



Year 9

Philosophy and Ethics:

Ethical Theory

Knowledge Organiser & Homework Booklet

Name.....

Ethical Theory– Knowledge Organiser

Key Words			
Absolutism	The idea that some actions are always wrong or right	Morality	One’s own sense of right and wrong
Agape	Unconditional love for all other humans	Relativism	The idea that actions can be right or wrong depending on the context
Banality of Evil	The idea that evil can come from ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances	Sanctity of life	The idea that life is gifted to us by God and is therefore sacred and must be preserved
Categorical Imperative	Kant’s idea that you should only carry out an action if you think it would be acceptable for everyone to do the same thing	Situation Ethics	A Christian ethical theory arguing that agape is the guide to ethics
Consequentialism	The idea that the ethics of an action is determined by its consequences.	Stewardship	The idea that God gave humans the responsibility of looking after the world
Deontology	The idea that the ethics of an action can be determined by the action itself	Tabula Rasa	The idea we are born with a blank slate with no pre-existing ethical ideas
Ethics	The study of what is right and wrong	Ten Commandments	10 rules given to Moses by God to guide the Israelites about how to live a good life
Innate	The idea that our ideas of right and wrong are in us from birth	Utilitarianism	An ethical theory seeking ‘the greatest good for the greatest number’

Key Ideas	
Where do ethical ideas come from?	Some people believe that morality is innate , meaning inbuilt. In other words, we are born with a natural sense of right and wrong. If morality is innate, this would, in theory, mean that if someone were to grow up in isolation away from all other humans, they would still have a sense of right and wrong. In the 17th century the philosopher John Locke (1632 – 1704), argued that we are born with no knowledge of anything; he said a new-born baby’s mind is like a blank slate (tabula rasa). All of our knowledge comes from our experiences that are written onto the ‘blank slate’ of our mind’.
Christian Ethics	When Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt, they camped in a desert near Mount Sinai. God wanted to make it clear to the Israelites how they should live and honour him, so he called Moses to meet him on Mount Sinai. He gave him 10 rules, known as the Ten Commandments , or the ‘law’. They were engraved on two tablets of stone. Later, Jesus taught that the two most important commandments are “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ And: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ This is very similar to what is seen as being the golden rule of Christianity – ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ Christians believe that human life is sacred (sanctity of life)- it is more special than other kinds of life. Other animals do not have souls, and are not made in the image of God, although they deserve to be treated with kindness and respect. Christians believe that God knows and plans every human life. Dominion and stewardship are also important parts of Christian ethics, ‘ dominion ’ means to rule over nature. This is the idea that humans are in charge of the world on behalf of God. Stewardship is the idea that God gave humans the responsibility of looking after the world
Absolutism	Some people believe that actions are always good or always bad. This means that actions are good or bad in themselves regardless of their consequence or the motive behind them. This view is known as <i>absolutism</i> .
Relativism	Believing that no action is always good or bad; it depends on the situation and the action’s consequences. This is known as <i>relativism</i> .
Utilitarianism	- Utilitarianism is an ethical theory put forward by Jeremy Bentham . It states that people should seek to maximise pleasure and minimise pain. Bentham sought to create the ‘ most good for the greatest number ’. - He created the hedonic calculus as a way of trying to measure pleasure and pain in order to work out what the best action to take is. - John Stuart Mill developed the idea by arguing there are higher and lower pleasures which should not be treated equally when calculating pleasure and pain.
Situation Ethics	Situation Ethics is a modern remaking of Christian ethics by Joseph Fletcher . Fletcher rejected legalistic ethics (following set laws) and preferred to base his ethical theory on agape – unconditional love showed to other humans. Fletcher’s ‘situation ethics’ is relativist – as how ‘loving’ an action is will depend on the situation it is carried out in, and consequentialist, as the ‘right’ thing to do is the one that results in the greatest amount of love.
Sanctity of Life	The Christian view that human life as being sacred. It is connected with God and a reflection of God’s holiness. This view stems from the belief that God created the world, and particularly that God singled out humans to be made ‘in His image’. Genesis 1:27 states “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them”. Nothing else in the creation story is described as being created in God’s image – it is an honour solely given to humans, leading to the belief that human life sacred.

