

Form 5 (Age 15-15)

General Theme: Life and Death Issues

Module 1: The Value of Life (1st term)

Module 2: Life and Death Issues (2nd term)

General Introduction

Life and death issues are arguably the most urging and challenging ethical issues we have with us today – this is demonstrated by the frequency with which they arise in everyday life and the attention they are given in the media when they do so. Issues about the conduct of war (the taking of hostages, the use of chemical weapons, the use of torture, acts of terrorism against civilian populations, and so on), the use of capital punishment, practices of non-voluntary euthanasia, suicide, assisted suicide, contraception, and abortion are distinguished by the passion with which they are discussed. Not only are they ethical issues they are legal also because they involve practices that are regulated with laws in all societies, and they are regulated differently in different societies depending on the moral and political culture of the particular society. This latter point has been made nearly throughout the whole Ethics programme from Primary onwards and the teacher has the opportunity once more to make it explicitly. It's importance lies in the fact that without appreciating it, without appreciating the fact that, for the most part, deep differences of moral and religious outlook owe themselves to historical accident not to some inherent wickedness that lies in the hearts of those who think differently from us, tolerance, the value that must lie at the heart of a multi-cultural or pluralist society if its members are to live at peace with each other, is impossible.

The programme for Form 5 is divided into two instead of the usual three modules and this is because this is a shortened year because of the SEC examinations which commence in the final term. The two modules form the entire programme for Form 5. The first explores and discusses the general issues that arise over questions of life and death in our society, and identifies key issues that will be taken up and explored individually and in-depth. Module 1 introduces the general topic of the value of life distinguishing different ways of valuing it, namely intrinsically and instrumentally. By focusing mainly on the first it also prepares the way for Module 2 where, apart from the alternative view that life is valuable not in general but only if it is a worthwhile life, the different issues itemised in the previous paragraph and introduced and explained in Module 1 are explored in-depth and with the assistance of narratives true or fictional used as case studies. In fact, in Form 5 the students are taught how to make a case study through the use of moral analysis, which exercise requires the marshalling of all the skills learnt gradually through the whole Ethics Programme, Primary and Secondary.

The first module, Module 1, bears the general title 'The Value of Life'. It begins by helping the students make sense of its subject and conducting them through the issues to which the question of the value of life leads, helping them distinguish in the process the different sense in which a thing, including a life can be valuable, and making the point that human life and

death, and questions related to them, are viewed differently in different moral and political cultures. The sanctity of life doctrine, articulated in the language of the right to life, is tackled next with its different interpretations and ramifications; including the interpretation that limits the right to life to innocent human beings – an interpretation that raises questions about the moral treatment of non-human life. Module 2 opens with a case study of a real case where the claim to the right to life of one person was sacrificed to the utilitarian argument that without it neither that same person's life nor that of another which depended on the death of the first could be saved. This is a model case study for the treatment of the different issues treated in the module and identified in the first paragraph above. Module 2 also presents the instrumentalist case against the view that life has intrinsic worth and considers the two together critically.

Assessment:

The assessment methods used in these modules for Form 5 are those used for the SEC Ethics examination.

Module 1: The Value of Life 1 (1st term)

Introduction

The introductory discussion in this module is of the claim that life is valuable which is teased out to present the life and death questions to be explored in a preliminary way here and then in depth in Module 2. The teacher also uses the discussion to reinforce the fact highlighted throughout the whole of the Ethics Programme that different answers to them correspond with the different moral positions religious and humanist from which they are approached. That an important influence on the way they are answered is the belief or otherwise in an afterlife. Next s/he identifies different ways of describing a thing's value; as intrinsic and as instrumental to distinguish two ways in which life can be deemed valuable; that its value is intrinsic (that it is valuable in itself and apart from every other consideration), and that its value is instrumental to its being a worthwhile life (one of happiness or flourishing). This Module, Module 1, focuses on the first of these viewpoints, the second will be explored in Module 2. Finally, s/he introduces the class to the general Kantian principle that we should never treat others merely as means, one needs always to treat them as ends, and explores its meaning with them.

