Here are two example answers from the AS-level Exam practice questions on page 13.

1a Explain why Hume rejected the design argument as proof of the existence of God.

(15 marks)

**Mark scheme**
- Design arguments commit the fallacy of composition.
- Mechanistic analogies are inappropriate.
  - As a living entity, any analogy should be with other living entities.
- Principle of Occam’s razor: the simpler option preferable.
  - There is no need for an explanation outside the known world.
  - There are natural explanations for the apparent design.
- The design argument is selective, focusing on the elements that arouse awe and wonder.
  - The reality of terrible suffering argues for poor design or no design at all.

**Answer**

Hume was effectively an atheist, stating that it was ‘just barely possible that God exists’. Therefore he was unlikely to accept any arguments for theism. Christian versions of the design argument were all intent on proving the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God. As an empiricist, Hume challenged this with reference to the existence of evil. Natural disasters such as the 1755 Lisbon earthquake and other terrible suffering in the natural world suggested to Hume that any designer deity was at best incompetent and at worst downright malevolent.

Hume accused all versions of the design argument of committing the fallacy of composition. Even if the parts making up the universe bore evidence of design, there were no grounds for arguing that this was true of the universe as a whole. Hume also claimed that the limited knowledge possessed by humans meant that they could have no understanding of what it would take to design a universe. Any attempts to argue for a divine designer were therefore doomed from the start.

Building on this, he claimed that the apparent order and design in the universe is ‘mind-imposed’, i.e. human interpretation of what is observed. Adopting the Epicurean hypothesis, he stated that the universe is as it is through chance. It could be that there are cycles of order followed by chaos, and we just happen to be in a period of order.

Hume also criticised them for using inappropriate analogies. Based on his observation of the universe, he viewed it as a living entity so a more appropriate analogy would be living, e.g. a vegetable. This would suggest a natural rather than a supernatural explanation. Mechanistic analogies were, he thought, deliberately chosen because they led naturally to the explanation of design.
Furthermore, a vegetable analogy and the principle of like causes behind their effects suggested to Hume that any designer must be similar to the design. Hume suggested therefore that if there was a designer, it could be a multiplicity of mortal deities, male and female and not the deity of monotheism.

**Commentary**

This is a Level 5 response. Although there is inevitably some inclusion of how Hume challenged the design argument, the focus throughout is on ‘why’. The points selected for inclusion are fully developed. The answer is coherent, with one paragraph leading naturally to the next and there is precise use of specialist terminology.

1b ‘For religious believers, the design argument is persuasive as an argument for the existence of God.’ Assess this view. (15 marks)

**Mark scheme**

*In support*

- Empirical basis of argument.
- Fits well with traditional Christian understanding of God and creation.
- Supports and is supported by the sacred texts of the Abrahamic religions.

*Other views*

- Supports deism rather than theism.
- Naturalistic explanations of the apparent order and purpose seen in the universe are equally possible.
- Design arguments are not able to rebut these.
  - Given the existence of natural evil, design arguments suggest a flawed or uncaring designer.

**Answer**

Though he rejected it, Kant stated that the design argument deserved to be treated with the utmost respect and many Christians would agree with him. The beauty and complexity of the world and its ordered nature encourage a sense of deep awe and wonder that lead to the conviction that a divine, omnipotent Being must be behind everything. Paley’s explanation of how differences of design in human and in birds’ eyes meet the different survival requirements of those species seemed to suggest that only a supernatural explanation will suffice.

However, Darwin’s theory of evolution and modern science have dealt the design arguments a fatal blow. Natural explanations that are based on empirical evidence seem more convincing. For many Christians, traditional versions of the design arguments cannot be regarded as persuasive arguments for the existence of God.

