concerns about family or children on the outside become the concern of the prison chaplain. In addition, chaplains often help prisoners re-enter the community, working with **parole officers** and other volunteers. Since 2011 the British Humanist Society has been running a project with Humanist Pastoral Support Volunteers at Winchester Prison. This includes meeting inmates with 'nil' religion on admission, holding discussion groups and providing counselling, such as bereavement support, for inmates. Often prisoners are unable to attend funerals of loved ones & benefit from the type of community support.

REMEMBER TO LEARN ABOUT HELEN PREJAN AND THE RESPONSES FROM PRISON CHAPLAINS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR ROLE. THESE ARE IN YOUR CLASS BOOK AND WE DID A PRACTICE QUESTION ON IT.

Various Christian views about the death penalty:

Liberal Christians - Most Christians believe that only God has the authority to take a life. Execution goes against the sanctity of life, as all life is precious. God commanded 'Thou shalt not kill'. Christians follow the teachings of Jesus to be compassionate and forgiving. Jesus forgave the adulterous woman and pleaded with God for his executioners to be forgiven when he was on the cross: '*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*'. Many favour reform over execution, and have been involved in prison reform and continue to work in prisons as chaplains. Jesus taught us to '*turn the other cheek*' and to '*love our enemies*'. The Golden rule of '*do to others what you want them to do to you*' also compels us to treat others as we would wish to be treated.

Quakers - have campaigned against the death penalty since 1818. All human life should be respected as every person is a reflection of God – '*made in God's image*'. Quakers believe punishments should be used to reform.

Conservative Christians - Some Christians advocate the death penalty, as Old Testament law states '*an eye for an eye*' and '*Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed*'. The Old Testament specifies 36 capital offences including crimes such as idolatry, magic and blasphemy & murder.

Catholics - are divided. Traditionally they have allowed (but not encouraged) capital punishment. In 1997, the Vatican issued a statement saying that execution was acceptable where the identity of the criminal was absolutely confirmed and where execution was the only means to protect society. It did, however, state that non-lethal means of punishment were: '*more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and . . . the dignity of the human person*'. Pope John Paul II

Muslim views about the death penalty:

Islam as a whole accepts capital punishment for the most severe crimes. While criminals will be punished by God on the Day of Judgement, Muslims believe that they should be punished on earth. Forgiveness is important & preferred, but so is the need to protect the ummah. The Qur'an forbids the taking of life: '*Nor take life – which God has made sacred, except for just cause*'. Most Muslims agree that this 'just cause', for which the death penalty is permitted, is the crimes of murder and attacking Islam. Most Muslim countries (Saudi Arabia and Iran) retain the death penalty. Methods of execution in Islamic countries vary and can include beheading, firing squad, hanging and stoning. In some countries public executions are carried out to provide a deterrent. Islamic countries that practise very strict Shari'ah law are associated with the use of capital punishment as punishment; for example for adultery, homosexuality, terrorism and treason.

There is a small but growing number of Muslims who disagree with the death penalty and call for it to be abolished. They argue that Shari'ah law is often used by repressive governments that attack women and the poor.

Moral arguments for the death penalty

I believe that that death penalty should be used only very rarely, but I believe that no-one should go out certain that no matter how cruel, how vicious, how hideous their murder, they themselves will not suffer the death penalty.' Margaret Thatcher

The below criminals did not face the death penalty:

- In July 2010 Jonathan Vass, 30, murdered his ex-girlfriend Jane Clough, 26, after he had been released on bail for raping her. He was jailed for 30 years.
- Nathan McLeod, 16, murdered Temidayo Ogunneye, 15, for a mobile phone in May 2011. Earlier that day he had been granted bail at Camberwell Youth Court in London after being accused of attacking a gas man with a bread knife.

Moral arguments against the death penalty:

Amnesty opposes the death penalty absolutely – for all crimes without exception. They believe that:

- The death penalty violates basic human rights in every case.
- Evidence shows that it doesn't deter crime.
- It discriminates. Statistics show that the death penalty is used disproportionately against the poor, minorities and members of racial, ethnic and religious communities..
- It can be used as a political tool. In the USA, many state governors have fast-tracked the executions of inmates during re-election time to prove that they are 'tough on crime'.