The teacher introduces the important notion of the right to life to the students for exploration and discussion, and with it to the so-called sanctity of life doctrine which is refined in three stages (All life is sacred. All **human** life is sacred. All **innocent human** life is sacred), each discussed separately then together. Meanwhile the issues that feature in debates on the right to life, self-defence, situations of war, capital punishment, non-voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, contraception, and abortion, are introduced into the discussion, all to be explained in preparation to being taken to depth in Module 2. The teacher then moves the discussion on to consider the claim to a right to life in relation to non-human beings, to examine how we need

to treat humans and non-humans differently with regards to how we value life, and to discuss how we must treat the lives of non-human, or animal, beings. Up to this point the discussion has focused on the first two formulations of the sanctity of life doctrine. Next to be explored is the notion of an innocent human life which features in the third formulation, what it means and what kind of limitations it imposes on the claim to a right to life.

In the discussion of these matters a general discussion of humane and inhumane modes of treating human and non-human beings is made to include a discussion on forms of actions and punishment that include demeaning acts of subjugation, humiliation, the infliction of torture, and mutilation. These are extreme examples of how others are treated purely as means, as objects, their rights as persons (as 'possessors of rights', foremost amongst which the right to have one's dignity respected) disregarded and violated, that are discussed with examples taken from different contexts, war, terrorism, work relations (different kinds of slavery), abusive sexual relationships, etc. The teacher makes the point that the differences between how degrading treatment is regarded reflects different cultures, some of which tend to distinguish different ways of treating men and women, and therefore to think of the rights of men and women as distinct and different. In this respect s/he must point out how gender differences are treated in Maltese society and by Maltese law.

Objectives:

- To consolidate the writing of the journal as a reflective tool now on general moral issues that are raised in this module responding to them with their written reflections;
- To extend the students' skills and abilities to examine arguments and to write their own arguments and reflections on selected topics or issues on narratives or case studies set for them;
- To introduce the students to the notion of a right to life and to the issues it raises, to teach them how to reflect on these issues and how to discuss them responsibly;
- To introduce the students to the different interpretations of the sanctity of life doctrine, in order to introduce them also to the notions of self-defence and an innocent human life;
- To extend the discussion on the right to life to non-human beings, to consider whether it should be extended to such beings and to consider the degree to which non-human life should share the same rights as human;
- To explore to greater depth the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value as it applies both to human and non-human life and to introduce the principle that other persons, human beings, must never be used only as means, and always treated as ends;
- To further reinforce the idea that moral difference is the fruit of cultural and religious difference and must be understood in this way for the sake of tolerance;

- To introduce the students to the issues concerning the taking of life human raised in the module for further exploration, reflection, and debate in the next: self-defence, war, capital punishment, non-voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, contraception, and abortion;

Teaching Strategy:

Tools: Narrative, exposition, analysis, discussion, exploration, comparison.

Resources required: Stories, narrative, videos, documentaries, docudramas, current affairs stories, others.

Content and Method

- (a) The opening question for this module is a general one. The students are asked what they think people mean when they say that **life is valuable**, whether it is an important question to ask, and if so why. S/he leads the students to understand the implications of the question; i.e. the important subsidiary questions it opens into. S/he allows an open and unrestricted discussion of each briefly and from their own perspective. The subsidiary questions teased from the discussion and pursued in the rest of the module are: (1) Does claiming that life is valuable mean that **all** life is valuable **always**? (2) Does saying that life is valuable mean that **dying** is always **bad** – is it sometimes good to die? (3) Does recognising the value of life commit us to recognise a **right to life** such as is common in Western societies – would such a right be **absolute**? (4) What would an absolute right to life mean, what would it commit us to? (5) Would recognising the right to life commit us not to kill any living being, or would such a right be limited only to human beings? (6) If the right to life is limited to human beings does this include all human beings? (6) If there is a right to live is there also a **right to die**?
- (b) The teacher concludes the open discussion, which will have been contentious on each question, by making the point that the meaning and value of human life is defined differently between different cultures and religions and between religious and humanist outlooks that are sceptical of the idea of an **afterlife**. That these differences of outlook account largely for the differences and disagreements that quickly surface when these questions and others akin to them arise. And that the object of further discussion is to understand the different points of view and to seek out the agreements where they exist. S/he points out that the view of all religions is that life, human or otherwise, is God's creation and that all living creatures are God's creatures, and that they seek guidance on the questions discussed from Sacred Texts and traditional interpretations of the Texts. Humanists, on the other hand, are sceptical of Divine intervention into the world, tend to explain it scientifically, and seek the guidance of reason on the questions. The difference between the two sides is immediately evident on one important life and death issue; the moral issue about taking one's own life, committing **suicide**. The religious viewpoint is that suicide is immoral because our lives are not our own but God's, and that our fate, therefore, is in God's hands [find

