

RELIGIOUS
STUDIES A
REVISION
NOTES

FOR EDEXCEL GCSE (9-1)
SIMPLE, CLEAR & MEMORABLE

PAPER 3
PHILOSOPHY & ETHICS

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USING THIS BOOK

1.1 THIS IS A SPECIFICATION CHAPTER

1.1.1 This is a specification subchapter

“This is a source of wisdom and authority” – *source ref.*

1 ARGUMENTS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

1.1 Revelation as proof of the existence of God

- Significance of Jesus Christ as the culmination of God's revelation:
 - it is God's final revelation to humankind
 - it involves God physically coming down to Earth
 - God sacrificed his Son for this revelation
- What the revelation of Jesus Christ shows about the nature of God:
 - **loving:** sacrificed his only Son for our salvation
 - **forgiving:** Jesus forgave soldiers who mocked him
 - **powerful:** Jesus healed lepers, the blind, the paralysed, and even the dead

“in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son” – *Hebrews 1*

“having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs” – *Hebrews 1*

Arguments for the Existence of God

1.2 Visions as proof of the existence of God

- Nature of visions:
 - visions are a form of private revelation
 - a vision is only approved if it does not contradict any Church teachings
- Importance of visions:
 - a form of divine communication between God and mankind
 - may contain messages to help us make the right decisions
 - can stimulate or strengthen one's faith
 - prove that God exists

- Examples of visions:

Biblical	Non-biblical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- God promised Abraham he will protect and reward him “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great” – <i>Genesis 15</i>- During the transfiguration of Jesus, Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus and some of his disciples “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him” – <i>Matthew 17</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- St Joan of Arc had visions of St Michael, St Catherine, and St Margaret in 1424:- She was instructed to force the English out of her French territory.- After being a successful military soldier, the English captured her and burnt her at the stake aged 19.

- Why visions might lead to belief in God:
 - powerful experiences which can strengthen faith
 - reveal God's loving nature
 - prove existence of God
- Athiests and Humanists believe that visions are hallucinations and do not provide proof that God exists due to:
 - lack of evidence
 - can be hallucinations
 - have nothing to do with God even if they do happen
- In response, Catholics argue:
 - visions are a form of communication from God to humanity
 - historically, visions have predicted the future, e.g. Our Lady of Fatima's Secrets and the shooting of Pope Benedict XVI
 - as there are visions recorded in the Bible, we still expect them to happen

1.3 Miracles as proof of the existence of God

- Nature of miracles:
 - miracles are acts which break the laws of science
 - a lot of evidence is required for the Church to verify a miracle has taken place
- Importance of miracles:
 - show how powerful (omnipotent) God is
 - can stimulate or strengthen one's faith
 - prove that God exists, as nobody is powerful enough

- Examples of miracles:

Biblical	Non-biblical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus healed the government official's dying son "Jesus said to him, 'Go; your son will live'" – <i>John 4</i> - Moses parted the Red Sea "the waters were divided" – <i>Exodus 14</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Virgin Mary appeared to St Bernadette in Lourdes in 1858: - St Bernadette dug out a spring, and water flows out of this spring to this day

- Why miracles might lead to belief in God:
 - powerful experience which can strengthen faith
 - healing miracles reveal God's powerful and loving nature
 - prove existence of God due to no scientific explanation
- Athiests and Humanists believe that miracles can be scientifically explained and provide no proof that God exists due to:
 - coincidences
 - limited scientific knowledge
 - have nothing to do with God, even if they do happen
- In response, Catholics argue:
 - miracles cannot be scientifically explained
 - nobody has the power to perform miracles except God
 - miracles are necessary for people to believe in God

"Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe" – *John 4*

Arguments for the Existence of God

1.4 Catholic attitudes towards religious experiences and its use as a philosophical argument for the existence of God

- A religious experience is a feeling of the presence of God in the world.
- The Church does not approve all religious experiences because the Church is not expecting another revelation of God, as explained in CCC 66.
“no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ” – CCC 66
- Atheists and Humanists believe that religious experiences do not prove that God exists due to:
 - **laws of nature:** such experiences claim to break these (David Hume)
 - **lack of evidence:** no examinable proof
 - **use of stimulants:** e.g. drugs and alcohol cause hallucinations
 - **hallucinations:** could be mistaken for visions
 - **wish fulfilment:** delusions/dreams (Sigmund Freud)
- In response, Catholics argue:
 - nothing proves that a religious experience did not happen
 - the Church conducts deep investigations into religious experiences
 - God is bound to break the laws of nature
“God created the heavens and the earth” – Genesis 1

