

# Small Groups

## **Hippocrates**

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## **Vesalius**

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## **Avicenna**

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## **Semmelweis**

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Johnny Thang  
Karina Vazquez  
Joshua Vecchi  
Isabella Zoog

## Small Group Roles

**Facilitators:** start and stop the discussion, keep things on track.

**Monitors:** make sure everyone participates and all ideas are heard and considered.

**Recorders:** keep minutes; write down your group answer.

**Everyone:** listen closely to each other and ask questions when something isn't clear to you.

## Quiz #1 (Thu, Jan 4, afternoon)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The syllabus mentioned what resource for locating definitions of bioethics terms?  
a. Wikipedia. b. The online glossary for the course. c. Encyclopedia Britannica d. Your class notes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Will there be brief quizzes in this course?  
a. Yes, about every other class session. b. Yes, every class session. c. Only if students fail to do the readings. d. Never, and this paper you are filling out is not a quiz.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What is the class policy on cell phones?  
a. They should be kept on the desk and used as needed. b. They should be turned off and put away. c. Texting in class is allowed, but no phone calls. d. They can be used so long as you use earbuds or headphones with them, and speak quietly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Writing assignments for this course are:  
a. A 20 page research paper. b. Nine book reviews. c. Four discussion forums and six case study reports. d. There are no writing assignments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What is the difference between morality and ethics, as discussed in class?  
a. Morality is concerned with our beliefs about how we should live, while ethics is the study of these beliefs. b. They are the same thing. c. Morality is concerned with our beliefs, while ethics is concerned with our actions. d. Morality is concerned with my beliefs, while ethics is concerned with the beliefs of others.

# Metaethics

# Ethics and Metaethics

**Normative ethics:** the study of goodness, virtue, and right action.

- What is intrinsically good?
- What is the best distribution of benefits and burdens in the world?
- What traits of character do we value in people?
- What rules or principles should we follow?

**Metaethics:** the study of these moral concepts and their grounding.

- What is the scope and status of moral values?
- What does it mean to say that “X is good”?
- Do moral claims like “X is good” have a truth-value?
- Do moral values exist in the world independently of human beings?

# Subjectivism and Objectivism

**Ethical Subjectivism:** the truth of moral judgments is grounded in **an arbitrary will**.

- Personal Relativism (PR): the individual's feelings.
- Divine Command Theory (DCT): the will of God.
- Social Relativism (SR): the beliefs of the group.

**Arbitrary** =<sub>df.</sub> based on random choice or personal whim, rather than any reason or system (e.g., *his mealtimes were entirely arbitrary*).

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**Ethical Objectivism:** the truth of moral judgments is grounded in **some non-arbitrary reality**.

- Aristotle's virtue theory: human flourishing.
- John Stuart Mill's utilitarianism: pleasure.
- Immanuel Kant's deontology: reason.

# Personal Relativism

The truth of moral judgments is grounded in ...

... the speaker's feelings or personal preference.

## Pro:

- (1) Fits with the common sense view of the world that distinguishes **facts** (“the land of **is**”) from **values** (“the land of **ought**”).
- (2) Explains the **lack of moral agreement** between individuals.

## Contra:

- (1) Doesn't explain **moral deliberation, discourse, and consultation**.
- (2) Misplaces the **location of moral disagreement**.

# Divine Command Theory

The truth of moral judgments is grounded in ...  
... the will of God.

## Pro

- (1) DCT **allows for moral disagreement** and provides methods for resolving that disagreement.
- (2) DCT **allows for moral guidance and advice.**

## Contra

- (1) Still makes morality **arbitrary.**
- (2) No agreed upon method for **discerning God's Will.**

# Social Relativism

The truth of moral judgments is grounded in ...  
... the moral beliefs of a social group.

## Pro

- (1) Social relativism explains the prevalence of **cultural relativism** (the difference in moral beliefs from culture to culture).

## Contra

- (1) Can't explain the role of **moral criticism within one's society**.
- (2) **Moral fallibilism** is compatible with universalism.

# Social vs Cultural Relativism

Social (ethical) Relativism: what is *actually* right differs between cultures.

Cultural Relativism: what is *believed to be* right differs between cultures.

# Relativism vs Universalism

**Social (ethical) Relativism:** what is ethically right **differs** between cultures.

**Ethical Universalism:** what is ethically right **is the same** at all times and places.