texts from the different faiths]. Humanists, on the other hand, hold the contrary view that our lives are our own and that, therefore, we should have the right to decide our own fate, including when to end our life.

- (c) The teacher proposes re-examining the arguments made in the free discussion in the usual way by asking the students to look at the general notion of something **being valuable** first. S/he points out that something may be regarded as valuable **in itself** apart from any purpose it may serve, or it may be regarded as valuable **for some purpose**. In the first case it can be described as having **intrinsic** value, in the second **instrumental** – the distinction is only fully grasped with examples. Once we assume that life does generally have some value (as all humans do whatever their differences about whether it comes from God or otherwise) must, otherwise there would be no sense made of our attempts to safeguard, preserve, and improve it, then the question is, is life valuable intrinsically or instrumentally – or both? The question is **how we should treat others**. The teacher distinguishes an ordinary, **everyday**, sense in which we use other people for our purposes, and others use us; **a means** to satisfy a need, to render a service, etc., and which derives from our **dependence** in different ways on others. The greater purpose of a religious ethics (Christian, Muslim, or Jewish) is to respect God's revealed will in this world in order to win ones reward in the next, in the life to come. For a humanist ethics which does not acknowledge the existence of an afterlife, it would be human happiness.
- (d) Regarding life as having intrinsic value means respecting it **for what it is, as an end**, i.e., apart from its instrumental value for us. The teacher proposes the principle that **one should never use other persons, human beings, only as means, and always as ends**, and that this is what respect for others finally means. This important principle is discussed and extended to cover all human relations with examples. To treat others **only** as a means is to treat them purely **as objects** to be used and discarded, to deny them the right to their **dignity as persons** by forcing them to suffer indignities through acts of humiliation and submission (including the practice of torture) often, in ordinary life, involving force or deceit or different kinds of 'punishment' people may be subjected to. The teacher includes sexual activity with his/her examples sensitizing the students to the fact that there are ethical boundaries that it should not be transgress especially that of showing proper respect towards one's partner by respecting his or her dignity as a person.
- (e) From there s/he moves to consider the statement of the intrinsic value of life expressed in quasi-religious terms known as the 'sanctity of life doctrine' which in its most general form states that 'All life is sacred'. S/he points out that the **right to life** is taken to follow from this doctrine. In this general absolute form the sanctity of life doctrine makes it morally wrong to kill **any** living being. The teacher asks for an open discussion on the notion of a right to life and on this formulation of it. Following which, as usual, s/he invites a careful examination of the claim; what it means and what it would commit us to, especially the absolute 'all'? S/he points out that if the right to life is extended to **all** living beings then it is morally wrong to kill any living

being, human but non-human also also; not just animals and insects, but plants also, even harmful ones like viruses, germs, microbes, and so on. But should we view all life as the same, and should we value **all** beings because they live? The question is put to the students for discussion, in the course of which the teacher points out that some people, vegetarians, vegans, and animal rights activists oppose slaughtering animals for food or to use their pelts for decoration, or in experiments.

