

# **GCSE Philosophy and Ethics – Human Rights**

**Key concepts:** (A questions – you must have definition & example)

## **Censorship**

The practice of suppressing or limiting access to materials considered obscene, offensive or a threat to security.

## **Discrimination**

Acts of treating groups of people, or individuals differently, based on prejudice.

## **Extremism**

Supporting ideas that are far from what most people consider correct or reasonable

## **Human Rights**

The basic entitlements of all human beings, afforded to them simply because they are human.

## **Personal Conviction**

Something a person strongly feels or believes in.

## **Prejudice**

Pre-judging: judging people to be inferior/superior without cause

## **Relative Poverty**

A standard of poverty measure in relation to the standards of a society in which that person lives.

## **Absolute Poverty**

An acute state of deprivation whereby a person cannot access most of their basic human needs.

## **Social Justice**

Promoting a fair society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity.

## **Human Rights and Social Justice**

There are 30 articles of human rights including:

- The right to marry and start a family
- Protection from discrimination
- Freedom of expression

When these human rights are being abused people may fight for social justice: to ensure that all have fair access to these basic human rights. For example Malala Yousafzai fought for the rights of females to education in Pakistan.

### **Human rights and Social justice: Christian**

Many believe that the universal declaration of human rights reflects the main principles of Christianity. For example, freedom from discrimination is reflected in the teaching 'all are equal in the eyes of God', and the right to life is reflected in the teaching 'thou shall not kill'.

All humans have worth and dignity as God made them and so no human should be destroyed or maltreated.

Jesus is the ultimate example of agape love (a self-sacrificing unconditional love), and so all humans should attempt this kind of love when it comes to how to treat other humans. For example, Jesus said 'treat others as you would like to be treated'. Therefore, Christians should be willing to suffer inconvenience, discomfort and even death for the benefit of others in the hope that they would receive this agape love in return. Liberation Theology and more specifically, Oscar Romero is an example of this.

### **Human rights and Social Justice: Islam**

A Muslim has a duty to oppose injustice and oppression. An example of a Muslim who did this is Malcolm X.

The Qur'an says that "Whoever saves one (a soul) it is as if he has saved mankind entirely" and therefore Muslims should strive to save the lives but also the quality of life that others have.

All Muslims are to be considered as equal as Muhammad stated that 'all are equal like the teeth of a comb'. Therefore all should have equal access to human rights.

Muslims believe that as each person was created by God, each person should be treated with dignity and respect. Therefore, within the Ummah there is no rich or poor but the welfare of every citizen is important.

Muslims encourage social justice by giving Zakah and Sadaqah to make a more equal Muslim society. They may choose to oppose social injustices by being a member of organisations such as the Islamic Human Rights Commission.

**Censorship**

Censorship: the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are "offensive,". Censorship can be carried out by the government as well as private pressure groups.

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<p>It protects people from potentially harmful materials ie. offensive language on TV before watershed.</p> <p>It protects religious groups. Ie. the 2008 blasphemy law would not allow any media which was offensive to Christianity.</p> <p>It can stop potentially offensive material being published ie. it could be argued that the Charlie Hebdo magazine should not be allowed to publish pictures of the prophet Muhammed.</p> <p>It can lead to discrimination which we have the human right to be protected against. Ie. anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) online forums should be censored/shut down by the government.</p> <p>It helps to prevent conflict between different groups. For example, not allowing Westboro Baptist Church to carry homophobic signs could help heal the rift between the Church and the gay community.</p> <p>It stops extremist views from being aired ie. online terrorist forums should be shut down by the government.</p>	<p>It goes against the human right 'freedom of expression'.</p> <p>We cannot always trust that those in power will use censorship only for good. Often the government has been accused of censoring information that is released to cover up scandals.</p> <p>It could be classed as discrimination not to allow some groups to have their say.</p> <p>Some may deem some extremism to be a positive thing. For example anti-abortion campaigners/ animal rights campaigners that are willing to use violence for their cause. If people think this is right they may also believe that the news regarding this should not be censored.</p>

**Freedom of Religious Expression**

Religion is expressed in many different ways: For example:

- Clothing ie. Burkha/Hijab in Islam
- The wearing of religious symbols ie. the crucifix
- Public protests ie. Christian anti-abortion protests
- Street evangelism/preaching
- Christian Charities

