Chapter 7: Understanding Ethics

Background

Ethics is set up well in Chapter 6, which introduces various metaphysical ideas about the existence of God and the problem of evil and if there is a beneficent and omnipotent being. The discussion of the five-fold path of Buddhism (SE p. 171) is a good example of this cross-over between Units 2 and 3. (See Teaching Plan 1, Teaching Strategy 1 for suggestions on how to make the connection between metaphysics and ethics.) The discussion of relativism in this unit will help students approach the even more difficult topic of epistemological relativism in Units 4 and 5 (SE pp. 287-288; 333-335).

About Chapter 7

For many students this chapter will be one of the more accessible, addressing the categories of ethics and its various sources of moral authority or "grounding." Here, students question whether ethics is subjective or objective (SE pp. 167-168) and enter into the problem of moral universality versus relativity. Finally, students entertain the metaphysical problem of free will versus determinism, giving us a framework for discussions of moral responsibility.

Features

In this chapter, the following features are included to help students make personal connections and/or deepen their understanding of ethics. You may use all or some of these features as explained below.

Feature	Student Textbook Page(s)	Opportunity for Assessment	Strategies for Classroom Use
Your Unit Challenge	159	Students' reflections on how their answers changed throughout the unit could be included in their culminating activity personal statement of ethics.	Brainstorm possible questions, as a class or in small groups. Post them in the classroom to give students ideas on what they might not have thought of, as focus topics of inquiry.
Thought Experiment	177	Use questions 1 and 2 as the basis for a student journal entry (see BLM J). It could also be used as the basis for a cartoon that conveys the message about human inclinations and moral behaviour.	Students can relate to the scenario of an invisibility ring through the character Bilbo Baggins in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *The Hobbit*. See answers to feature questions for further discussion.
Viewpoints	170	As an assessment option, try using an analogy to the Euthyphro dilemma and ask students to write a reflection on whether it is a suitable or false analogy. (See the Text Answers section for this "Viewpoints" feature for a specific analogy to use for this assessment option).	To answer questions 1 and 2 in this feature, students need to read SE p. 169 on divine command theory.

BIG IDEAS

- Ethics is a consideration of a person's or a culture's customs, character, or practices that falls into three categories, each of which addresses a different aspect of this philosophical area: *metaethics* addresses the source of our ethical principles; *normative ethics* deals with what we should or ought to do, and why; *applied ethics* deals with what works in a given situation. (SE pp. 162-163)
- A challenge to ethics is *relativism*, or the claim that what is "right or wrong" varies from person to person, among substantially different social groups, or by way of denying philosophically any absolute foundation for ethics. (SE pp. 163-166)
- Ethical principles may have different types of "grounding" or foundation: metaphysical bases that draw on religious ideas of divine will or the moral path to virtue and enlightenment; appeals to nature or to social practices and their benefits; duties grounded in an appeal to universal reason; and actions or choices based on calculation of the best outcome. (SE pp. 167-175)
- To be a morally responsible agent, who can make his/her own decisions, there must be some degree of freedom as opposed to determinism. This brings metaphysics into the discussion of ethical problems. (SE pp. 176-179)
- Instead of having universal ethical principles or divine commands, existentialists contend that humans must make their own ethical codes and find the courage to live by them without expectation of reward in an afterlife. (SE p. 180)
- Ethical principles may be open to interpretation through "excusing conditions." (SE p. 180)

Teaching Plan 1 (SE pp. 158-167)

Learning Goal

Students are introduced to the field of ethics and will become aware of the vexing problem of ethical relativism. In the process they will develop the vocabulary for discussing such ethical problems.

Activity Description

Students enter the topic of ethics by first confronting the problems of relativism in the context of a four-corners debate about the Latimer case. Use small group and whole-class discussion to get the class moving toward their own ideas about a need for some kind of common grounding of morality, before inquiring more deeply into that topic in the next segment of this chapter (in Teaching Plan 2).

Assessment Opportunities for Chapter Questions

The table below summarizes assessment opportunities for selected chapter questions, including questions in the Chapter Review, which are relevant to this teaching plan.

Assessment Type	Assessment Tool	Section Questions	Chapter Review Questions
Assessment as Learning	Values line and four-corners debate		10, SE p. 183
Assessment as Learning	Preference Identification	1, SE p. 163	
Assessment for Learning	Analytic thinking	1-3, SE p. 167	

Timing

225 minutes
(three 75-minute classes)

Learning Skills Focus

- Collaboration
- Independent work
- Organization
- Initiative

Resources Needed

Make copies of these Blackline Masters:

- BLM 7.1 Unit 3 Culminating Activity: Personal Statement of Ethics
- BLM A Venn Diagram
- BLM B Pro/Con List: Points for Debates and Essays
- BLM C Comparison Chart
- BLM D Argument Builder
- BLM F Writing Assessment Rubric
- BLM G Debate Assessment Rubric
- BLM H Presentation Assessment Rubric
- BLM J Journal Writing Guide

Possible Assessment of Learning Task

Encourage journal writing (see BLM J) to extend reflection on applications of ethics beyond the work that students do for the culminating activity. See suggested topics in the Teaching Strategies that follow.

Assessment (For/As Learning)

As teachers move through each chapter, opportunities will be highlighted to provide assessment for/as learning in preparation for assessment of learning at the end of each chapter. (See table on the next page.)