- (f) This position is not however discussed at this point. Instead the teacher proposes a modification to the sanctity of life doctrine to read: ‘All **human** life is sacred’ (this would restrict the right to life to human life only) and puts it to the students once more for open discussion during which the teacher points out the implications of adopting it, namely that it forbids such actions as **self-defence** that leads to the death of the aggressor, fighting a war, **capital punishment, non-voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, contraception, and abortion**. These terms are introduced into the discussion by the teacher and defined for the students but none is pursued **as an issue** (i.e. for deep discussion) at this point where what is being explored is the **general** notion of a right to life. On this formulation of the doctrine (namely ‘All human life is sacred’) the teacher makes two points: (1) that in limiting itself to human life it deliberately excludes **non-human**, life of any kind from enjoying that right; (2) that it still proscribes the actions referred to in the previous discussion; self-defence, fighting an war, capital punishment, and so on. The first of these exclusions is discussed returning to earlier on the subject of animal rights and to the objections of animal rights activists outlined earlier. The question for discussion is: **Should the right to life be limited to human beings?**
- (g) The second exclusion is discussed next, and the teacher offers a second modification of the doctrine which responds to the complaint that the first, that ‘**All** human life is sacred’, is too general and that there are circumstances where it is morally legitimate to take a human life, including those discussed; self-defence and capital punishment, for example. The second modification reserves the right to life only for the **innocent**. In this formulation it reads: ‘All **innocent** human life is sacred’. It means that the right to life is enjoyed **only** by those who are ‘innocent’ of offence. It distinguishes human beings into two kinds: ‘innocent’ and ‘guilty’. In its **radical** form it denies **any** human right to the guilty not just the right to life, any recognition of the individual concerned as a **human** being, it thereby denies any right to be **treated** as human, and opens the door to what its opponents regard as degrading forms of actions and punishment; like torture, mutilation, and humiliation. The teacher points out that in European societies like Malta, though they were once practiced, these forms of punishment are today illegal and regarded as unnecessarily **cruel** and **inhumane** (i.e. they are **merciless** and involve **unnecessary suffering**) and therefore as objectionable by both Christians and humanists. In other societies, Moslem societies for instance where *Sharia* law is dominant, they are practiced in some form and justified on the basis of religion. The teacher does not put this difference of perspective up for discussion; s/he simply explains it as a difference of moral and legal culture that must be respected by the two

sides in our society which recognises the **democratic** right of freedom of belief which is a **political** rather than a moral right.

- (h) S/he then turns to the **less radical** use of the distinction between guilty and innocent, where it applies **only** to the right to life, where the formulation ‘All *innocent* human life is sacred’ justifies the practice of capital punishment, for instance, which is legally practiced and supported in societies of all kinds in different parts of the world, though not in Malta and the other countries of the European Union where it was once used but is now banned, and is justified as a deterrent and as an act of retributive justice (the students are reminded of the notion and what it means). The teacher points out that the formulation also permits the use of capital punishment, and acts of self-defence and non-voluntary euthanasia, but leaves the matter here. Instead s/he raises the question for discussion: Should numbers count in life and death situations? Can it be justified to sacrifice some lives if more lives are saved thereby? Examples are given (lifeboat at sea, house on fire, etc.) and discussed with the class. The teacher must make the distinction between the argument that **numbers matter** (that on the whole it is better to save two lives than one), and the argument that it is **morally right** to take two lives to save one.

Module 2: Life and Death Issues (2nd term)

Introduction

The teacher opens Module 2 with an in-depth moral analysis of a case-study which serves as a model for such analyses. The case the students are presented with is that of the Gozo twins of some years ago. The analysis is made with the class and included in the students’ portfolios together with their personal conclusions. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of capital punishment where the human life taken is presumed guilty – hence outside consideration of the right to life according to the third formulation of the sanctity of life doctrine explored in the final part of Module 1. Then the complex theory of the right to self-defence which is explored and discussed in its ramifications and with its distinctions and conditions through the examination of case-studies or narratives where the right to and/or mode in which self-defence is exercised is controversial and contested. The discussion involves a more basic discussion on the use of violence; the use and extent of use of which is controversial. Evidently the question here is whether violence against human beings is morally justified or legitimate and, if yes in which situations and to which extent. The different positions; pacifist, realist, and moderate are explored in the discussion. The teacher also uses the discussion to cement the case being made through the Ethics Programme that bullying is cruel and immoral.

