Consider Ethics Theory Readings and Contemporary Issues 4th edition Waller Test Bank

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Instructor's Resource Manual and Test Bank

Tracy Grenier

Consider Ethics
Fourth Edition

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Chapter 1: Thinking About Ethics

Summary

The text discusses the goals of studying ethics. It will explore how to think carefully, critically, and effectively, along with how to avoid errors in thinking. Some people believe that ethics is not based on reasoning, but is built upon emotions, feelings, and intuitions. Other people believe there are no objectively true ethical principles. The chapter explores the arguments for and against theological voluntarism—the principle that ethical principles depend on what God wills. A number of ethicists believe there are no fixed facts in ethics and that any attempt to reach basic objective ethical principles is doomed to failure. Religion also influences ethical inquiry. If a person rejects religious voluntarism, it does not mean that religions considerations are also rejected. The text considers what ethics might be based on if they are not based on God's will.

Studying Ethics

1.1. Summarize the goals of studying ethics.

Ethics is the discipline that explores how we should live and how we should act. Ethical inquiry takes into account the findings of psychology and sociology, but it is distinct from them. It is not the intention of this book to make you a better person. This book will help you explore a wide range of different, and often conflicting, accounts of ethics. You can then decide where your own views fit. This book is designed to give you an opportunity to think carefully about some major issues in metaethics (the study of the nature of ethics) and some specific ethical questions. It is possible throughout this course, that your views on certain issues may change.

The Nature of Ethical Principles

There are many good places to start an examination of ethics, but one of the most disputed questions is: What kinds of truths are ethical truths? Are they eternal, absolute, and universal, known only by some special power; or are they more common ordinary facts that are part of our world that can be known by ordinary means? Philosophers have taken various stands with regard to moral truths. Plato believed that moral principles are eternal truths that are known only through pure reason—reason that sees through the senses and discovers the fixed, immutable truth. Aristotle regarded moral principles as basic guides to living a good life. Moses found truth on a mountaintop, in the presence of God. Descartes believed that God implants moral principles in our minds as innate ideas. Kant discovered the basic governing principle of morality through rigorous reasoning. Thomas Hobbes believed that morality is a collection of self-interested agreements that contributed to a more peaceful society. Bentham asserted that the basic moral principle is to maximize pleasure and minimize suffering. Hume insisted that morality is rooted in the affection that humans feel for one another.

Knowing Ethical Principles

Those who believe in absolute moral principles believe they *must* exist. They are universal, eternal, moral principles that are unconditionally true whether one recognizes them or not. Some claim that the truths are dictated by God; others believe that each of us has a conscience or moral sense that implants in us basic moral truths.

Natural Morality versus Transcendent Morality

Is morality something that rises *above* the natural world? Is morality something that *transcends* the natural world? Is morality a more natural process, based on our emotions or on rules we draw up for promoting social harmony? People have strong opinions about these questions. Those who oppose absolute ethics have little patience with the transcendent absolutism favored by Halverson and others. They believe denying transcendent absolutes does not lead to moral anarchy and that the benefits of cooperation and honesty require neither divine sanction nor special insight.

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God's Commandments and Ethics

1.2. Analyze the arguments for and against theological voluntarism.

One of the most common views of ethical principles is that they are tied to the commands of a divine being. This view is referred to as theological volunteerism or the Divine Command theory of ethics. Theological volunteerism holds that a law or principle is right if and only if it is willed (commanded) by God. Something is good because God wills it to be so, not because God recognizes it to be good. For example, God does not condemn murder because it is wrong. Murder is wrong because God says it is wrong. Many people turn to religion for ethical guidance. There are some who insist that their personal religious beliefs provide the only acceptable ethical standards. There are contradictions in religious texts about many questions of right and wrong.

Ethical Principles as Divine Commandments

Theological volunteerism raises serious questions about the relationship between ethics and religion. If ethics is based on God's commands, there are two questions we might ask about the nature of these command: (1) Is something moral/ethical/right because God commands it, or (2) does God command something because it is moral? These questions expose a tension between the religious views of ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Aristotle, and the religion of the ancient Hebrews. Aristotle's God is perfect, completely self-sufficient, and unchanging. The God of Abraham changes His mind often, and He rewards and punishes people.

