

GCSE Philosophy and Ethics – Life and Death

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

Afterlife

Life after death; the belief that existence continues after physical death.

Environmental Sustainability

Ensuring the demands placed on natural resources can be met without reducing capacity to allow all people and other forms of life to survive.

Euthanasia

Meaning 'good death' or referred to as 'mercy killing'. The act of killing or permitting the death of a person who is suffering from a serious illness.

Evolution

The process by which different living creatures are believed to have developed from earlier less complex forms.

Abortion

When a pregnancy is ended so that it does not result in the birth of a child

Quality of life

The extent to which life is meaningful and pleasurable.

Sanctity of life

The belief that life is precious, or sacred. For many religious believers, only human life holds this special status.

Soul

The spiritual aspect of a being which is non-physical and is often seen to live on after death.

How did the world come to be?

Creation Stories: Christian

For Christians it is important to recognise that God is the creator. In Genesis 1 it states that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". **Genesis 1** describes how God created all things over 6 days by speaking things into existence.

"And God said 'Let there be light' and there was light"

Genesis 2 teaches that God made Adam and Eve first, before the animals, and placed them in the Garden of Eden.

"Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken from the man" Gen 2:22

Creation Stories: Islam

There is no one creation story but the Qur'an teaches that God is the creator and sustainer of all life. Muslims believe God created the heavens and earth from formless matter over six long periods of time. He created humans out of clay moulding Adam and breathing life into him.

"Indeed, your Lord is God who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established himself above the throne."

LITERAL INTERPRETATIONS

Literalists believe that the holy texts should be understood word for word. Young earth creationists are literalists as they believe that creation happened exactly as described in sacred texts.

"All scripture is God breathed" (Bible)

LIBERAL INTERPRETATIONS

Liberalists believe that people should be free to interpret the texts to best suit them arguing that many texts are more like parables or symbolic stories. They contain meaning but do not refer to historical events.

Evolution

The traditional view of creation was that the earth had been created by God as described in the book of Genesis. However, evolutionary theory put forward by Charles Darwin suggests that the earth is actually millions of years old and that life had arisen through the slow, natural process of evolution due to natural selection and survival of the fittest.

THEISTIC GUIDED EVOLUTION

The belief that life came about through evolution but that God **guided this** process.

NATURAL EVOLUTION

The belief that life came about through evolution but that God **began this** process.

Big Bang Theory

In 1965 cosmologists published evidence to show that the universe began from the point of 'singularity' which then expanded in a hot and dense environment so that matter was formed. Most believe that the expansion will continue for billions of years to come. This theory was supported by the discovery of cosmic background radiation thought to be left over from the initial expansion at the point of 'singularity'.

Studying the origins of the universe is called cosmology.

Intelligent design

ID is the popular belief in the USA today among some Christians. It states that there exist things that are so complex and have a purpose and therefore cannot have simply developed through evolution. Michael Behe came up with the argument of **IRREDUCIBLE COMPLEXITY** using the example of a mousetrap. He claimed that the function of some things in nature require all parts to be present in the very beginning,, just like a mousetrap. Therefore it could not have developed over time through evolution but things must have been made on day one in exactly the same way as they exist today.

William Paley uses the example of the eye to demonstrate this and argued that it must have only been created through God's design.

Stewardship

Caring for the planet and managing its resources

Christianity

Christians believe that humans are given the role to be stewards of god's creation.

"You have made them the rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet"
(Psalm)

Liberal Christians argue that we are to care for the world rather than exploit it – Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden to 'cultivate and care for it'.

Evangelical Christians tend to take the Bible literally so believe humans can 'rule' by using the earth's resources for human benefit. This means having **DOMINION** over it.

'Green Christians': These are environmental activists who promote awareness of environmental issues.

Islam: Muslims believe that animals must be respected but that they are not sacred and so can be used for human benefit.

Shown in the story told by Muhammad of the prostitute who cared for the thirsty dog.

Humans are to be Khalifahs (stewards) of God's creation as he has trusted us with it.
The earth is green and beautiful. God has appointed you stewards over it (Muhammed)
There is a balance in the universe that must be maintained by mankind called FITRAH.
No change should there be in the creation of God (Qur'an)
We will be judged (AKRA) on how we treat the universe.

