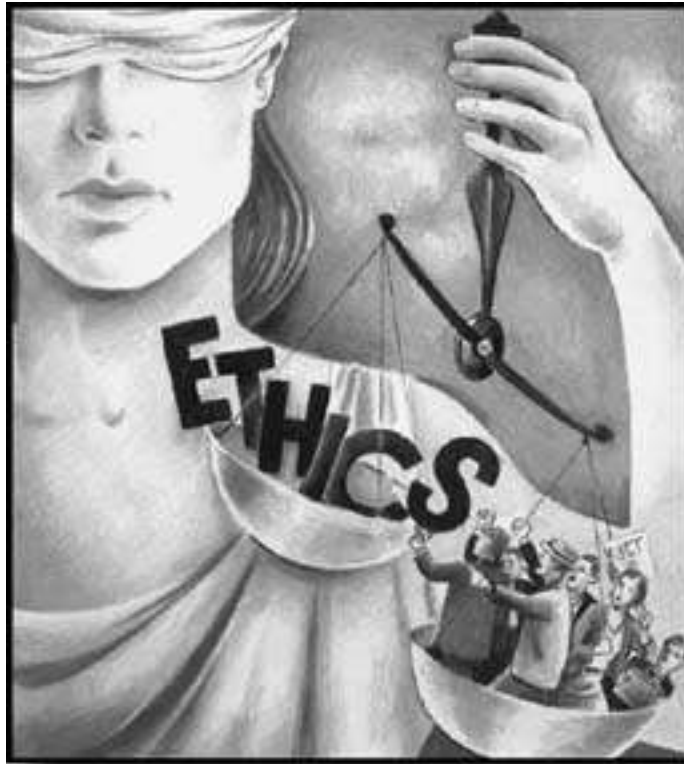


AP Language Ethics Unit

Name: _____



1. The Dot Riddle

2. What is the difference between ethics and morals?

This is the definition of “ethics” from *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*¹ : “The field of ethics, also called moral philosophy, involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior.

This is the definition of “morals” from *www.hyperdictionary.com* : “Morals are motivation based on ideas of right and wrong.”

“The field of ethics (or moral philosophy) involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior. Philosophers today usually divide ethical theories into three general subject areas: metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. *Metaethics* investigates where our ethical principles come from, and what they mean. Are they merely social inventions? Do they involve more than expressions of our individual emotions? Metaethical answers to these questions focus on the issues of universal truths, the will of God, the role of reason in ethical judgments, and the meaning of ethical terms themselves. *Normative ethics* takes on a more practical task, which is to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or the consequences of our behavior on others. Finally, *applied ethics* involves examining specific controversial issues, such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights, environmental concerns, homosexuality, capital punishment, or nuclear war.

By using the conceptual tools of metaethics and normative ethics, discussions in applied ethics try to resolve these controversial issues. The lines of distinction between metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics are often blurry. For example, the issue of abortion is an applied ethical topic since it involves a specific type of controversial behavior. But it also depends on more general normative principles, such as the right of self-rule and the right to life, which are litmus tests for determining the morality of that procedure. The issue also rests on metaethical issues such as, ‘where do rights come from?’ and ‘what kind of beings have rights?’”²

Metaethics

Objectivism: Moral values are objective in the sense that they exist in a spirit-like realm beyond subjective human conventions. They also hold that they are absolute, or eternal, in that they never change, and also that they are universal insofar as they apply to all rational creatures around the world and throughout time.

Relativism: Moral values [do not] exist as spirit-like objects, or as divine commands in the mind of God. Moral values... are strictly human inventions, a position that has since been called *moral relativism*. There are two distinct forms of moral relativism. The first is ***individual relativism***, which holds that individual people create their own moral standards. The second is ***cultural relativism*** which maintains that morality is grounded in the approval of one’s society – and not simply in the preferences of individual people. Relativism denies the absolute and universal

¹ Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/e/ethics.htm>

² Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/>

nature of morality and holds instead that moral values in fact change from society to society throughout time and throughout the world.

