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Richard McGowan
Butler University, rmcgowan@butler.edu

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Pedagogical Strategies for Teaching Moral Minimalism

Richard J. McGowan
Department of Philosophy and Religion
Butler University
Indianapolis, Indiana

Matthew K. McGowan
Foster College of Business
Bradley University
Peoria, Illinois

Garrett J. McGowan
Chemistry Department
Alfred University
Alfred, New York

ABSTRACT

In 1986, Stephen Satris's article, “Student Relativism,” meant to "offer analysis of, and suggest some methods for dealing with, a quite particular and peculiar problem in teaching philosophy...I speak of the problem of student relativism." (Satris, 1986, p. 193) The problem has not gone away. However, psychological research suggests that the problem of relativism, a problem especially critical for teaching business ethics (or any other class in applied philosophy) is not insolvable. This paper, extending earlier work by R. McGowan, provides a brief account of research by Lawrence Kohlberg and William Perry on the structure of thought exhibited by students, gives evidence of that structure, and offers pedagogical strategies for overcoming that structure and attaining moral minimalism in the classroom.

Introduction

When he-who-shall-not-be-named told Harry Potter, “There is no good or evil, there is only power,” J.K. Rowling identified a central problem for our time, namely, ethical relativism.

If Voldemort is correct, no standards exist for judging right and wrong; the exercise of power is the default mechanism for resolving dispute. Rowling could have had Stephen Satris’s 1986 article in mind. Satris’s “Student Relativism” meant to “offer analysis of, and suggest some methods for dealing with, a quite particular and peculiar problem in teaching philosophy...I speak of the problem of student relativism.” (Satris, 1986, p. 193) The problem has not gone away. However, psychological research suggests that the problem of relativism, a problem especially critical for teaching ethics (or any other class in applied philosophy) is not insolvable. This paper presents a brief account of research by Lawrence Kohlberg and William Perry on the structure of thought exhibited by students, provides evidence of that structure, and offers practical suggestion for attaining moral minimalism in the classroom.
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The Structure of Student Thought

When Satris wrote, the research by Lawrence Kohlberg and by William Perry et al was not as widely known as it is now. Today, most professors understand that people, including students, develop in orderly, predictable though not innately

As noted above, students can willfully embrace the lower structures of thought. For Perry, lower stages include dualism, where “the world of knowledge, conduct and values is divided as the child divides his world between his family and the vague inchoate outside” (Perry et al, 1986, p. 59, and multiplicity, where “no judgments about opinions can be made.” (Perry et al, 1986, Glossary) In these stages, knowledge is said to chart the comfortable plateaus on which people reside while they check their advance. For Perry notes that retreat often involves anger directed especially to people who represent or manifest the challenge. Needless to say, professors are frequently provoked by students who are provoked may direct their frustration to another involves the reorganization of major personal investments. (Perry et al, 1986, p. 49) Students must rearrange their manner of thinking to meet the challenge that moral dilemma, with its cognitive conflict, poses. Rearranging thought, though, “involve the risk, subjective and objective.” (Perry et al, 1968, p. 178)

Perry observed common patterns that would avoid the difficulties of accommodating chal-

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tion, good behavior consists of pleasing others and gaining their approval.” (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 18) As anyone who has ever observed teen-agers for a little time understands, in this stage, people follow peer pressure and conform to the group. On the other hand, the stage 4 thinker is orient-
ed toward rules and maintaining the social order for its own sake. Students in this stage make law-abiding, dutiful citizens though if questioned, they might not fully be able to articulate why. The short answer is the authority of laws and of social order.

The Reality of Today’s Students

If our experience is reliable, then students are indeed in Kohlberg’s stage 4 and Perry’s stage of relativism. Satris’ observation still holds. We asked business majors in ethics classes, business majors in business classes, and science majors in science classes to respond to the question, “Can ethics be taught? If so, how? If not, why not?” Student responses (see appendices) show what professors face in the classroom. The responses reflect a wide range of students from two different courses at two different schools: a business ethics course and a chemistry course. We analyzed the re-

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The language of the student responses were analyzed in context. For example, the phrase, “A person’s ethics may change over time,” could indicate a student at the level of multiplicity whose ethics may change to suit the convenience of the situation. The phrase could suggest a student at the relativity stage who believes that society may change its standards over time, and that a person’s moral standards must change accordingly. Or the phrase could represent a student at the highest stage, one who views ethical development as a lifelong process in which a person’s moral standards develop and evolve.