Task/Project	Achievement Chart Category	Type of Assessment	Assessment Tool	Peer/Self/ Teacher Assessment	Learning Skill	Student Textbook Page(s)	Blackline Master
Values line for Kevorkian case; four-corners debate for Latimer case	Knowledge; Thinking; Communication	As	Pro/con list, argument builder, and debate assess-ment rubric	Self; peer	Initiative	159; 183, question 10	BLMs B, D, and G
Linking ethics and metaphysics	Knowledge; Thinking; Communication	For	Writing or pre-sentation	Teacher	Independent work; orga-nization	168-171	BLMs C, F, and/or H
Bride kidnap-ping: What is a normal mar-riage?	Thinking; Communication	As	Personal reflection; Exit card	Self	Independent work	178-180	

Prior Learning Needed

The section on the metaphysical grounding of ethics (SE pp. 168-171) builds upon concepts that were explored in Unit 2: Metaphysics. For example, see the discussion of Buddhism and Taoism (SE pp. 97-101) and the discussion of theism and atheism (SE pp. 144-148), and the problem of reconciling evil in the world.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. The feature on Levinas (SE p. 149) questions whether metaphysics or ethics is the first philosophy—that is, the basis on which all other philosophy rests. Raising this question of first philosophy may offer a useful starting point for transition between Units 2 and 3. It may also help to clarify the *metaethical* sense (SE p. 162) in which ethics receives various forms of "grounding" (SE pp. 167-175). The section "The Meaning of Life" (Unit 2, SE pp. 150-155) also sets up ethics, as it introduces questions as to whether maximizing pleasure, or living in accordance with God or existentialist visions of the free life, is the goal of our mortal existence. This kind of teleological (goal- or ends-directed) thinking is also at the root of virtue ethics, as well as more recent forms of moral perfectionism (Nietzsche, Cavell, etc.).

2. Unit 3 Opener (SE p. 159): Try running a four-corners debate with students, using the Latimer case as set out in Chapter Review question 10, SE p. 183. In this debate, the four groups are focused on what students think is the most reasonable or fair outcome, rather than on schools of thought they have yet to study. Later, students can revisit this activity and consider how or whether the several schools of thought match with these outcomes or solutions. (See section questions 2 and 3 on SE p. 176 and ask students: "What does it mean if people who identify with the same school of ethical thought arrive at different outcomes? Is the theory weak? Or does a particular outcome or conclusion stem from incorrect application of the theory?")

   Acc Doing the four-corners debate suggested above sets up the four-corners debate based on schools of thought to come in the next chapter. Students can self-assess how well they did in the four-corners debate suggested above, and, if necessary, try to do better in the next one with the advantage of more preparation time. If a student was very quiet in the debate, pull him or her aside and ask how they might be assisted in preparing for the next one. It may help these students to use pre-written notes as well as talking through their ideas with a partner before the debate. These students

could also pre-record a debate statement, making success less reliant on impromptu or extemporaneous delivery during the debate.

3. Spend some time going through SE pp. 162-163 with your class to help them distinguish between the three types of ethics outlined in those pages. It is essential that students learn correct usage of these terms as they will be used throughout the unit. These terms also appear in the vocabulary quiz (BLM 7.3) at the end of Chapter 7. To further help students engage and understand these terms, ask them to address the section question on SE p. 163.

4. We quickly jump into the quagmire of ethical relativism (beginning on SE p. 163). Plato's *Protagoras* dialogue raises the question of whether we learn what is virtuous, much like we learn the customs and language of our local community, making it relative to that group and perhaps to each individual (i.e., as Protagoras said: "man is the measure of all things"). In the 1970s and 1980s there was a movement in North America, taken up in many Ontario schools, called "values clarification." Its proponents, such as Louis Rath, advocated that teachers guide students to clarify their own values instead of socializing them to accept the contemporary values of their culture. In other words, the starting point was acceptance of social relativism—that society's norms were not universal laws that students needed to internalize, and the norms might be outdated (a 1960s realization that occurred during the countercultural revolution). The goal was to achieve a form of individual (egoistic) relativism. By this account, the only metaethical standard of evaluation for assessing normative claims, or the one value that stood out in assessing different approaches to problems of practical ethics, was clarity itself.

   Acc Both gifted and challenged students benefit from examples drawn from literature or popular film. For example, the protagonist, Alex, in Anthony Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange* was clear about his desire to do evil deeds. Didn't this make him authentically evil despite societal efforts to make him "normal"? Teachers may wish to see Stanley Kubrick's film adaptation of the novel, but it is not recommended for classroom viewing. Even the movie trailer is not suitable for the classroom. The literary and cinematic example, however, is potent as the author and film director raise the question as to whether someone like the character Alex can be cured of evil through operant conditioning (the fictional Ludovico technique that makes him physically ill when he desires evil). Look up the following video title on YouTube:

   A Clockwork Orange – Trailer

   DI Exploring ethics by analyzing a novel or a film may prove to be a motivating technique for some students, even replacing the culminating activity as an alternative means of fulfilling a similar end.

   Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg complained that both national programs of character development, as practiced in France and Russia, and values clarification resulted in ethical relativism. The former is socialization, leading to social relativism, and the latter is free expression of individuality, leading to egoistic relativism. Kohlberg thought that neither approach gives us a way to answer to the Nazis who were all too certain in their values and actions—a problem that haunted Kohlberg as someone who assisted Jews emigrating from Europe to Israel after the Holocaust. He looked instead for empirical evidence of trans-cultural stages in moral reasoning, moving from simple obedience to authority to a social contract sense of responsibility, and ultimately to a refined, compassionate, and rational appeal to justice. These levels of maturation combine Piaget's stages of cognitive

development from psychology, with Kant's philosophical appeal to universal reason as a metaethical ground for ethics (see SE pp. 187-189).