1.5 Design argument

- The Teleological Argument states that as the world is designed, it must have a designer. Since only God is omniscient/omnipotent enough to design the world, he must exist.
- Strengths of the argument as seen by Catholics:
 - **based on daily observations:** we see the design of the world around us
 - **complements Christian views of God:** omnipotence/omniscience
 - **compatible with scientific evidence:** DNA, cells etc. must have been designed
- What the teleological argument shows about the nature of God for Catholics:
 - **omnipotence:** power to create the universe out of nothing (ex nihilo)
 - **omniscience:** knowledge of how exactly to create the world and life on Earth
 - **benevolent:** God created enough resources for humans to use to survive

“his invisible qualities [...] have been clearly seen; they are perceived in the things that God has made” – CCC 66

- Atheists and humanists believe the teleological argument is invalid due to:
 - **evolution:** Charles Darwin’s theory that bacteria evolved into larger organisms
 - **evil and suffering:** why would God design the world to have evil?
 - **no order in the world:** Richard Dawkins mentioned natural disasters as a lack of order in the universe

“[religion] teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding the world”
– *Richard Dawkins*

- In response, Catholics argue:
 - **God directed evolution:** it may simply be how God created humans
 - **humans learn from evil/suffering:** everything is a lesson
 - **science supports concept of order,** e.g. food chains, ecosystems, land/sea etc.

Arguments for the Existence of God

1.6 Cosmological argument

- The Cosmological Argument states that the universe exists as an effect of a cause, and only God is omnipotent that he can cause the universe to exist.
- Strengths of the argument as seen by Catholics:
 - **based on daily observations:** we can see that everything has a cause in life
 - **cannot be an infinite regression:** there must be a primary cause
 - **compatible with scientific evidence:** Pope Francis says God caused the Big Bang

St Thomas Aquinas' First Three Ways of showing God's existence:

- **way of motion:** nothing can move without being moved, so there must be an unmoved primary mover, God
 - **way of causation:** nothing can create itself, so God must be the first cause for objects to exist
 - **way of contingency:** objects do not have to exist, so a necessary being (God) has to make a contingent object exist
- Nature and importance of what the cosmological argument shows about the nature of God:
 - **omnipotence:** only God can be the primary mover, causer and contingent being
 - this compliments the Christian belief that God has limitless power
 - **omniscience:** only God knows how to create a universe out of nothing (ex nihilo)
 - this compliments the Big Bang Theory (which God may have started)
 - it also compliments the Christian belief that God is all-knowing
 - Atheists and Humanists believe the cosmological argument is invalid due to:
 - **no need for a cause:** objects need a cause, but the universe is different so doesn't
 - **impossibility of total explanation:** we should just accept existence as a fact
 - **primary cause doesn't have to be God:** Big Bang was a natural occurrence
 - In response, Catholics argue:
 - **God is the cause** of the universe; all we need is to prove it
 - **a total explanation is possible** if there is no infinite regression of causes
 - **no other omnipotent being:** only God has the power to cause the universe to exist

1.7 Issues raised by the existence of suffering and God as all-loving

- Issues raised by the existence of evil and suffering: (Inconsistent Triad)
 - **if God is omnipotent**, he can eliminate suffering
 - **if God is omniscient**, he knows that we have suffered, are suffering and will suffer
 - **if God is benevolent**, he would not want us to suffer

“Does the clay say to him who fashions it, ‘What are you making?’” – Isaiah 45

Suffering does not disprove God’s existence	Suffering disproves God’s existence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - we should not question God’s creation - God will punish evildoers - without evil we will not know what is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - if God was omnipotent - if God was omniscient (<i>Inconsistent Triad</i>) - if God was benevolent