Normative Ethics

Normative ethics involves arriving at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. In a sense, it is a search for an ideal litmus test of proper behavior. The Golden Rule is a classic example of a normative principle.

Virtue Theories: Plato's cardinal virtues are wisdom, courage, temperance and justice.

Duty Theories: Obligatory; they base morality on specific, foundational principles of obligation.

Consequentialist Theories: An action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favorable than unfavorable.

Applied Ethics

Applied ethics is the branch of ethics which consists of the analysis of specific, controversial moral issues such as abortion, animal rights, or euthanasia. In recent years applied ethical issues have been subdivided into convenient groups such as medical ethics, business ethics, environmental ethics, and sexual ethics. Generally speaking, two features are necessary for an issue to be considered an "applied ethical issue." **First, the issue needs to be controversial** in the sense that there are significant groups of people both for and against the issue at hand. The issue of drive-by shooting, for example, is not an applied ethical issue, since everyone agrees that this practice is grossly immoral. By contrast, the issue of gun control would be an applied ethical issue since there are significant groups of people both for and against gun control. **The second requirement for an issue to be an applied ethical issue is that it must be a distinctly moral issue.** Sensitive issues such as affirmative action policies, gays in the military, involuntary commitment of the mentally impaired, capitalistic versus socialistic business practices, public versus private health care systems, or energy conservation...are controversial and have an important impact on society, but they are not all moral issues. Some are only issues of social policy.

3. Meta-Ethical Questions

"There are two fundamental meta-ethical questions: can we prove any statement about morality? and why should we be good? The first asks about the truth-status of moral statements: to what extent, if any, can such a statement be said to have been proved. (For example, 'slavery is evil' or 'we should treat people as equals unless there are valid

reasons for treating them differently.’) Taking some ‘self-evidently’ true moral statement and asking how we know it's true (it's not enough that everyone agree it's true: everyone once agreed that women were inferior to men and that slavery was allowable). The second asks not, what is the right thing to do but, why should anyone ever do anything other than what is in his or her own best interests. (Since it will often be in our own best interests to yield, compromise, take turns, be a good sport, keep our word even when it's inconvenient, help out someone in a jam, tell the truth even when a lie would be easier, etc., etc., we might have extensive non-moral reasons for "doing the right thing." A reputation for being a reliable, honorable person is a valuable commodity . . . but we would be doing it for reasons that have nothing to do with ‘wanting to be good’).”³

➡ CFL Lesson 1 Handout 2 and Lesson 2 Handout 3

Define:

1. epistemology
2. existentialism
3. ontology
4. phenomenology
5. empiricism ➡ CFL Lesson 19 Handout 29, 30

➡ *Waking Life* video excerpts and handout

➡ CFL Lesson 32 Handout 49

Case #1⁴ Kidneys for Sale?

Reason.tv – Organ Transplants: Kidneys for Sale (10 min video narrated by Drew Carey
<http://reason.tv/video/show/333.html>)

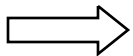
What reasons might we have for not treating body organs as commodities that may be bought or sold by consenting individuals? Are these reasons convincing?

- Is there anything wrong with allowing those with greater wealth more access to life-saving organs, then to those less able or unable to pay for such organs?

³ From an email conversation with Dr. Martin Beller, Senior Ethics AP English Teacher

⁴ University of Southern California Levan Institute at: <http://college.usc.edu/selling-body-organs/>

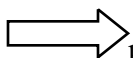
- Is legalization likely to lead to greater or lesser availability of human organs? What are the arguments for each side and which are more convincing?
- How might international legalization benefit or harm lower-income persons considering selling organs to much wealthier Americans? What worries does the issue raise about the exploitation of the poor?
- What, if any, are the *moral* differences between selling one's body in the form of hired labor and selling one's body in the form of organs?
- The very idea of selling a body part might feel intuitively repugnant to you. What, if anything at all, does such repugnance mean when considering the rights of others to engage in a mutually-consensual practice such as the sale of an organ?
- Should our social policy treat all organs the same, or should some organs be treated differently than others? If so, why? (e.g. organs we can regenerate like blood; non-vital non-regenerable organs like a kidney; vital organs like a heart)



