

1.1 Ancient philosophical influences

Forms: a name Plato gave to ideal concepts

Reason: using logical steps and thought processes in order to reach conclusions

Rationalist: someone who thinks that the primary source of knowledge is reason

Empiricist: someone who thinks that the primary source of knowledge is experience gained through the five senses

Prime Mover: Aristotle's concept of the ultimate cause of movement and change in the universe

Socratic method: the method of philosophical reasoning which involves critical questioning

Analogy: a comparison between one thing and another in an attempt to clarify meaning

Transcendent: being beyond this world and outside the realms of ordinary experience

Dualism: the belief that reality can be divided into two distinct parts, such as good and evil, or physical and non-physical

Action: an explanatory factor, a reason or cause for something

Telos: the end, or purpose, of something

Theist: someone who believes in a God or gods

1.2 Soul, Mind and Body

Soul: often, but not always, understood to be the non-physical essence of a person

Consciousness: awareness or perception

Substance: a subject which has different properties attributed to it

Dualism: the belief that reality can be divided into two distinct parts, such as good and evil, or physical and non-physical

Substance dualism: the belief that the mind and the body both exist as two distinct and separate realities

Scepticism: a questioning approach which does not take assumptions for granted

Materialism: the belief that only physical matter exists, and that the mind can be explained in physical terms as chemical activity in the brain

Reductive materialism: otherwise known as identity theory – the view that mental events are identical with physical occurrences in the brain

Category error: a problem of language that arises when things are talked about as if they belong to one category when in fact they belong to another

1.3 Arguments based on observation

Teleological: looking to the end results (telos) in order to draw a conclusion about what is right or wrong

Cosmological: to do with the universe

Natural theology: drawing conclusions about the nature and activity of God by using reason and observing the world

Contingent: depending on other things

Principle of Sufficient Reason: the principle that everything must have a reason to explain it

Sceptic: someone who will not accept what others say without questioning and challenging

A posteriori arguments: arguments which draw conclusions based on observation through experience

Necessary existence: existence which does not depend on anything else

A priori arguments: arguments which draw conclusions through the use of reason

Logical fallacy: reasoning that has a flaw in its structure

1.4 Arguments based on reason

A posteriori arguments: arguments which draw conclusions based on observation through experience

Ontological: to do with the nature of existence

A priori arguments: arguments which draw conclusions through the use of reason

Contingent: depending on other things

Necessary existence: existence which does not depend on anything else

Predicate: a term which describes a distinctive characteristic of something

Epistemic distance: a distance in knowledge and understanding

Logical fallacy: reasoning that has a flaw in its structure

1.5 Religious Experience

Mystical experience: experiences of God or of the supernatural which go beyond everyday sense experience

Conversion experience: an experience which produces a radical change in someone's belief system

Corporate religious experience: religious experiences which happen to a group of people 'as a body'

Numinous experience: an indescribable experience which invokes feelings of awe, worship and fascination

Principle of credulity: Swinburne's principle that we should usually believe what our senses tell us we are perceiving

Principle of testimony: Swinburne's principle that we should usually trust that other people are telling us the truth

Naturalistic explanation: an explanation referring to natural rather than supernatural causes

Neurophysiology: an area of science which studies the brain and the nervous system

1.6 The Problem of Evil

Omnipotent: all-powerful

Omniscient: all-knowing

Omnibenevolent: all-good and all-loving

Inconsistent triad: the omnibenevolence and omnipotence of God, and the existence of evil in the world, are said to be mutually incompatible

Theodicy: an attempt to justify God in the face of evil in the world

Natural evil: evil and suffering caused by non-human agencies

Moral evil: the evil done and the suffering caused by deliberate misuse of human free will

Privatio boni: a phrase used by Augustine to mean an absence of goodness

Free will: the ability to make independent choices between real options

Epistemic distance: a distance in knowledge and understanding

Soul Deciding

Soul Making

2.1 Natural Law

Deontological: from the Latin for 'duty', ethics focused on the intrinsic rightness and wrongness of actions

Telos: the end, or purpose, of something

Natural law: a deontological theory based on behaviour that accords with given laws or moral rules (e.g. given by God) that exist independently of human societies and systems

Synderesis: to follow the good and avoid the evil, the rule which all precepts follow

Secondary precepts: the laws which follow from primary precepts

Primary precepts: the most important rules in life: to protect life, to reproduce, to live in community, to teach the young and to believe in God

Practical reason: the tool which makes moral decisions

Eudaimonia: living well, as an ultimate end in life which all other actions should lead towards

2.2 Situation Ethics

The following definitions are derived from Joseph Fletcher's theory of situation ethics. They are not universally agreed definitions.

