

## Form 2 (Age 11-12)

### Theme: Freedom, Obligation, and Consequences

#### General Introduction

In Form 2 students are led to follow on from Form 1 where the primary focus was on the exploration and evaluation of the notion of a right and of its force and importance in our contemporary moral language. The Form 1 programme established in a preliminary way the necessary relationship between the notion of a right and the notions of **freedom** and of **obligation** as a moral restriction on the exercise of freedom, besides that of the rights of others – the point was made in the Form 1 programme that rights are never absolute but always curtailed by our duties or obligations and by the morally prior rights of others. The Form 2 programme now focusses on the notions of freedom and obligation more specifically and beyond their relations with rights engaging the students also in an in-depth exploration and evaluation of these notions and of their role in our moral considerations and in our everyday lives. This is the general object of the first module.

The second module introduces them to the notion of a **consequence** or an **outcome** and to the crucial role the consideration of the consequences or likely outcomes of an action should play in deciding whether it is the right thing for us to do. Consequences are shown to be other considerations that influence moral action besides rights. Consequentialist arguments are shown to be other kinds of arguments that receive special consideration and carry special force in our contemporary moral language besides rights based arguments. Teachers need to make the point that the appeal to rights and to the consequences of actions can conflict as some argue for the priority of the first, others of the second. Module 2 also returns to the question of the value of **motive** already raised in an earlier place in the Ethics Programme [find], and of how important motive is in evaluating the moral worth of actions and/or actors who perform them. This is in preparation for Module 3 where a third way of representing morality also having a strong currency in contemporary moral discourse is presented to the students tying right action with the motive of **doing one's duty** which is in turn represented as obedience to the moral law – and where the moral law is represented in religious or secular terms.

The programme for Form 2, in general, links up with the work done in Yr 6 of the Primary Programme and together with the programme for Form 1 re-introduces students anew to the different moral perspectives (with their key notions) described and explained in the Yr. 6 programme. Perspectives that, from Form 1, become the intellectual and discursive tools for carrying out the objectives of Secondary Programme B. In Form 2 the students are encouraged to evaluate more complex arguments and chains of arguments and to make valid arguments or counter-arguments of their own. Again the arguments and themes selected by the teacher for these purposes relate to the themes taken in up in the Form 2 programme. The teacher makes the point (1) that after passing the test of validity arguments are evaluated on other grounds also; (2) that a formally valid argument can be made up of propositions, or statements that are entirely or partially false – this is not easy to understand but students need

to learn the difference between **truth** and **validity**. The truth of the premises (the statements that make it up), when they are claimed as such in an argument, is the next evaluative level of an argument's worth. We reject arguments that are formally valid but depend on demonstrably false statements. The third level of evaluation will introduce students to the other kind of **fallacy** that an argument can commit (besides technical or formal kind); **informal** or discursive fallacies some of the simplest and commonest of which are presented to the students as examples.

Assessment for the Form 2 programme is:

- (a) The contents of the reflective journal;
- (b) The students' performance in the evaluation of arguments.

## **Module 1: Freedom and Obligation**

### **Introduction**

The point made about the need to consider the rights of others is that it restricts my power to act, to use my freedom, as I please. The module begins by returning students to the notion of dependence which is now explored as a condition that limits one's freedom, and to a repetition of the fact of human interdependence. The exploration of the notion of freedom that follows establishes two points: that my freedom is limited by my dependence on others, whatever its degree, and that my right to exercise my freedom, to choose what and what not to do or how to behave, is restricted by the rights of others who may be affected by my behaviour to have their freedom and well-being respected also.

The students are thus returned to the notion of **respect** already familiar to them and this is connected with **obedience to rules**. The object being to make the important point that freedom does not consist in the absence of rules, indeed that the contrary is the case, that the absence or disregard of rules often leads to the abusive use of freedom. From here follows the discussion whether we are always obliged to obey rules or commands because they come from someone with authority on us, whether we should not sometimes question and resist commands that seem immoral or harmful to us.