Problems with Theological Voluntarism

Theological voluntarists believe that God is the sole arbiter of ethics that the ethical principles or commandments laid down by God are absolute, universal, and eternal. They are not subject to critical examination or questioning. Critically examining ethical principles requires involving standards of ethical judgment *independent* of God's commands. Many religious people have a great respect for reason and use it to understand their religion. For theological voluntarists, reason is more likely to be an enemy rather than an ally. Some argue whether such total unthinking devotion would qualify as ethical behavior at all. Rachels argues that only those who exercise free will are capable of acting ethically.

God's Law and Punishment

The intersection of religion and ethics raises another fundamental distinction in ethics, namely, the difference between moral motivation and moral justification. It is possible that the person of faith endorses theological volunteerism because of the possibility of divine punishment. While this may provide one with a motive for obeying God's commands, it does not justify the commands themselves. One may be motivated to act in accordance with certain rules, without reflecting on whether the rules are ones that ought to be followed.

Religion and Ethics

1.3. Outline the influence of religion on ethical inquiry.

If we reject theological voluntarism, it does not imply the rejection of religious considerations in terms of our inquiry into ethics. Martin Luther King's civil rights campaign drew heavily on religious symbolism. Religious parables and traditions have often stimulated reform movements and have encouraged us to look more closely at our lives, habits, and assumptions. So, if ethics is not based on God's will or God's punishments, what is the basis of ethics?

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Discussion

1. Several films have explored explicitly or implicitly the problems with accepting theological volunteerism or divine command theory. In *The Name of the Rose* the inquisitor Bernardo Gui justifies the torture and killing of supposed heretics on theological grounds. How can we know which commands are genuinely from God? Show part or all of the film and examine the implications and problems with theological volunteerism. Consider a present-day ethical question, such as: Is drug addiction a brain disease or a moral failing? Discuss how questions of ethics might determine how people are treated for addiction.

Activities

1. The U.S. Supreme Court legalized same sex marriage nationwide in 2015. Should the government be able to decide who marries whom? People on all sides of this question often use religious or moral arguments to support their views. Have students research same sex marriage in the United States. Have each student take a position on the question. Facilitate a roundtable discussion where students use their research to support their opinions.

2. Although many churches are Christian, not all Christian churches share the same outlook on individual moral issues. Ask the students to create a chart comparing the moral positions of several different denominations on a topic such as abortion, capital punishment, homosexuality, or marriage.

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True/False Questions

1. Metaethics is the study of moral rules, norms and principles that guide or govern human action. _____
Answer: False

2. Plato believed moral principles are eternal truths that are only known through reason. _____
Answer: True

3. The word *transcend* means to go beyond the limits of something. _____
Answer: True

4. Theological voluntarism is also referred to as Divine Command theory. _____
Answer: True

5. Western religious tradition has struggled to combine the views of ancient Roman philosophy with the religion of the first Christians. _____
Answer: False

6. Aristotle's God changes His mind frequently. _____
Answer: False

Multiple Choice Questions

1. This philosopher believed that God implants moral principles in our mind as innate ideas.
    A. Aristotle
    B. Descartes
    C. Hobbes
    D. Socrates
    Answer: B. Descartes

2. The belief that what is moral or immoral is commanded by God is known as
    A. moral relativism.
    B. moral absolutism.
    C. theological voluntarism.
    D. theological noncognitivism.
    Answer: C. theological voluntarism.

3. This religious leader referred to reason as "the Devil's greatest whore."
    A. Moses
    B. Socrates
    C. Pythagoras
    D. Martin Luther
    Answer: D. Martin Luther

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4. One implication of accepting the premise that what is moral is moral in virtue of God's commanding it is that

A. there must be a moral standard independent of God.
B. there must be one God.
C. what is moral is arbitrary.
D. God is not a necessary for there to be morality.

Answer: C. what is moral is arbitrary.

