

**A-Level Religious Studies**

**Y11 Bridging Document**

**Part** **2**

Welcome philosophers, ethicists and theologians. This is part 2 of the bridging course aimed to get you ready for you A-Level Religious Studies course.

This section of the bridging course aims to introduce you to the first topics that we study in year 12. You have the opportunity to pre-read the content and do some research of your own. This will help you to feel confident and comfortable when you start the course; it will feel familiar.

**Introduction**

Over the two-year course we study three units: Ethics, Philosophy and Christianity. Each of the units are split into four themes. This booklet will give you an insight into the first theme of Ethics and Philosophy. Read through the information and complete the tasks. Watch the videos and make notes, bring all of your work to college when you start in September. We cannot wait to meet you and see the work that you have completed.

**Ethics:**

**Task 1:**

Read the information below and answer the questions. When reading the information make sure that you have a selection of pen colours and/or highlighters. As you read you will come across quotes and key information that need to be highlighted. There may be words or concepts that you do not understand, underline these and search for them on the internet. When you have a definition, annotate the information.

**Divine Command Theory**

* Divine Command Theory (a.k.a. Theological Voluntarism) is a religious ethic that believes that an action's status as morally good or bad is completely commanded by God e.g. stealing is only seen as morally bad because God commanded it that way.
* Divine Command Theory is a meta-ethical theory. This simply means that this theory will attempt to tell us the nature of morality i.e. it will answer questions like "What is goodness?" and "How can we tell what is good from what is bad?". Divine Command Theory will answer these questions by telling us that ‘goodness’ is simply what God commands.

**Divine Command Theory: The Ethic**

To help you understand Divine Command Theory it has been broken into 4 sections:

**i. God as the origin and regulator of morality**

* Divine Command Theorists believe that what is moral is determined by what God (the divine) commands. Therefore, Divine Command Theory believes that morality is ultimately completely dependent upon the commands of [God](http://www.iep.utm.edu/god-west/). One supporter of Divine Command Theory is William Frankena, he stated: **“the standard of right and wrong is the will … of God.”**
* The specific content of these divine commands varies according to different particular religions; however, all versions of the theory hold in common the claim that morality, and thus human moral obligations, ultimately depend upon God. As the Rev John Robinson states: **“They (religious laws) come down direct from heaven, and are eternally valid”**
* Generally, those who accept Divine Command ethics look to sacred texts to ascertain God’s commands.
* For example, in Christianity God’s moral commands can be found in the Bible e.g. the Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) can be found in Exodus 20 of the Bible. One of the Ten Commandments is ‘You shall not murder’. Therefore, humanity knows that murder is morally wrong because God has commanded this.

**ii. Right and wrong as objective truths based on God’s will**

* One result of the above is that right and wrong (good and bad) are objective truths.
* This means that morality (right and wrong) are not influenced by humanities personal feelings, opinions or reasoning’s about what is right or wrong e.g. it does not matter what humanity thinks about the issue of stealing; it is wrong because God has commanded it that way.
* Therefore, God’s will alone decides what is right and wrong and human feelings etc on morality has no authority, God has total authority. As **William Ockham** stated in the Middle Ages: **“With Him (God) a thing becomes right solely because He wants it so.”**

**iii. Moral Goodness is achieved by complying with divine command**

* Therefore, if a person wishes to be moral the only way to do this is to follow God’s commands i.e. moral obligation consists purely in been obedient to God’s commands.
* The Qur’an is full of teachings that consist of God asserting His moral law e.g. in terms of adultery Qur’an 17:32 states: **‘And go not nigh to fornication; surely it is an indecency and an evil way.’”** Therefore, according to Islam you cannot be morally good if you are committing adultery.
* Some followers of Christianity, Judaism and Islam believe that not following God’s Divine commands can lead to a moral agent facing God’s wrath e.g. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden for not following God’s command.
* The idea that moral goodness is achieved by following divine commands is strongly supported in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy (13:18). It states: **“the Lord your God will be merciful if you listen and keep to all his commands.”**