Kohlberg's work was contested by his pupil, Carol Gilligan, who claimed he had masculinized morality by emphasizing the virtue of reason, making justice-seeking supreme. One of the early feminist ethicists, she turned instead to emotional ways of resolving ethical dilemmas (see Hume, SE p. 201), emphasizing care and communication—more often found, she claimed, among females. Consider showing the class the following video, which is available on YouTube:

Kohlberg's Moral Development Theory

The video cited above illustrates Kohlberg's response to relativism. First, however, you may want to jump ahead to SE p. 212 and ask the class to try to resolve the famous Heinz dilemma as described on that page. This might be a good time to ask the class to compose their unit challenge question (SE p. 159), perhaps opening this example to further inquiry. At the end of this unit, will students find Kohlberg's approach to be sound, or will they have critical considerations about the universality of his metaethics?

5. Ethical relativism can be opened to class discussion by using the familiar example of marriage customs. In *The Construction of Social Reality,* John Searle uses money and marriage as prime examples of practices that we socially construct, and that have meaning only in relation to their background cultures (see SE p. 274). Marriage practices also offer an example of what Michel Foucault calls *normalization*: a way of thinking and behaving that we are disciplined into, and that is reinforced by discourses in contemporary society. Watch and discuss the following shocking 20-minute segment from PBS *Frontline's Stories for a Small Planet* series (it can be viewed on YouTube):

Kyrgyzstan Bride Kidnapping part 1

The use of ceremony (festive dress, alcohol, cakes, music, and laughter) serves to normalize what in our society would be a serious criminal offence. Some 90 percent of Kyrgyz women are kidnapped into marriage, based on a centuries-old tradition that goes back to Mongol horsemen riding along the Silk Road from China to the Middle East. It perhaps goes even further back into our prehistory as a way of preventing inbreeding (consider, for instance, the Roman capture or "rape" of the Sabine women, and similar marriage-through-abduction practices among tribes in the Amazon rainforest). Is marriage through dowry or gift exchange systems any less an economic pact? From what vantage point can we judge these practices, or any others (e.g., arranged marriages in South Asian cultures)? How successful is the Western romantic system, based on some degree of infatuation (mutual desire) and suffering from high separation and divorce rates? For example, when the initial rush of endorphins, oxytocin, or dopamine no longer kick in, some Westerners may turn to serial monogamy to maintain the chemical stimulus. Bringing these biochemical elements into the picture helps to set up a discussion of Hume's Guillotine on SE p. 173, where he argues we cannot derive an *ought* from an *is*, or base normative ethics on naturalistic grounds. Could prevention of inbreeding make bride kidnapping right in one culture, but not in another where it is not necessitated?

DI Ask students: "Using non-verbal means of expression, how could you express your reaction to the case of bride kidnapping?"

Text Answers

Page 163: Section question

Which of the three categories of ethics is most important depends on what one is looking for in the study of right livelihood: a foundation on which ethics, like knowledge, can be justified (metaethics); a general guide as to how to conduct oneself, or how to solve moral dilemmas (normative ethics); or a more context-sensitive appreciation of how "right" and "good" change with circumstances (applied/practical ethics). A Nietzschean or existentialist might argue that people who follow the first two categories suffer from making futile attempts at foundationalism (see SE p. 274), leaving us without recourse to God or reason to provide a universal basis for ethics. The answer may depend on whether one favours subjective or objective answers to moral problems (see SE pp. 167-168).

Page 167: Section questions

1. At first it might appear that conflicting answers to moral dilemmas present something similar to Aristotle's law of non-contradiction and the excluded middle (SE p. 24): either a claim is true or false, but not both or neither. But are moral claims the same as propositions or truth claims we make about science, math, or history? Is this a false analogy, or partly so? Aristotle noted that the degree of certainty varies in subjects and that it would be silly to expect the same degree of accuracy in ethics as in the sciences. From a post-foundational viewpoint, we might see ethics as a different language-game than those practiced in the maths and sciences. We do not expect disagreement on answers to math problems, but we do with moral dilemmas as these are more context-dependent and open to differences of perspective or judgment.

Some students will bring up the problem of self-contradiction in relativist claims that "We cannot know anything for certain" (SE p. 163). Students may note that this statement is itself a truth claim, which diminishes the strength of the relativist's argument. The concept of *incommensurable pluralism* (SE p. 165), on the other hand, suggests that we don't fully understand the norms or values of other groups, making it impossible for us to judge the decisions of others based on our own culture.

2. One could sort "strong" and "weak" opinions about ethics using the following considerations:

- stronger views avoid overly value-laden language (SE p. 163): these views do not appeal to rhetoric (e.g., whipping up sentiments, like Hitler's appeal to nationalism with talk of the "fatherland") but to reason and emotion (compassion, not fear);
- stronger views may offer a *modus vivendi* approach to live peacefully together (SE pp. 165-166)—they are roads or avenues to right livelihood that get us there, whether or not they are absolute and grounded;
- stronger views may yield greater net benefit (e.g., following this rule does more good than harm—consequentialism);
- stronger views may appeal to reason (deontological ethics), offering what appear to be logical rules or universal moral maxims to which every rational being would adhere (SE p. 166);
- stronger views may have a basis in cultural and religious traditions that are grounded in virtues or favourable character attributes; these virtues or character attributes may have demonstrated social benefits over long periods of human history (e.g., commandments against murder that cross cultures and religions).