Some do this as they feel it is important to tell others about their faith. Others see it as a reminder to themselves as to what they believe. It could also be seen as part of a mission to evangelise others. For example Christians follow the teaching from Jesus 'Go forth and make disciples of all nations'. However, others feel that it is disrespectful to try to convert others to your beliefs. For example in the Qur'an it says 'To you be your religion and to me be mine'

### **Extremism**

For some believers, they may be so convicted in their beliefs that they are willing to take extreme actions to achieve their goal/make their point. These actions may involve causing harm to themselves or others. They act this way because:

- They are encouraged by their religious scriptures. "Fight against those who fight against you" (Qur'an) "I have not come to bring peace but a sword" (Jesus)
- They believe that through these actions they will gain a reward in this life or the afterlife. Some in Islam believe that martyrs (those who give up their life for their faith) will be rewarded with 72 virgins in the afterlife.
- They are influenced by family or friends – radicalisation
- They truly believe that they are doing the work of God. This can be shown by the cry of 'Allah Akbar' by many Muslim extremists.

### **Prejudice and Discrimination**

There are many examples of how the government and other organisations have, or still do, discriminate against groups based on their prejudice. For example:

- Being homosexual was only legalised in Britain in 1967 and gay marriage was only legalised in 2014.
- Jewish men and women were not allowed to be doctors among other jobs under Hitler's Nuremberg laws.
- Some buildings do not allow access for those with disability.
- Some major organisations, such as the BBC, are accused of not paying equal wages to men and women.

Religions can also be accused of being discriminatory. For example, the Roman Catholic Church of England will not marry a same sex couple. Furthermore, in the Roman Catholic Church women cannot be priests and couples who are divorced are not able to take communion.

**Christian Attitudes:** Christians believe that all were created by God so each life is equal and sacred. Jesus himself showed care and compassion to people in society who were marginalised or discriminated. For example, he talked about religious and legal matters with a Samaritan woman at the well, and befriended Zacchaeus, a despised tax collector.

Paul wrote in the New Testament that 'there is neither Jew or Gentile, slave or free, but all are equal in Christ Jesus'.

However, it was Paul who also wrote that 'I do not permit a woman to teach in Church' which could justify religious discrimination against women. Pope John Paul II confirmed this when he said "the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women".

### **Islamic Attitudes:**

The Qur'an states that 'We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.' This suggests that our differences do not mean that we should fight but that we should embrace each other as equals created by Allah.

This idea of equality is shown by the wearing of the Ihram at Hajj.

Although men and women are believed to be equal it does not mean that they have the same role. The Qur'an does not mention if women can lead prayers but traditionally it has been the men who have this role and act of imams of the mosques. There are several passages in the Hadith, however, that show that Muhammad's wives led prayer and so in some Sunni sects the women can lead if the congregation consists of women alone.

In Britain Raheel Raza became the first woman to lead a mixed male/female congregation through their Friday prayers. She argues that nowhere in the Qur'an does it forbid a female imam.

### **Racism:**

This is discrimination against people on the basis of their race. Many successful movements have made it illegal to carry out racist practices. For example, MLK's work in the USA and Nelson Mandela's campaign against apartheid in South Africa. More recently there has been the movement 'Show racism the red card' to tackle racism in football.

**Christian Attitudes:** Christian teachings promote the equality of all races such as in the story of the Good Samaritan. Jesus himself healed men and women of all different races which has encouraged many different campaigns against racism. For example, the Catholic Association for Racial Justice which seeks to 'value, respect and celebrate the equality and dignity of all God's people'.

**Islamic Attitudes:** The Islamic creation story describes how God sent angels to gather different types of soil to make the first man- Adam. These soils could be said to represent different races and parts of the world that God made the first man out of. Therefore, all races are to be considered equal and valued by God.

Muhammad chose the first Muezzin (the person with the responsibility for the Adhaan – call to prayer) to be a black slave. This shows a tolerance from Muhammad to people of all different races. He also said "an Arab is not better than a non-arab...a white person is not better than a black person".

Therefore for many Muslims it has been important to challenge racism even at a risk to their own life. For example, Farid Esack, a Muslim university teacher, was part of the fight for equality between blacks and whites in South Africa.

**Inter-Faith:** Muslims and Christians have worked together through inter-faith dialogue to try to create a more just society. For example, the Christian/Muslim Forum, set up in 2006 seeks to build good relations between Muslims and Christians through dialogue, activities and education in the hope of a greater understanding between the two religions.