It is interesting to observe that Kohlberg’s stages one through four and Perry’s first three stages of intellectual development are years all include some degree of relativism. In Kohlberg’s stages 1 and 2 and up to Perry’s second main stage, multiplicity, ethics are thought to be relative to self-interest. In cultural relativity, ethics are relative to society, groups, or organizations.

The following table (see Table 1) provides the context of the overall response.

**Table 1: Responses of Students in Multiplicity Stage.**
- Hard to teach an adult; adults simply do not want to be told what to do or how to act.
- People and most managers follow what they feel is right.
- A person should be able to be more open-minded about opposing ethical opinions.
- Ethics and moral standards depend on the individual and their upbringing.
- Everyone encounters unique experiences and has different values, so what one person deems ethical, another may think is unethical.
- Every person has his or her individual feelings on what is right or wrong.

The following table (see Table 2) provides various responses representative of cultural relativity in development and understanding.

**Table 3: Responses of Students in Cultural Relativity Stage.**
- Society . . . insight to what is ethically right and wrong.
- Ethics can be taught but only within each culture; there is no global ethic that exists.
- In our culture, children learn rules; Adults are also able to “learn” ethics by watching others and understanding social norms.
- Violating a code of conduct that society has deemed unacceptable.
- People don’t come to ethical understanding on their own, they inherit society’s standards.
- Ethics is a very difficult concept to understand because ethics can differ from one group of people to another.
- These morals should closely relate to ethics of a society.
- Rules are made by businesses, government . . .
- Ethics is group morality.

The following table (see Table 4) provides responses of students whose language suggests an intersubjective or committed level of development.

**Table 4: Responses of Students in Committed Level of Development.**
- People . . . find themselves in situations where those standards are challenged . . . may end up changing their point of view and possibly their ethics.
- Each person can have his or her moral standards.
- It is my feeling that we all have a set of ethics.

The responses of students at the stage of multiplicity are indicative of the multiplicity. The phrases are indicative of the student’s sentiment, but we classified the responses based on the context of the overall response.

Many students indicated that a person learns moral standards at a young age, i.e., during childhood. The implicit message was that adults could not be taught ethics. This attitude might indicate an unwillingness to learn ethics past youth, a phenomenon that would preclude professors being able to influence moral development and teach ethics.

Some comments included: “The most influential time of a child is when they are young. I think ethics can be taught, but it must be taught at an early age.” Some students stated outright that ethics could not be taught. Several responses indicated that knowing ethics and acting ethically are two different issues. These responses are consistent with the idea of moral sensitivity supported by James Rest, and also relate to Rest’s concept of moral character. Moral sensitivity is a person’s awareness of how actions affect others. Some student comments include the following. “Just because it can be taught doesn’t mean that people will follow the correct ethics; it depends on the individual if they will follow them.” “A general code of ethics can be taught. That does not, however, mean that code of ethics is always followed.” Whether or not the individual will make decisions based on the ethics he or she has been taught. “Knowing ethics however, does not guarantee an adherence to ethical behavior.”

The responses from our students suggest that most students are at Perry’s stages of multiplicity or relativity. Since there are few students at the advanced stage of moral development, we need to look for ways that we, as professors, can advance their moral development.

The Move to Moral Minimalism

If our student responses are typical, then the ‘enemy’ of an ethics class is ethical relativism in either form, i.e., ethical subjectivism or cultural relativity. The goal of an ethics class is to make students aware of the danger of relativism. By default if for no other reason, is to have students take seriously the notion of moral minimalism, the position that a floor of universal moral standards exists or could exist. We propose five strategies that can be used to move students towards moral minimalism.

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Given our student responses though, most students are at Perry’s stages of multiplicity or relativity. Since there are few students at the advanced stage of moral development, we need to look for ways that we, as professors, can advance their moral development.
pedagogical strategy to achieve both goals, that is, dispel relativism and get students thinking seriously about ethics, is to assign the paper we assigned and read them carefully for their specific language. We advise assigning the paper on the first day of class so students can see immediately how they think.

A pedagogical consequence is that the assignment, combined with one of the strongest arguments students raise on behalf of ethical subjectivism. Students frequently argue that “ethics and moral standards depend on the individual and their upbringing,” that “ethics cannot be taught because I believe that one’s ethical values are a result of personal experience and morals, which cannot be taught,” or that it is very important to remember that different people have had different interactions in their lives, and therefore can have varying moral standards.”