3. Although one may wish to avoid argument or conflict so as not to insult other persons, not discussing these matters of morality makes them too sacrosanct; it concedes to fundamentalist and conservative elements in communities that resist change.

From another perspective, *quietism* also gives in to relativism in that it creates incommensurable diversity, which leads to isolation and diminishes dialogue across differences.

After students develop their own conversational rules, introduce them to Jürgen Habermas' "discourse ethics" from his book, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. In that book, Habermas states that "only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all affected in their capacity as participants in a practical discourse." Habermas was trying to provide the conditions in which we arrive at an "ideal speech situation," in which participants in the dialogue experience equality and freedom. Think of these as Kantian universal rules, applied to moral discourse instead of individual deliberation. The main principles or rules of Habermas' discourse ethics follow:

> "(3.1) Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
>
> (3.2) a. Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.
>
> b. Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.
>
> c. Everyone is allowed to express their attitudes, desires, and needs.
>
> (3.3) No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down in (3.1) and (3.2)."

Teaching Plan 2 **(SE pp. 167-181)**

Learning Goal

Students will become familiar with different ways of providing a foundation for normative ethics, gaining exposure to the main approaches or schools of thought in ethics.

Activity Description

Through a series of interconnected investigations, students will consider the metaethical grounding for normative ethics. Small group and class discussions are encouraged, as is reflective writing. The video clips on social conformity may serve as prompts for journal writing. Students are asked to use graphic organizers to distinguish between the different approaches to ethics and thinkers who address ethics.

Assessment Opportunities for Chapter Questions

The table below summarizes assessment opportunities for selected chapter questions, including questions in the Chapter Review, which are relevant to this teaching plan.

Assessment Type	Assessment Tool	Feature Questions	Section Questions	Chapter Review Questions
Assessment as Learning	Critical reflection	1-2, SE p. 170		
Assessment for Learning	Application and re-evaluation		1-3, SE p. 176	
Assessment as Learning	Imagination: projection into a scenario	1-2, SE p. 177		
Assessment for/of Learning (journal topics)	Estimation and application		1-2, SE p. 181	
Assessment for Learning	Definition, explanation, and categorization			1-4, SE p. 182; 7, SE p. 183
Assessment as Learning	Extensions and applications: writing and discussing			5-6, SE p. 182 and 8-10, SE p. 183

Timing

225 minutes
(three 75-minute classes)

Learning Skills Focus

- Collaboration
- Independent work
- Organization
- Self-regulation
- Initiative

Resources Needed

Make copies of these Blackline Masters:

- BLM 7.2 Inductive Learning Exercise
- BLM 7.3.A Chapter 7 Vocabulary Quiz: Matching
- BLM 7.3.B Chapter 7 Vocabulary Quiz: Short Answer

Possible Assessment of Learning Task

You may use BLM 7.3.A Chapter 7 Vocabulary Quiz: Matching and BLM 7.3.B Chapter 7 Vocabulary Quiz: Short Answer to assess students' knowledge of Chapter 7 vocabulary.

Assessment (For/As Learning)

As teachers move through each chapter, opportunities will be highlighted to provide assessment for/as learning in preparation for assessment of learning at the end of each chapter.

Task/Project	Achievement Chart Category	Type of Assessment	Assessment Tool	Peer/Self/ Teacher Assessment	Learning Skill	Student Textbook Page(s)	Blackline Master
Euthyphro dialogue	Thinking	As	Analysis or charting of philosophical argument	Self; peer	Independent work	170	
Is and *ought* distinctions	Thinking; Application	For	Think-pair-share: Inductive learning exercise	Teacher	Collaboration	172-173	BLM A and BLM 7.2
Altruism versus ethical egoism	Thinking; Application	As	Discussion or reflective writing	Self; peer	Collaboration	172	BLM C
Conformity and responsibility	Thinking; Communication	As	Discussion and/or reflective writing	Self; peer	Collaboration	173	
"Truthiness" and lying	Thinking; Communication	As	Discussion and/or reflective writing	Self; peer	Collaboration	174-175	

Prior Learning Needed

If students have not already read Unit 2, consider directing them to the sections that will help them understand the concept of metaphysical grounding.

Teaching/Learning Strategies

1. Grounding morality (SE p. 167): Weighing the objective versus subjective grounds offers a useful transition from the previous discussion of relativism: if morality is outside of us, it appears to be objective instead of subjective. If we determine right from wrong, it is more subjective and therefore relative to our personal or cultural/social perspective. The idea of "grounding" comes from Kant's work *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* (1785). Have students look up the following

Web link and scroll down the Web page to read the second section: "Transition from Popular Moral Philosophy to the Metaphysic of Morals":

http://philosophy.eserver.org/kant/metaphys-of-morals.txt

2. Metaphysical grounding (SE pp. 168-171): Here we are seeking a deep connection between right livelihood and the way of the world, or reality. In the ancient Greek sense, it is the communion between "things human and divine" that gave definition to philosophy (see SE p. 3). Encourage students to use a comparison chart (BLM C) to track the many philosophers listed as for or against the connections between ethics and religion (SE pp. 168-169). Further research into philosophers of interest could lead students to develop a journal response (BLM J) or to include their research in their culminating activity personal statement of ethics.

