

## Excellent Essays Activity Paper - AO2

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### INTUITIONISM - Ethics Year 2

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This activity will guide you to the creation of an AO2 response to this area of the specification. You will be guided as you work to create an essay. Along the way, you will find insights, ideas and examples of good practice. Jump right in!

You can make the best use of this activity sheet by reviewing all of your notes and having done some reading on this area prior to this activity. Then, lay out all of your notes, print off these pages - and get to work.

Note: working carefully through these sheets will guide you to make a great essay. This will not guarantee you an A\*, but you will find all the qualities that make an A\* essay reinforced in this activity. We've also given you an example of an excellent paragraph so you can see A\* qualities at work.

# 1. Questions

**Refresh your memory** of what you are supposed to know for this area of the specification and the related issues

## **Meta-ethical approaches - Intuitionism:**

Objective moral laws exist independently of human beings; moral truths can be discovered by using our minds in an intuitive way; intuitive ability is innate and the same for all moral agents; intuition needs a mature mind so not infallible; allows for objective moral values. H.A. Prichard, 'ought to do' has no definition; recognise what we 'ought to do' by intuition; two ways of thinking (general and moral).

**Challenges:** no proof of moral intuition exists; intuitive 'truths' can differ widely; no obvious way to resolve conflicting intuitions.

## **Issues for this section which form the basis of the AO2 Questions for this area:**

- Whether moral terms are intuitive.
- The extent to which moral terms are just expressions of our emotions.
- Whether one of Naturalism, Intuitionism or Emotivism is superior to the other theories.
- The extent to which the different meta-ethical theories encourage moral debate.

## **Some possible exam questions:**

- 'Moral terms are [or, are not] intuitive.' Evaluate this view.
- 'Moral terms are more than the expressions of our emotions.' Evaluate this view.
- 'Intuitionism is (or is not) superior to (or, more relevant/practical than) Emotivism and/or Naturalism.
- 'Intuitionism encourages [or, discourages] moral debate.' Evaluate this view.

## **The question you will work with**

For this exercise we will work with one question which should prepare you well for this area. Answering this one question well will give you material to address all of the questions above, though you are encouraged to also practice answering those questions on their own.

**'Moral terms are not intuitive'. Evaluate this view.**

## 2. BUG the Question

Your first step will be to simply BUG the question – this is a technique which will help you with any question on the exam. This simply means

**B** – Box the command word. There is one word in the question which tells you what you are to do: put a box around it.

**U** – Underline any word that you think is especially critical to address in your response. In a way, all of the words are critical to address! But which words would you really need to focus upon – underline these

**G** – Glance back at the question. You won't be doing this now, but on an exam, you will always be glancing back at the question as you write your response to ensure you are still responding to the question.

Now do your “B” and “U” to this question – and then look at the small print below to check your work:

**‘Moral terms are not intuitive.’ Evaluate this view .**

*Guide:*

- You will have put a box around the word ‘Evaluate’ - that is the command word for all AO2 questions. It is good to do this because it reminds you that your job is not merely to describe different points of view; it is to weigh them up – to point to strengths and weaknesses and come to a conclusion.
- You will want to underline the phrase word “not intuitive” because it represents a one-sided statement! You will direct all of your arguments to this phrase. It does not matter which side you argue (i.e. that moral terms are / are not intuitive); what matters is that you engage with that word throughout your response.
- You will have underlined ‘moral terms’ – for, this reminds you that you will need to focus on these terms – and keep bringing the conversation back to the key ethical terms that intuitionists use (and ‘obligation’ or ‘duty’ for Prichard or ‘good’ for Moore).
- You might put a double underline under ‘intuitive’ – for you will need to have a definition of this term in mind in order to answer the question.
- You may, then, have underlined every word in the question – good. This ensures that you are paying attention to the words used and will formulate a response that relates to these words.

### 3. Write a Short Introduction

You do not need an introduction to score the highest mark on your essay response. In fact a long and meandering introduction can mean that you lose marks – since you are using up time that should be spent engaging with the issues.

