<u>**Task 1: What is ethics?**</u>

Answer the questions below.

A.   What is ethics? Write a short response using your own ideas:

B.   Beware of 'ethical fallacies' - Studying ethics is not simply having an opinion about ethical issues: it is complex system of theories and justifications or criticisms of these. Ethics is the philosophical study of good and bad/ right and wrong. People often do not have logical reasons for what they believe about ethical issues but you will need to learn how to rationally and logically justify any ethical statement.

See how you justify your views by completing the statement: I believe abortion IS/ IS NOT morally wrong. My reasons for believing this are:

The following are a list of examples of **how not to** arrive at a belief (these are called fallacies). **Look at your response to the statement above and tick any fallacies you made when justifying your decision**:

- A belief based on **peer-pressure, herd mentality, xenophobia** (fear of the strange). EG: *'most people oppose euthanasia, so it's probably wrong.'*
- A belief simply based on **sympathy**. EG: *'It's horrible to use those poor apes for drug testing, so I'm against it.'*
- An argument **based on the assumptions that there are fewer alternatives than there** actually are. EG: *'It's either euthanasia or a horrible, slow, painful death.'*
- An argument based on **only the positive part** of the story. EG: *'Animal research has saved lots of lives, so I'm for it.'*
- Basing arguments on a **misrepresentative sample**. EG: *'my teachers agree with euthanasia, therefore, most adults probably think it is right.'*
- Basing arguments on **exaggeration**. EG: *'We owe all our medical advances to animal testing, so I think it's a good thing.'*
- The **slippery slope** argument. EG: *'If we legalise euthanasia, it will inevitably lead to killing all old people.'*
- An argument based on **tradition**. EG: *'We've done fine without euthanasia until now, we shouldn't change it.'*

- **C. Take the moral parsimony test:** Read the results carefully.
  http://www.philosophyexperiments.com/moralityplay/Default.aspx

  (You might also wish to complete the 'In the face of death' test too for another ethical experiment)

  Make a list of the factors you considered when making an ethical decision:
- EG Consequences

  Why does the test argue it is better to limit your moral parsimony (the number of factors you use to make an ethical decision)?

TASK 2: Ethical theory

So, if we are not supposed to commit ethical fallacies, and we are encouraged to limit our moral parsimony how can we make ethical decisions and judgements about right or wrong? The answer is through developing ethical theories which can be applied to situations and can be justified.

Read the following explanation of absolutism and relativism and then write a definition of each branch of ethical theory and explain which one you find most convincing and why.

"The Absolutist theory is the theory that certain things are right or wrong from an objective point of view and cannot change according to culture. Certain actions are intrinsically right or wrong, which means they are right or wrong in themselves. This is also known as deontological.

The relativist theory is the theory that there are no universally valid moral principles. All principles and values are relative to a particular culture or age. Ethical relativism means that there is no such thing as good "in itself", but if an action seems good to you and bad to me, that is it, and there is no objective basis for us to discover the truth. This theory is also known as teleological.

An example of an absolutist ethical system would be if a single mother with a very young child had no money and therefore no food to feed the child, and she stole some food from the shop and the mother was caught and had a trial, an absolutist would argue that its morally wrong to steal and should suffer the consequences of the crime. They don't take into account the situation the person might be in and use an absolute law. However, this is in contrast to the alternative ethical system, called "relativist", because this system is really the complete opposite. Again I'll use the same example as I did for absolutist. If a relativist was looking at this they would take into consideration the situation the woman might be in and empathize with her and try to find an outcome that is the most fair. "

TASK 3: Scholars we will study.

Use the internet to briefly research the following philosophers from the specification and fill in the grid below:

Scholar	An idea or quote from them in a sentence
Fletcher	
Aquinas	
Bentham	
Mill	
Sartre	
Dr Sirigu	
Aristotle	

Task 4: Fletcher's Situation Ethics

Use the reading on the next page to complete the table below.

Background	**Who is Fletcher?** **What is Situation Ethics?**
What is legalism? Definition:	**Give 3-5 reasons Fletcher rejected this as an ethical system:**
What is antinomianism? Definition:	**Give 3-5 reasons Fletcher rejected this as an ethical system:**
What is agape? Definition:	**Give 3-5 reasons Fletcher accepted this as an ethical system:**
Your view	Do you think basing all ethical decisions on bringing about the most loving outcome is valid? Do you also reject legalism and antinomianism or can you see some benefits to these?

Joseph **Fletcher** was a 20th century Christian ethicist who put forward the theory of **Situation Ethics**. This is a relativist and teleological ethical theory which claims that that in all situations a moral agent should aim to produce the most loving outcome. Situation Ethics provides a 'middle way' between legalism and antinomianism whereby there is only one moral absolute: to bring about the most loving outcome.

Legalism means conformity to law or to a strict religious or moral code. E.G. Following the 10 Commandments. It is an absolutist approach to ethics. Fletcher rejected this because:

-He argues that Jesus didn't use a system of ethics: ethics requires no fixed system

-The teachings of Jesus also reject legalism: this is not a new idea

-No room for personal circumstances to be considered

-Fletcher saw this as a restrictive and complex web of laws - '*any web woven sooner or later chokes its weavers.*'

-The laws/ rules are suffocating and too rigid

-The rules take priority over the people when Christianity should put people first

Antinomianism means 'against law', the idea that people are under no obligation to obey the laws of ethics or morality as presented by religious authorities. Fletcher rejected it because:

- It is directionless with no clear goal

- It leads to an ad hoc (random/ case by case, erratic) system

- It is lawless and unprincipled

- Produces an 'anything goes' ethics with no way of judging what is right or wrong

- People can use it to justify any action

- Christians should follow principles such as agape

- The Bible warns against it '*do not use your freedom as a cover up for evil*' 1 Peter.

Agape refers to an idea found in the New Testament. It is a selfless and unconditional love – a love for all humanity, not just the love you have for family and friends. For Fletcher it is the one rule/ law of Christian ethics. Fletcher accepted this because:

-it is a middle way which takes the flexibility of antinomianism and the structure of legalism but leaves the chaos and suffocation of those approaches behind

-it still treats the teachings of the Bible as illuminators – they can be useful and should be respected, they just shouldn't be used to form rules that are put ahead of people

-if the situation requires, we can put 'illuminators' such as the 10 Commandments aside – this allows a caring approach that accounts for people's situations

-It is the way Jesus and St. Paul approached ethics in the New Testament