Sanctity of Life

The Bible says that *'In his hand is the life of every creature'* (Book of Job).

Christianity

God created mankind *'in his image'* so all life is precious and sacred. Therefore only God can take life away. We are to treat our and other people's bodies with respect 'Similarly only God can decide when life begins. Jesus showed that all life should be valued through the way he treated the lepers, sick, and despised groups of people ie. Samaritan and tax collectors. Finally, God is involved in our life from the very beginning *'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you'*.

Islam

Muslims believe all life is created by God and only he can take it away *'And do not kill the soul which God has forbidden'*. It is believed that God has a plan for each life even before each person is 'planted as a seed in your mother's womb'. Because of this any Muslim who kills another will be judged as if they have killed the whole of mankind *'whoever kills a soul...it is as if he has slain mankind entirely'*.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple' (Bible).

Abortion

CASE STUDIES: Savita Halappanavar and Gianna Jessen

Christianity

Catholics: Life is sacred and God given = **pro-life**. From the moment of conception a new life has begun so abortion is forbidden at any stage. Instead the foetus has a right to live and terminating this is a moral evil. The Didache written as early as the second century states:

You shall not kill the embryo by abortion

Church of England: Abortion is not allowed for social reasons but possibly if the mother's life is in danger and out of compassion if the woman has been raped.

The Church of England combines strong opposition to abortion with the recognition that there may be...conditions under which it may be morally preferable. (General Synod)

Islam: Most Muslims agree that only God can create and take away life and so abortion is mostly considered **HARAM** (forbidden). Abortion for purely economic reasons is forbidden in the Qur'an

Do not kill your children out of poverty

However, abortion may be allowed if the child is likely to have a serious illness or if the mother's life is at risk. Some schools of Muslim law permit abortion in the first 16 weeks while others only in the first seven. Generally, it is agreed that '**ensoulment**' takes place at 120 days after conception and from this point on abortion is mostly considered Haram unless it is the 'lesser of two evils' ie. to save the mother's life. The taking of the life of a child is a sin which will have to be answered for in front

of Allah on judgement day.

CASE STUDIES: Harold Shipman, Stephen Hawking and Charlie Gard

Euthanasia

Christianity: Most agree that it is not acceptable as they believe in the sanctity of life and those who assist in euthanasia are going against the Ten Commandments. Some believe that suffering can have a purpose and must be endured as God will not give us more than we can cope with.

God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. (The Bible)

Liberal Christians: It is acceptable to turn off life support (passive euthanasia) if the person is brain dead. They may also consider withholding treatment (passive) which prolongs a painful illness as Jesus was compassionate.

Islam: Muslims believe that no matter what state the body is in, the soul is perfect and therefore life cannot be ended early. All life is made by God so taking away life is wrong. Muslim lawyers have recently agreed that it is acceptable for a person in a coma with no hope of recovery to have their machines turned off as the life has already ended.

"He who created all things in the best way" (Qur'an)

Hospice care can provide an alternative to euthanasia

Materialism: The belief that we are merely physical bodies.

Death and the Afterlife

Dualism: The belief that we are made of two separate parts: body and soul.

Christianity: Christians believe that the soul was 'breathed' into Adam during mankind's creation. It is through our soul that we can connect to God and therefore our soul will continue to live on even though our material body dies (dualism). However, others argue that the body and soul cannot remain separated (non-dualists) and so although the soul goes to be judged immediately after death, the body will resurrect on the final day of judgement to be untied with the soul.

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die" (Jesus)

Evangelical Christians refer to heaven and hell as literal places whereas others understand it simply to mean being in or without God's presence for eternity.

Islam: Muslims believe that God made Adam from the 'earth' and so we have a physical body which is also blessed with a soul (ruh). When a child is born they have a natural belief in God (fitrah) and therefore our soul naturally seeks to follow the religion of Islam. This life is preparation for **akhirah** – the life to come. Upon death the soul is kept in **Barzakh** waiting for the day of judgement when all will be raised from the dead to stand before Allah who will judge. Muslims believe the **Mahdi** (the 'guided one' or saviour) will also come at this time to save the world. Muslims tend to have a literal view of Jannah (heaven) and Jahannam (hell).

Don't forget funeral rites in Christianity and Islam!