

EXAMPLES OF ANSWERS TO EXAM QUESTIONS II

Prof. Dan Flores
Dept. of Philosophy
Houston Community College
daniel.flores1@hccs.edu

DISCUSSION PROMPT

For this discussion, I want you to begin thinking about the role that arguments play (or should play) in moral decision making. Is morality simply a matter of belief, opinion, and one's own personal standards? Is it simply a matter of religious traditions? Is there something more to morality? In this week's reflection, you need to demonstrate that you can distinguish between morality and ethics. Remember, among all the other things, I am always looking to see that you are grasping the information presented to you.

Note: If you have not already done so, go back to last week's discussion and read some of my comments. Here are some of my more salient points:

1. Discussions should be taking place over a much longer period of time than the two days prior to the due date. This is an online course, but this does not mean that you don't have work to do during the week.
2. The posts and replies need to be directly related to the readings. Many of you are simply giving me your feelings about the readings, summaries of the readings, and vague assertions like "philosophy makes you think ...", Etc ... I want you to get in there and actually try to understand what is happening and why the authors are discussing the things they are.
3. There is a distinction between belief/opinion and truth. All of us are believers of something. The question is always whether or not what we believe is true or not. What role does theory and argumentation play in this process of belief formation?

1. POOR ANSWERS

A.)

In the first reading *Ethics and the Examined Life*, moral philosophy or ethics is described as centered on "what people should believe and do". And this brings me to something that happened to me last week: while walking on campus I noticed a maybe 20 years old man crying in the floor, a few people looked at him surprised when walking by but no one would approach him and so I did; when I got to him he looked genuinely sad and disturbed so I convinced him to walk him to a coffee shop so he could calm down and when we got there, three police officers took him away without explanation. Then I noticed that what I had done was dangerous because I did not know the guy; but what else could I have done? Honestly, my morals would not have let me just walk by like the rest of the students because what if he had someone really close to him passing away and needed someone to talk to? I would have liked that if I were in his shoes. Besides, I could argue that it was in plain daylight in the middle of a crowded campus so it was unlikely that he would try to assault me. Also, from a christian standpoint, I think my God would have wanted me to help someone in need.

In the other hand, other people could argue that it would not have been the first time that someone assaulted in that panorama. And that God would have wanted me to help someone in need but not by risking myself, because I am a Christian but also a thinker so I believe that as God (or love) exists, evil also exists.

Ultimately, putting those arguments together I came to the ethical conclusion that I will not be doing that again which makes me sad, but the reality of life is that there is a lot of bad people in this world and you can not just trust blindly unless you are willing to put your own life at risk to help a stranger.

MY REPLY TO THE ABOVE POST:

That message was a little short, I suppose. Let me explain. On the one hand, the pieces you were asked to read for last week involved a fairly detailed discussion about the nature of ethics (as the study of morality) and various aspects to look for when studying morality and when constructing a moral theory (a justification of why certain moral propositions (morality) are true, or should be believed or followed).

On the other hand, you present a personal anecdote about how you tried to sincerely help somebody because you thought that it was the right thing to do, but that you realized later that you shouldn't have acted the way you did (and won't in the future) because you realize that there is evil in the world and that it is just dangerous.

While I certainly realize what you are saying and agree, I am left to wonder how any of this directly relates to the readings? For example, where do the notions of the Principle of Impartiality, or the Preeminence of Reason ("reason" understood as we've been discussing, or should have been discussing) as the ability to recognize contradiction, alternative possibilities, and to act in light of these abilities) figure into your anecdote? Given your story, how am I to tell that you understand what the difference is between "morality" and "ethics"? How am I to tell that you understand the dangers of not taking ethics (properly understood) seriously as presented by your authors?

Although, I have no doubt of your sincerity and I agree with your conclusion, personal anecdotes do not necessarily reflect an adequate understanding of the readings. But note, though, I am not simply asking for a summary of the readings. I want, at least, a reflection about how you understand the material and to begin thinking about what it all means and how to apply it.

I hope this helps.

B.)

Morality and ethics basically relate to what is right or wrong, both are used interchangeably. Morality relates more towards a social perspective. For instance what others expect from us. Ethics relates more towards ones personal perspective. For instance what we expect from ourselves.

Morality plays a role of what is influenced by our society or culture. Morals are subjective, meaning it will be up to us, and will appear not to be consistent. For example, like how we were raised of thinking, our background history, the way we feel aren't necessarily clear cut or intuitive, because we still haven't rationally examined them. More like an personal opinion, or one's own personal standards. This is where ethics will help. The study of the system of ethics will help clarify our own individual subject of moral perspective.

Ethics plays a role of external standards provided by institutions of an ethical code. Ethics is a object of a rational clear cut and impartial discipline. The standards of good and bad that is imposed by some outside group, for example a society or profession. What a society or group would say? Let's take lawyers for a clearer example, standards in the legal profession in what lawyers should or should not do based on the standards of their profession. Or even business ethics that say what you should or should not do based on what your business community says is right and wrong. The main importance is for that it will remain consistent in a given way as how we look towards the world.

