

# **A-Level Philosophy and Ethics**

## **Base line task.**

Read the article below and then answer the following question:

‘Trust is dying across the world’ Do you agree. Give reasons for your answer. You must explain those reasons fully.

I am expecting to see a series of well written paragraphs covering the following view points

1. Agree, trust is dying out – detailed explanations for why this is the case and examples to support your reasoning.
2. Disagree, trust is not dying out – detailed explanations for why this is the case and examples to support your reasoning.
3. Conclusion – bringing together key ideas from both paragraphs, but presenting the view which you are in agreement with and an explanation for why this would be the case.

Each paragraph should be checked for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors and you should ensure that each paragraph links back to the question (it is clear why you have spent the time writing the paragraph)

# Trust is dying across the world, says survey



**Honour:** In 1648, a handshake (above) was enough to seal the peace between the Netherlands and Spain.

**Whatever happened to good faith?  
People no longer believe that it is possible for institutions to do the right thing AND be competent.  
This is creating an unprecedented wave of cynicism.**

There was embarrassing news for a lot of important people yesterday. The politician preparing for a debate; the charity worker heading for a disaster zone; the newspaper editor approving a front page, and the businessman watching share prices – all had reason to be ashamed, particularly if they were British. A massive survey by the company Edelman revealed that the public does not consider institutions to be both ethical and effective.

And, of all countries in the survey, the UK came out second-worst. Only people in Russia are more disillusioned.

China, meanwhile, comes out best – probably because it still enjoys strong (if declining) growth and the government dictates what the public is allowed to know. The survey examined people’s feelings about government, business, the media and NGOs.

“Today, trust is granted on two distinct attributes,” writes company head Richard Edelman. “Competence (delivering on promises) and ethical behaviour (doing the right thing and working to improve society).” To be trusted, an institution needs to combine the two.

There are many possible reasons why trust may be declining. Some are technological. The rise of fake news makes us doubt the information we are given, while the use of algorithms to make decisions affecting our daily lives leaves us feeling we are not being treated as human beings. Globalisation may also be a factor. If you are doing business with someone on the other side of the world, you obviously cannot know them as well as someone you see every day. And if a company keeps moving its factories to wherever labour is cheapest, nobody will believe that it cares about its employees.

The decline of religion could play a part too. Many successful British businesses were started by Quakers, whose strong moral code meant that people trusted them to honour a deal.

Another theory is that we are more aware of the failings of institutions because they have been forced to become more transparent. As a result, some major scandals have been exposed. On the plus side, people are likely to conduct themselves better as a result, and so win more trust in the long run.

So, whatever happened to good faith?

Some people say that trust is in terminal decline because of the scandals which have engulfed institutions in recent years. The 2008 economic crisis was caused by the dishonest and incompetent behaviour of banks. British MPs lost credibility over the expenses scandal; in the US, President Trump has been impeached. Support for Oxfam was dented when staff were accused of sexual misconduct in Haiti. Others blame globalisation and the rise of social media. Business used to be done face-to-face: you knew that you would see people again and could hold them to account if things went wrong. Now, we deal with people in distant countries, who we may never meet. Meanwhile, the manipulation of social media has made fake news and fraudulent behaviour a growing problem.

Q: What do we know?

A: Edelman carried out a survey in 28 countries, asking people how they felt about institutions like government, business, media and NGOs. The Chinese felt the most trust for them, while the British and Russians felt the least. There was a scandal in

Britain about MPs' expenses. President Trump has been impeached. Thousands of people cancelled donations to Oxfam because of allegations of sexual misconduct by its staff in Haiti.

Q: What do we not know?

A: Why people in China trust their institutions far more than people do in Britain and Russia. How much their trust has been damaged by fake news and algorithms, and how much by scandals. Whether globalisation and the decline of religion have played a part. How many Oxfam employees were guilty of sexual misconduct.

#### Word Watch

NGO—Stands for Non-Governmental Organisation, usually meaning a charity.

Algorithms—A formula used for problem-solving by a computer.

Globalisation—The expansion of trade across the world, with large companies operating in many different countries.

Quaker—Quakers, also called Friends, are a Christian group whose formal name is the Religious Society of Friends or Friends Church, founded by George Fox in the 1640s. Its members started companies including Lloyds Bank, and the chocolate companies Cadbury and Fry's. Many Quakers emigrated to the USA and were leaders in the fight against slavery.

Impeached—To charge an official with misconduct.

Oxfam—A charity started in Oxford in 1942 to relieve poverty around the world.

Fraudulent—Designed to deceive.

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