However, a short and focused introduction can help to focus your mind and your essay. In just 3-4 sentences try to do these three things:

- Restate the question in different words – this shows the examiner that you understand the question and are aware of specialist language. You might even want to “interrogate” a word in the question
- Give an indication of the issues that need to be covered in order to evaluate the question.
- (optional) you can take a position in the first paragraph (alternatively you can skip this – just make sure you take a position at the end of the paper – and support it)

Now write your introduction here. Don't look at the guide below until you have given this try:

Guide:

- Did you state the question/issue in a fresh way? For instance, you could have said: ‘Some moral philosophers have thought that words such as ‘good’, ‘duty’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ are indefinable but known intuitively; in other words, that these terms are self-evident to us. Yet, this is a highly debatable position.’ This shows that you clearly understand the question and have a grasp of specialist language (‘moral philosophers’, ‘good’, ‘duty’, ‘right’, ‘wrong’, ‘indefinable’, ‘self-evident’).
- You could have interrogated the term ‘Intuitive’ saying something such as, ‘What does ‘intuitive’ mean? In common use the word ‘intuitive’ speaks to the idea of having an immediate grasp of the truth, apart from a process of reasoning. But Prichard and other intuitionists never used this word. Still, this ‘common’ use of the term will be used in this essay as it corresponds well to Prichard and Moore’s belief that we have direct knowledge of morality.
- You could have stated a position such as, ‘I [or, this response] will show that there is no ground at all for maintaining that ethical terms are known intuitively’ Or, you could have stated an opposite position (Prichard and Moore are quite right to insist that we have intuitive knowledge of what is meant by the moral terms we use). You could see the rest of your response (all of the paragraphs that follow) as ‘unpacking’ this position, explaining it and evaluating challenges to it.
- You might have referred to some specific claims you are going to deal with such as: ‘In order to evaluate this issue effectively it will be important the claim that no proof of moral intuition exists, the fact that intuitive ‘truths’ to which moral terms refer can differ widely and, finally that there is no obvious way to resolve conflicting intuitions.’

## 4. Write Your 1<sup>st</sup> Body Paragraph

The body of your essay will be composed of three, long paragraphs. Each paragraph will have three elements:

1. You will make a point in direct response to the question. You will support or deepen this point with any of these: scholarly knowledge, an example, quotation etc. See page 9 for ideas.
2. You will challenge (1) by presenting a counterargument or point that could be made against it. You will support or deepen this point with any of these: scholarly knowledge, an example, quotation etc.
3. You will come to a mini-conclusion based on just (1) and (2). You might simply say that (1) is stronger because – or it is weaker because...

These three elements, together, form one long paragraph of the body of your essay  
Now, give this a try:

1. Make a point in relation to the question and support it.

2. Make a counter point or raise a challenge to (1) and support it.

3. Come to a mini conclusion. This means pointing out why (1) and/or (2) above is strong or weak based on how they were supported.

Guide:

- See page 10 for an example of a main body paragraph with all of these qualities - you can feel free to borrow from it for your paragraph above.
- Having trouble coming up with points and counterpoints? See the ideas on page 9.

## 5. 2nd Body Paragraph

Now you are going to do the same thing again – with a different point!

1. Make a point in relation to the question and support it.

2. Make a counter point or raise a challenge to (1) and support it.

3. Come to a mini conclusion. This means pointing out why (1) and/or (2) above is strong or weak based on how they were supported.

Guide:

- (1) Make sure you look at the question and ensure that your point is related to the question. For instance you might say 'It may seem that moral terms are intuitively known, but there is a perfect explanation behind this: our culture and families have already defined these words for us. We inherit the definition not from intuition but from society.' See also page 9 below for ideas.
- (2) Your counterpoint needs to be a direct challenge to (1) – and different from what you have said in your first paragraph. You will always support each point and counterpoint – again, not merely repeating material you have already used in other paragraphs
- (3) If you are stuck on your 'Mini-conclusion', simply begin by saying, 'This point [1 or 2 above] is strong (or weak) because...' and make sure you justify your assertion with some evidence.

## 6. 3rd Body Paragraph

Now you are going to do the same thing a final time – with a different point!

1. Make a point in relation to the question and support it.

2. Make a counter point or raise a challenge to (1) and support it.

3. Come to a mini conclusion. This means pointing out why (1) and/or (2) above is strong or weak based on how they were supported.

Guide:

- Make sure your paragraphs use specialist terms. For example, have you used any of these: the names of scholars, 'self-evident', 'immediate', 'consequentialism', 'obligation', 'duty', 'utilitarianism', 'motive', 'desire', 'conflicting obligations', 'the tradesman [Prichard]', 'word game' etc.? You don't need to use all of these words, but your discussion should reflect words you find in the textbook for this area
- The mini conclusions you reach of the body paragraphs do not need all agree with each other – your mini-conclusions can disagree with one another – as long as they respond directly to the question.
- Some students like to use a quotation to support a key point or make an argument. This is fine, as long as you explain why that quote has been used or why it is so effective. However, you can also paraphrase key scholarly ideas in your own words.

