

## L&S 160B

## Effective Personal Ethics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

### WRITING ASSIGNMENT

#### PSYCHOLOGY / PHILOSOPHY / RELIGION DISCUSSION

Using the lectures, readings, and discussions you found the most interesting and/or useful, select and discuss three of the following interrelated issues. Be sure to select one issue from each of the three subject areas. A final section of the paper, of at least one page (at least 300 words), should be devoted to exploring the connections between the three issues you have chosen, thus dividing the paper into four discrete parts. By the end of the paper, at least three of the course readings should have been substantially discussed. Offer personal insight and creativity beyond what was discussed in class. Papers should be at least 2500 words in length, and 2-sided printing is recommended. Late papers will be penalized ½ grade point per day late, and must be emailed to your section leader.

#### PSYCHOLOGY

What exactly is the meaning of “whole-being wisdom?” How can it be cultivated and used with maximum effectiveness?

Can emotions be “intelligent?” What is the difference between: 1) strong emotional participation/complementarity in a decision and 2) emotional flooding? What value do emotions provide?

What main features of our microphase evolutionary inheritance challenge our development and expression of macrophase wisdom? What would macrophase wisdom be like? How will it be expressed?

What is the “shadow?” If it is unconscious, how can we discover and know it? How can we effectively integrate it into our decisions and action? What is “projection?” How can we achieve greater ethical expertise by recognizing and integrating shadow material?

What, according to Almas, are “holes?” What can we do about them? What is the difference between the emotions and the qualities of essence?

#### PHILOSOPHY

According to Williamson, what does our individual “retardation” or development have to do with the world-at-large? What is the “spiritual” meaning of every situation? What, for her, is the single most important factor in the “salvation” of the world? What does it have to do with centering and meditation?

Is it possible to live an effective, satisfying, and ethical human life using only consequentialism as an action guide? Is the use of any means justified by some ends? Are some pleasures qualitatively better than others?

Is it possible to live an effective, satisfying, and ethical human life using only deontology as an action guide? Does the purity of “right intention” justify any and all consequences? What are the two main tenets of Kant’s Categorical Imperative?

Is a consistent ethical/moral philosophy necessary to an effective, satisfying, and ethical human life? Or, can there be no useful forethought, and the best action is only discernable on its own unique terms, on a case-by-case basis, at the time? Some mixture of the two? How does the Dalai Lama’s guide for ethical action relate to Aristotle’s?

In “Life Wars,” Richard Holloway argues that there is no ethical algorithm that we can apply to

make ethical decisions for us, but rather that we must be guided by the fundamental principles that characterize us as human. What are they? Can following them work?

In “Three Malaises,” Charles Taylor argues that the rise of individualism and the primacy of instrumental reasoning are actually undermining the experience of life and political participation. What does he mean? Is he correct? If so, what can we do?

In the “Introduction,” Eric Fromm suggests that the “great promise” has failed. What was the promise, has it failed, and, if so, why? What’s the solution?

Pick an aspect of your life that has critical importance to you. Explore your current relationship to it in terms of the “having” and “being” modes developed by Fromm.

Is “happiness” the truest goal of a human life? What is human happiness? What are its elements? Is it a state or an action? How is it measured? Is it dependent on effort? On good fortune? Is it Aristotle’s concept of eudaimonia?

According to Aristotle, what is the purpose/function of a human being? How does a person embody excellence?

In Aristotle’s view, how is virtue inculcated in a human being? What are the factors responsible for the positive development of our character and disposition?

Did Socrates live a eudaimon life? Does his being executed by the State change anything? Where did Socrates find “guidance” in his life?

What does Sartre mean by saying that “existence precedes essence?” What does he mean that “in choosing for himself, he chooses for all men?” What does he mean by “action without hope?” What are the roles of freedom and responsibility in existentialism?

## **RELIGION**

What, exactly, is the difference between “religion” as we have used the term during the course and “spirituality?” Can one be religious and not really spiritual? Spiritual and not really religious?

Can a specific absolute rule-based ethical system be an effective guide to human ethical behavior? What should happen when the situation that arises was not contemplated by the rules?

What, at their core, do all religions seek to provide? How effective are they at it? For religion to be effective as an ethical guide, what is required of the religious practitioner? What is forbidden?

Can a religion based upon a cosmology that is 2000 – 4000 years old still provide relevant ethical guidance today? Is cosmology significant in religion? Must religion accommodate sociological developments, e.g. changes in the acceptable roles/positions of women? How can these accommodations be made?

From a religious point of view, what is the function of human “free will?” Do human beings possess it? Why or why not?

Does a person have to be “religious” in order to be ethical? Is religiosity an indicator of ethical integrity?

What does Campbell mean when he argues that all religions are true metaphorically yet none are true “concretely?”