The teacher then returns the discussion to the earlier distinction made between the view that life has intrinsic value; that it is valuable in and of itself which finds expression in the

sanctity of life doctrine, and the view that life is valuable only if it is worthwhile, if through it we flourish and are happy, not otherwise. The first was explored in Module 1, Module 2 explores the second beginning with the notion of a 'worthwhile life'. The teacher links the second point of view with the case made for the moral right to die as well as to live, whether through direct (self-inflicted) or assisted suicide, or through non-voluntary euthanasia, and points out that it is still very controversial in our society. Questions the debate raises in questions of suicide but in other situations also are: Who owns my life? Do I have the right to do with it what I please, to decide whether or not it is worthwhile? The affirmative answer is made from with a liberal viewpoint which recognises individual 'autonomy' in making such choices – a concept which needs to be carefully explained. What if I am unable, because of my circumstances (I am in a comatose or vegetative state, or brain-dead) to decide and live on life-support machines, should I be kept alive indefinitely? Who has the right to decide?

The question when does life begin and when does it end (when is one dead?) is regarded by many as crucial to these discussions, for their answers are taken to influence where the recognition of the right to life should begin and end for moral purposes. Put otherwise the question is about when the individual should be recognised as a moral person; a bearer of moral or human rights including the right to life. This is the way in which the issue of abortion is often presented in Western societies against the feminist claim for a woman's right over her own body. The last section of the Module, in fact, which concludes the whole of the Ethics Programme from Primary to end of Secondary, is about the prevention of life, which includes the issues about contraception.

Objectives

- To consolidate the writing of the journal as a reflective tool now on general moral issues that are raised in this module responding to them with their written reflections;
- To extend the students' skills and abilities to examine arguments and to write their own arguments and reflections on selected topics or issues on narratives or case studies set for them;
- To specifically discuss the issues raised and discussed in a preliminary way in Module 1 submitting them to more thorough examination and an in-depth discussion;
- To explore the question of violence and the different positions taken about its use, distinguishing its aggressive use from its use in self-defence and identifying the moral boundaries of self-defence;
- To introduce students to the contrary position to the sanctity of life doctrine; the argument that life itself has no intrinsic value, that it is valuable only if it is a worthwhile life – notion which is also discussed in the module;
- To explore the claim that there is a right to die with reference to acts of suicide whether self-inflicted or assisted, and to look at death in the context of the value of life – whether death also has value;

- To introduce students to and to explore the moral issues that concern the prevention of life, namely contraception and abortion;
- To reinforce yet again the case against bullying which has been made and consolidated repeatedly through the whole Ethics programme since Primary School;

Teaching Strategy:

Tools: Narrative, exposition, analysis, discussion, exploration, comparison.

Resources required: Stories, narrative, videos, documentaries, docudramas, current affairs stories, others.

Content and Method

- (a) The teacher enters this module by posing the question whether it is ever justified to take one life in order to save another, especially when both lives are ‘innocent’. The case of the Gozo twins of some years ago, in all its complexity is used as a case study by the teacher. It is examined and discussed with the students to illustrate the sort of dilemma that can produce this question; the conflict between: (a) the view that there can be **no discrimination** on the right to life, that **all** individuals have the **same** right equally, and (b) that faced with this kind of choice one is justified to save one life even if the consequence is the loss of the other. The teacher needs to bring into the discussion the supplementary question, **who has the right to decide** in such situations since, in this particular case, the parents’ wishes were over-ridden by the court with the argument that the interests of the children takes precedence in these situations and that the court must regard this as its first consideration.
- (b) The teacher invites the students to discuss the practice of **capital punishment**. S/he points out that opponents to capital punishment are usually against retributive justice generally and disposed towards a kind of justice which envisages the possible reform of the guilty party. They argue that it has never worked as a deterrent, and this is shown by the fact that despite its existence capital crimes continue and it is continues to be extensively used in some countries, that there is no proof that the rates of capital crimes, like murder for instance, are lower where it is practised, that it is a cruel and unnecessary form of punishment because society can be protected from the criminal by other equally efficient means, by life imprisonment in a high security prison, for example (though even the morality of life imprisonment is contested by some), finally that innocent people have been mistakenly executed, even where the proof against them seemed conclusive – i.e. it is not fool-proof and there is no correction to the act of execution once it is carried out. The teacher uses the discussion on capital punishment to illustrate the complex form discussion of such subjects can take; in this case there arguments from the facts; that deterrence doesn’t work; that there are efficient alternatives to it; that innocent people are known to have been executed.

