

1. (b) **'The strengths of Finnis' Natural Law outweigh its weaknesses.'**
Evaluate this view [AO2 30]

Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.

- A strength of Finnis' Natural Law is that it does not rely on the existence of God for its authority, e.g. the basic goods cannot be derived from God. Finnis' Natural Law could appeal to non-believers because it is reliant on human (and not divine) deductive reasoning.
- However, he accepts that one of the seven basic goods is religion, still providing a basis for believers to accept his theory. Therefore, Finnis' ethic can be seen to be open to all. It potentially provides a universally acceptable idea on what is 'good' rather than just a religious one.
- In Finnis' Natural Law, 'basic goods' and 'principles of practical reason' are adapted to contemporary society i.e. this version of Natural Law is more in line with the beliefs of a secular society.
- Another strength of Finnis' Natural Law is that it focuses on community morality rather than just individual morality. This can be seen in Finnis' 'First Moral Principle' - the idea that we act for the good of the community as a whole not just as an individual.
- However, Finnis' Natural Law can be seen as a weak ethic. The seven basic goods are based on fallible human reason and therefore they have no divine justification. Many religious believers would, as a result of this, not consider following Finnis' Natural Law. Its status as a moral ethic is flawed because it is not associated with the command of God.
- The seven basic goods are not necessarily linked to morality, for example knowledge can be seen as being ethically neutral, or worse if used in isolation from the others goods.
- A further weakness of Finnis' Natural Law is that it is not a clear ethic. Aquinas' Natural Law, for example, gives a clear set of ethical rules, whereas Finnis' Natural Law can be seen as something to aspire to rather than a set of moral commands.
- Finnis claims that the seven basic goods are independent of human thought. They are universal and do not change in the same way that Aquinas claimed his precepts were universal and unchanging. This claim will not appeal to moral agents brought up in a post-modern society, where morality is seen as fluid and unique to each moral agent and or situation.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.