Justice: justice ordinarily refers to notions of fair distribution of benefits for all. Fletcher specifically sees justice as a kind of tough love; love applied to the world

Pragmatism: acting, in moral situations, in a way that is practical, rather than purely ideologically

Relativism: the rejection of absolute moral standards, such as laws or rights. Good and bad are relative to an individual or a community or, in Fletcher's case, to love

Positivism: proposes something as true or good without demonstrating it. Fletcher posits love as good

Personalism: ethics centred on people, rather than laws or objects

Conscience: the term 'conscience' may variously be used to refer to a faculty within us, a process of moral reasoning, insights from God or it may be understood in psychological terms. Fletcher described it as function rather than a faculty

Teleological ethics: moral goodness is determined by the end or result

Legalistic ethics: law-based moral decision-making

Antinomian ethics: antinomian ethics do not recognise the role of law in morality ('nomos' is Greek for 'law')

Situational ethics: another term for situation ethics, ethics focused on the situation, rather than fixed rules

Agape love: unconditional love, the only ethical norm in situationism

Extrinsically good: good defined with reference to the end rather than good in and of itself. Fletcher argued only love was intrinsically good

2.3 Kantian Ethics

Deontological: from the Latin for 'duty', ethics focused on the intrinsic rightness and wrongness of actions

Moral law: binding moral obligations

Maxims: another word for moral rules, determined by reason

Duty: duties are created by the moral law, to follow it is our duty. The word deontological means duty-based

Summum bonum: the highest, most supreme good

Good will: a person of good will is a person who makes decisions according to the moral law

Categorical imperative: an unconditional moral obligation that is always binding irrespective of a person's inclination or purpose

Hypothetical imperative: a moral obligation that applies only if one desires the implied goal

Kingdom of ends: an imagined future in which all people act in accordance to the moral law, the categorical imperative

2.4 Utilitarianism

Principle of utility/greatest happiness: the idea that the choice that brings about the greatest good for the greatest number is the right choice

Teleological: looking to the end results (telos) in order to draw a conclusion about what is right or wrong

Hedonic calculus: the system for calculating the amount of pain or pleasure generated

Consequentialism: ethical theories that see morality as driven by the consequences, rather than actions or character of those concerned

Hedonistic: pleasure-driven

Quantitative: focused on quantity (how many, how big, etc.)

Qualitative: focused on quality (what kind of thing)

Act utilitarian: weighs up what to do at each individual occasion

Rule utilitarian: weighs up what to do in principle in all occasions of a certain kind

2.5 Euthanasia

Non Treatment Decision: the decision medical professionals make to withhold or withdraw medical treatment or life support that is keeping a person alive because they are not going to get better, or because the person asks them to. Controversially it is also sometimes called passive euthanasia

Active euthanasia: a deliberate action performed by a third party to kill a person, for example by lethal injection. Active euthanasia is illegal in the UK.

Sanctity of life: the idea that life is intrinsically sacred or has such worth that it is not considered within the power of a human being

Quality of life: a way of weighing the extrinsic experience of life, that affects or justifies whether or not it is worth continuing life

Personhood: the quality of human life that makes it worthy – usually linked to certain higher capacities

Autonomy and the right to die: the idea that human freedom should extend to decide the time and manner of death

Voluntary euthanasia: this applies when a person's life is ended painlessly by a third party at their own request

Non-voluntary euthanasia: this applies when a person is unable to express their wish to die but there are reasonable grounds for ending their life painlessly, for example if a person cannot communicate but is in extreme pain

Dignity: the worth or quality of life, which can be linked to sanctity or freedom

Palliative care: end-of-life care to make the person's remaining moments of life as comfortable as possible

