

# Introduction to Philosophy

## Tutorial 8, Week 10

### Practical ethics

#### Section A

In section B of this handout, you will find a list of questions. Look at each in turn, and, in each case, answer the following questions. Don't worry about addressing all the questions in section B, discussing one thoroughly is better than rushing through, but do move on to section C five minutes before the end of the class.

1. What would holders of the moral theories we have looked at over the semester (cultural relativism, subjectivism, ethical egoism, consequentialism, Kantian ethics, virtue theory) have to say about the question? Don't worry at this stage about what *answer* they would give to the question—just try to think what considerations they would bring to bear.
2. Can you think of any problem applying any of the moral theories to the question at hand?
3. What *answer* do you think each moral theory will give to the question? Where the answer is not clear, but will depend on certain factors, try to say what those factors are.
4. What do *you* think is the correct answer to the question? *Give reasons* for your answer.
5. Were there any considerations you mentioned when discussing question (4) that don't seem to fit naturally into any of the moral theories?
6. Which moral theory do you think is closest to your own view on this question?

#### Section B

1. Ought better-off people accept a reduction in their own living standards in order to help the less-well-off (either in their own country, in the developing world, or both)? If so, how *much* of a reduction in living standards ought they (or you!) accept? Should governments impose (by means of taxation) a greater reduction in living standards of the better off in order to help the less well off? Is there anything they should be doing as well, or instead?
2. Is it morally wrong to eat meat? If you think it is, should it also be illegal? Explain your answer.
3. Is there anything morally wrong about assisted suicide and/or euthanasia? Ought one or both be legalized?
4. Ought we look after the environment, eg by accepting restrictions on our behaviour that reduce global warming? Should we act to prevent plants and/or animals becoming extinct? What should governments be doing about these environmental issues?

#### Section C

1. If you had time to look at more than one question in section B, did you give the same answer to section A, question 6 in each case? Do you think there's a problem with applying different moral theories to different questions?
2. Moral theorists of the past have sometimes appeared biased on some issues towards the received view in their culture (eg Aristotle's endorsement of slavery). It seems possible, and even likely, that our moral reasoning is similarly influenced by our environment, and that people in the future will be as shocked at some of the behaviour that we now find acceptable as most of us now are at slavery and the oppression of women in earlier (or other) societies. What do you think future generations are most likely to be shocked by? (You can choose from amongst the issues above, or suggest something new)