Freedom is here identified as a **power to choose** what and what not to do. Students are returned to the fact that there are good and bad choices we can make and that we may choose to exercise our freedom in good or bad ways. Then to the point that most of the choices we make are habitual while other, more weighty, ones require reflection and consideration. Habitual choice as the expression of freedom is discussed with the students and the importance of habitual freedom coinciding with good choices made.

The discussion is turned onto the notion of **harm** which is distinguished into **physical** and **mental** and into **self-harm** and **harm to others** done through one's actions – the idea is to sensitize the students especially to the existence of mental harm which is not as

easily visible as physical harm and is therefore more easily unnoticed. Then to the discussion of **reflective action**, to the fact that reflection enables responsible choice of action, and that this in turn implies making **informed** and **considered** choices of what and what not to do.

### **Objectives:**

- to sophisticate the weekly journal to add personal reflection to reporting on the sessions;
- to exercise the students further in the evaluation of valid and invalid arguments;
- to explore the notion of freedom generally as freedom of action and choice;
- To explore the notion of freedom together with those of dependence and respect for the rights of others;
- To deepen the exploration of the relationship between freedom and the need for rules;
- To take on the question whether we are always obliged to obey rules and commands given us by an authority (someone authorised to set rules and command);
- To discuss the notion of harm further by distinguishing physical from mental harm and deepening a discussion on the latter;
- To explore the idea of freedom as a power involving choice and to explore its limits, distinguishing habitual from reflective action;
- To explore the meaning of reflective action, what it involves and its importance in the moral life.

### **Teaching Strategy:**

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

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

### Content and method

- (a) Begins by returning to the students to the fact of human **dependence** discussed earlier in Module 2 Form 1. The teacher moves the discussion on by noting that, with most, while their dependence on their parents decreases with age their **freedom** of action, or **autonomy**, grows with the onset of mature adulthood when they gain the power to speak with their own voice and act independently – to the extent that their freedom is recognised as a **right**. However, s/he points out, that that right is **never absolute** since, as social beings, our rights never are, they are always restricted by the similar rights of others, not just to their freedom but to their **integrity** as human beings (**not to be treated like objects**). In short, our freedom is restricted by duties or obligations

we owe to others depending on the nature of one's relationship of **inter-dependence** with them.

- (b) The teacher reminds the students that though dependence is in many ways tied with age, it is primarily tied with one's mental and physical **condition** and that there are people in society for whom, owing to some disabling physical or mental condition or to the peculiar circumstances of their lives, it may not decrease significantly with age and may be permanent. People who despite their age remain incapable of full adult autonomy and heavily reliant on others throughout their lives. Dependence sometimes returns with infirmity also, with illness and/or old age; conditions that can render one vulnerable and dependent on others once more. The students are asked to discuss examples of these sorts of dependence of their own; situations **they** have met with or know of, or experience in their families perhaps, and how they are dealt with, but the discussion is not taken further at this point into one about solidarity with the dependent which will come later. [\[note\]](#)
- (c) Instead the students are returned to the point that freedom does not mean the right to live as and do what one pleases, to the point that as human and social beings we have an obligation to **respect** the rights of others, and that this means recognising the obligations and duties we owe them. They are returned to the point made in the last module of Form 1 that the recognition of rights and obligations means the recognition of rules and of their authority. The point the teacher seeks to make is that freedom is **not the absence of rules**, that, on the contrary there is no freedom without rules and without respect for rules – the example to make in the discussion is that of **games** we play together, and what happens when one or more of the players decides to break the rules and go their own way. The point is made that with some games there **referees** have the power to enforce the rules – this is what happens with **official** laws and regulations of different kinds. With many games children themselves play, however, there is no referee, there is loyalty to the agreed upon rules otherwise the game is unplayable – **moral rules** are analogous they are respected even without being written down and having external enforcement by an authority [\[return to Primary curr\]](#)
- (d) The students are next asked to look a bit more closely at the notion of **freedom** and what it entails, and given its first description by the teacher as the **power to choose**. S/he thus makes the point that freedom is the exercise of **power**, the power **to do or to prevent some action**, and with the **non-interference** with the actions of others. As a right it takes both forms. The laws of a society and moral rules define the extent and limitations of one's power to exercise one's freedom, and the exercise of freedom within laws and rules is legally or morally justified – examples of the lawful exercise of our freedom are given by the teacher and invited from the students at this point. The teacher makes the point that when these constraints are ignored the exercise of freedom is a matter of brute force, of the bully for instance, – the teacher invites discussion of this point giving **bullying** its broader meaning as a form of aggressive behaviour that relies on power and has no legal or moral basis – through giving