Involuntary euthanasia: where a person is killed against their wishes, for example when disabled people were killed by Nazi doctors

2.6 Business Ethics

Capitalism: an economic system based on the private ownership of how things are made and sold, in which businesses compete freely with each other to make profits

Shareholder: a person who has invested money in a business in return for a share of the profits

Corporate social responsibility: a sense that businesses have wider responsibilities than simply to their shareholders, including the communities they live and work in and to the environment

Whistle-blowing: when an employee discloses wrongdoing to the employer or the public

Globalisation: the integration of economies, industries, markets, cultures and policymaking around the world

Stakeholder: a person who is affected by or involved in some form of relationship with a business

Consumerism: a set of social beliefs that put a high value on acquiring material things

3.1 Augustine on Human Nature

Will: the part of human nature that makes free choices

Sin: disobeying the will and commands of God

Grace: in theological terms, God's free and undeserved love for humanity, epitomised in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross

The Fall: the biblical event in which Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command; also used to refer to the imperfect state of humanity

Neoplatonism: philosophical thinking arising from the ideas of Plato

Redeemed: in theological terms, 'saved' from sin by the sacrifice of Christ

Concordia: human friendship

Cupiditas: 'selfish love', a love of worldly things and of selfish desires

Caritas: 'generous love', a love of others and of the virtues; the Latin equivalent of the Greek word agape

Concupiscence: uncontrollable desire for physical pleasures and material things

Ecclesia: heavenly society, in contrast with earthly society

Summum bonum: the highest, most supreme good

3.2 Death and Afterlife

Disembodied existence: existing without a physical body

Resurrection: living on after death in a glorified physical form in a new realm

Beatific vision: a face-to-face encounter with God

Purgatory: a place where people go, temporarily, after death to be cleansed of sin before they are fit to live with God

Election (in a theological sense): predestination, chosen by God for heaven or hell

Limited election: the view that God chooses only a small number of people for heaven

Original Sin: a state of wrongdoing in which people are born (according to some Christians) because of the sin of Adam and Eve

Unlimited election: the view that all people are called to salvation but only a few will be saved

Universalism: the view that all people will be saved

Parable: a story told to highlight a moral message

Particular judgement: judgement for each person at the point of death

Parousia: used in Christianity to refer to the Second Coming of Christ

3.3 Knowledge of God's existence

Faith: voluntary commitment to a belief without the need for complete evidence to support it

Empiricism: a way of knowing that depends on the five senses

Natural theology: drawing conclusions about the nature and activity of God by using reason and observing the world

Protestantism: a form of Christianity which rejects the authority of the Catholic Church and places greater emphasis on the Bible and on personal faith

Revelation: 'uncovering'. In theological terms, this is when God chooses to let himself be known

Immediate revelation: where someone is given direct knowledge of God

Mediate revelation: where someone gains knowledge of God in a secondary, non-direct way.

Grace of God: God's unconditional and undeserved gifts

Wisdom literature: a genre of writing from the ancient world, teaching about wisdom and virtue. In the Bible, books such as Proverbs and Job are classified as wisdom literature

3.4 The person of Jesus Christ

Son of God: a term for Jesus that emphasises he is God incarnate, one of the three persons of the Trinity

Liberator: a general term for someone who frees a people or group

Rabbi: a Jewish teacher, often associated with having followers

Hypostatic union: the belief that Christ is both fully God and fully human, indivisible, two natures united in one person

Homoousios: of the same substance or of the same being

Word: from the Greek logos, another name for the second person of the Trinity, used at the beginning of John's Gospel to describe the incarnation which existed from the beginning, of one substance with and equal to God the Father

Redemption: the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil

Incarnation: God born as a human being, in Jesus Christ

Zealot: a member of the Jewish political/military movement that fought against Rome in the first century AD

Messiah: in Christianity, the word is associated with Jesus Christ, who is believed to be the Son of God and the Saviour. In Judaism the word is associated with individuals who rose up against oppression, the people of Israel

3.5 Christian Moral Principles

Bible/Scripture: the collection or canon of books in the Bible which contain the revelation of God

Church tradition: the traditions of how Christian life in community works, in worship, practical moral life and prayer, and the teaching and reflection of the Church handed down across time

