
PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS BRIDGING UNIT

A quick note

Welcome year 11!

If you are considering philosophy and ethics as an A level option, it doesn't really matter whether or not you have done GCSE philosophy and ethics.

BUT there are some skills you can develop and knowledge it would be incredibly helpful to have BEFORE we begin the course.

Below there are six different activities to complete. You need to complete each one. When you have completed these tasks, pat yourself on the back and email your work to me (rbrooks@tuxford-ac.org.uk)

See you soon!

Mrs Brooks

ACTIVITY 1

Ethical Dilemma

I'm on school lunch duty and I see and hear a girl saying nasty things to another girl while they're eating their chicken pie.

Answer the following questions

1. Why is it OK, and my duty, to tell her off for being unkind?
2. Why is it *not* OK for me to tell her off for eating meat (I'm vegetarian)?
3. Which, if any, of our beliefs are 'just a matter of personal preference' and which, if any, refer to some kind of absolute fact?
4. Should we leave others to their 'personal preference' in matters of religious belief, or are some religious beliefs right and others wrong in an absolute sense?
5. Is there an ultimate truth, an absolute right and wrong, about religious truth claims?
6. At what point, if any, does one culture have the right to tell another 'you're doing it wrong' over matters of religion and ethics?
7. To what extent, if at all, do people have an obligation to share their religious faith with others – or should we keep our beliefs to ourselves and try and respect the views of others even if we think they'll miss out on going to heaven?

ACTIVITY 2

Comprehension

Balm for disaffected youth

Michael Holman - 20 August 2011

At Clapham Junction, in south-west London, where Lavender Hill meets St John's Road, stands Debenhams department store. Last Saturday morning, I stood with a crowd of onlookers reading the many messages on its boarded-up windows illustrating the range of reactions to last week's riots: "Feral scumbags"; "Human Rights have gone too far!"; "There must be justice but will there be forgiveness?"; "These are our children. We need to ask what we have done wrong".

On the opposite corner was the burnt-out shell of the Party Superstore whose owner, I was told, used to donate a percentage of his profit each year to youth charities.

Justifiable anger at scenes of appalling violence, vandalism, looting and arson in London and a number of English cities is slowly giving way to a more reflective attitude, underpinned by a deep concern for the victims, towards the direction our society is taking, and towards our young people, including those who in unprecedented numbers got involved.

How can this have happened? Ministers hurriedly returning from their holidays looked taken by surprise. But should they have been? The warning signs have long been there – major discipline problems in some schools, a growing gang culture and a spate of tragic teenage knifings.

Three years ago a report from UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, put the United Kingdom near the bottom of the league of children's well-being in developed nations, and there were warnings then that our young people's values were shaped too much by their peers and not enough by significant adults. Successive governments should be asked: "What have you done about this?"

Instead, the gap between rich and poor has got wider. For those at the lower end, there is even less money around and in a consumerist society, where self-worth is too often measured by what you have, this is potentially dangerous. Ministers claim criminality and opportunism are to blame for the disorder, end of story. Yes, to an extent. But criminality on this scale has a hinterland.

Equally alarming is the possibility that what we saw last week is symptomatic of a wider, deeper malaise among the young. There is too much hopelessness around just now and it is not confined to the estates. With the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance, which provided a weekly allowance to poorer teenagers to stay on at school post-16, university fees trebling next year and gruesome tales of how long it will be before young people today own their own home, rightly or wrongly, many feel the system is against them and that's not good.

More widespread still is the suspicion, well founded or not, that the poor have to bear more than their fair share of the cuts because government cannot tackle those responsible for the mess we are in lest

they take themselves and their businesses off elsewhere. Tackling social deficit is now as urgent and complex as cutting the national debt, and it requires a searching review of the way we live and investment in a culture in which more young people and their families can flourish.

The quality of the education children get is relevant to the debate, both as insurance for the future and because many schools, though not all, have much good practice to share when it comes to tackling what we saw last week in dramatic form – disaffection among the young. We would all do well to listen to the experience of professional educators.

“Disaffection” in school has some low-level parallels with what we saw on our streets. It involves an alienation from the aims and purposes of the institution and a disengagement from its life. This is either passive, through various forms of non-compliance, such as truancy, or active and more alarming, through theft, vandalism and other forms of violent behaviour. Disaffection crosses racial divides and social classes. School is seen as an irrelevance and an annoyance, and, for the disaffected, authority is always against them. The challenge is to alter these perceptions.