After reading a dozen or so examples of this response, it becomes obvious to the students that, while students “have had different interactions in their lives,” students themselves exhibit similar patterns and act alike. In reading to students what they have said about how unique everyone is, students repeatedly encounter the same response. Further, the assignment invites a safe passage to the idea that ethics are universal and transcultural. What threatens students is the notion that “universal” principles are the same thing as “absolute” principles. One student thought it was “dangerous to teach ethical behavior” because it “conflicts with human ability of free thought and reasoning.” Showing students that there is a consistent and predictable pattern of thought among their responses removes the threat to their freedom but retains the position that universal moral principles may exist.

If students see pattern in themselves, then they can understand the next and more objective pedagogical strategy, namely, showing that the social sciences work. The only way that the work of Kohlberg or of Perry can be meaningful is if people behave in generally similar and predictable ways. The social sciences work precisely because people are alike—even if everyone is raised in an individually unique fashion. What apparently is constant is the thought process in those different circumstances. It is an easy jump to maintain that moral thought is constant across individuals and cultures and, therefore, ethical relativism does not square with readily accessible, empirical information.

A third argument is now available. Once students are out of themselves and into the world of ideas, they can be shown anthropological conclusions. Every society has taboos about murdering members of the community; every society has some sense of property; every society has laws and rules. Societies could not exist without some minimal moral principles in place and when societies are compared, similar principles appear across cultures.

A fourth argument can now be offered: the Golden Rule appears across cultures. One way to have this lesson really sink in is to read variations on the Golden Rule and have the students identify the source. For instance, one source advises to “regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain and regard your neighbor’s loss as your own loss” and another advises “do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” Some sources state that “what you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others” and “as you deem yourself, so deem others.” One source goes so far as to say that “None of you truly have faith if you do not desire for your brother that which you desire for yourself” and another source says “what is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor.” The sources—Taoism, Christianity, Confucianism, Sikhism, the Quran and the Talmud, respectively—suggest that cultures have the same broad moral injunction. The hunt for moral minimalism is not futile.

A fifth way to show the viability of moral minimalism is to ask students who their heroes are. Students will say their parents, other relatives, historical figures such as Jesus, Gandhi, or Mother Teresa, and teachers, coaches, and other important adults in their lives. Once the ‘hero list’ is on the board, students can be asked why the people are so designated. On what basis were the people chosen? Students will provide a laundry list of virtues, habits that are constructive to society and the individual. Those virtues are transcultural. The upshot of this exercise is that students see an objective basis for preferring one pattern of behavior over another pattern of behavior. This exercise is especially compelling when international students are in the class. Many Butler University students, classmates of a Kuwaiti student, respect the courage of Prince Faud of Kuwait’s royal family.

In short, ethical judgment is possible, ethical relativism is inconsistent with normal, everyday experience, and the cardinal demand of ethical relativism, i.e., the universality of toleration, is incoherent, empirically misplaced, and finally, destructive in its consequent, miserable results. Why tolerate the behavior of Nazis, Osama bin Laden, or Jeffrey Dahmer?

We think that if students can be enticed into the position of taking ethical judgment seriously, teaching ethics and having engaged citizens will be both probable and productive. While the majority of students enter class as relativists, they are quite capable of leaving class committed to some sort of moral minimalism. If they commit to the possibility that a floor of universal moral principles exist, they are more likely to be civically responsible to others in the world.

Resources


APPENDIXES

Appendix A
Student Responses from a Business Ethics Course

1. “Our way of thinking is shaped by what we are taught from the people around us, and this varies greatly from region to region…” “There will always be people with different moral standards…” “It is very important to establish and maintain certain global guidelines of what is ethically right or wrong in the business world, as long as it does not greatly benefit one side while significantly affecting the other.”

2. “Ethics involves concepts that cannot be defined” “Can ethics be taught.”

3. “may not be gained through instruction…” for example a personal code of ethics.” “Ethics are completely subjective” “One person’s moral foundation, views of the world, religious beliefs…will never exactly match that of another person’s”

4. ethics are taught by example

5. “Ethics are personal beliefs as to what is right and what is wrong because ethics are different for everyone, a person’s ethics cannot be considered correct or incorrect.” “Ethics are taught by example by providing information that forces them to revise their beliefs,” “whether they truly believe in what the consider right or wrong.” “My point of view.”

6. “My moral standards are the same for everyone’s” “Ethics and morals vary, not one individual is alike so neither should their beliefs”

7. “A child is taught how to express there emotions in acceptable ways that adhere to the accepted morals or standards of society” “Morals are not absolute in that they change from culture to culture and over the years they will never be the same as everyone’s” “Ethics and morals depend on the individual and their upbringing” “One must be able to live with the choices and decisions he makes in it.”