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Short Answer Questions

1. Are ethical principles fixed or changing? Explain your response.
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

2. In the text, the author asks the reader to consider *how* to think carefully, critically, and effectively. What does this proposition mean to you?
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

3. What is the difference between moral motivation and moral justification?
Answer: A motive might be a reward or punishment for doing or not doing something. Justification is an acceptable reason for doing something.

4. What two questions can we ask of someone who holds that "moral" equals "what God commands?"
Answer: Is a law right because God commands it? Does God command a law because it is right?

Essay Questions

1. Explain the difference between natural morality and transcendent morality.
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

2. What two questions are raised by theological volunteerism (Divine Command theory)? What are the implications of holding one or the other true?
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

3. Do you agree with Rachels notion that only those who exercise free will are capable of acting ethically? If you subject your will to the external commands of others, are you acting slavishly? Explain your response.
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

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Chapter 2: Thinking Critically About Ethics

Summary

Ethics requires that we be clear on the questions we seek answers to. You may decide that there are no moral objective facts in ethics. You may also decide that there are objective moral facts. Understanding ethical questions requires being able to identify which premises are relevant to the conclusion. Changing one's beliefs in light of better arguments or new information is a sign of clear and honest thinking. Bad forms of reasoning include: Red Herring/Irrelevant reason, Ad Hominem, Principle of Charity, Strawman Fallacy, and Inconsistency.

What's the Question?

2.1. Determine the exact conclusion and distinguish relevant from irrelevant arguments.

When considering ethics, it is important to be clear on exactly what question is being considered. When examining an argument, think about *precisely* what the argument is supposed to be proving. Make sure you clearly understand what the *conclusion* of the argument is. The relevance of an argument is not determined by whether a claim is true or false but whether it *matters* if the claim is true or false. For example, a false claim by a witness in a trial may be relevant because a defendant may go to prison because of the false statement. When a person uses an irrelevant point in support of a conclusion, we say the person has committed a *fallacy*, or argument error, of *irrelevant reason*. This is also known as the *red herring* fallacy.

Ad Hominem Fallacy

2.2. Recognize ad hominem arguments and distinguish legitimate uses of ad hominem from ad hominem fallacies.

An *ad hominem* fallacy is an attack on the *source of the argument*. If someone presents an argument, we must evaluate the merits of the argument itself, not the merits of the person making the argument. If you attack the source of the argument in order to discredit the argument, you have committed an *ad hominem fallacy*. It is important to keep this point in mind because many arguments can become intensely personal. Not all *ad hominem* attacks are fallacious. For example, in the O.J. Simpson trial, the defense made an ad hominem attack on Mark Fuhrman. In order to evaluate Fuhrman's testimony, the jury needed to know if he was a credible witness.

The Principle of Charity and the Strawman Fallacy

2.3. Focus on the strongest version of arguments and avoid the strawman fallacy.

The *principle of charity* supports the idea that you should interpret opposing views and arguments as generously, fairly, and honestly as possible. Resist the temptation to score cheap points and win false victories by misrepresenting opposing views. When someone distorts or misrepresents a position in order to make it easier to attack, it is called the *strawman fallacy*. Always represent opposing views in their strongest and most plausible form.

Appeal to Authority

2.4. Recognize the limits of appeal to authority in ethics.

In order for an *appeal to authority* to be legitimate, it must meet certain conditions. First, the authority to whom you appeal must be an expert *in the appropriate area*. Second, the subject on which we appeal to authority must be the one in which there is *general agreement* among authorities on that subject. We cannot legitimately appeal to authority to settle ethics issues because there is no general agreement among such authorities.

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Consistency

2.5. Appreciate the importance of argument consistency.

A key question in examining ethical views is whether they are internally consistent and whether they are consistent with our other beliefs. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." Emerson believed that it is okay for people to change their minds. He believed in keeping an open mind, but it shouldn't be so open that it allows internal contradictions.