Of course, fundamentalist Christians pay no attention to scientific challenges to the design argument. The Bible contains all the truth about God, and it states clearly that God is the omnipotent and all-loving creator and designer of the universe. The design argument is compatible with this view. However, I do not think it would be accurate to say that fundamentalist Christians would find the design argument persuasive, as they do not need persuasion. The Bible is all they need.
Nor would fundamentalists pay any attention to what I, however, think is the greatest problem with the design argument: the problem of evil. There are modern versions of the design argument that address the scientific challenges, but none address the issue of why there is so much suffering. As Hume pointed out, if there is a designer, a natural conclusion is that he is either incompetent, has no interest in his creation, or is cruel and capricious. For this reason, I think that intellectually honest Christians might think that some forms of the design argument give limited support to theism, but they may well not find them persuasive.

Commentary
This fulfils the Level 5 criteria. It is coherent and makes effective use of both scholarly reference and specialist terminology. It contains logical chains of reasoning and the conclusion arises out of the earlier discussion.

A-level Exam practice answers
Here are two example answers from the A-level Exam practice questions on page 118.

1a ‘Examine the key ideas of Bentham about moral decision-making.’ (10 marks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark scheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Basis in fact of universal human goal of maximising pleasure and minimising pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Greatest happiness principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Happiness understood in terms of pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consequentialist theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Intentions unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pleasure and pain are measurable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Purely quantitative assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ No assignment of greater value to some pleasures over others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rules and established principles not worthless but not to be followed blindly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ To be set aside if they get in the way of the greatest happiness for the greatest number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Each decision-making situation to be assessed separately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>○ Use of the seven criteria of the hedonic calculus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answer
Bentham’s Act Utilitarianism is a teleological theory. It is based on the observation that all humans seek to maximise pleasure and minimise pain. From this fact, the obligation to aim at this is derived. It may be summed up in the Greatest Happiness Principle: the greatest happiness (equated by Bentham with pleasure) for the greatest number of people.

It is also consequentialist. There are no absolute and intrinsic values, other than that of maximising pleasure. Apart from happiness, no other quality has intrinsic value. All other qualities are at best instrumentally good. It is the same with generally accepted rules and principles, e.g. telling the truth or keeping promises. Everything depends on whether following such principles would maximise pleasure for the greatest number. If, for instance, breaking a promise to take his wife out to dinner
for her birthday means that a doctor can volunteer for an extra shift in A & E, knowing that there has been a major incident nearby with many casualties, a utilitarian would judge it right to break that promise even if he cannot let her know and she sits at home waiting for him.

Moreover, pleasure and pain are measurable. Bentham famously assigned the same value to pushpin (a game played in bars) to poetry. Each decision-making situation should be judged on its own merits. To assist in the decision-making process, Bentham developed the hedonic calculus with its seven criteria: intensity was concerned with the strength of the pleasure to be obtained from the action being considered, certainty with the likelihood that the desired consequence would be achieved, duration with whether the pleasure was short or long term and propinquity with how soon it would be experienced. The criterion of fecundity asked whether the pleasure (or the pain) would be followed by further pleasures (or pains) and purity with whether pleasure might turn to pain or pain to pleasure. Most importantly for Bentham, extent assessed how many people would experience the pleasure or pain. Applying the calculus to von Stauffenberg’s decision to kill Hitler, most of the criteria, particularly intensity and extent, would have supported his decision. In the light of what happened, certainty raises doubts. Utilitarians recognise, however, that in many situations, it is impossible to be absolutely certain of the outcome, so they work on probability.

Commentary

A level 5 response. The content is both accurate and detailed. The brief explanation of each of the criteria of the hedonic calculus shows that the specialist terms are fully understood and there is relevant application of the theory in the second and third paragraphs. The length of the response is appropriate and it is coherently written.

1b ‘Bentham’s approach to ethics has nothing whatsoever in common with religious moral decision-making.’ Evaluate this claim.’