I was impressed by a young black student on BBC2’s Newsnight last week. When asked why he didn’t get involved, he said he was one of the lucky ones; he had a mother and father who would do anything for him. While the causes of disaffection are multiple and many-layered, one stands out: too many young people have not experienced this kind of love. One or more consequences often follow.

First, such deprived young people are deep-down angry, and focus that anger on those they think responsible or just better off. Secondly, too many grow up with next to no self-esteem and look to get it by having more things (as our society teaches) or sometimes by joining a gang with the easy, corrupting sense of power that this brings. Thirdly, they lack the kind of nurturing environment that is crucial in the cultivation of values, virtues and moral principles, and is strong enough to challenge selfishness.

Such an environment is what many schools work hard to provide and wider society needs to do it too, for children and for young people after leaving school, for all our sakes. We will not reform overnight a culture of poor family life but we can do something to make up for its inadequacies and so invest in its future.

The schools best at working with the disaffected adopt a “whole school and whole person” approach and bother as much with the kind of people their students are becoming as with results. They can look at themselves and root out what could lead youngsters to say “it’s not fair”. They recognise that children prosper within clear behavioural guidelines, firmly but fairly applied. Catholic schools are often good at this because they work alongside families and the community, and children grow up with the same values applied more or less consistently from age four to 18 in a way that says “You matter”.

If a school is to nurture values and virtues, children need to feel it is on their side. So along with personal and educational support, there needs to be a curriculum broad enough to allow them to shine in at least something. Being young people, they need opportunities to play in a way that raises self-esteem, promotes socialisation, personal responsibility, teamwork and leadership skills. This is

why music, sport and drama are so important. Young people need good role models who embody the values and virtues the school teaches, and the school environment itself must also say “You matter”.

Schools like this bring hope, and some recent “free school” initiatives with their vocational focus may provide more of them. But work with the disaffected gets undermined. The prospect of complaints from parents and disciplinary appeals can mean teachers are less ready to check unruly behaviour.

The promotion of a celebrity culture sends youngsters the message that innate talent makes you successful, not education; and in this target-obsessed age it hardly helps when young people with fragile self-esteem see their school named and shamed and themselves branded as failures. What’s more, too many public figures have failed in their responsibility to be role models for young people and have given a striking example of the greed culture.

Is it really in society’s interests to impose cuts that put work with challenging children at risk? Subjects that promote self-esteem and healthy socialisation, after-school clubs, citizenship classes and youth services are threatened. The programme to rebuild schools has been scrapped and, with the English Baccalaureate, a further narrowing of the curriculum in a strictly academic direction is likely, with fewer opportunities for such pupils to shine.

Young people and their families must accept responsibility for what they have done; government must do something about the cultural, social and economic factors that provide for the possibility of more disorder. This summer of discontent calls for thoughtful leadership that promotes a “whole society and whole person” approach to tackling disaffection. Can Mr Cameron’s Big Society now come of age?

While it is right to encourage voluntary participation for the common good, the wider and tougher issues remain the business of government. Ministers must weigh cuts against their social consequences and learn from experts on their doorstep about dealing with disaffected youth and creating environments that promote self-esteem and moral values.

We need an education that bothers as much about the formation of our young people as the future of business and industry. And we urgently need a dialogue about an agreed set of values and virtues that will give them and their families a moral compass – a complex task in our liberal, multicultural society. But who will foot the bill?

Back in the 1940s, the Chilean Jesuit saint Alberto Hurtado wrote that the Church’s social teaching should promote a non-conformist attitude to wrong in society. The challenge for Mr Cameron and his Big Society is to persuade us that for the common good we need to pay something more in tax as an investment in our young people’s future.

Answer the following questions

1. List the four responses that Michael Holman saw scrawled on the shutters of Debenhams, Clapham Junction, after the London riots.
2. What warning signs were there that young people in England were disaffected?
3. Where did the UK come in the UNICEF list of child wellbeing in developed nations?
4. What, other than the widening gap between rich and poor, has made disaffection worse?
5. What do government ministers claim was to blame for the riots?
6. List 3 recent developments which have led to a widespread feeling that the world is against young people in England.
7. Why do people believe that government cuts have not been applied fairly?
8. What does Michael Holman mean by “Tackling social deficit is now as urgent and complex as cutting the national debt”
9. What is “disaffection” and how does it manifest passively and actively in schools?
10. What often causes disaffection?
11. What are the three consequences of disaffection for many young people?
12. What, according to Michael Holman, are some characteristics of schools that are good at working with disaffected young people?
13. What has been the effect of celebrity culture on young people?
14. What recent policies have affected young people?
15. Why does Michael Holman ask if these policies are really in society’s interests?
16. What must ministers do when making cuts?
17. What sort of education do we need for young people, according to Michael Holman?
18. What do we need a dialogue about?
19. How does Michael Holman suggest that we must address the deficiencies in education?
20. What did the Chilean Jesuit saint write?