examples s/he points out that bullying takes place in all walks of life and is not limited to individuals, that institutions and countries can be bullies.

- (e) The teacher raises the question whether we must **always** obey authority **because** it is authority. Students are led to distinguish **respect** from **blind obedience**; that though respect and obedience usually go together we are **not obliged** to obey an authority, rules or commands that seem to us plainly immoral or harmful to oneself or others, no matter who they come from. On the contrary we are obliged **not** to obey them. This difficult territory is supported with examples and stories (from history and other places) where obedience has been cited to justify plainly immoral or inhuman action. It involves discussing whether we are morally obliged to obey immoral or harmful commands **because** their source is someone who has authority over us, whether we are not, on the contrary, obliged to question and even to resist and disobey them; and whether obeying a command can ever justify an action which we know to be bad or harmful.
- (f) The teacher points out that choosing what to do is something we do all the time, mostly unthinkingly through **habit**. But sometimes we feel the need to think before and while we act; in this case we choose after **reflection**. Both, acting from habit and from reflection, are necessary and important, the teacher takes the discussion into choosing from habit first. The students are invited (i) to say where they think we get our habits (modes of acting that unthinking because they are trained and programmed into our unconscious behaviour) from, (ii) then asked whether they think all habits are good or whether some can also be bad, and to give examples of both kinds (iii) they are invited to say how they distinguish a good from a bad habit and led to conclude that good habits are, or can be, **beneficial** for oneself or others, bad ones **harmful**, finally (iv) the teacher seeks agreement with the class that harmful habits should be avoided or abandoned if they exist, and beneficial ones cultivated through practice if they exist and adopted if they do not.
- (g) The teacher explains what **harm** means; i.e. causing unnecessary pain or damage to oneself (as **self-harm**) and to others. That pain or damage can be **physical** and visible, or it can be **mental** and invisible except through its symptoms, how it effects our outlook or behaviour. S/he provides examples of both. Examples of physical pain (because they are directly visible) are easy, of mental (because they are only indirectly visible), of such as fear, severe worry, anxiety, needless doubt, stress, exclusion, not so much. Students are asked to say what they think some of the symptoms of mental pain could be. Then to discuss what their causes could be, including the habits and circumstances that could bring them about. The point needs to be made that true freedom consists in the practice of good habits that are beneficial for oneself and others while the exercise of bad habits is a false freedom because they lead to harming oneself and others – hence that we need to adopt and cultivate good habits so that they become intrinsic to our practice of freedom.

(h) The discussion now turns from habitual to **reflective action** and the teacher asks the students to give examples of needing to think before one acts. S/he aids the discussion by finding stories that relate to situations of this kind that illustrate the result of thoughtless action when thought was required, and the result of thoughtful action. The point being to make the distinction between **choosing responsibly**, i.e. reflectively in the light of the **circumstances** and the possible **consequences** of the action and **irresponsibly** or short-sightedly, without thinking. The story/stories illustrating irresponsible choices are discussed with the students to identify what kind of thinking would have rendered them responsible. The teacher makes the point that acting 'reflectively' means acting in an **informed** way, a reflective choice being an **informed choice** – being informed meaning **looking at the circumstances** of the situation and the **possible outcomes** of action taken in it. Then that being informed is not enough one needs also the **will** to make the right choices and this is where the proper exercise of freedom comes in.

