SUMMER TASKS – GCSE TO A-LEVEL TRANSITION

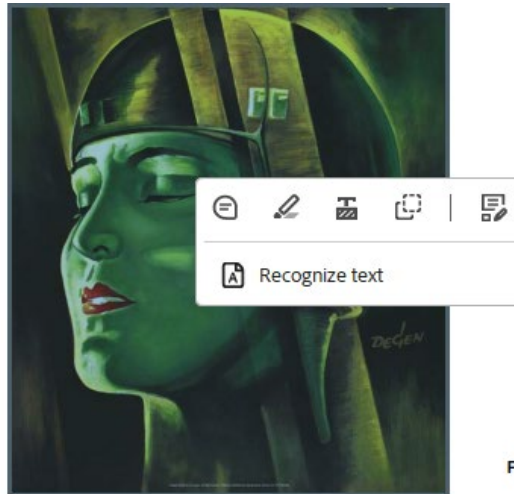| |
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| **Subject: A-Level** |
| **Title:** |
| **Task:** Image: artwork for Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927)

 The Big Question:
 "Can a machine ever be a person?"

 Project Overview:

 Your task is to explore how developments in artificial intelligence challenge traditional religious and philosophical ideas about:
 • **Personhood**
 • **Consciousness**
 • **Free will**
 • **Ethical decision-making**

 You'll be researching, reflecting, and presenting your findings in one of several creative formats.

 Learning Objectives:

 • Introduce students to key A-Level themes (Self, Death & Afterlife, Free Will, Ethical Theories)

 • Build independent research skills

 • Encourage ethical reasoning with real-world applications

 • Promote engagement with current technology and debates |

Project Task:

"Explore whether A.I. can (or should) be considered a person, and how this might affect
the way we think about ethics, morality, and what it means to be human."

You can focus on one of the following guiding questions — or come up with your own:

- Can A.I. ever have free will?

- If a machine can feel pain or think like us, should it have rights?

- Could A.I. be more moral than humans? What would Natural Moral Law or Utilitarianism say?

- If a human mind can be uploaded to a machine, does the soul still matter?

You will present your findings in **one** of the following formats:

- 🎥 A short video essay (3–5 mins)

- 🗎 A mini research report (800–1000 words)

- 🎙 A podcast episode (solo or group)

- 🎨 A creative piece (e.g. a short story, comic, or art piece) with a 300-word explanation

Make sure to include:

- Reference to at least **one ethical theory** or **philosophical concept**

- Your own viewpoint – supported by reasoning and examples

- Reference to at least **one real-world case or technology** (e.g. ChatGPT, Boston Dynamics, Neuralink, etc.)

To get you started:

- Short article: The people who think AI might become conscious - BBC News
- Podcast: The AI Dilemma (Centre for Humane Technology)
- Philosopher to explore: Daniel Dennett or John Searle (Chinese Room)
- Ethical theory intro sheets (please see attachments)

Enjoy this summer project and I look forward to seeing what you discover!

Luke

How long should I spend on this? 1hr
How will I get feedback?
Contact email:

Ethical Theory Summary Sheets

Natural Moral Law (NML)

<u>What is it?</u>

Natural Moral Law is a deontological theory developed by Thomas Aquinas. It says that right and wrong are determined by reason and the natural purpose of humans.

<u>Key Features:</u>

- Based on Aristotle's idea of a natural purpose (telos).

- Aquinas believed God gave humans reason to discover moral laws.

- Actions are right if they help us achieve our natural purpose (e.g. to live, reproduce, learn, live in society, worship God).

- Follows absolute rules, e.g. 'Do not kill', 'Do not lie'.

- The Principle of Double Effect: An action with a good and bad effect may be allowed if the bad effect is not intended.

<u>Strengths:</u>

- Provides clear and consistent rules.

- Respects human life and dignity.

<u>Weaknesses:</u>

- Assumes everyone has the same natural purpose.

- Can be rigid and ignore outcomes or context.

Situation Ethics (SE)

<u>What is it?</u>

Situation Ethics was developed by Joseph Fletcher in the 1960s. It is a teleological theory that says the most loving thing to do is the right thing.

<u>Key Features:</u>

- One absolute rule: Always do the most loving thing (agape love).

- Rejects legalistic (strict rule-based) ethics and antinomianism (no rules at all).

- Decisions should be made based on the situation, not fixed laws.

- The theory uses six working principles (e.g. love is the only norm, love and justice are the same).

<u>Strengths:</u>

- Flexible and practical.

- Puts people and love at the centre of moral decisions.

<u>Weaknesses:</u>

- Can be too subjective: people may disagree on what is 'loving'.

- May allow harmful actions if seen as 'loving' in the moment.

Utilitarianism

What is it?

Utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory. It says an action is right if it brings about the greatest happiness for the greatest number.

Key Features:

- Founded by Jeremy Bentham; developed by John Stuart Mill.

- Bentham's version: use the Hedonic Calculus to measure pleasure and pain.

- Mill: focused on quality of happiness, not just quantity.

- Rule Utilitarianism (Mill): follow general rules that usually lead to the greatest happiness.

Strengths:

- Democratic and based on outcomes.

- Easy to apply in many situations.

Weaknesses:

- Can justify immoral acts (e.g. lying, harming an innocent person).

- Hard to predict all consequences.