Develop your Understanding – Answer 2 of the following questions

1. Michael Holman suggests that it is not just poverty that causes disaffection. What else contributes to young people becoming alienated from society and likely to take part in riots and criminal behaviour? Include ideas from the article and other ideas, including your own thoughts if possible.
2. “Youth-clubs and projects encouraging sport or the arts really make no difference to disaffected young people: those that are really disaffected don’t take advantage of these opportunities because they don’t see the point. The young people helped by these initiatives probably wouldn’t be likely to get involved in riots or crime anyway, so cutting spending on them, whilst a pity, will not make any real difference.” Do you agree? You must consider different points of view and give reasons and examples to support your answer.
3. One of the central problems in moral philosophy is that of moral luck. Whilst we assume that all people are equally free and responsible, it is clear that there are wide inequalities in human personality and potential, in human experience of the world, which make people more or less likely to be exposed to big moral choices and more or less likely to make the wrong choices. To what extent is it reasonable to say that the crimes committed by disaffected young people during the London riots are the result of individual free moral choices for which individuals must be held fully responsible?
4. “The real problem in the UK is a defective education system!” Do you agree? You must consider different points of view and give reasons and examples to support your answer. (10)
6. Some people have suggested that social networking sites like Facebook have made problems with young people much worse. Explain this view and then assess the extent to which it is a fair one.

Extension Questions

- Read <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/article/13530> “Nobody wants to give me a chance” by Danny Curtin (22nd August 2009).

What would you do if you were the Minister for Education? Should education be all about training people to fill jobs that are available at the moment – or does it have another purpose?

- Read <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/article/12148> “Towards an Ethical Future” by Mark Speeks, (18th October 2008).

Is it possible for a Christian to make money from investment or business? Does real Christianity necessarily lead to a life of poverty? Does Christianity have anything to offer the poor of today's economically depressed world?

ACTIVITY 3

Symbolism and Meaning

- 'Visit' the British museum online <https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com>

OR

- Explore the collections at the Horniman Museum <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/explore-the-collections/>

Answer the following questions

1. How much can we tell about people's beliefs, from the objects they leave behind?
2. What makes an object a 'religious' object, rather than just a special one?
3. Why do religious people have sacred objects – what function do they serve?

Research one of the objects you found

- Find out more about the culture it comes from, what the people believed and how the object was used, as well as which questions remain unanswered.

ACTIVITY 4

Death and the Afterlife

Watch the documentary 'Barra Boy' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhGX1YCsvAM>

Answer the following questions

- Do you think the story provides convincing evidence for reincarnation? Why, or why not?
- What do you think counts as 'convincing evidence' for life after death (e.g. scripture, near death experiences, nothing)? What makes evidence convincing or unconvincing?

Read the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus

Matthew 28:1 – 10

Luke 24: 1 – 10

Mark 16: 1 – 8

John 20: 1 – 18

Answer the following questions

- Do you find these stories convincing? Why, or why not?
- Do you think the stories contradict each other, or are they just told from different points of view, in your opinion? What might account for the differences and the similarities between the stories?

ACTIVITY 5

Sexual Ethics and Gender Reflection

1. Do religious ideas have anything to offer discussion of sexual ethics?
2. Does religion provide a necessary challenge to a promiscuous culture or, is society predominantly secular and therefore moral principles no longer require religion?
3. Is sexual behaviour entirely private and therefore not an area that needs ethical discussion?
4. If there is consent, is everything permissible?
5. On the other hand, do sexual relationships have moral consequences for those involved and often wider groups of people e.g. children of both parties?
6. Should Christian teaching resist secular views of gender? Have secular views of gender undermined Christian views of gender?
7. Can the Christian God be presented in female terms? Can a male saviour (Jesus) save women?

ACTIVITY 6

Key Philosophers and Theologians note-taking

Listen to 2 of the following podcasts

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01f0vzr>

- Plato's Republic
- Augustine
- St Thomas Aquinas
- The Ontological Argument
- The Soul
- Redemption
- Kant
- Relativism
- Utilitarianism
- William James
- Nietzsche
- Duty
- Good and Evil
- Feminism
- Evil
- Empiricism
- David Hume
- Logical Positivism
- Mill

Practice different note-making skills while you listen

- During one podcast, try to create a dual coding graphical organizer (pictures and key words)
- During the other, try using Cornell Notetaking