## **Module 2: Consequences and motives**

### **Introduction**

This module is about the moral weight of **motives** for an action and its **consequences**. It will explore both notions and their moral value or worth at some depth. The first point to make is that moral responsibility is not only for the **direct effect** of our actions but for their consequences or outcomes also, the two together constitute reflective action. The second is that **motive** is a third moral component of action. After introducing this second point the teacher goes on to explore the notion of consequences and their moral importance emphasising that we are responsible not for all the possible consequences of our actions but only for the **foreseeable** ones.

The distinction between the intention behind an act and its outcomes is made to make an important point about moral judgment; that it can be addressed **at the actor**, the one who performs an action, where motive is of importance, or **the action** itself where the immediate effect and consequences are in play, or at both. Students are introduced into the difference between direct and side effects of actions and taken into a discussion of addictive behaviour and its causes in order to promote the value of self-control.

A further distinction is discussed between acting from **self-interest** and acting from **egoism** where the latter is represented as anti-social. The notion of **predictable** consequences is explored and the distinction made between consequences that are **beneficial** and those that are **harmful**, while the general principle that we should promote the first and avoid the second **is** promoted by the teacher.

### **Objectives:**

- To introduce the students to the distinction between validity which is a property of arguments, and truth which is the property of statements;

- To introduce a second level in the evaluation of arguments; the truth of the statements made in it, if they claim to be true;
- To introduce the students to two important components of moral judgment; the motive and consequences of moral actions;
- To underline the importance of motive in judging the moral merit of an action;
- To explore the idea of moral worth;
- To distinguish the actor from the act as the recipients of moral judgment and to tie motive to the former consequences to the latter;
- To discuss in depth the notion of consequences or outcomes and the importance of considering them in judging the rightness or otherwise of actions;
- To introduce the students to the distinction between self-interest and egoistic, i.e. anti-social behaviour;
- To illustrate the discussions by connecting them with the act of bullying, hence once more reinforcing the fight against bullying as a form of cruelty.

### **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 students are returned to the point made in the previous module that **reflective action** requires considering the **circumstances** of our contemplated actions and their **consequences** or **outcomes** and the will to do what is morally right. Stories are used by the teacher of harmful decisions made by acting unreflectingly or impulsively where reflection was required. The teacher expands on the meaning of moral responsibility by making the important point that we are responsible not just for our **direct actions** but also for their **foreseeable consequences**. The latter notion is carefully explained with examples to make the point that though we cannot be held responsible for the unforeseeable we are responsible for the foreseeable results of our actions – e.g. drinking excessively and driving, leaving things in places that could lead to injury, smoking, giving money to an addict. The students are invited to give examples of their own.
- (b) The teacher points to the importance of **motive**, **why** an action is performed, in judging the **moral worth** of an action and this is briefly debated. But the point to make at this moment is that though motive is important it is not enough, the way we judge moral behaviour includes its **foreseeable consequences** or **outcomes** for which

we are morally responsible. The teacher insists that not wanting to do wrong does not let us off the hook if the outcome of our contemplated act is **predictably** harmful or damaging. This discussion should enable the teacher to identify **two different aspects of moral judgment** for the students; **judging the actor** (in which motive is crucial), **and judging the act** (in which outcome is crucial) – thereby to explain that there could be good acts with bad motives and good motives that could lead to bad acts, and that the two should be considered separately. **All this requires illustration through stories and examples.**