### **Wealth and Poverty:**

#### **Wealth is acquired (gained) through:**

- Working for a business or organisation and receiving an income
- Having your own business and making a profit
- Inheritance
- Criminal Means
- Gambling

#### **Wealth can be used by:**

Buying materialistic goods

Helping family and friends

Giving to charity (a study in 2015 found that Britain was the most generous nation in Europe).

Poverty can be separated into two categories; 1) Absolute poverty: a set standard of poverty that is universal (over all countries). It is generally considered that these are the people who struggle to have access to their basic needs ie. Water and sanitation.

2) Relative Poverty: This means you are poor relative to others in your country. For example, people who require benefits to support their income in the UK.

Even in the UK Oxfam have estimated that there are 2 million people who are malnourished and 3.7 million children living in poverty.

**Christian Attitudes:** Christianity teaches that a person should be judged by their actions and not their wealth. For example in the parable of the Sheep and Goats, those that enter heaven have helped to provide for their neighbour without any consideration of their wealth. Furthermore, the story of Lazarus and the rich man shows that it is important that we use wealth to help those who are less fortunate if we are to make it into heaven.

It is not jobs in themselves that are not allowed, but Christians are encouraged to choose sources of income that do not exploit others as God is a God who loves justice.

Many Christians are against gambling as it encourages a love of money and greed. Quakers, further state that it encourages gaining at the expense of others.

Furthermore Jesus warned that money can actually distract us from God and we could end up worshipping money rather than God. Therefore he states that it is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter heaven. However, Jesus needed money for his ministry and so money in itself is not a bad thing, it is simply how you use it that will be judged.

#### **Islamic Attitudes:**

In Islam, all wealth is a gift from God, and therefore humans are simply caretakers of something that does not permanently belong to them. How they take care of this gift is something that they will be judged on.

According to the Qur'an some jobs are forbidden such as money lenders as the Qur'an forbids interest to be added to loans.

The Quran also forbids gambling "Gambling...are but defilement from the work of Satan"

Charity is an important part of Muslim life as one of the five pillars of Islam. However, it should be given out of love and not out of duty. Muslims have the following financial obligations:

ZAKAH – 2.5% of their wealth every year. Both Shi'a and Sunni.

KHUMS – Shia Muslims are expected to pay this. A tax of 20% on their savings.

SADAQAH – Voluntary giving (does not have to be money) for both Shi'a and Sunni

ZAKAT UL FITR – An additional donation at the end of Ramadan to go to the poor. Both Shi'a and Sunni.

**ISLAMIC RELIEF** The work of Islamic Relief reflects the key values of Islam:

COMPASSION – giving support in disasters

JUSTICE – raising awareness of marginalised voices

CUSTODIANSHIP – recycling and selling donated clothes in the UK

SINCERITY – sponsoring over 30,000 orphans

EXCELLENCE – signing the Red Cross Code of Conduct., an international set of standards for working in disaster zones.

**CHRISTIAN AID** Christian Aid is a charity working in partnership with local organisations in over 60 countries to help those in need, regardless of religion, ethnicity or nationality. It has five core values:

**LOVE AND SOLIDARITY:** We are called to love and care for each other

**DIGNITY AND RESPECT:** We are convinced that every human being has innate dignity. All people are of equal worth.

**JUSTICE AND EQUALITY:** WE support work that empowers people and fights against injustice.

**COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP:** WE work with and for churches and other organisations to ensure that those in need receive support.

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND STEWARDSHIP:** WE are accountable to how we use the resources entrusted to us. WE aim to be effective stewards of the world's resources.

### **What happens if a person's belief in a human right conflicts with the law of a country?**

**We can see this happening in the world around us. Here are a few examples:**

All have protection from discrimination yet in the USA blacks were segregated from whites and not allowed access to the same areas.

All have freedom of expression yet in France there is a ban on religious symbols ie. Hijab in state schools.

All have the right to an education yet in Taliban run areas girls are not allowed to go to school.

All have freedom from torture and degrading treatment yet during the holocaust Hitler's government were responsible for the dehumanisation and murder of 6 million Jews.

We all have the right to marry and start a family but in Iran, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, homosexuality is still punishable by death and therefore gay couples do not have the right to marry.

The Bible states that "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities" which seems to mean that Christians should follow the laws of the land. However, when these laws result in injustice many religious people feel a need to stand up to these injustices based on their religious texts and examples of their religious leaders. For example, Jesus stood up for the adulterous woman who bylaw should have been stoned for her crimes.

Examples of those that have stood up against injustice are:

Malala Yousafzai

Oscar Romero

MLK

Nelson Mandela

Malcolm X