

Component 1 Themes – Issues of Life and Death

Key words

Afterlife – Life after death; the belief that existence continues after physical death. **Akhirah** – the Islamic term.

Environmental sustainability – Ensuring the demands placed on natural resources can be met whilst allowing all life to live well.

Euthanasia – Greek for ‘a good death’. Sometimes known as ‘mercy killing’. Killing or permitting the death of a seriously ill person.

Evolution – The process by which different living creatures have developed from earlier less complex forms during the history of the earth.

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; that which connects someone to God. Non-physical and living on after death in an afterlife.

Creation – The universe was planned and brought into being by a divine power (God).

Evolution by natural selection – Species that flourish are those which are best suited to their environment.

Creationism – all life was made by God.

Intelligent design – certain features of life are explained by an intelligent cause, rather than an undirected process, such as natural selection.

Global citizenship – part of a worldwide community. The world is our home and we have responsibility to care for it.

Medical ethics – the process of deciding what is good and acceptable in medicine.

Situation ethics – judging the rightness or wrongness of an act on a case-by-case basis. Basing moral decision-making on the most loving thing.



Hospice – A place where those with terminal illness go to die with dignity. **Palliative care** – focuses on relieving pain and suffering.

Ensolement – When the human soul is said to enter the baby’s body.

Barzakh – a place of waiting, after death, before Judgment Day comes. **Purgatory** – A Catholic place of waiting to have sins forgiven before entering heaven.



The scientific origins of the world	Christian & Humanist creation	The design argument
<p>Charles Darwin in the 1800s explained how living creatures have evolved through a process of gradual change over millions of years. Natural selection was observed on the Galapagos Islands where finches (birds) had different shaped beaks on different islands to suit the environment and eat food. These characteristics happened by chance but helped them survive and pass on these traits to their offspring. ‘The survival of the fittest.’ Over time, this process led to new species of animals. It is how humans evolved. The Big Bang argues that time and space began 15 billion years ago from a singularity which was infinitely hot and dense and expanded causing sub-atomic particles and atoms to appear. Stars and planets were formed, including Earth.</p> 	<p>The book of Genesis explains Christian teachings on creation. It outlines the creation of earth, sky, sun, stars, planets, animals and humans over 6 days. On the 7th day G-d rested. Adam was formed from the dust of the ground and Eve from his rib. Evangelical Christians are creationists but some are more literal than others. Young Earth creationists believe the world was created in exactly 6 days which makes the Earth less than 10,000 years old. Old Earth creationists believe the 6 days may realistically be 6 longer periods of time and accept the Earth is millions of years old. Liberal Christians believe the Bible stories are myths which contain wisdom and are not to be taken literally. They accept scientific views like evolution and either believe in theistic guided evolution (G-d guided the process of life through evolution) or natural evolution (evolution is a natural process which brought about life and G-d set down the laws of nature before the universe existed). Humanists understand the world through science and say that all religious explanations are unreliable.</p>	<p>We can observe order and beauty in the world which suggests evidence for the existence of a designer like G-d. The complexity of nature could not have come about by itself. The watch analogy by William Paley: <i>If you find a watch by accident you would notice it was designed by a clever watch-maker. When you look at the world with its complex patterns you would conclude the same thing; there must be a cosmic-world-maker and designer called G-d.</i></p>  <p>Intelligent design argues there are organisms today that could not have evolved gradually through evolution. Creation scientist Michael Behe explains using a mouse trap: <i>It depends on 5 parts and if 1 part was missing it wouldn't work. The same is true of life, individual parts cannot have come together by chance; they were designed together.</i> Richard Dawkins a biologist argues that the world might appear to have been designed, but who designed the designer? As an atheist he argues evolution needs no help from G-d.</p>
Science and religion	Stewardship	The sanctity of life
<p>Science and religion oppose each other: Evangelical Christians believe that where science contradicts the Bible, science is at fault. Some Muslims have a problem with scientific evolution theory as a literal interpretation of the Qur’an suggests creation was instant not over millions of years. Atheist scientists argue religion tells us nothing about how the world was formed. The appearance of design is an illusion (Dawkins).</p> <p>Science and religion complement each other: Science tell us <i>how</i> the world was made, religion tells us <i>why</i>. Liberal Christians can accept scientific evolution theory. Many Muslims recognise a long history with science in Islam as many discoveries were made in the Middle East. The Qur’an says the world was created in 6 <i>periods</i> not days. These might be long periods of time complementing evolution theory.</p>	<p>Stewardship is caring for the planet and managing its resources. Christians believe life is a gift from G-d and they have a duty to be stewards and take care of the planet. The creation story implies humans are unique and above nature ruling over it. Evangelical Christians taking the Bible literally believe they have dominion and can rule over nature. Liberal Christians argue they should be stewards instead of rulers and live in harmony with nature. Humans have a responsibility for the planet and should aim to be global citizens. Muslims respect animals but do not believe they are sacred. All humans are created with responsibilities and are Allah’s khalifahs to look after the world for future generations, They will be judged on this in the afterlife. Humanists agree with stewardship as it makes reasonable sense for the future.</p>	<p>Most people believe to have life is special but religious people believe this because it is G-d’s gift. This belief has an impact on issues of medical ethics such as abortion and euthanasia. Christians believe G-d is involved in His creation and has made everyone unique. He made humankind in His own image which means all life is sacred. Only G-d should take life away. Quakers oppose the death penalty and war. G-d chooses when life begins. Catholics disagree with IVF and contraception. Muslims argue only G-d has the right to take life. Murder is forbidden in the Qur’an. G-d has a plan for each life. Humanists argue there is no soul or afterlife as this is the only life we get. Therefore life is special and its purpose is to make us and others happy.</p>