**iv. Divine command as a requirement of God’s omnipotence**

* Supporters of Divine Command Theory justify the theory by stating that it is a natural consequence of God’s omnipotence (God is all-powerful). An omnipotent God by definition must have complete power over everything, including morality.
* On a basic level if God did not have complete power over morality this would suggest that God is not all-powerful. This is because if God did not control morality, ‘something else’ must control what is right and wrong. This would make this ‘something else’ more powerful than God, destroying God’s omnipotence. Therefore, God has to control morality, or He wouldn’t be omnipotent.
* Therefore, if a religious believer accepts God is omnipotent, they must also have to accepts the principles of Divine Command Theory i.e. God is the creator of morality

**Divine Command Theorist: Robert Adams**

* Over the centuries there have been many attempts to explain Divine Command Theory. However, your syllabus only wishes you to only consider **Robert Adams (1937 - …).** Hisversion of Divine Command Theory is called the ‘**Modified Divine Command Theory**’.
* Adams’ starts by restating the normal Divine Command Theory (as you’ve already seen above) e.g. ‘X’ is wrong because God has commanded ‘X’ to be wrong, therefore it is God that commands moral truths e.g. God commands that stealing is wrong and therefore it is an eternal and universal moral truth that stealing is wrong; thus, it becomes our religious duty not to steal.
* However, there is a problem with this (called the **Euthyphro Dilemma,** as you will see in the criticisms below). Basically, what happens if God were to command that ‘X’ is moral when human logic would conclude ‘X’ is immoral. Therefore, a seemingly immoral act would then become good (a moral truth) and humanities duty would be to follow it.
* For example, if God commanded that murder was good, then Divine Command Theory would have to concede that this was a moral truth, even though human logic would conclude murder is wrong. Therefore, Divine Command Theory allows God to command cruelty.
* Adam’s concedes that it is logically possible for God to command cruelty because He is omnipotent (God can do anything). However, Adams’ claims that it would be unthinkable for God to do this because of His omnibenevolent (all-loving) nature.
* Adams’ argues that God’s omnibenevolent nature will be rooted in the moral commands He has given. Therefore, it would be impossible for God to command anything that is cruel because this would counter His omnibenevolent nature. Therefore, Adams states: **“Any action is ethically wrong if and only if it is contrary to the commands of a loving God.”** The emphasis is on the word ‘loving’
* Thus, if cruelty appeared to be divinely commanded, Adams argues that this cannot be a true command of God.

**Challenges to Divine Command Theory**

There are 3 major challenges to the Divine Command Theory:

**1. The Euthyphro Dilemma**

* The [Euthyphro dilemma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euthyphro_dilemma) was proposed by Ancient Greek philosopher [Plato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plato) (through his character ‘Euthyphro’).
* You’ve seen this argument above: what if God were to command that ‘X’ is moral when human logic would conclude ‘X’ is immoral. For example, if God commands that murder was moral, then Divine Command Theory would have to concede that this was a moral truth. Therefore, ultimately Divine Command Theory allows God to command cruelty.

**2. The Arbitrariness Problem**

* The arbitrariness problem proposes that Divine Command Theory appears to render the content of morality arbitrary (arbitrary means based on random choice or personal whim, rather than any reason or ethical system).
* If Divine Command Theory is true, the problem states, then what is good and what bad depends on nothing more than God’s whim. Even if they are God’s whims, this is not an adequate foundation for universal morality.

**3. The Pluralism Objection**

* In a world of [religious pluralism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_pluralism) (many different religions) it is impossible to know which god's (or religion's) commands should be followed. Especially because some religious commands seem to contradict other religious commands, making it impossible to accept all of them. For example, in Islam it is seen that God commands that divorce is morally acceptable but in Christianity it is not.
* Moreover, even if a person believes that one religion is correct, there remains a plurality (lots) of understandings within specific religious traditions, with respect to what God commands us to do e.g. Catholic Christians generally believe that God commands contraception is wrong, but Protestant Christians generally believe God does not command this.