The "Viewpoints" feature on Plato's *Euthyphro* dialogue (SE p. 170) could be enhanced by reading the primary source and asking students to outline the main moves in Socrates' argument (see also the reference to *The Republic* on SE p. 177). Follow this link to read the *Euthyphro* dialogue:

http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyfro.html

Ask students to look at an excerpt from the dialogue that begins with Socrates' words "And what do you say of piety, Euthyphro: is not piety, according to your definition, loved by all the gods?" and that ends with Socrates' question "... what is impiety?"

In somewhat paraphrased form, the dialogue goes something like this: "Do the gods love actions because these actions are pious, or are these actions pious because the gods love them?"

In modern debates between believers in monotheistic religions and their non-believing opponents, the dilemma is often rephrased like this: "Does God command certain actions because these actions are intrinsically good, or are the actions good because God commands them?"

Buddhism: If you did not devote much time to Buddhism in Chapter 4 (or have started with Unit 3 and want to set up this topic for when you come to Unit 2), consider showing students segments of the following documentaries that make the history of this belief system more accessible. As well, the topic of non-violence is addressed (see Unit 6 regarding Gandhi and King). Look up the following video titles on YouTube:

Buddha - A Documentary About Buddhism

BBC The story of India Episode 2 (The Power of Ideas)

DI Suggest that students create a poetic or visual representation of the connections between a metaphysical and ethical philosophical position, such as the Buddhist five-fold path. See mandalas and icons, or other forms of symbolic communication.

3. Naturalistic grounding (SE pp. 171-172): Seeking grounds for moral behaviour in our evolutionary socio-biology is risky in that it may be used to justify competitive, reproductive, and aggressive tendencies instead of curbing or guiding natural inclinations with our "higher nature," rational soul, or "better angels." An empiricist like Hume might say that we risk conflating natural ways of behaving (what *is*) with how we should behave (what *ought to be*). See Hume's Guillotine (SE p. 173) for the distinction between *is* and *ought to be*. Empiricists like Hume, however, still want to argue that we can arrive at moral decisions based on emotions like compassion or pity (see affect-based ethics, SE p. 201). Using universal reason, Kant separated the moral domain from the variety of human behaviours (behaviours that exist and that are studied by anthropologists) from what ought to be (our duties).

Using BLM 7.2, have students conduct an inductive learning exercise to get them to find (inductively) the rule for distinguishing normative (*what ought to be*) from factual (*what is*) claims. (See Chapter 14 for other applications of inductive learning, grounded in the work Jerome Bruner did in educational psychology at Harvard in the 1970s.)

Extension: Ask students: Can you find logical fallacies in the moral arguments of your peers? Students can refer to SE pp. 45-63 to help them recall and apply fallacies.

In setting up the topic of ethics, it may help to differentiate between ethical egoism and altruism, and then connect the former to egoistic relativism (SE p. 163). Ayn Rand is most closely associated with ethical *egoism*, or the notion that it is natural for us to put ourselves first instead of others. We shouldn't feel guilty, in other words, for being selfish or pursuing a path that is self-promoting. Look up the following video titles on YouTube:

Ayn Rand on the value of selfishness

Ayn Rand - The Virtue Of Selfishness

Altruism on the other hand is based on self-sacrifice, and may be best represented by the teachings of the Buddhist leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama. The videos listed below focus on his visit to Stanford University and look into the scientific basis for his message of altruism and his solution to world violence. His advice also addresses how we can engage in respectful discourse with one another, as called for in section question 3 on SE p. 167. Ask students to compare these two approaches, altruism and ethical egoism, on a graphic organizer (BLM C), and identify which applies most to their lives. When is an altruistic deed possibly done for egotistical reasons? Look up the following video titles on YouTube for further background:

Researchers, Dalai Lama And The Neuroscience of Altruism

The Dalai Lama Talks About Compassion, Respect

Dalai Lama - Conquer your "self"

In regards to altruism and cooperation in nature (SE p. 172), the anarchist Peter Kropotkin, in *Mutual Aid,* discusses how communalism is as much a part of nature as competition, taking the edge off Darwinian arguments that lead toward Adam Smith's defence of free market capitalism.

4. Sociological grounding (SE p. 173): Here it might be helpful to show students the conduct of a substantially different cultural group, or to refer back to the bride kidnapping case from the previous section. Look up on YouTube the following video title on Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of sociology:

6. Lecture on Emile Durkheim (1858–1917)

Showing video clips of psychological experiments on conformity is instrumental to opening discussion as to whether we are autonomous individuals responsible for our rational choices, as both consequentialism and deontology suggest, or whether we are social chameleons. Look up the video titles listed below on YouTube. Watching these videos will generate discussion of how social pressure leads to conformity, possibly eroding people's honesty or their good character.

Milgram Experiment (Derren Brown) Milgram's Obedience to Authority Experiment 2009 1/3

The Asch Experiment

Asch Conformity Experiment (2/2)

Stanford Prison Experiment (Documentary)

THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

Ask students to write a reflection in response to this question: "Do these experiments demonstrate that we are not morally responsible for our behaviour?" Also consider this as a possible journal topic for students (see BLM J).