The quality of life	Abortion	Euthanasia										
<p>Some argue this is more important than the sanctity of life. If we are free from pain and can live in freedom and dignity then we have a good quality of life. If pain outweighs pleasure, then we have a poor quality of life. Measuring our quality of life is difficult as we all experience different tolerance to pain and pleasure. Government look at living conditions, health, education, the economy and human rights to determine the quality of life. This belief impacts medical ethics where some argue if the quality of life has deteriorated then someone should be allowed to die (euthanasia).</p> 	<p>Life begins at different points for people. Some argue it is at conception (when the sperm meets the egg). Other when the baby can be felt in the womb. Others at 120 days known as ensoulment. Others it's when the nervous system and organs develop. At 24 weeks the baby has viability and can survive if born. This is the UK legal limit for an abortion where 2 doctors must agree. For some it is at birth. Pro-life people believe abortion is always wrong as the foetus has a right to life. <i>UK law however does not recognise an unborn child as a person.</i> Pro-choice people believe a woman should have a right to choose what happens to her body. Catholics do not allow abortions due to the sanctity of life. Life begins at conception. It is murder and against the 10 Commandments. Aquinas' Natural Moral Law says a primary precept is to reproduce, therefore a secondary precept would be not to have an abortion. Church of England opposes abortion for social reasons but not if the mother's life is in danger, or it affects the quality of her life (e.g rape). Humanists look for the least amount of harm to be brought to all concerned. There is not one view, but many are liberal and pro-choice.</p> 	<p>The four types of euthanasia:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Voluntary (asks to die) 2. Active (tries to end their life) 3. Passive (treatment is removed) 4. Involuntary (forced death) <p>Most want to end their lives as they have a poor quality of life and suffer from incurable degenerative diseases. Euthanasia is illegal in the UK but legal in countries like Switzerland where the Dignitas clinic exists. Atheist Peter Singer argues euthanasia should be legalised as quality of life is more important than sanctity. Passive euthanasia should be allowed if the person is brain-dead. If they are rationally able to choose death because of illness, then this should be allowed too.</p> <p>A DNR (do not resuscitate) is a living will that instructs medics not to revive someone if they are dying which is perfectly legal.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="970 611 1422 1086"> <thead> <tr> <th>FOR</th> <th>AGAINST</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Free will to decide and control when and how they die.</td> <td>Open to abuse like with doctor Harold Shipman who killed 15 people</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Degenerative disease</td> <td>Vulnerable people may make a wrong decision</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Life-support is expensive</td> <td>Hospices are an alternative</td> </tr> <tr> <td>We don't let animals suffer so why humans? (Stephen Hawking)</td> <td>The slippery slope argument: it is a gateway to unacceptable practices like involuntary euthanasia.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Christians mostly disagree stating the sanctity of life argument, murder and the 10 Commandments, a purpose in suffering and Hospices as an alternative. Liberal Christians might agree to life support being turned off or withholding treatment as it is the most loving thing (situation ethics). Humanists support legalising voluntary euthanasia and not just for the terminally ill. People should be able to die with dignity and when faced with a poor quality of life.