**Questions**

1. What is this theory also known as?
2. What is the basic concept of this ethical theory?
3. What does a meta-ethical theory tell us?
4. Explain the reverend John Robinson’s view of ethics
5. What is the decalogue?
6. Good and bad are described as objective truths, what does this mean?
7. What support is there from religious texts?
8. Why does God need to control morality in order to remain omnipotent?
9. What is Robert Adams’ theory called?
10. Who wrote the Euthyphro dilemma?
11. What is the Euthyphro dilemma?
12. How does Robert Adams overcome this issue?
13. What is the arbitrariness problem?
14. What is religious pluralism?
15. Why is this a problem for divine command theory?

**Task 2:**

Watch the following videos and make notes underneath that enhance the information that you have already been given. The guy in the video talks very fast but he knows his stuff; you may need to watch it a couple of times.

* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wRHBwxC8b8I>

**Task 3:**

In an exam you have to answer two types of question. One type of question wants you to write everything that you know and the other type requires you to write ‘for’ and ‘against’ arguments. The table below is an essay plan, using the information from task 2 complete the table as best you can.

|  |
| --- |
| **‘Good is whatever God decides it is’ evaluate this view** |
| Arguments that **agree** with the statement | Arguments that **disagree** with the statement |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

**Philosophy: The Teleological Argument**

**Task 1:**

The following words are necessary to know for your A-level course. Learn the words and the definition. Learn them in the same style that you were taught to learn your primary school spellings; LOOK, COVER, WRITE, CHECK.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **KEYWORD** | **DEFINITION** |
| telos (Greek) | The end purpose |
| purpose | Each part of the world is important and there is a reason for its existence |
| aesthetic Value | The world is full of beauty which has no practical function (said Tennant) |
| regularity | The universe is predictable e.g movement of the planets (Aquinas / Paley) |
| sustaining human life | The world has many features which help sustain human life (Tennant: Anthropic argument) |
| analogy | A way of comparing a real-life scenario to something the audience would better understand. Paley does this to compare features of the universe to things that humans create. |
| inductive argument | An argument which can lead to a number of different conclusions, which are probable but not proof. |
| a posteriori | After experience, derived from observed facts. We can gather evidence by using our senses. |

**Task 2:**

Read the passage and then use this new information to answer the questions below. When reading through the information is it useful to have a couple of highlighters and a couple of coloured pens. Make yourself a key and highlight quotes and key information. There will be information that you do not understand or perhaps individual words that you do not know, use a coloured pen to underline these. You can search for the definition online and add the definition as an annotation.

**Teleological Arguments**

* **The teleological argument is an inductive, a posteriori argument (look back to part 1 for the definitions of these keywords)**
* There are **two** types of inductive argument, for the existence of God, which you will study:
* Cosmological Arguments
* Teleological Arguments- this is the one we will focus on for this task.

**The Teleological Argument**

**Background**

* The teleological argument is based on ‘**DESIGN**’ and is also known as the ‘Design Argument’ for God’s existence.
* The basic teleological argument states that complex things, like watches, need designers because they are too intricate. The world is also complex and therefore it too needs a designer e.g. God, therefore God exists.
* The teleological Argument is technically **two** slightly different arguments:
1. **Design Qua Regularity:** This version generally argues that the world/universe is too ordered/regulated to have come about by chance, therefore it must have a designer – that designer is God. We refer to this using the Latin ‘Design Qua Regularity’.
2. **Design Qua Purpose** – The second type of teleological argument states that objects, like eyes, have too specific a purpose to have come about by chance, therefore it must have a designer – that designer is God.
* The syllabus wants you to look at 3 Philosophers who have created Teleological Arguments:
* An old version by **St. Thomas Aquinas** (1225–1274) - **Design Qua Regularity**
* A moderately old argument by **William Paley** (1743-1805) - **Design Qua Purpose**
* A modern(ish) version by **F.R. Tennant** (1866-1957). **Design Qua Regularity and Design qua Purpose**