Analogies

2.6. Understand the different forms of analogy and how deductive arguments by analogy work.

An analogy is a comparison of two things, usually for explanation or clarification. Using analogy can be an effective way to convince someone to change his or her point of view. It can also be an effective way to evaluate the legitimacy of one's own views. Figurative analogies don't prove anything. They are illustrations. They are not effective as arguments or proofs. *Deductive arguments by analogy* do offer arguments, and they can be powerful and persuasive. There are two ways to dispute deductive arguments by analogy. First, you can reject the basic starting point of the analogy. Second, you can accept the starting point of the analogy but then argue that the analogy itself is flawed. For the second option, you must explain why the two cases are not analogous.

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Discussion

1. There are many films that explore questions of ethics. In the 1981 film *Whose Life is it Anyway?*, a sculptor who is paralyzed from the neck down sues the hospital he is in for the right to be allowed to die. Show part or all of the film and examine the different kinds of arguments the parties make about their positions on the question. Compare the issues examined in the film to an ethical question you have had to consider in your own life.

Activities

1. Logical fallacies are often found in the editorial pages, and letters to the editor pages of the local and national newspapers (not to mention blog posts and comments). Have the students find an article from a newspaper, magazine, blog, etc. that commits one of the logical fallacies discussed in the text.

2. President Donald Trump frequently uses red herrings in order to distract the media and the public from investigations conducted on his administration. Have students search online for examples of red herrings Trump has used during his presidency. Invite groups of students to share what they found with the class.

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True/False Questions

1. The first step in critical thinking is to understand the issue in question. _____
Answer: True

2. A red herring is used to attack a person who is making an argument. _____
Answer: False

3. Not all ad hominem arguments are fallacious. _____
Answer: True

4. People can appeal to authority to support arguments on ethics questions. _____
Answer: False

5. An arguer that uses an irrelevant point to support his or her position commits a red herring. _____
Answer: True

6. Attacking the person presenting an argument rather than the argument itself is to commit the strawman fallacy. _____
Answer: False

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Misrepresenting or distorting the argument of one's opponent in order to make it easier to attack is called a (an):

A. ad hominem fallacy.
B. strawman fallacy.
C. red herring.
D. fallacy of irrelevant reason.
Answer: B. strawman fallacy

2. Steve believes that the universe came into being by accident. Joe says Steve does not believe in God, so nobody should accept his opinion. This is an example of a (an)_____fallacy.

A. red herring
B. strawman
C. ad hominem
D. principle of charity
Answer: C. ad hominem

3. "President Obama's arguments for a public option to be included in the health care reform bill can't possibly be good. After all, he has all of his medical needs taken care of by a private doctor." This argument commits which of the following fallacies:

A. ad hominem fallacy
B. strawman fallacy
C. red herring
D. fallacy of irrelevant reason
Answer: D. fallacy of irrelevant reason

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4. A person believes in freedom of speech but believes music with obscene lyrics should be banned. The person may be criticized for:

A. charity.
B. irrelevancy.
C. inconsistency.
D. hypocrisy.

Answer: C. inconsistency

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Short Answer Questions

1. What does it mean for an ethical view to be consistent?
Answer: The argument is internally consistent and also consistent with our other beliefs.

2. What is the principle of charity?
Answer: This principle interpret arguments that oppose yours generously, fairly, and honestly.

3. How did the George W. Bush administration use a red herring in the lead-up to war?
Answer: They spent a lot of time talking about the importance of fighting terrorism. The real question was about whether Iraq was supporting terrorist activities or providing weapons of mass destruction to terrorists.

4. A witness in a murder trial wants to testify about the character of the victim instead of about when he or she last saw the victim alive. Is the witness's testimony relevant or not? Explain your answer.
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

Essay Questions

1. The 1960 film *Psycho* uses several red herrings to distract the view from finding out who the real murder is. Choose a film you like. Briefly describe how a red herring is used in the film.
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

2. Not all ad hominem arguments are fallacious. Describe an example of an ad hominem argument that is legitimate.
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

3. Samantha and Rajiv are having a discussion. Samantha says that women should make the same money as men for the same work. Rajiv says it is discrimination to pay men less than women. Describe the type of fallacy being used in this example. Make suggestions for improving the quality of the argument.
Answer: Student responses should be supported by evidence or reasoning.

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