- (c) Focussing on consequences first students are taught that these can be distinguished into **direct** and **indirect**, that the latter are the possible **side-effects** of an action; its effects on other parties **not intended** by the action – for example if I go to prison for a crime I commit my family may suffer the consequences in different ways, the same is true if I encourage the addict through my action of giving him/her money even if my motive is a good one, his/her family may suffer. The students are made to discuss these or other examples. The teacher makes the point yet again of the social, **inter-dependent**, nature of our lives so that nearly everything we do affects others directly or otherwise; if I have an accident or harm myself through lack of thought the consequences are born by myself but also by my family, my friends, etc. who suffer also.
- (d) The students are asked to name and discuss with the teacher practices and actions the outcomes of which may be harmful for oneself; for instance over-eating or eating bad or unhealthy food, staying too long in the sun, reckless behaviour, drinking too much alcohol, smoking, and so on. The teacher makes the point that these practices are particularly harmful when they are habitual, even more so when they are addictive. This leads to a discussion on **addictive** behaviour, on what they think brings such behaviour about, then what they think the dangers of such behaviour are. The teacher uses the discussion (i) to link addictive behaviour with irresponsible behaviour and with disregard of the consequences of one's actions which are potentially harmful both for oneself and for others; (ii) to link addictive behaviour with the loss of one's freedom; (iii) to highlight the importance of **self-control** to avoid addictive behaviour.
- (e) The students are returned to discuss the moral importance of the **motive** of an action. The question the teacher raises is why is it important **why** people do something if it is good, giving money to the poor, helping a neighbour in need, performing some other act of charity, and so on? Isn't the doing of the action enough? The discussion should lead to the distinction between doing good from **self-interest**, or **egoism**, from prudence, to show off, not to be shown up, or because, say, giving money to the poor makes them less troublesome, and makes me feel good, and so on, and from **altruistic** or **selfless** concern for others. And to the further distinction between the motive of **self-interest**, which is natural and important, and of **egoism** which is anti-social and therefore to be discouraged. The students are then asked to give examples of both kinds which are discussed with them.



- (f) The teacher needs to summarize at this stage by: (i) re-making the point that we are responsible both for the direct result of our actions and for their foreseeable consequences for oneself and others, including their indirect and side-effects; (ii) re-making the point that motive and outcome are **both** important when we judge the moral worth of an action. The notion of **foreseeable consequences** left off from earlier is returned to for further elaboration beginning with the question **foreseeable for whom?** The answer is two-fold: (i) for whoever is weighing the action, the actor, and (ii) for those who can be **foreseeably affected** by the contemplated action, those who experience its effects. (ii) needs elaboration by looking closely at the **foreseeably** condition using different examples (stories, anecdotes, etc.) to: (i) distinguish effects and side-effects that are **immediate** and easily **predictable**, from those more **remote** and **less** predictable, and those that not **unpredictable** at the present at all; (ii) that our power of prediction of what will happen depends on our **present knowledge** which is nearly never complete; (iii) that therefore one can never be fully confident that one can predict or anticipate **all or even most** of the consequences of any action; (iv) that even decisions based on predictable consequences require **caution** in how we act because they may cause unforeseeable harm to oneself or others affected by them.
- (g) The consequences or outcomes of actions can be beneficial or harmful to oneself or others; if the former they produce **pleasure** or **happiness**, if the latter **pain** or **distress**. The general principle of action should be to avoid pain and distress and promote pleasure and happiness to the greatest extent possible. The teacher reminds the students of the point made in the previous module that pleasure and pain can be **physical** or **mental**, and that they can be brought onto oneself and others. S/he turns the focus of discussion once again on **bullying** in its different forms as an example of both kinds of pain; through physical violence, exclusion, black-mail, cruel teasing, belittling, mockery, etc. The students are asked to discuss these and other examples of bullying and the possible consequences bullying, as the infliction of both physical and mental pain, can have for the quality of the victim's life.
- (h) The teacher makes the general point that inflicting needless pain on others, harming them, wilfully or from spite (like the bully), is **cruel** and wrong, and that this includes cruelty to animals which can, like humans, suffer both mental and physical harm. After a discussion of this point s/he proposes a **resolution against cruelty** in all its forms, whether on human beings or on animals, to the class, and of every kind, physical and/or mental, and an undertaking to expose and fight it in all its forms whenever and wherever they detect it.