Arguments for the Existence of God

1.8 The solutions offered to the problem of suffering and a loving and righteous God within Catholicism

- Biblical responses:
 - **Psalms:**
 - God's omnipotence, omniscience and benevolence are made clear
 - suffering is a way to learn what is good
 - **"I will praise thee with an upright heart, when I learn thy righteous ordinances" – Psalm 119**
 - **Job:**
 - God allows Job to be tested and tormented by Satan
 - faith gave Job strength during the difficult time
- Theoretical responses:
 - **free will:**
 - St Augustine taught that evil exists due to the misuse of free will
 - the reward for using free will to do good is entry to heaven
 - **a way for humans to develop:**
 - humans are not created perfect but in God's image, so must try to be like God
 - suffering allows humans to learn what is right and wrong
- Practical responses:
 - **prayer:** prayers of intercession unite sufferers in the hope of God helping them
 - **charity:** helping others can help reduce suffering for them
- Divergent Christian understandings of solving the problem of evil and suffering:
 - salvation is a result of Jesus' suffering
 - for many, suffering remains a mystery
 - some Christians convert to atheism as a result

2 RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS ON RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

2.1 The importance and purpose of marriage for Catholics

- Catholic teachings about marriage:
 - **loving:** a relationship of love and faithfulness
 - **lifelong:** a covenant valid until death
 - **exclusive:** commitment to only one partner
 - **fruitful:** an opportunity to bear children

Not Just Good, But Beautiful by Pope Francis

→ reminds Catholics that marriage is the cornerstone of healthy families, communities and societies

- Divergent Christian and non-religious attitudes to the importance of marriage in society:
 - **sanctity of marriage:** some believe marriage is holy as it is administered by the Church, but atheists and Humanists do not follow this belief
 - **lack of importance:** atheists and humanists tend not to marry, only cohabit
 - **cohabitation:** the most common family, where couples live together
- Catholic responses to these attitudes:
 - **sanctity of marriage:** Catholics believe marriage is a holy covenant which cannot be broken by any of the two parties
 - **lack of importance:** Matrimony is a Catholic sacrament performed in the Church
 - **cohabitation:** Catholics discourage this as it tempts couples to have premarital sex

Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

2.2 Catholic teaching about the importance of sexual relationships

- The Catholic Church teaches that sexual relationships are:
 - **marital:** only married heterosexual couples should have sex
| **“Sexuality is ordered to the conjugal love of man and woman” – CCC 2360**
 - **unitive:** sex unites a couple with mutual love
| **“man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts”**
| – CCC 2361
 - **procreative:** sex is an opportunity to reproduce
| **“the capacity to love and to procreate” – CCC 2332**
- Catholic teachings about sexual relationships outside marriage:
 - sex should be reserved for marriage
 - premarital sex is a sin
 - lust, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution and rape are sins
(as detailed in CCC 2351-56)
| **“All the baptized are called to chastity” – CCC 2348**
- Catholic teachings about homosexuality:
 - homosexual acts are a form of moral corruption and wickedness
| **“[Scripture] presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity” – CCC 2357**
 - as homosexuals cannot procreate, this violates natural law
| **“They are contrary to the natural law” – CCC 2357**
 - it is made clear that God does not favour homosexuals
| **“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination”**
| – *Leviticus 18*
 - those who commit homosexual acts should not be allowed amongst others
| **“For whoever shall do any of these abominations, the persons that do them shall be cut off from among their people” – Leviticus 18**
- Divergent attitudes to sexual relationships outside marriage and homosexuality:
 - the **Church of England permits cohabitation**
 - **atheists and Humanists think you can have sex whenever you like**
 - **homosexual** sexual relationships are **permitted by law**
 - the **Church of England only allows a ‘service of thanks’** rather than a full marriage ceremony

2.3 Catholic teaching about the purpose and importance of the family

- Catholic teachings about the purpose and importance of family:
 - **procreation:** marriage is the starting point of a sexual relationship for procreation
 - **security and education of children:** a family is a comforting environment to raise children in a Catholic context

Type of family	Definition	Catholic response
nuclear	a couple and their dependent children as a basic unit of society	the favoured type of family
single parent	caused by the separation or loss of a parent	only acceptable following the unfortunate loss of one partner
same-sex	a homosexual pair adopts a child	strictly forbidden due to likelihood of homosexual acts occurring
extended	grandparents, aunts, uncles etc. living together or in close range	accepted as it unites a collection of hierarchal families
blended	two families join following the marriage of partners who have left their previous partners	generally not acceptable as it is caused by divorce, which is usually not permitted in the Church

