Issues in the News

1. Should doctors assist suicide by terminally ill patients?
2. Should circumcision be banned?
3. Should the US have a national health plan?

What is Philosophy?

- Philosophy: The search for answers to fundamental questions about the nature of reality, knowledge, morality, and the meaning of life.
- Epistemology: The philosophical study of the nature of knowledge.
- Metaphysics: The philosophical study of the fundamental nature of what exists.
- Ethics: The philosophical study of the basis of right and wrong.

Facts vs. Values

- How the world is: Descriptive, Scientific methods: Observation, Experiment, Theories, Models
- How the world ought to be: Prescriptive, normative, Ethics, philosophy.

What Matters?

1. Nihilism: nothing.
2. Egoism: yourself.
3. Tribalism: Your immediate family or group.
4. Anthropocentrism: all humans.
5. Theism: God.
7. Deep ecology: All things, e.g. the planet.

Discussion Questions

- What do you see as the most pressing questions in biomedical ethics?
- Are there objective answers to these questions, or does right and wrong depend on your point of view?
Positions about ethics (meta-ethics)

1. Objectivism: there really is right and wrong.
2. Relativism: right and wrong depend on your point of view, so what's right for one person might be wrong for another person.
3. Non-cognitivism: Ethical statements are merely expressions of emotional attitudes of approval or disapproval.

Ethical Decision Procedure

1. Identify the issue.
2. Identify the options.
3. Use Ethical Reasoning Patterns to evaluate the options.
4. Reach a conclusion on the issue.

Ethical reasoning patterns

An ethical reasoning pattern (ERP) is a standard way of justifying a conclusion about right and wrong.

Religious ERP:
- Issue: Is a particular action right or wrong?
- Analysis: According to my religious beliefs, the action is right (wrong).
- Conclusion: The action is right (wrong).

Consequences ERP

Issue: Is a particular action right or wrong?
1. Analysis: Overall, the action has good consequences, so it is right.
2. Or, overall, the action has bad consequences, so it is wrong.
3. Conclusion: the action is right (wrong).

Hedonistic utilitarianism: Consider consequences with respect to pleasure/pain.

What are good consequences?

1. Pleasure vs. pain.
2. Happiness
3. Flourishing
4. Human needs
   - Biological
   - Psychological

Rights/duties ERP

Issue: Is a particular action right or wrong?
Analysis: An action is right if you have a duty to do it and it does not violate anyone’s rights.
An action is wrong if you have a duty not to do it or if it violates someone’s rights.
Conclusion: The action is right (wrong).
**Principles ERP**

Issues: Is a particular action right or wrong?
Analysis: An action is right if it follows from a valid general principle, and does not violate any principles. An action is wrong if it violates an ethical principle.
Conclusion: The action is right (wrong).

**Discussion**

- Which approach to ethics do you find most plausible?
  - Religion
  - Consequences
  - Rights and duties
  - Principles

**Ethical Principles**

- Autonomy
- Equality
- Beneficence
- Non-malfeasance

**Value Maps**

- Positive element
- Neutral element
- Mutual support
- Incompatibility
- Strongly positive element

**Cognitive-Affective Map - Left**

- Human needs
- Social welfare
- Health care
- Poverty
- Inequality
- Freedom
- Economic development
- Capitalism

**Cognitive-Affective Map - Right**

- Human rights
- Family values
- Private property
- Non-traditional lifestyles
- Capitalism
- Freedom
- Economic development
- Taxation
- Regulation
- Government