I do not think that God approves the death penalty for any crime, rape and murder included. Capital punishment is against the highest expression of love in the nature of God.' Martin Luther King Jr

Christian teachings about forgiveness:

The Bible clearly instructs Christians to forgive: '*Forgive, and you will be forgiven.*' The importance of forgiveness is emphasised in the Lord's Prayer. Christians ask God to '*forgive their sins, as they forgive those who have sinned against them*'. Jesus taught the importance of forgiveness in the **Beatitudes**: '*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*' The actions of Jesus highlight forgiveness as he visited the tax collector Zacchaeus despite his cheating and selfishness and, in doing so, enabled Zacchaeus to make amends and reform. He also forgave the adulterous woman imploring her to '*go and sin no more*'.

Bible stories - The story in the Bible of the prodigal son teaches explicitly about forgiveness and repentance. It tells the tale of a son who demands his inheritance from his father, abandons the family home to seek his fortune elsewhere, and returns years later, poor and hungry. The father forgives his son and welcomes him back, despite his wrongdoing. The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant reinforces the teaching that we must forgive others in order to be forgiven ourselves. In this parable, the servant refuses to forgive a friend for borrowing a small sum of money when he had received a very large sum of money from his master. This teaches Christians to forgive a limitless number of times because they will be forgiven by God for all of their many sins. '*For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you*'.

Muslim teachings about forgiveness

The Qur'an states that those who forgive others will be rewarded by God and that forgiveness is the path to peace. Within Islam there are two kinds of forgiveness: God's forgiveness and human forgiveness. Human beings are in need of both as they make mistakes in their actions towards each other and their actions towards God. There is no limit to God's forgiveness. The words '*God is All-forgiving, Most Merciful*' are repeated many times throughout the Qur'an. In Islam, individuals who commit a sin ask for forgiveness directly from God. They believe that God will forgive all those who are truly repentant. In the Qur'an it says: '*God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and He loves those who keep themselves pure*' Muslims are to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who helped the old woman who became sick even though she had regularly brushed dirt in his direction.

Christian teachings about goodness:

In Genesis it says that God made the earth '*and it was good*'. God has, however, given people free will. The story of humanity's battle with good and evil is told in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. This is called the Fall, and explains how free will can be used to stray from what is good. God has shown people how they should live a good life through both rules of behaviour found in the Bible, eg 10 commandments and through religious teachings. Jesus' life and example also show Christians the ways to lead a moral, good and righteous life. It is up to individuals to decide whether or not to follow God's instructions. Christianity is a religion which places 'good' qualities at its core – tolerance, compassion and love. Jesus demonstrated all of these qualities through his life, and it is considered a Christian duty to treat others with kindness, humanity and genuine acceptance.

Islam teachings about goodness:

Everyone is born with a natural instinct to understand the difference between right and wrong (fitrah). All humans have free will, and they must choose between right and wrong. Some say this means choosing between the path of God and the temptations of

Shaytan (the devil). The Qur'an speaks of true Muslims very often as '*those who believe and do good deeds*'. The Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad outline the qualities required for good, including truthfulness, patience, humility and kindness. Muslims are expected to follow this example to guide their actions and choices in everyday life, for example, by doing **sadaqah**. God will judge each person individually, according to their faith and their good actions. God will show mercy and fairness in his judgement. According to Islamic teachings, those who believe in God and perform good deeds will be eternally rewarded in heaven.

Christian attitudes to Evil:

St Irenaeus believed that human kind was not created perfect, but that they required growth in order to become spiritually perfect and moral. He argued that God does not necessarily intend evil to provide the only opportunity for this kind of spiritual growth, as a person could grow to spiritual perfection simply by obeying God's laws. Irenaeus also believed that God does not intervene in human affairs to prevent evil because that would mean interfering with free will.

John Hick believes that God created humans with the potential for spiritual growth. Hick argues that the process of 'soul making' is a response to the evil in the world. If murder, cancer and natural evils did not exist, we would not have the means to develop and perfect ourselves spiritually. Hick also believes that humans are born with an immense distance between themselves and God.

Original sin: Catholics believe that evil comes from human beings. Adam and Eve introduced sin to the world (known as **original sin**) when they chose to disobey God. This act brought sin into humanity. Since then people have been born with the ability to commit acts of evil.

Life as a test: Many Christians also believe that life is a test, to tolerate suffering and keep faith. The story of Job in the Bible gives Christians an example of how suffering can come to anyone, even the most holy and good-living, and that we will be judged on how we behaved throughout our suffering.