## 7. Write Your Conclusion

You need to do two main things in your conclusion

- State a firm point of view either for or against the question statement.
- Support this point of view by restating points you said earlier in a fresh way.

In other words, you do not need to bring in brand-new material here. You can use material you used earlier but rework this. You might find it easy to restate one or more of your 'Mini conclusions' earlier in the paper – noting why it/they are particularly relevant to reaching an overall conclusion.

Now write a conclusion using anywhere from 4 to 8 sentences.

Guide:

Here is an example of a short conclusion which displays the qualities above. This conclusion does not need to be long because it emerges from/builds upon the three mini-conclusions earlier in the essay it comes from. Also, it is only one possible conclusion – you may wish to conclude that Ethical Egoism does indeed lead to moral evil. Finally, take note that the conclusion works directly with the question, referring several times to 'moral evil'.

*'It is clear, then, that moral terms are not known intuitively. As we've seen, we may have an experience of knowledge that feels 'intuitive' in that we are not conscious of having gone through a long process of reasoning. Yet we have that knowledge, in fact, because it was taught to us at a young age. Another way of putting this is that our dispositions to moral terms 'came with our mother's milk.' So, when someone feels an obligation to give to the poor or to pay a 'tradesman' what is due, this is because we were socialised to do so. This view has the advantage of explaining why different obligations occur in different cultures - a fact that intuitionism cannot explain.'*



## 8. Points You Can Develop in Your Paragraphs

- **Moral terms are undefinable yet self-evident – or are they?** The intuitionists said that terms such as ‘good’ (Moore) or ‘obligation’ (Prichard) are undefinable, yet we recognize them when we see them. (You can strengthen this with a scholarly quotation or the paraphrase of an idea from one of these scholars). Supporting this idea is that we have all had the sense of something we should do – apart from a process of reasoning (you can give an example of this). Yet if this is true, why do people in different times and places have such different ideas of what constitutes ‘goodness’ or ‘obligation’? (Give an example of how different families, cultures or nations have entirely different senses of ethical obligations. Remember to close this paragraph with a mini-conclusion in which you weigh up the ideas and come to your own view).
- **It’s possible to have immediate and direct knowledge of things (like moral terms) – or is it?** The intuitionists believe that we have direct access to moral knowledge. They see this as reflecting the more general fact that we have direct knowledge of all kinds of things. Prichard said that we can look at a mathematical equation or symbol and suddenly understand the answer or what it means (You can give an example of this and/or a quote or paraphrase of a scholarly idea). Yet, this is just an assertion about reality without any real evidence. For, we only arrive at any knowledge through a process of training, instruction and trial and error (give an example of this). Even when things seem suddenly ‘true’ or ‘right’ this is because of learning and reasoning that has happened in the past. (Close this paragraph with a mini-conclusion).
- **Moral terms have everything to do with intuition and nothing to do with following desires or outcomes – or do they?** The intuitionists say that their approach to ethics is different from other approaches including utilitarianism. In utilitarianism one makes decisions based on their desire for greater pleasure for themselves and/or for others. (You can give an example of this and/or a quote from a utilitarian theorist). This is not the same, says Prichard, of basing ethics on a direct and immediate (or, intuitive) sense of obligation. Utilitarianism can give you a desire to take an action – it cannot ever replace the sense of obligation you had in the first place (you can use a quote or a paraphrase of an idea from Prichard). But isn’t this just a word-game? Why draw a circle around ‘obligation’ and exclude desire from it? Isn’t it true that our desires are a part of everything we do and feel (Give an example of this. Close this paragraph with a mini-conclusion).

## 9. Sample Paragraph

This paragraph contains all of the qualities that you have been asked to reflect: a clear point which is supported, a challenge (also supported) and a mini conclusion.

Intuitionists maintain that moral terms are intuitively known – aside from all reason and our ability to define the terms. H. A. Prichard said that the term ‘obligation’ is indefinable but, at the same time, our obligations are self-evident – we know what they are. This seems supported by the fact that most human beings would agree that they have an ‘inner’ or ‘intuitive’ sense of what they should do without having arrived at that sense through a process of reasoning. Prichard used the example of having agreed with a ‘tradesman’ on the price for some work to be done. Now, the work has been completed and we have the obligation to pay the tradesman. Acting on this sense of obligation is the essence of morality. Yet, if this is true, why do people in different times and places have such different ideas of what constitutes ‘obligation’? For example, a young person in Taiwan may feel an obligation to participate in military service whereas a young person in Britain may not feel that obligation at all. When we look into reasons for the differences in obligations, it seems clear that these can be explained through the expectations of family, friends, culture and nations – it’s currently the law in Taiwan for all males aged 18-35 to serve in the military; this is not the case in the U.K. This refutes Prichard’s position. For, as soon as we can explain why we have an obligation it is no longer self-evident and indefinable. We could thus define ‘obligation’ as: ‘the pressure we feel to act in certain ways in order to maintain a positive relationship with our society.’ We could use this definition (and not intuition) to explain and even predict the meaning of moral terms.