Homework 1: What is altruism?

Due:

Read the following passage, then make notes of the key points in the bullet-points below the text. You will be quizzed testing your knowledge of this text in your next lesson.

Does altruism exist?

Some philosophers believe humans are simply driven by a selfish desire to survive and they argue that altruism does not naturally exist. Altruism is selfless behaviour, actions that are done to help others without an expectation of reward such as helping an elderly person cross a road or stopping to help someone who is injured. They argue that all of our actions that appear altruistic, such as giving to charity or saving the lives of others, are simply selfishness in disguise. This is the view of the American scientist Michael Ghiselin (1939 -) who famously said 'scratch an altruist and watch a hypocrite bleed' – he meant that if you scratch below the surface and look deeper, someone who appears to be acting in a selfless way will always have selfish motives.

Some people might argue that whether a person's reasons for doing something, their motives, are selfish or not makes no difference to whether an action is good or bad. Others would say that motive does matter, and so a good action done with a bad intention is in some way less good than the same action done with a good intention.

What is effective altruism?

Effective altruism is a philosophical phenomenon. It promotes the evidence-based charitable giving of disposable income to avoid preventable deaths and alleviate unnecessary suffering. Unlike many other types of charitable giving, effective altruism is characterised by rational decision-making and the repression of emotional responses to misery and pain. Write a definition for "effective altruism".

The term "effective altruism" derives its meaning from the words "effectiveness" and "altruism". Effectiveness is the capacity to successfully produce a desired outcome, and altruism is a system of beliefs and practices that promotes concern for the wellbeing of other people and animals. Effective altruists argue that altruism is most successful when it is concerned with the avoidance of preventable deaths. Make a note about effectiveness and altruism.

Key Points:

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Knowledge Quiz:

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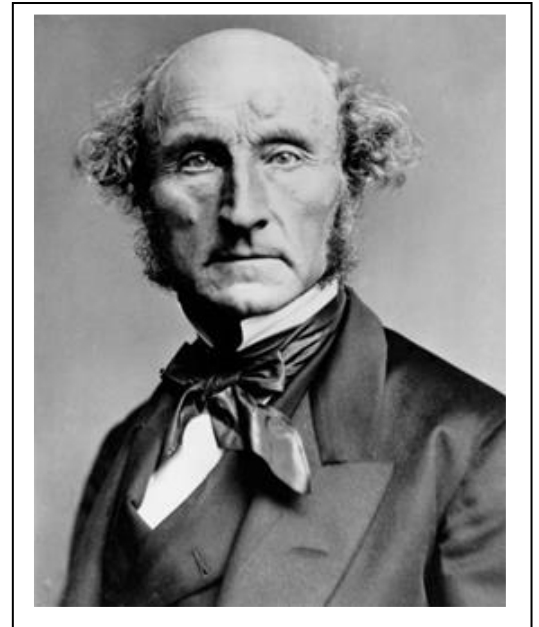
Homework 2: How did John Stuart Mill develop Bentham's ideas about Utilitarianism? Due:

Read the following passage, then make notes of the key points in the bullet-points below the text. You will be quizzed testing your knowledge of this text in your next lesson.

John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) was a 19th century philosopher and is best known today as the father of liberal politics. He believed that utilitarianism could create a more equal and fairer society as it considered the needs of everyone and treated those needs equally.

Mill developed his own version of utilitarianism which he hoped would prevent problems like this above. Mill argued that there are both 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures which should not be treated as having the same value. An example of a higher pleasure would be reading Shakespeare or listening to classical music. Lower pleasures, however, are more 'animalistic' and related to satisfying our animal urges such as eating lots of unhealthy food or watching a boxing match.



Mill thought it was not just the **quantity** (amount) of pleasure which was important but also the **quality** of pleasure. He explained his view by saying:

"It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates [a famous Greek philosopher] dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question." – John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, 1863

Key Points:

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Knowledge Quiz:

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