2. ACCEPTABLE ANSWERS

A.)

Ethics also known, as moral philosophy is the philosophical study of morality, on the other hand, morality is the distinction of right or wrong, it is the determination of what should be done and what should not be done.

In life, it is reasonable that we often disagree about question of value or belief; we know that many people disagree about abortion, gay marriage animal right and other issues, when it comes about topics like the one I just mentioned, we need to understand why we think certain things are right and other things are wrong, we need to make arguments and give reason to work out our own conclusion to others who are disagree. Philosophers usually divide ethical theories into three general subject areas: normative ethics, Meta ethics and applied ethics

Ethics help us to decide what is good or bad, better or worse, this is normally called normative ethics- the study of the right thing to do, this can be contrasted with Meta ethics- the study of the meaning and logical structure of moral belief, in Meta ethics we inquire to ask question as, what should one do? How can we know what is right or wrong? The main job is to question all the assumption in order to see if really makes sense at the end and when it comes about applied ethics it is a term that use to describe attempt to use philosophical methods to identify the morally right in different field of human life.

As you can see, the above three areas of philosophy are related and at time also overlap, when we use these theories help us to give direction to answer the fundamental question how we should live our life and how can we can make it right

B.)

Morality is the difference between right or wrong. Many different things can effect a persons morality, such as culture, society, or how a person is raised. We make decisions based on morality every day, but to come to these decisions we have to study our own morale beliefs which is where ethics kicks in. You must go through ethics to get to your morale reasoning for making a certain decision. Although morality can be molded by society and other such factors if an individual simply adopts a set of morals from other people then that individual will likely not be able to make a justified reasoning behind their "morals". Ethics is an important aspect of individual growth because it allows you to take subjects around you and use critical thinking skills to analyze them and come up with your own reasoning behind them. If you are learning about something you have never heard of before you tend to just sit back and take in as much information as possible. As you analyze the new information you begin to develop an idea about the subject and whether or not you want to believe what you are hearing. In essence it is an argument within yourself to determine whether or not you believe in this new found information. By doing this on a daily basis an individual develops a large set of morals that when proposed with an "argument" against them they will be able to justify their reasoning with evidence.

3. EXCELLENT ANSWERS

A.)

The main goal of ethics is to study morality, so it rationally analyzes human behavior. On the other hand, morality is defined as the set of beliefs, principles and values that a person or a society has. As I was discussing with my parents I realized that every person has its own morals. I realized that our morals are created by our surroundings, the way we were raised, our culture, manners, religion and relationships. That is why moral varies between people, and culture. I related morality with personality because each one is created by the things that happened to us, further by our culture and surroundings. For example, in my culture I was taught that killing animals is a bad action, but my friend's dad is a hunter, so for him it is right to kill animals. In this case, ethics would critically examine the differences between our morals, and if our beliefs are not arbitrary. Arguments are crucial to moral decisions because

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they make us think critically about our concerns. In order to make a moral decision, the decision has to pass a lot of filters thru our minds. Those filters for me are when I think about if it is good or bad, if I am going to affect someone else, and obviously the consequences of that decision. Also, every thought has to be supported by arguments, and each argument needs to have logical claims and premises, preventing inconsistency. Further, I would analyze if those consequences and arguments are consistent with my morals. In conclusion, ethics is used to evaluate our actions, and to question our beliefs, and morality are all those concerns that make us who we are.

B.)

In "Ethics and the Examined life" by Lewis Vaughn and Ch. 5 Introducing Moral Philosophy: a first pass by Dan Flores ethics and morality are both defined the same. Morality is beliefs, customs, and/or judgments that help guide our actions (right or wrong). Ethics is the discipline that takes the set of moral claims and moral doctrines (cultural,religious,political) and inquires about their truthfulness and asks for justification or justifications for one should believe, accept, and adopt moral claims written by Prof. Flores in Chapter 5. Ethics involves critical thinking because it means to study morality. As mentioned in the readings it involves reasoning, metaphysics, epistemology in order to take a step back and analyze what we truly believe is valid. It takes time and reasoning as I mentioned in my previous discussion to have a certainty that moral claims are true or false. After we ask ourselves questions it is normal to be confused because sometimes we realize that most things are customs and we might not have reasonable arguments about anything we believe in because of not reasoning and asking relevant questions that sometimes are not socially acceptable. For example, people that I know believe in putting a red bracelet with an animal eye attached to it to babies because it is said that when people stare at the baby or have negativity towards the baby, the baby cries. When I had children I was faced with the decision in putting the bracelet on because it was a custom in order to feel like the baby was protected. I took a step back and realized that we cannot protect our children from everything. We can prevent but when things happen they just happen. I felt it was a custom and not necessarily true because a bracelet is just a bracelet and after reflecting on my ethical principles and morality I broke the tradition. I did not care if I was judged because I had a clear argument. If I would not have taken a step back I would of probably just believe whatever I was told but not what I truly believed even though I was judged. It is better to reflect and reason about our norms that guide us to our decisions and create arguments that help us ask questions that become theories to later having the knowledge to argue with a educated response to make it valid.