### Guide:

- This paragraph responds directly to the question by pointing to one reason it is claimed that moral terms are intuitive and then refuting that reason.
- Notice that the seventh sentence presents a challenge which is also supported.
- The paragraph closes with a short ‘mini-conclusion’ that weighs up the points made.
- You can feel free to borrow from the views presented here in one of your own body paragraphs
- Note specialist language H. A. Prichard, obligation, self-evident, reasoning, etc.
- Scholarly ideas and examples have been used.
- Did you notice the evaluative ‘feel’ of this paragraph? By using phrases such as ‘seems supported’, ‘Yet, if this is true, why...’, ‘It seems clear’ and ‘this refutes’ it is clear that the writer is doing more than describing; this paragraph is weighing up ideas.
- The ‘mini-conclusion’ at the end of the paragraph links directly to the question through using the phrase ‘moral terms’.

## 9. What's Wrong?

The paragraph below is an attempt to respond to the same question; it is weak in several ways. Read the paragraph and write down some weaknesses in the empty box below it. When you've done that, check the guide to see if you are on the right track.

**'Moral terms are not intuitive.' Evaluate this view .**

Of course moral terms are intuitive. This is because we all know what 'good' is without a long argument being used. If you go to the cinema and you watch any of the Avengers movies, you don't need to be taught who the good guys and good causes are – you just know. This is intuition at work. Now, if someone comes along and says that they can explain what 'good' is, they will get hopelessly lost. Let's say they try to say, 'Good is good' – that is no definition at all and really just proves the point of intuitionism. Let's say they try to define good differently: 'Good is pleasure'. Well, that runs into a different problem: changing good into a different concept, something that it isn't. That is a 'cheat definition'. That also proves that the intuitionists are right as they say that 'good is good' and completely undefinable. So, there is absolutely no way to know what moral terms are apart from our intuition. When you are in life, standing in front of people and situations, you just know and do not need to be told what 'good' is.

Write down what you think is weak about this paragraph:

Guide

- This is a one-sided paragraph. No real attempt has been to represent an opposite point of view. If the student had gone on to provide a counterpoint later in the response, then this would make the overall presentation much stronger.
- There are no scholars named in this paragraph. Furthermore, there are no scholarly examples and no attempt to represent scholarly ideas with any care.
- This student could have mentioned Moore's 'Open Question Argument' as this seems to be behind one of the points they are making.
- There are not many specialist terms used. 'Cheat arguments' is not a specialist term.
- Yet this is NOT a terrible paragraph – the points are all relevant! This student would be credited for understanding something of the intuitionist view and presenting three different arguments which support it. The paragraph also does directly engage with the question. So, if the student sustained this level of engagement and was careful to include some counterarguments, it would be possible to achieve a very good result.
- It would have been much better if the student had simply begun their paragraph by saying, 'One reason to see ethical terms as being intuitive is X. X = one point that can be made in response to the question (i.e. these terms defy definition). Then, the student could go on and provide a brief description of X and back it up with an example, a quote or a scholarly reference. Then X should be criticised! Finally, the paragraph should end with some kind of evaluation. What is the stronger or weaker point made (X or the criticism of it)?

## 10. Checklist

When you have ticked all of the boxes below, then you have completed this exercise. You can then:

- (i) write up all that you have written into one continuous paper. You may wish to show this to your teacher for feedback
- (ii) Move on to a new essay for a different subtheme

I have...

- Written a short opening paragraph which restates the question using different specialist terms, outlines the direction of the essay, interrogates a key word in the question (optional) and states a point of view (optional)
- Written three 'body paragraphs' with each paragraph presenting a point that is directly relevant to the question, presenting a counterpoint, and supporting all points made with evidence in the form of examples, insights, quotes, or paraphrases of key ideas.
- Written three mini-conclusions at the end of each of the body paragraphs.
- Written a conclusion which articulates a point of view – and supports that point of view through a fresh restatement of material used earlier in the paper.
- Looked over my work to check that I have used a variety of specialist language that I see used in the textbook and the notes I have taken for this section
- Looked over my work to see that I have made use of issues and arguments referred to by my teacher and by the textbook and other resources we have used for this section.