CFL Lesson 39 Handouts 61, 62
Extra Credit: CFL Lesson 38 Handout 59

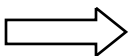
View and Discuss Harvard University's Lecture Series "Justice with Michael Sandel"
<http://www.justiceharvard.org/>

Extra Credit: Read and write a two-page reaction to "The Moral Life of Babies" from
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/magazine/09babies-t.html?>



Watch and discuss *Return to Paradise* (DVD). In the film, *Return to Paradise*, people have to decide whether to give up three years of their lives or give up the life of their friend. They have eight days to decide. Directed by Joseph Ruben, this film stars Vince Vaughn, Anne Heche, and Joaquin Phoenix.

During the film, jot down your ideas about who is acting ethically, unethically, morally, and immorally. We will look at this at the end of the film and see if your ideas have changed.



TED Videos
Transhumanism: http://www.ted.com/talks/nick_bostrom_on_our_biggest_problems.html
What's the Right Thing to Do?
http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_sandel_what_s_the_right_thing_to_do.html

Can we create new life out of our digital universe?

http://blog.ted.com/2008/03/06/craig_venter/

To upgrade is human

http://www.ted.com/talks/gregory_stock_to_upgrade_is_human.html

Case # 2⁵ Do we have any moral obligations to distant or future people?

You'd lay down your life to save your mom, or your little sister. If they were starving, or being poisoned to death, you'd move heaven and earth to help them. Every minute of every day, innocent mothers and little girls across the globe are dying from starvation or toxic pollution. What makes them different from your mom or your little sister? Are they too far away? Is the problem that you cannot see or imagine them? Is it that your moral responsibility extends only to your genetic tribe or regional population or nation?

It's so easy these days to harm others without knowing we are doing it. What you eat, what you buy, what you drive profoundly affects the life prospects of other people. Are you responsible for the well-being of people you've never met on the other side of the globe? What about for the future generations who will inherit our planet someday? If so, what are you morally obligated to do (to sacrifice?) for their sake?

- Does geographical or temporal distance effect the moral responsibilities we have to people in need in any way?
- What reasons do we have to think that our moral responsibilities to those in need are confined to those of our own nation? Are these reasons convincing?
- Do we have the obligation to try to refrain from harming people of other nations, the obligation to help prevent suffering they might endure that we are not the cause of, both, or neither?
- Do we have the obligation to try to refrain from harming future generations, the obligation to help prevent suffering they might endure that we are not the cause of, both, or neither?
- How do we assess the moral significance of our actions to generations of people that have yet to be born? Can persons have rights even before they exist?

⁵ University of Southern California Levan Institute at <http://college.usc.edu/future-and-distant-people/>

- How much do the interests of such generations count in comparison to those of existing persons? What are some schemes we can use for determining such comparisons? (e.g. count the interests of each person of a future generation as $\frac{1}{2}$ as important as one of our own, the following generation's persons receive $\frac{1}{4}$, etc.)
- Given an issue like pollution and global warming, how do we weigh the interests and existing Americans with those of future generations of non-Americans? (e.g. what trade off do we make between current American jobs that pollute and the expected famines that will result in Bangladesh as a result of such pollution)

Video: *The Life You Can Save: Acting Now to End World Poverty* at:
<http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/resources/video/data/000231#>

Additional Resources:

Online Textbook *Ethics*

<http://www.ditext.com/frankena/ethics.html>

Institute for Global Ethics: "Dilemmas"

<http://www.globalethics.org/dilemmas.php>

THE DAILY DILEMMA ARCHIVE by Charis Denison

<http://www.goodcharacter.com/dilemma/archive.html>

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University

<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/whatisethics.html>

Online Guide to Ethics and Moral Philosophy

<http://caae.phil.cmu.edu/cavalier/80130/>

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