</p>	FOR	AGAINST	Free will to decide and control when and how they die.	Open to abuse like with doctor Harold Shipman who killed 15 people	Degenerative disease	Vulnerable people may make a wrong decision	Life-support is expensive	Hospices are an alternative	We don't let animals suffer so why humans? (Stephen Hawking)	The slippery slope argument: it is a gateway to unacceptable practices like involuntary euthanasia .
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Hospices	The soul	Judgement										
<p>Hospices provide physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological support to those in the final period of their illness before death. Whilst not a religious place, the founder of the first hospice in Britain was a Christian and this influenced Dame Saunders' promotion of the sanctity of life and opposition to euthanasia. Patients can die in dignity and have some quality of life through palliative care which manages symptoms with pain relief medication.</p>	<p>Dualism – we are made of 2 separate substances (body and soul). The soul will live on after death. Materialism – we are 1 substance; matter. A physical body. Christians believe the soul is what animates our body. The Bible says G-d breathed life (soul) into Adam. The soul connects us to G-d. Ensoulment is when the soul enters the foetus (Aquinas). Some are dualists and believe the soul will live on and the body dies. Others are soft materialists and argue the body and soul cannot be separated. At death the soul temporarily leaves the body but is reunited on Judgement Day during the resurrection of the dead. Humanists are hard materialists and dismiss the idea of a soul. We are physical beings, not spiritual and will not live on after death. Dawkins said we can only live on in our genes passed down to offspring. Gilbert Ryle said it is like a 'ghost in a machine'. We think we have a soul but we don't.</p>	<p>Christians believe in resurrection and everlasting life. Jesus modelled what would happen to our mortal bodies by rising from the dead. On Judgement Day G-d will decide who enters paradise and who doesn't. Dualists believe the body will decay upon death and the soul, which is immortal, will be reunited with G-d in heaven. Evangelicals argue we will have a bodily resurrection like Jesus. St Paul says it will be a spiritual body. The Parable of the Sheep and Goats reveals that Jesus will separate those who followed Him (sheep) from those who rejected Him (goats). Humanists say we can reflect on our own lives. There is nothing after death. We should live morally for ourselves and others, not G-d.</p>										
Heaven	Hell	Funeral rites										
<p>For Christians, heaven is to be in G-d's presence. Evangelicals argue it is a real place. Liberal Christians say heaven is symbolic. A reminder there are consequences to actions and thoughts. Humanists say there is no paradise.</p>	<p>For Christians hell is to be in constant torment cut off from all things good and loving. Evangelicals argue it is a real place. Liberal Christians say hell is symbolic. A reminder there are consequences to actions and thoughts. Humanists say there is no hell.</p>	<p>Catholic funerals have a priest give the last rites. Prayers are said for forgiveness with Holy Communion. Christians hold it in a church, the coffin is taken to the front with flowers and candles. Some are buried because of the resurrection of the dead but many are cremated today who are dualist. Humanists will remember the life of the person with no mention of G-d. The funeral will celebrate their life.</p>										