**Version 1: Aquinas’ Teleological Argument (Design Qua Regularity)**

* Aquinas’ teleological argument is the fifth of his five ways to prove God exists: from his book ‘Summa Theologica’. This is a **‘Design Qua Regularity’** teleological argument.
* Aquinas teleological theory observed (a-posteriori) that all final purposes in universe seem to have been very carefully designed to support the development and growth of human life. For example (Aquinas’ own examples): it rains so we have enough to drink and the seasons change so that we can grow food.
* Therefore, Aquinas’ argument is that non-intelligent entities in the universe (like trees, plants and clouds) act in a way to support human life. However, they cannot choose to produce this support for human life, thus it requires an intelligent being to bring this final purpose (telos in Greek). For Aquinas this is God.
* Therefore, God must exist to design nature so that it supports human life i.e. God must exist to govern the laws of nature in the universe. As Aquinas states: **“Whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it is directed by some intelligent being.”**
* Aquinas used an analogy to illustrate his point. He stated: **“An arrow is directed towards a target by an archer; just as an intelligent being exists whom directs/orders all-natural things.”** What Aquinas means by this is that an arrow cannot fire itself towards the target; it needs someone to direct it i.e. an archer. In the same way nature cannot direct itself to support human life it too needs someone to direct it i.e. God.

**Version 2: Paley’s Teleological Argument (Design Qua Purpose)**

**Background**

* Paley wrote his teleological argument in his 1802 book: ‘Natural Theology’.
* This is the most famous teleological argument and is often referred to as the ‘Watch Analogy’. The watch analogy is a ‘Design Qua Purpose’.
* Paley was heavily influenced by the great Roman, first century BCE, Philosopher Cicero. Cicero had argued: **“When you see a sundial you see that it tells the time by design and not by chance. How then can you imagine that the universe as a whole is devoid of purpose and intelligence, when it embraces everything?”**

**Paley’s Watch Analogy**

* Paley put forward his teleological argument for the existence of God in the form of a simple analogy.
* If we were to come across a stone, whilst out walking, we could conclude that it was formed as a result of random natural events (the wind, rain etc).
* However, if we were to come across a watch we could not come to the same conclusion as the stone. This is because the watch has a set of complex parts that are fitted together for the specific purpose of telling the time. Therefore, it cannot have come into existence by just random natural events (chance). Paley adds that anybody with intelligence would, therefore, have to conclude the watch had a designer (in this case a watchmaker).
* Paley states we would even have to come to this conclusion even if we dd not know what the watch was for or even if it did not work properly.
* Paley then extends his analogy to the world around us. He argues, like the watch, the world is complex and also appears to have been designed with the specific purpose i.e. supporting the development and growth of human life. Therefore, just like the watch, our world must also have a designer: in the case God.
* Paley adds, like the watch, this would still be the case if we were unsure what the worlds purpose is or even if the world does not completely work properly (he did this to address the natural evil in the world: like volcanoes)
* Paley furthered his analogy by also giving several examples to illustrate the same point. Two of which are below:
* He firstly uses the example of the eye and the way in which it is adapted for sight. Its various parts co-operate in complex ways to produce sight. He believed that the eye was designed for the specific purpose of seeing. Therefore, this complex design suggests an intelligent designer (God).
* Secondly, Paley discusses the design of human teeth. He states: **“At birth, every part of the human mouth is perfectly formed but the design is so perfect that nature does not permit teeth to be formed until a time when the baby has usually finished its dependence upon the mother’s milk.”** This is yet more evidence for Paley that there is an intelligent designing mind behind creation: God.
* Such evidence of complex design for specific purposes, Paley argued, could only be the result of an 'intelligent designing creator', which for Paley was God.