Evil and suffering as beyond human understanding: The story of Job also reveals to Christians that we should not question why we suffer, but simply accept that we do. Many say that 'God works in mysterious ways' and he has reasons for letting evil and suffering happen, but humans will never be able to understand the mind of God.

Suffering helps humans understand Jesus: Jesus chose to endure suffering and pain in order to achieve greater good. His death and resurrection were to bring an end to death and suffering forever, with the promise of

everlasting life and a new heaven and earth. For many Christians, suffering is both a way to bring them closer to an understanding of Jesus and his suffering and a way to bring about a greater good.

Other explanations for evil and suffering: Some Christians argue that evil is simply the absence of good. St Augustine believed that things were created good but free will enabled things to grow away from good and become evil. Others argue that evil comes from Satan.

Muslim attitudes to evil:

Within Islam it is believed that everything happens because it is the will and the plan of God. This is known as al-Qadr, and means that suffering and hardship are part of God's greater plan. Even though people may be unable to appreciate the value or purpose of suffering, they must accept that suffering exists and that they will never be able to truly understand God's purpose. Muslims believe that all life is a test. Humans are given life as a gift by God, and throughout their life their good and evil acts are noted down by two angels. Muslims will have to answer to these at Judgement Day, and these will determine whether they will enter paradise or be sent to hell. God is also known as Ar-Rahman (The Merciful), Ar-Rahim (The Compassionate) and Al-Karim (The Generous). Many Muslims believe that evil comes from Shaytan. The Qur'an explains how he refused God's command to bow down before Adam. As a result of pride and disobedience, God banished him from heaven. He now exists to tempt people to turn from God and to do wrong.

Christian attitudes to suffering:

Suffering is seen to be a test. Suffering is a punishment for sin and for Catholics is the result of original sin. Suffering is also part of God's plan – we might not understand it but should know God will never make us suffer beyond our ability to cope. Suffering enables us to appreciate what is good in the world and allows us to grow closer to Jesus, who also suffered. Stories from the Bible, such as that of Job in the Old Testament, teach Christians that anyone can suffer and that persevering with suffering can strengthen faith in God.

Muslims attitudes to suffering:

Islam teaches that everything that happens is part of the will and plan of God (al-Qadr). Life is a test and therefore so is suffering. Suffering enables Muslims to prove their faith by resisting temptation. Those who resist Shaytan and follow the straight path will be rewarded in the afterlife. Good can come from suffering, both because it leads to personal spiritual development and because it allows us the opportunity to support others.

Christian responses to the problem of evil & suffering: FREE WILL/PREDESTINATION

Christians believe that free will is given by God. Humans therefore have the ability to choose to do good & evil. Catholics believe that as a result of original sin, humans find it easier to choose to do wrong, but with the help of God can choose to do good. Fate is not a Christian idea, and the vast majority of Christians do not believe that their life is totally planned out for them. Some denominations (for example Lutheran and Calvinist Christians) believe in **predestination** – that God has already chosen who is to reach salvation.

Islam responses to the problem of evil & suffering: FREE WILL/PREDESTINATION

For Muslims, free will must exist as without it humans are simply puppets – unable to truly take responsibility for themselves or offer genuine faith and submission to God. Similarly, though, predestination must exist as without it, God is not ultimately powerful and omniscient: '*God has power over all things.*' Islam teaches that every person is free to choose whether or not to follow God. As some do not, suffering occurs. Al-Qadr is the will of God and translates literally as 'fate' or 'pre-ordainment'. Some Muslims believe God wrote down all that has happened and will happen (on the 'Preserved Tablet'). God has measured out the span of every person's life, their lot of good or bad fortune, and the fruits of their efforts. Although many Muslims believe in predestination they also believe that we have free will. The idea of *iktisab* means that while God knows the final outcome, a person must 'acquire' or 'merit' responsibility for their own actions. These Muslims believe there is no fate in Islam as this infers surrendering yourself helplessly. Instead there is the idea of working to understand and cooperate with God, and bringing oneself to a unity with his will.

Sunni Muslims believe in the concept of the 'Preserved Tablet' - They firmly believe in the concept of 'Bada', which states that God has not set a definite course for human history. Instead, God may alter the course of human history as is seen to be fit. Shi'a Muslims believe that God has definite power over the whole of the universe, however, whenever he wills, he can replace a given destiny with another one (effectively changing the course of fate).

REMEMBER to learn the difference between crime and sin, and also the facts about crime in society today. Also, remember to learn examples of people who have forgiven e.g Gee Walker.