DI Suggest that students film their own psychology experiment, being careful not to damage the reputation of the subjects filmed. Students should get permission from anyone who appears in their film, as would be required under the ethical review procedures of a modern social experiment conducted at a university. The Stanford experiment would not be approved today; five of the students involved had a nervous breakdown and had to be taken out of the experiment, raising the question of why it went that far in the first place. Look up this video of a psychology experiment on YouTube:

Psychology experiment - wallet dropping

5. Rationalistic grounding (SE pp. 174-175): Have students read about the two main forms of rationalistic grounding (deontological and consequentialist) on the student textbook pages listed below. Then have students use a comparison chart and/or Venn diagram (BLMs A and C) to record their notes about these two forms of rationalistic grounding.

- Kant's deontological grounding of ethics: the moral maxims (see SE pp. 174 and 187-189).
- Bentham's consequential foundation for ethics: utilitarianism (see SE pp. 175 and 190-192).

"Truthiness" activity: Ask students: Is it always best to tell the truth? (e.g., "You look fat in your new dress.") Or is it better to tell a white lie? (e.g., "You look great in your new dress.") How would the two rational schools mentioned above (deontological and consequentialist) differ in their approaches to these questions? Ask students to write down their answers and then share their answer with another student. Discuss as a class.

In ethics we often hear people say they have a gut feeling that something is right or wrong. How do they know it is true? A neologism for this kind of gut feeling is "truthiness," popularized by the TV personality Stephen Colbert. Look up the following Web link to see Colbert's social commentary on the word *truthiness*:

http://www.gametrailers.com/user-movie/truthiness-the-colbert-report/33403

Extension: Watch Michael Sandel's lectures on YouTube to help students prepare for writing the culminating activity assignment. (The titles of his lectures are listed below.) Here students could address the question of whether it is ever right to lie, which consequentualists affirm but deontologists, like Kant, deny. The key distinction is that deontologists pay more attention to the intention behind actions, and not the result. An act committed with good intentions cannot be faulted for having negative consequences, a principle on which Good Samaritan laws are based (e.g., if the teacher administers an EpiPen® to alleviate a student's allergic reaction, he or she cannot be charged with malpractice if there are negative repercussions). Look up the following video titles on YouTube for further background on the question "What's the right thing to do?":

Justice - An Introduction

Justice: What's The Right Thing To Do? Episode 06: "MIND YOUR MOTIVE"

Justice: What's The Right Thing To Do? Episode 07: "A LESSON IN LYING"

6. Moral responsibility (SE p. 176): The topic of moral responsibility and free will follows easily from the earlier case of the kidnapped brides, as most students will feel that the kidnapped brides have been denied the choice to fashion their own

lives. We have been informed by an Enlightenment view of rational autonomy, going back to Locke, Rousseau, and Kant (in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). The topic of moral responsibility goes back much further to Homer's *Odyssey*, to the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, and to Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle, in particular, noted that, although character is largely determined by nature (genetic inheritance) and early socialization or training (see his *Nicomachean Ethics*), this is not an excuse for bad conduct. People are morally responsible for forming their own character, as one's character traits are malleable and can be reconditioned through proper training and emulation of proper role models in society. The Duties of the Teacher in the Ontario *Education Act* include to this day: "to inculcate, by precept and example, Judaeo-Christian values." These duties are perhaps archaic in today's multicultural society, but they are a powder keg for any political party that attempts to broaden the terms of reference by amending the wording in the act (see SE pp. 430-433).

DI Suggest that students create a skit or story that illustrates our human situation with respect to moral responsibility, either siding with determinism or free will. Have the class identify the moral of the story.

Plato's and Aristotle's ethics were particularly influential on the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions that followed, but in these monotheistic religions there is more emphasis on accordance with divine will, natural law, and commandments (see SE p. 199). The good is not just rational but in harmony with divine will. That notion also holds for Stoicism (SE pp. 151, 202, 278). With Taosim, the emphasis is related more to being in harmony with nature and not an anthropomorphic deity or father/mother figure.

Libertarianism (SE p. 179): Ask students to inquire into the way this position on ethical freedom translates into a political philosophy of minimizing government interference in our lives. See Robert Nozick (SE. pp. 425).

Existentialism (SE p. 180): See SE p. 155 regarding existential self-determination. Both Sartre and Camus fought in the French Resistance to Nazi occupation, showing that existentialism does not mean one has no basis for action. In Sartre's words, we are condemned to our freedom, and must build our own ethical system without recourse to outside authority or grounding.

Excusing conditions—ignorance, compulsion, trying (SE p. 180): See Chapter Review question 8 for an application of this topic (SE p. 183). Consider whether these conditions apply to some extent in all cases, or whether, depending on the severity of the offence in a particular case (e.g., unfaithfulness, rape, murder, genocide, etc.), we would not consider these conditions at all.

Acc Apply and discuss with students excusing conditions in the context of plagiarism and in direct relation to the culminating activity, effectively removing the excuse that "we didn't know" (see SE pp. 217-218).

7. Review for and then run the vocabulary matching quiz on BLM 7.3.A. (You may wish to create a second version of the vocabulary matching quiz to help prevent students from copying one another—that is, students seated beside one another would be given a different version of the quiz. Do this by using the same "descriptions" that are provided on BLM 7.3.A, but then change the letters associated with each term, creating a new set of correct answers.)

Acc Often students who have trouble on a matching format quiz such as BLM 7.3.A (e.g., IEP or ELL students) do better by writing out the answers. Consider using BLM 7.3.B as an alternative format for these students.

Text Answers

Page 170: Viewpoints

Note: The "Features" chart earlier in this chapter suggests using an analogy to the Euthyphro dilemma as an assessment option. It is suggested that students write a reflection on whether it is a suitable or false analogy.