- (c) The teacher turns the discussion next to the so-called **right of self-defence** which may necessitate using violence and even **taking another life** in order to save one's own, in which case it violates the other's right to life. S/he points out that self-defence is an act of **self-protection** and can only be cited as a right in such cases such as when one is attacked physically and includes attack on one's property, especially one's home. Also that self-defence, when it involves violent action, need not mean taking another's life, nor need it require violent action; one can defend oneself from acts of aggression by avoidance; by staying or getting out of the way. It becomes an ethical issue violence is used against another who is harmed in the process. S/he points to the importance of distinguishing the two kinds of acts of violence we may commit against another; as **aggressive** (when one **initiates** an act of violence) and as **defensive** (when it **responds** to acts of aggressive violence). S/he points out that there is a doctrine that denies moral legitimacy to both which is called **pacifism**. The **pacifist** denies that violence is ever justified, including in self-defence (Gandhi, Martin Luther King and others can be cited as examples), and is **always** immoral. At the other pole is the **sceptical realist** who argues that aggressive violence can be a legitimate tool for political and other action (for the purpose of deterrence, or revenge, or conquest, for instance), believes that violence should be repaid with violence, and that this repayment should be unrestricted in cases of war and self-defence.
- (d) These positions are carefully explained by the teacher who invites the students to an open discussion on them, and proposes an intermediate or middle of the road view in between for their consideration. This view: (i) rejects **aggressive** violence in all its forms as a way of resolving issues between human beings, individual or collective; (ii) acknowledges the right to the use of violence in self-defence, as a self-protective response against aggression or the threat of aggression; (iii) and employs the **principle of proportionality** which says that the violence exerted in self-defence must be proportional to the aggression suffered; i.e. that violence exerted in self-defence should be minimal – it must serve that purpose and stop there – it cannot become an act of revenge, for instance, or used for purpose other than that of defending oneself. If I am attacked with a feather I cannot respond with a hammer. I cannot take the aggressor's life and claim the right to self-defence unless my life is imminently threatened by the aggression. The teacher points out that this principle, which is discussed with the others, also exists in Maltese law.
- (e) S/he next asks the students whether they can think of other situations beside those of self-defence where the use of violence can be morally justified; for instance the defence of innocent victims of criminal, unjustified, or disproportionate aggression, or who may be too weak or vulnerable to respond, to defend themselves. The teacher points out during the discussion that one cannot plead neutrality in such situations, 'It's not my business' for not taking action renders one an **accomplice** to the aggression. The teacher once more introduces the subject of **bullying** which certainly does not qualify as self-defence and which is a form of unprovoked physical and/or mental violence against another weak or vulnerable person. S/he once more invites

discussion on whether we do not have a moral duty to defend the victims of bullying in whatever form, though the defence may not necessarily, indeed should not ideally, take the form of violent action – it can, for instance, involve reporting the bully to the appropriate authority; the teacher (in the school or classroom), one's parents (in the home) the police (outside).

