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PHIL 102

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Chapter 1 Review

1. Determine whether the following statements about the nature of ethics are true or false. Explain your answers.
   1. Ethics is the study of why people act in certain ways; False. Ethics is a branch of philosophy. Ethics can generally be thought of as a set of principles or values held by a person or a group of persons. When it comes to philosophy, ethics is used as a system for determining whether one set of beliefs or values is better than another. Ethics asks questions about what is better or worse, if there is any objective right or wrong, and how we’ll know if there is.
   2. The solution to moral conflicts and ethical disputes it to accurately describe the way the world actually is; False. In order to make any progress toward understanding each other in a dispute on moral issues, then we must understand why we think that certain things are right and others are wrong. We cannot blame the world for a moral dispute; to do so would assume that everyone thinks the same way. The solution to moral conflicts and ethical disputes is to understand the difference between right and wrong.
   3. The statement “Most people believe that cheating is wrong” is an ethical evaluation of cheating; True. The statement is not only describing the action of cheating. It goes further along and expresses a negative regard for cheating. This ethical evaluation places a negative value on the act on cheating by saying that most people believe that it is wrong.
2. Label the following statements as either normative (N) or descriptive (D). If normative, label each as ethics (E), aesthetics (A), law (L), religion (R), or custom (C).
   1. One ought to respect one’s elders because it is one of God’s commandments: N, R
   2. Twice as many people today, as compared to ten years ago, believe that the death penalty is morally justified in some cases: D
   3. It would be wrong to put an antique chair in a modern room: N, A
   4. People do not always do what they believe to be right: D
   5. I ought not to turn left here because the sign says “No Left Turn”: N, L
   6. We ought to adopt a universal health insurance policy because everyone has a right to health care: N, E
3. Discuss the differences between the ideas that ethics is subjective and that it is objective: Subjectivism in ethics argues that ethical propositions refer to subjective dispositions or values. It is defined mainly by relativism. Subjectivism holds that ethical values are relative to an individual and may vary depending on culture and perspective. Objectivism in ethics argues that ethical propositions refer to objective facts. Objectivism believes that there are ethical facts and that moral judgments can be true or false.
4. Explain emotivism and intuitionism in ethical theory: Intuitionism claims that our ideas about ethics come from an intuitive knowledge about ethical truths. These intuitions are held to be clear and distinct beliefs about ethics. Emotivism is an idea that states that ethical propositions express emotional states. It maintains that when we do something good, we are showing our approval of it and recommending it to others rather than describing it.
5. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using naturalistic explanations in ethics: While the naturalistic approach of sociobiology is provocative and insightful, people might worry that it will commit the naturalistic fallacy. Even though altruistic behavior is useful and natural in the evolutionary struggle for survival, that does not always make it good or right. Incest, for example, is useful in animals for disseminating our genetic material to select desirable traits. But incest is still condemned by humans.
6. As they occur in the following statements, label the reasons for the conclusions as appeals to the motive (M), the act (A), or the consequences (C).
   1. Although you intended well, what you did was bad because it caused more harm than good: M
   2. We ought always to tell the truth to others because they have a right to know the truth: A
   3. Although it did turn out badly, you did not want that, and thus you should not be judged harshly for what you caused: C