Try this analogy: The philosophy essay was good, so the teacher liked it; versus, the teacher liked it, making it good. What if we try a third possibility: this essay was one of the few that the teacher liked, leading us to think it is a good essay, but another teacher might have a different standard and might have given it a lower mark. Which teacher is the better authority is a matter we can consider, based on qualifications or expertise, but there might also be social factors affecting how hard the teachers mark—one teacher might come from South Africa, where few students earn a 90 percent grade (A+), and the other teacher might be an American, a country where an A grade is 90 percent.

1. See the section on the problem of evil on SE p. 145, which entertains the thought that an omnipotent God is culpable for wrongdoing and disasters. There is also the problem of whose interpretation of divine will is correct, a matter that divides religious sects and often leads to violence. Some of the most egregious acts are committed in the name of religious zealotry.

2. In fairness, we don't really have enough of Craig's critique provided here to make a judgment of whether he succeeds in eliminating the Euthyphro dilemma. Saying it is a false dichotomy (see SE p. 311) dissolves rather than solves the dilemma, and likely evades the central problematic of who, God or us, determines whether an act is good. Lumping the two together appears to be an all-too-easy answer to this lasting paradox, derived from his theistic stance instead of critical engagement with Plato. Craig has a doctorate in theology and is a Research Professor of Philosophy at Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California. Craig's debate with the late atheist Christopher Hitchens might be of interest. Look up the following video title on YouTube to see them refresh dialogue on the moral argument for God's existence or non-existence (you may want to skip ahead to the 1-hour 23-minute mark):

   Debate - William Lane Craig vs Christopher Hitchens - Does God Exist?

   You also may want to look up Craig's Web site:

   http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer

   The non-religious thinker Socrates often leaves us wondering about where he stands on different issues; although he pursues the truth assiduously, he does not try to pin down answers to everything (e.g., the ambivalence at the end of the *Meno* dialogue).

Page 176: Section questions

1. Applying key concepts to the sociological view of grounding:

   a) *Incommensurable pluralism* means different social groups have substantially different value schemes and norms, which are literally "measured by different standards" and therefore not understandable to outsiders. (See SE p. 333.)

   b) *Social relativism* means that the value schemes and norms are applicable, not universally, but in relation to particular social groups. (See Rorty's concept of solidarity, SE p. 287.)

   c) S*ubjectivity* means that the value schemes and norms are reliant on the perspective of an individual or social group who share values and terms of reference such as religious books or spiritual teachings (intersubjectivity).

2. The consequentialist should argue that pain is alleviated and a net benefit is gained by society if people who are suffering from a terminal illness are put out of their misery. Even the social cost of keeping them on life support is reduced. The deontologist would say that this violates the person's right to life and is murder, thus breaking a universal law. In terms of observations about humans and the animal world: Many nomadic cultures throughout human history resorted to abandoning people who were incapable of making the annual migration (the old or infirm). Sometimes elders would lie down in the snow instead of continuing the journey, as a form of euthanasia and a way of lessening the burden they imposed on the community. A similar phenomenon occurs during animal migrations.

3. See the rules of discourse ethics in the answer to section question 3, SE pp. 167. Apply these rules in discussing reasons for different answers to the dilemma posed in question 2 above. See Teaching Plan 1, Teaching Strategy 2 for reference to using this set of questions in the opening of the chapter.

Page 177: Thought Experiment

1. Also ask students this question: "Can we answer this honestly, or do we construct in our imagination a more ethical behaviour than we might actually exhibit?"

2. Shockingly, surveys of male university students have revealed that many would commit rape if they felt they could get away with it, raising the question of whether people are intrinsically good or only under the external and legal restraints of society. Consider the modern case of the Congo, where militia members commit atrocities out of sight or beyond reproach.

Page 181: Section questions

1. Psychology experiments show that our moral behaviour is influenced by circumstances. A person who finds a coin on the floor, or smells the aroma of freshly baked cookies, may be more inclined to do good deeds. (See Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Experiments in Ethics*.) This does not totally erode our ability to make choices, but it does point to the flaw of virtue ethics that fails to take into account any excusing conditions. Studies of adolescent psychology suggest that teenagers are not as responsible or culpable for their behaviour as teachers might expect. See "The New Science of the Teenage Brain," in *National Geographic* (October 2011).

2. The Kevorkian case hinges on the fatal illness or pain and suffering of those he assisted to die. Perhaps in the eyes of some people, these conditions excuse him but not in the eyes of others. The same goes for the Latimer case, in that his daughter was deemed to be incurable and suffering. Some advocates for the seriously ill argue that this gives others the right to terminate lives deemed not worth living, taking away the individual's right to life. The Nazis murdered persons with severe mental and physical handicaps, deeming them to be of no use to society and not wanting them to taint the gene pool should they reproduce.

Pages 182-183: Chapter Review

1. This writing exercise should bring out a range of uses for the word *ethics*. It should be noted that there is no single definition, but rather ranges of reasonable usage. Sometimes philosophers create technical terms with prescribed meanings, such as Habermas' different use for the terms *ethics* and *morals*—terms most would use as synonyms (Greek and Latin variations of the same thing).