- (f) Returning to the general question about the value of life and what was said earlier the teacher points out that there are those who claim that life has **no intrinsic value**; i.e. it has no value in itself. S/he is careful to specify that the claim is made not about **the individual person** but about the **life** of the person, human life. It distinguishes between a **worthwhile** life and a **desperate** life that becomes an intolerable **burden** for the one living it. They argue that there are lives of this kind, that are not worth living, lives of unbearable pain and/or suffering, or lives without scope, and that there are individuals in such cases who hold that it is better to die, to end one's life, rather than to continue living in that condition. The argument is frequently brought into the discussion of such acts as those of suicide, non-voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, and abortion. The teacher points out that this view is contrary to the view that human life is intrinsically valuable, that we have no right to end our lives or to decide when it should end. S/he returns the students to the earlier mention of suicide, pointing out that this view recognises an individual moral right to commit suicide in situations where her or his life is unbearable, and asks for a discussion. S/he then returns the students to the earlier definition of assisted suicide, which is **voluntary** to distinguish it from **non-voluntary** euthanasia on the basis of **who** takes the **decision** to end a life. Focusing on voluntary assisted suicide s/he asks for a discussion on the general question: **Is there a moral right to die?**
- (g) Next the teacher explores the subject of **death** asking the students whether they have experienced it with anyone they know, a relative, friend or acquaintance, and what they think of it. They are asked what they think happens once one's earthly life ends? Two answers to the last question are possible: we live on in another life, as religion tells us, or our existence terminates with our death. Students are asked to give their views either way. After which they are asked to discuss the question: Is it bad to die? A free discussion where answers will depend largely on the belief or otherwise in an afterlife – the teacher points out that the answer will determine not just one's attitude to death but to life also. S/he then points out that death is, by definition, the termination of one's earthly life, but when does that happen? When do we die? The answer may appear to be obvious, even trivial, but **where** one identifies the end of life (**when** one is dead for legal and moral purposes) can be very controversial, as is the question **where** it begins (**when** one's life begins for legal and moral purposes); the first is particularly significant in the debate on non-voluntary euthanasia, the latter in that on abortion. The students are asked to discuss these two issues separately.
- (h) The teacher returns to the discussion on what makes life valuable; the contrary points of view that life is intrinsically valuable and that it is only valuable only for what it gives us, if it is a worthwhile life, one worth living. According to the latter,

instrumentalist, point of view life has no intrinsic worth, what makes it valuable or otherwise is not the fact of being alive, the fact of living, but the **quality** of life. Within the perspective of non-voluntary euthanasia the question arises **who** has the right to decide when a life is or is not worthwhile? The teacher points out that those who support a right to suicide, direct or assisted, have no problem answering this question in this context; they usually refer to the argument from **autonomy**; namely that I have the right to decide for myself on matters that concern important decisions in my life including when to end it, provided my powers to make responsible decisions are not clearly impaired; that my decisions are free and rational. The teacher invites general discussion on this point of view making the point that the claims to a **right to die** often refers to this argument. S/he makes the point that from the instrumentalist point of view what make a life valuable is not its length but its quality, and that that death is not a bad thing in itself but is good when it terminates a life that has become burdensome for oneself.

- (i) A more difficult question arises in the case of non-voluntary euthanasia, when it comes to deciding on the life or death for others, in circumstances where there is no question of their making an **autonomous** choice (in the case of the Gozitan twins, for instance, or being in an irreversible coma). In this case, as in other life and death situations involving others important questions arise: (i) 'Do we ever have the right to decide for another?' (ii) If yes, 'who should have the right to decide?' (iii) When and in which circumstances should such a right exist? The questions are put separately and in this sequence to the students for discussion which should be made around examples where they arise, in real life or fictitious, The teacher points out that they usually arise in medical settings and with terminally ill or permanently comatose persons, commonly needing life-support equipment. At the beginning of the discussion the teacher brings into play the important distinction between direct killing and letting someone die through non-intervention.
- (j) The final topic for discussion is the **prevention of life**; the issues addressed are those of **contraception** and **abortion**. The difference between the two is carefully explained by the teacher and the two are discussed separately. The key question for debate here is on when the right to life is supposed to begin for both moral and legal purposes. The question in both cases is whether there is a right to decide whether and when to have children (and who is to decide; nature, the woman (which is the position of many feminists), the woman and man together (in a traditional family situation)). One important variant between them is that in the case of abortion conception has already taken place while contraception involves the prevention of conception. Another is that in Malta abortion is regarded a criminal offence whatever the circumstances in which it is made. Do the unborn have a right to life? Is the right absolute? If yes, why, if no why? If yes, from which moment of their lives in the womb? If no, who should have the right to decide and until which stage of their life? Should the mother have a right to decide? Why yes, why no? If yes, in which circumstances? What happens when the mother's right to life conflicts with that in her womb? Who should decide if a choice

must be made about who will live? What should happen if the mother's health is seriously compromised by her continued pregnancy? What are the mother's rights in the circumstances? What happens when the life in the womb suffers from a condition of very serious disability? Is there a right/duty to terminate it? Why yes, why no?