### **Module 3: Morality as Law**

#### **Introduction**

This module takes the other general approach to morality from the consideration of freedom and the consequences of actions; namely that which regards it as **obedience to a law** instead.

In other words it introduces students to the notion of a **moral law** and the idea that to do what is morally right is essentially to obey such a law. This is the case with most religious moralities, including the religions of the Book, Hebrew, Christian and Islamic, which teach that the moral law proceeds from God whose intentions are revealed to humanity through the prophets who set the law down as **commandments** given to Moses in the Old Testament.

The importance of **revelation** through the written word in the respective texts, the Old Testament, the Scriptures, and the Koran, in determining the religious beliefs of the faithful is discussed to explain the differences between the religions that have this common moral source in the observation of God's commandments. The written texts and their authoritative interpretation into moral truths determine for the faithful what its right for them to do and what is wrong – faith in these truths is therefore a key element in their moral behaviour. Morality in this context consists in obedience to the moral law based on their **faith** in the religious authority that defines it, the rabbi, the bishop, the Imam. The importance of tradition in transmitting the moral law in religious cultures is explored with the students.

In the other part of the module students are introduced to the alternative, secular, view of the moral law that took root in our Western societies since the Enlightenment, that it is a **law of reason** and is therefore ingrained in our human nature, which gives rise to the representation of the moral law as **natural law**. The point to be made about both versions of the idea of moral law, religious and secular, is that they regard morality, right moral action, as **obedience to a law** (whether of God or of Reason) which is binding on everybody. That in both representations obedience to the law is regarded as a moral **duty** irrespective of one's interests or inclinations or of the consequences of an action.

### **Objectives:**

- To increase the importance of personal reflection as against simply reporting in the journal;
- to exercise the students further in the analysis and evaluation of valid and invalid arguments;
- to introduce the students to the notion of and common examples of informal fallacies;
- To introduce the students to the view that morality consists of obedience to a **moral law** in its respective religious and secular versions;
- To reinforce the influence for the faithful of their religious faith on their moral outlook;
- To continue to distinguish religious and secular moral culture both of which are the reality of our Maltese society;
- To represent Maltese society as one that is **tolerant** of different religious and moral belief;

- To explore and promote the **value** of tolerance of difference and its **limitations**, namely that not everything should be tolerated;
- To explore the moral language that is couched within the view of morality as obedience to a moral law;
- To introduce a first distinction between an **individualistic** and **communitarian** moral outlook.

### **Teaching Strategy:**

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

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

### Content and Method

- (a) Students are returned to the fact that the moral culture of many people is largely an expression of their **religious beliefs**, but that many people in Europe and elsewhere choose to have no religious belief at all and to follow a **secular** morality. The teacher explains the difference between the two and that Maltese society is made up of people of both kinds, religious and secular, who may, because of their cultural differences, disagree on moral matters. It also respects different civil rights; to **religious freedom; to disagree** and to hold their own beliefs whether religious or secular, including their right to practice their faith providing that they do not harm others in the process or the similar rights of others to practice their faith. S/he tells the students that this kind of respect is called **tolerance**, a quality that is valued in our multicultural society.
- (b) The next step is to discuss the notion of **tolerance** what it means and what it does not mean – that it means showing a certain **open-mindedness** when we deal with others, a readiness to accept **different** people with different **fundamental** beliefs and practices, lifestyles, moral and religious, faiths from one's own, but may be good people and valuable members of society nevertheless. But it also means that **not all** beliefs and practices should be tolerated, and those that shouldn't are those that cause or lead to social harm or harm caused to others who are **different** in terms of religion or race, or colour (tolerance towards different sexualities will come later). The general conclusion the discussion should lead to is that tolerance means **respect for difference** but it need **not mean agreement** with it, this is what renders it difficult to practice; because one needs to learn to accept to share one's society with others one may disagree with, even strongly perhaps.
- (c) After this discussion the teacher focuses on **religious moralities**, moral outlooks that are determined by religious belief. S/he returns the students to the fact that different people have different religious beliefs and reminds them of the three most relevant for our social context in Malta which, because of the island's history, tradition and