Sacred Tradition: the idea that the revelation of Jesus Christ is communicated in two ways. In addition to Scripture, it is communicated through the apostolic and authoritative teaching of the Church councils and the Pope

Agape love: unconditional love, the only ethical norm in situationism

3.6 Christian Moral Action

Discipleship: following the life, example and teaching of Jesus

Cheap grace: grace that is offered freely, but is received without any change in the recipient, and ultimately is false as it does not save

Costly grace: grace followed by obedience to God's command and discipleship

Passion: Jesus' sufferings at the end of his life

Solidarity: an altruistic commitment to stand alongside and be with those less fortunate, the oppressed, those who suffer

1.1 Attributes of God

Omnipotent: all-powerful

Omniscient: all-knowing

Omnibenevolent: all-good and all-loving

Timeless: atemporal, being outside the constraints of time

Everlasting: sempiternal, lasting forever on the same timeline as humanity

Free will: the ability to make independent choices between real options

Existentialism: a way of thinking that emphasises personal freedom of choice

Immutable: incapable of changing or being affected

1.2 Religious Language: religious perspectives

Agnosticism: the view that there is insufficient evidence for God, or the view that God cannot be known

Truth-claim: a statement that asserts that something is factually true

Apophatic way (via negativa): a way of speaking about God and theological ideas using only terms that say what God is not

Cataphatic way (via positiva): a range of ways of speaking about God and theological ideas using only terms that say what God is

Univocal language: words that mean the same thing when used in different contexts

Equivocal language: words that mean different things when used in different contexts

Analogy: a comparison made between one thing and another in an effort to aid understanding

Symbol: a word or other kind of representation used to stand for something else and to shed light on its meaning

1.3 Religious language: philosophical perspectives

Logical positivism: a movement that claimed that assertions have to be capable of being tested empirically if they are to be meaningful

Cognitive: having a factual quality that is available to knowledge, where words are labels for things in the world

Non-cognitive: not having a factual quality that is available to knowledge; words are tools used to achieve something rather than labels for things

Empirical: available to be experienced by the five senses

Verification: providing evidence to determine that something is true

Symposium: a group of people who meet to discuss a particular question or theme

Falsification: providing evidence to determine that something is false

Demythologising: removing the mythical elements from a narrative to expose the central message

2.1 Metaethics

Absolutism: the view that morals are fixed, unchanging truths that everyone should always follow

Relativism: the view that moral truths are not fixed and are not absolute. What is right changes according to the individual, the situation, the culture, the time and the place

Naturalism: ethical theories that hold that morals are part of the natural world and can be recognised or observed in some way

Intuitionism: ethical theories that hold that moral knowledge is received in a different way from science and logic

Vienna Circle: a group of philosophers known as logical positivists who rejected claims that moral truth can be verified as objectively true

Emotivism: ethical theories that hold that moral statements are not statements of fact but are either beliefs or emotions

Hume's Law: you cannot go from an 'is' (a statement of fact) to an 'ought' (a moral)

Naturalistic fallacy: G.E. Moore's argument that it is a mistake to define moral terms with reference to other properties (a mistake to break Hume's law)

2.2 Conscience

Ratio: the word used by Aquinas to describe reason, something which is placed in every person as a result of their being created in the image of God

Synderesis: for Aquinas, this means to follow the good and avoid the evil, the rule that all precepts follow

Id: for Freud, this is the part of the mind that has instinctive impulses that seek satisfaction in pleasure

Super-ego: Freud uses this word to describe the part of the mind that contradicts the id and uses internalised ideals from parents and society to make the ego behave morally

Ego: Freud uses this word to describe the mediation between the id and the super-ego

Conscientia: this is the name Aquinas gives to the process whereby a person's reason makes moral judgements

Vincible ignorance: this is how Aquinas describes a lack of knowledge for which a person is responsible, and can be blamed

Invincible ignorance: this is how Aquinas describes a lack of knowledge for which a person is not responsible, and cannot be blamed

2.3 Sexual Ethics

Cohabitation: an unmarried couple living together in a sexually active relationship. Sometimes known pejoratively as 'living in sin'