**Version 3: Tennant’s Teleological Arguments**

* Frederick Tennant put forward two modern(ish) teleological arguments: the ‘Anthropic Principle’ and the ‘Aesthetic Principle’
* Both principles take into account modern scientific theories: such as the ‘theory of evolution’ and the ‘Big Bang’ theory. Both of these scientific theories have been used as criticisms of Inductive Arguments, like the teleological argument. (NOTE: explanations of both of these scientific theories appear in the next section - ‘Challenges to Inductive Arguments’)

**Anthropic Principle (Design Qua Regularity)**

**Background:**

* Though Tennant did not use the term ‘Anthropic Principle’ in his 1928 book (‘Philosophical Theology’) he suggested a set of arguments that are now considered as: ‘Anthropic Principles’.
* Definition: the term ‘Anthropic’ means ‘related to being human’,
* Therefore, Anthropic Principles are evidences from humanity that suggest the world/universe was created by an intelligent designer (i.e. God).

**Tennant’s Anthropic Principle:**

* Firstly, Tennant believed that there must be an intelligent designer behind the universe. This is because the chances of the Big Bang and Evolution randomly creating a stable universe (for human life to develop) are so remote.
* For example: Martin Rees calculated the chances of a stable universe occurring from a random Big Bang were 10 to the power of 60 (basically 10 with 60 zeros at the end) - the equivalent of a marksman hitting a one-inch target from twenty billion light years away!!
* Therefore, Tennant believed the universe would be in chaos if there was no intelligent designer.
* Tennant’s observations clearly illustrated that the universe was not in chaos. He highlighted three such ‘Anthropic Principles’ to suggests that the world is not in chaos:
* **Intelligent Order:** the universe is so stable that it can be empirically analysed and fixed laws of nature can be deduced e.g. Newton’s Laws of Motion etc
* **Sustained Life:** the stable natural world, around us, provides precisely the right things that are needed to sustain human life e.g. the water cycle, the mix of chemicals in the air etc
* **Intelligent Progression:** the universe is so stable that a species (humanity) has been able to intellectually develop, to such an extent, that it can even observe and analyse the universe it exists in.
* For Tennant these Anthropic Principles clearly illustrates that the universe is not in chaos but is a stable entity. As the changes of a random Big Bang and evolution creating this are remote; it is clear evidence that the universes must be the result of an intelligent designer: God. Therefore, God must exist.

**Aesthetic Principle (Design Qua Purpose)**

* Tennant’s ‘Aesthetic Principle’ states that humans possess the ability to appreciate the beauty of their surroundings. Humanity can enjoy beauty in a variety of forms: art, landscapes, music, literature, poetry etc. Humanity, alone, is the only species on the planet that has this appreciation.
* However, such an appreciation of beauty is not a survival instinct. Darwin’s evolution theory (see later notes) states that humans developed from the ‘survival of the fittest’ i.e. only traits that helped humans survive continued, in humanity, and those that did not died away.
* However, the appreciation of beauty is not a human survival tool. As Tennant argues: **“Beauty seems to be superfluous and has little survival value…”** Therefore, Tennant argues that this appreciation of beauty must have been designed in humanity from another source, other than evolution.
* This source, according to Tennant, must be an intelligent designer i.e. God. This is because, according to Tennant, an omnibenevolent God not only wanted us to life and understand the stable universe, but to also enjoy it. Therefore, God exists

**Questions:**

1. What is the teleological argument also known as?
2. Inductive or deductive?
3. A priori or a posteriori?
4. Explain what design qua regularity means
5. Explain what design qua purpose means
6. Which type is Aquinas’ argument?
7. What is his example of things that support human life?
8. What is his famous analogy?
9. When did Paley write his book?
10. What was it called?
11. What type of argument is his? Design qua\_\_\_\_
12. What does he come across first?
13. Why could it have been there forever?
14. What does he then see?
15. Why does it look like it has not lain there forever?
16. What does he assume about the watch?
17. How does he extend this to the world? The world is also…
18. Therefore the world has…
19. Example 1 from the world
20. Example 2 from the world

**Task 3:**

For this task you will need to watch the videos that can be found at the link below. When you have watched these videos you need to create a mind-map or a poster.

* McMillanREvis part 1: This video is an introduction to the Teleological arguments and its main proponents <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foeM6vXZCys>
* McMillanREvis part 2: This video is an in depth look at the arguments put forward by Paley and Tennant. It also teaches you about scholars who criticise their arguments such as Hume. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NGj6Zk9Wj0>