geographical location, are the three ‘religions of the book’, **Christianity, Islam and Judaism**. The point is made that in all three religions morality is identified with obedience to the divine will which, in turn, expresses itself in terms of **moral laws** or commandments, the oldest basic set of moral laws being the Mosaic law, the ten commandments God gave to Moses in the narrative of the Old Testament – which is the point of reference of all three religions.

- (d) The differences between the three great religions, already described in the primary ethics programme, are returned to – students are referred to the three great books; the Old Testament, the Christian Scriptures, and the Koran, with their different histories, traditions, etc. as defining the moral standards of believers. The point is made that the different religions generate their different moral cultures underpinned by different readings of the divine will expressed in different versions of moral law, and subject to **different authoritative interpretations** of it. All three have in common the view that morally right action lies in one’s **obedience** to the divinely inspired moral law as interpreted in the different texts by the relevant ecclesiastical authorities; rabbis, bishops, imams, that such obedience is one’s religious **and moral duty**, that any disobedience of the law is **sinful** or an offence against God and not merely against other persons, other human beings, and that the only truly moral motive of our actions is obedience to the moral law as revealed by God.
- (e) The teacher introduces the students to a different, **secular**, version of the view that morality consists in obedience to a **moral law**, that grew in the Western world with the **Enlightenment** in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, according to which the moral law is a **law of Reason**, that its source lies not in divine revelation but in **human nature** itself, that therefore it is a universal law common to all human beings, and that it requires no other interpretation, or authority, than **human reason** itself. In short, the moral law came to be described as a **natural law** available directly to all human beings capable of reason, while moral behaviour came to be identified with obedience to the natural law, and the correct motive of moral behaviour came to be identified with a sentiment of **duty** to obey it. The point is made that the doctrine of universal human rights derives from this tradition.
- (f) The students are invited to discuss the **similarities and differences** between the two moral traditions, religious and secular, that identify moral rightness with obedience to a moral law, the religious and secular. One main similarity being that in both the moral law is represented as something impersonal or objective, while its pronouncements are regarded as moral truths which allow for no subjective interpretation. The students are also invited to note that they share essentially the same moral language that describes moral behaviour as obedience to duty and respect for the interpretive authority, religious or rational, as against, for example, the moral languages of rights (which is more about the individual) and consequences (which is more about well-being and the avoidance of pain) that are historically more modern. The students are asked to discuss these three apparently competing claims; i.e. that the motive of moral behaviour is respecting rights, respecting a moral law, and of

regarding the consequences of actions, and to say what they think about them – but the question is not pursued exhaustively.

- (g) The final point about religious moral cultures that speak the language of a moral law is that they are **communitarian**, they are the languages of communities that are exclusive and bound together by faith and by strong traditions (Hebrew, Christian and Moslem), and that their members tend to regard morality generally from the point of view of their faith. This is in contrast with the modern, Western-influenced, secular, moral culture which tends to be **individualistic** instead; i.e. which makes the individual either the direct interpreter of the law of reason, or the subjective locus of moral authority rather than the faith community. In short, a culture which tends to render morality a subjective and personal matter rather than a community concern. This distinction between communitarian and individualistic moral outlooks needs careful explanation and illustration with examples. **The object is not to represent them as competing with each other but as a reality basic to one's understanding of the contemporary world Maltese society belongs to.** Maltese society is represented as one still largely in transition and adaptation to rapid changes as it seeks to re-define itself to the new realities it has experienced in the last decades, its growing openness to the world and to European and other influences and challenges including that of re-defining itself as democratic, multi-cultural, and inclusive, though still steeped in its history and traditions.