“parents must trustingly and courageously train their children in the essential values of human life” – *Familiaris Consortio* 37 (by Pope John Paul II)

“the Church reaffirms her practice, which is based upon Sacred Scripture, of not admitting to Eucharistic Communion divorced persons who have remarried”
– *Familiaris Consortio* 84 (by Pope John Paul II)

“The family is, so to speak, the domestic church” – *Lumen Gentium* 11

Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

2.4 Support for the family in the local Catholic parish

- How and why the local parish tries to support families:
 - **family worship:** Family Masses encourage families to attend Mass together
 - **sacraments:** Baptism, Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Marriage programmes for both children and parents
 - **classes for parents:** usually before baptism or marriage to teach them how to be good Catholic parents
 - **groups for children:** for both socialising and regular Catechism in the Church
 - **counselling:** volunteers talk couples through problems in the family

“it is a privileged place for the catechesis of children and parents” – CCC 2226

Family Group Movement

→ a movement in Christian Churches to encourage families to visit one another and promote Gospel values in doing so

- Importance of support of local parish for Catholic families today:
 - encourages **fluency within families**
 - encourages **unity between families**

2.5 Catholic teaching on family planning and the regulation of births

- Catholic teachings on artificial contraception and natural family planning:
 - **artificial contraception:**
 - separates unitive and procreative aspects of sex
 - can tempt people to be unfaithful

“could open wide the way for marital infidelity”
– *Humanae Vitae* 17 (by Pope Paul VI)
 - **natural family planning:**
 - sex should be avoided at peak fertility and during menstruation
 - the male climax should always lead to an opportunity for procreation

“married people may then take advantage of the natural cycles”
– *Humanae Vitae* 16 (by Pope Paul VI)
- Divergent attitudes to family planning:
 - some **Protestants accept artificial methods to control the spread of STDs**
 - some **Christians** apply ethical theories such as **situation ethics** to decide
 - **atheists and Humanists believe artificial contraception can be used** at all times

Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

2.6 Catholic teaching about divorce, annulment and remarriage

Process	Definition	Catholic response	Other views
divorce	ending of a legal marriage by a court	only a civil separation is allowed for Catholics	allowed
	“Divorce is a grave offense against the natural law” – CCC 2384		other Christians say they should apply situation ethics to decide if it is right to do so
annulment	declaration that a marriage was never valid due to dishonesty, e.g. about known infertility or previous relationships	allowed as long as a legal divorce is obtained	
remarriage	one or both people getting married have been married before	only allowed if your partner dies	

2.7 Catholic teaching about the equality of men and women in the family

- Catholic teachings about the role of men and women in the family:
 - both should help to raise their children in a Catholic context
 - they should love each other in order to keep the family together
 - whichever works and whichever stays home, both types of work are equal (the Catholic Church teaches of the dignity of work in the home)
- “It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life”**
– CCC 2207
- Divergent Christian teachings and attitudes:
 - some Christians say men and women should formally work equally
 - some Christians encourage men to work less and spend more time with the family

Religious Teachings on Relationships and Families in the 21st Century

2.8 Catholic teachings about gender prejudice and discrimination

“There exists also *sinful inequalities* that affect millions of men and women”
– CCC 1938

Problem	Definition	Catholic opposition
gender prejudice	believing one gender is superior to another	in Pope John Paul II's <i>Theology of the Body</i> talk he says the attraction between man and woman is mutual and that this is the basis of life – this means men and women are equal in the context of the body in Genesis, both Adam and Eve sinned and were punished, so they are equal
discrimination	treating people less favourably due to gender, ethnicity, class etc.	the Bible teaches us to “ <i>love one another</i> ” and this means not to discriminate against innocent people

- Divergent Christian attitudes to gender differences:
 - **role of women in the Church:** Catholics only allow male priests as all of Jesus' disciples were male, but the Church of England allows female clergy
 - **prejudice and discrimination:** generally all Churches do not allow this

RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

PAPER 3 – PHILOSOPHY & ETHICS

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