2. Metaethics is different from normative ethics in that it seeks to explain the ground on which normative ethics operates. It looks to reason, nature, or a higher authority for a basis. A person who adheres to utilitarian normative ethics appeals to reason

in calculating the next benefit, showing reason to be a metaethical ground for the normative system. In terms of their applied ethics, such a person will actually calculate (or contemplate) the net benefit when determining whether we should shoot down an airliner to stop it from hitting a building, whereas a deontological thinker (whose metaethics is also based on an appeal to reason) will not even countenance this approach as his or her normative ethics is focused on universal rules or duties and not the ends that might justify the means. Most people think of ethics as something like morality, but when we talk about "doing the right thing" we are into practical cases. Few people think about metaethics other than to ground ethics in their religion or to make references to something or other being natural.

3. a) Social Darwinism: People may be hard-wired for certain behaviours, as these are part of our genetic heritage as a species. We get into fight-or-flight response when presented with conflict situations, resulting in episodes of road rage, because we can easily slip into our reptilian brains instead of using our higher, mammalian emotions and hippocampus for reasoning.

b) Hume's Guillotine: If we cannot use natural bases for ethics, then we may have cast ethics free of any grounding at all. We may want to point to how preverbal children seem naturally predisposed to help adults, as shown in experiments at the Max Planck Institute. See *The Human Spark* with Alan Alda (PBS). Here is a link to a lesson on social networks based on the documentary, comparing humans with primates:

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/humanspark/lessons/social-skills/lesson-overview/526/

See also the following link to a lesson on social skills and child development:

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/humanspark/lessons/the-developing-child/lesson-overview/468/

For the accompanying video excerpt, follow this link:

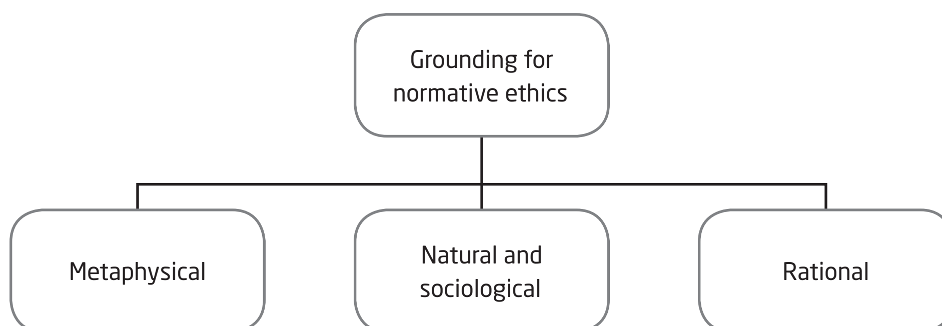
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/humanspark/video/program-three-brain-matters-video-excerpt-social-networks-and-the-spark/421/

4. Prohibitions on murder, adultery, and incest will be common, as are the high values put upon honesty, modesty, and integrity. The more unique rules deal with dietary prohibitions (e.g., abstinence from pork among Jews and Muslims; abstinence from eating beef among Hindus; adhering to vegetarianism among Jains and Buddhists). Some traditions prohibit idolatry, and others revel in worshipping statues, paintings, and icons. Some promote tolerance or acceptance and others exclusion.

5. In the quote, Hume takes the Enlightenment stance that without freedom of action there is no such thing as morality. If we could not control our own actions, and they did not come from the characters we have formed and have some control over, we could not praise or blame these actions. (Compare this to Socrates' argument in the *Meno* dialogue.) If a god or nature made me do something, how could I be held to account?

6. Scripting a discussion in which you attempt to reason with someone who stole your cellphone might include arguments that emphasize: a) the damage that theft does to the moral character of the thief, possibly inviting divine redemption or moral decay (e.g., the act removes them from the class of rational beings that adhere to universal moral maxims, making them subhuman); or b) that the negative consequences for all outweigh the immediate benefits the thief has obtained for himself. Of course, another approach would be to bluff: "The phone has a satellite tracking and locking feature, and also a detonation device I will activate if you don't give it back." (In all three cases, the appeal will likely result in bodily harm, so it is not actually advised.)

7. A diagram that organizes ways for grounding ethics might look like this:



Note: In this diagram, there is no distinction between objective and subjective.

8. Using all three of the philosophical "excusing conditions" (SE p. 180) for coming home late:
- Ignorance: "I didn't know it was past my curfew."
- Compulsion: "They wouldn't let us out of the dance/party until everything was cleaned up."
- Trying: "I tried to get back in time, but the streetcar did not arrive on time."

9. In performing the role of determinist-oriented judge in this deliberation, consult the discussion of retributive justice in Unit 6, as well as alternatives such as restorative justice (SE pp. 450-453).

10. Note: The first edition of the SE asks students to "Discuss the issue with the classmate across from you on the folded paper." This is incorrect. It is the line of students that folds back on itself; no paper is involved.

a) Instructions: To sort the class along a values line for the Kevorkian case, you ask them to line up along a continuum from "strongly agree with his action" to "strongly disagree with his action," with those undecided in the middle. This gets students up on their legs and fights off lethargy and fence sitting. The next instruction to "fold the line so that the extreme ends are facing each other" means taking the straight line and turning it into a U-shaped pattern. The idea here is to get the two extremes talking to one another, and then to address students in the middle in an attempt to persuade them to come to their end. One possibility is that the extremes are mitigated by direct contact with one another, but watch out: this could also lead to a clash and easily get out of hand.

b) Doing the four-corners activity on the Latimer case was recommended as preparation for the trolley-car dilemma that comes up in Chapter 9. The Latimer case, however, could also be used as a stimulus for a journal entry.