Consent: freely agreeing to engage in sexual activity with another person

Premarital sex: sex before marriage

Extramarital sex: sex beyond the confines of marriage, usually used to describe adulterous sex

Betrothal: traditionally the exchange of promises, which in earlier times marked the point at which sex was permitted

Consummation: an act of sexual intercourse that indicates, in some traditions, the finalisation of the marriage

Exclusive: a commitment to be in a sexual relationship with a person to the exclusion of all others. This is the opposite of an 'open marriage' or a 'casual relationship'

Homosexuality: sexual attraction between people of the same sex

3.1 Religious Pluralism and Theology

Exclusivism: the view that only one religion offers the complete means of salvation

Inter-faith dialogue: sharing and discussing religious beliefs between members of different religious traditions, with an aim of reaching better understanding

Theology of religion(s): the branch of Christian theology that looks at the relationship between Christianity and other world religions from a Christian perspective

Inclusivism: the view that although one's own religion is the normative (setting the standard of normality) means of salvation, those who accept its central principles may also receive salvation

Pluralism: the view that there are many ways to salvation through different religious traditions

Particularism: an alternative name for exclusivism, meaning that salvation can only be found in one particular way

Vatican II: the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, held from 1962 to 1965 to discuss the place of the Catholic Church in the modern world

Noumena: a Kantian term to describe reality as it really is, unfiltered by the human mind

Phenomena: a Kantian term to describe reality as it appears to us, filtered by the human mind

3.2 Religious Pluralism and Society

Multi-faith societies: societies where there are significant populations of people with different religious beliefs

Encyclical: an open letter sent to more than one recipient

Missionary work: activity that aims to convert people to a particular faith or set of beliefs, or works for social justice in areas of poverty or deprivation

Synod: the legislative body of the Church of England

Social cohesion: when a group is united by bonds that help them to live together peacefully

3.3 Gender and Society

Feminism: the name given to a wide range of views arguing for, and working for, equality for women

Gender biology: the physical characteristics that enable someone to be identified as male or female

Gender identification: the way people perceive themselves in terms of masculine, feminine, both or neither

Gender expression: the ways in which people behave as a result of their gender identification

Socialisation: the process by which people learn cultural norms

Patriarchal society: a society that is dominated by men and men's interests

3.4 Gender and Theology

Post-Christian theology: religious thinking that abandons traditional Christian thought

Reform feminist theology: religious thinking that seeks to change traditional Christian thought

Davidic Messiah: a Messiah figure based on the kingly military images of the Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament)

Servant king: an understanding of the Messiah that focuses on service rather than overlordship

Sophia: Greek for 'wisdom', personified in female form in the ancient world

Theology: studying God based around the goddess ('thea' is Greek for 'goddess')

3.5 The challenge of secularism

Secularism: a term that is used in different ways. It may mean a belief that religion should not be involved in government or public life. It may be a principle that no one religion should have a superior position in the state. It often entails a belief in a public space and a private space, and that religion should be restrained from public power

Secularisation: a theory developed in the 1950s and 1960s, developed from Enlightenment thinking, that religious belief would progressively decline as democracy and technology advanced. Sociologists now doubt such a linear decline

Secular: not connected or associated with religious or spiritual matters. Used colloquially in widely differing ways by atheists, pluralists and those who are anti-religion. Historically, the term was used to distinguish priests who worked in the world (secular priests) from those who belonged to religious communities, such as monasteries

Wish fulfilment: according to Freud, wish fulfilment is the satisfaction of a desire through a dream or other exercise of the imagination

3.6 Liberation Theology

Exploitation: treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work or resources

Alienation: the process of becoming detached or isolated

Capitalism: an economic system in which the means of production are privately owned and operated for profit, in contrast with communism where an economic system where trade and industry is controlled by the state

Conscientisation: the process by which a person becomes conscious of the power structures in society

Basic Christian communities: Christian groups that gather together to try to directly resolve difficulties in their lives

Structural sin: the idea that sin is not just a personal action, but something that can be brought about through unjust organisations and social structures

Preferential option for the poor: the idea that Jesus Christ stood with the poor and oppressed, and that the Church should focus on the poor and oppressed and stand in solidarity with them