(15 marks)

Mark scheme

In support

- Bentham had little time for Christianity and his theory reflects this
- Act Utilitarianism consequentialist with little place for intentions; motives are a key feature of Christian ethical approaches
- Happiness the sole intrinsic good; agape love is key to Christian ethical thinking and Aquinas saw the cardinal and theological virtues as good
- Rules of secondary importance in Bentham’s theory; in some Christian ethical theories, e.g. natural moral law, rules play a central role

Other views

- Bentham motivated by a desire to help others (exemplified in his leaving his body for dissection after his death); Jesus’ parable of the Sheep and the Goats makes the point that judgement will be based on helping or failing to help those in need
- If they prevented the fulfilment of the greatest happiness principle, established rules should be set aside; Jesus on occasion broke the rules in order to help others
Bentham regarded self-interest as inevitable and right; the command to love one's neighbour as oneself shows the interconnectedness of love of self and love of others.

Fletcher's Situation Ethics adopts a utilitarian approach with its use of the agapeic calculus to assess the rightness/wrongness of actions.

NB Answers that evaluate Bentham's theory in the light of the ethical thinking of other religions are acceptable.

In the essay itself, perhaps the first sentence should indicate that the response is in relation to Christian moral decision-making. Perhaps: 'My evaluation of this claim is in relation to Christian moral decision-making, and the fact that Bentham....'

Answer

The fact that Bentham had little time for Christianity makes it likely that his ethics would differ widely from Christian ethics. Its entirely secular basis would seem to be wholly at odds with the theocentric nature of Divine Command theory. The basis of that theory lies in the demands of God as presented in the Bible.

However, it could be argued that compassion, which is repeatedly urged on Christians throughout the Bible, is reflected in Bentham's character and his work. Paul told the Christians at Colossae to be clothed with kindness and compassion. Bentham worked tirelessly for the reform of prisons, and this was motivated by compassion for those who were incarcerated in the most miserable of conditions. His greatest happiness principle could also be said to be motivated by compassion; it sought to minimise suffering for as many people as possible.

Furthermore, this suggests that motive did play some part in Bentham's Act Utilitarianism, and that it wasn't a purely consequentialist ethic. If this is the case, then it has something in common with Jesus' emphasis on the importance of motive. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his disciples that charitable giving simply to impress people did not impress God. However, the hedonic calculus is concerned only with the results of the proposed action and not about the underlying intention.

Bentham paid little attention to rules and principles. They might be set aside if doing so led to the greatest happiness for the greatest number. It is true that Jesus himself occasionally broke the rules, as for instance, when he healed people on the Sabbath. Fletcher's situationism regarded the affirmation of agape as the only binding principle; absolutely any rules could be broken, should love require it. However, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus upheld the importance of the Law and when he healed the man of leprosy, he told him to fulfil the Torah's requirements for cleansing. Ethical theories such as Aquinas' natural moral law and Divine Command theory are rule-based systems.

When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus responded with two: love of God and love of neighbour. In his letter to the Christian community in Corinth, Paul said that there were three important qualities, of which the greatest was love. Love features throughout the New Testament as the quality that all Christians should reflect. The Greek word agape depicts its nature as a selfless, self-giving orientation of the will. Fletcher picked up on this when he stated in 'Situation Ethics' that the sole intrinsic good is agape. In contrast, Bentham regarded happiness in the sense of maximising pleasure as the sole intrinsic good,
and he included in this all kinds of pleasure. This has little in common with Christian ethics.

There are significant differences between Bentham’s ethical theory and those of most Christian ethical theories, particularly in relation to the intrinsic good, the question of motive and the place of rules. To claim, however, that the two approaches have nothing at all in common is a very sweeping statement. Fletcher stated that his ethical approach was in many respects utilitarian. Moreover, the fact that Bentham was not a religious man does not mean his values were totally different from those of religious believers. Paul and Aquinas claimed that the knowledge of right and wrong was inbuilt into humanity, regardless of culture or creed. Those who take this view are going to see several points of contact between the two approaches, however many differences there are.

**Commentary**

This is clearly and perceptively argued. The points on both sides of the debate are supported with evidence and the concluding paragraph follows naturally from those preceding it. This meets the criteria for Level 5.