8. “take courses in ethics that challenged them to look at issues from a universal point of view” “most choices can be seen as both right or wrong”

9. “violating a code of conduct that society has deemed unacceptable” “parameters of how our culture has bound our ethics” by involving consideration of others rule of process “development of awareness”

10. “it all depends on the person or situation,” “if there was some type of universal ethical code…what is excepted of them”

11. “people are not ethical simply because they were born with a greater sense of right” and wrong. They are taught to behave in a certain manner throughout their lives. The ethical behavior that they demonstrate is a result of the moral standards that they have been taught.” “This is not to say that many times morality and ethics teach the same things. I would just point out that they have different origins and are accented differently depending on the groups.”

12. “Everyone has their own personal ethics to abide by” “there are universal moral standards.” Osama bin Laden.” “A set of universal moral standards must be created” “Each person has their own set of ethical standards that they feel are correct, but we must remember to continue to hold universal more standards to unite us”

13. “people don’t come to ethical understanding on their own, they inherit society’s moral standards”

14. “A child has to make up their own mind if the believe that same grounds for ethics, because this varies for each individual” “People’s ethics and morals vary, not one individual is alike so neither should their beliefs”

15. “a child is taught how to express their emotions in acceptable ways that adhere to the accepted morals or standards of society” “Morals are not absolute in that they change from culture to culture and over the years they will never be the same as everyone’s” “Ethics and morals depend on the individual and their upbringing” “One must be able to live with the choices and decisions he makes in it.”

16. “A child learns from all these outside factors what is considered right and wrong” “Ethical values” “Children are exposed to many contributing sources that reinforce ethics (more specifically what is socially acceptable)...today students are being taught in classes...to reinforce their moral standards.”

17. “Everyone encounters unique experiences and has different values, so what one person deems ethical, another may think is unethical. There is not the sacred book of ethics that we can all pick up and read.” “we can teach ethics by instructions how to think ethically and rationalize all decisions” “Their surrounding will dictate appropriate standards to follow. However, everyone must decide whether or not to apply ethics that they have learned.”

18. “What the person might find offensive or harmful might not be to another individual...it is important to remember to rationally examine the given situation by determining the moral obligations that are expected.”

19. “Ethics cannot be taught because I believe that one’s ethical values are a result of personal experience and morals, which cannot be taught.” “Experience teaches ethics (not books)” “I interpret…” “epistemological solipsism”

20. “our ethical standards are rooted in history and tradition.” “the concept of ethics is viewed differently by groups of people and even individuals.” “There is perhaps no other issue, save religion, which lends itself to relativism. A common notion is that ethical standards are to be adaptable to each individuals lifestyle. Unfortunately many people prescribe to this idea resulting in a variety of views on an issue that seriously needs a uniform standard.” “There is really no solid way to get around this argument” i.e. that ethics differ individual to individual.

21. “Ethics and morals are something that is unique to every individual.” “As we begin to decipher between right and wrong, we establish our own unique ethical structure that guides our decision-making process throughout life.” “We begin to adapt ethical standards to fit our own personal identity and character.”

22. “looking at case studies...forces the student to analyze a situation and look at the problem from a universal point of view” “(www, scu.com)”

23. “Ethics is a very difficult concept to understand because ethics can differ from one group of people to another.” “What is reasonable is always debatable, and who is to determine what is reasonable and what is poor reason.” “who is to tell me how to live my life?” “I feel confident that we can successfully present all sides to a debate and decide what works best for us as individuals, or us as a group, but we should never attempt to solve what works best for the whole.”

24. “what each and every person does with his or her education is irrevent.” “many people never grasp the learning or decide to act differently.”

25. Adults “discern right from wrong...creating their own system of ethics.” “The children learns from parents but as an adult, “will they review this ethical system and alter it as they see fit.” Yet: this student sees ethics developmentally and sees the inadequacy of stages 1 and 2.

26. “each person individually defines ethics and it is my belief that ethics cannot be taught” “every individual has his/ her personal feelings on what is right or wrong.” “because one gets his or her ethics from his/her feelings, and since feelings cannot be taught, it makes teaching ethics impossible.” “each individual has a unique lifestyle.” “there are no people that have the exact feeling on a subject”

27. “Ethics can be taught because ethics is the study of morality, rather than morality itself” “Ethics is a very difficult concept to understand because ethics can differ from one group of people to another.” “What is reasonable is always debatable, and who is to determine what is reasonable and what is poor reason.” “who is to tell me how to live my life?” “I feel confident that we can successfully present all sides to a debate and decide what works best for us as individuals, or us as a group, but we should never attempt to solve what works best for the whole.”

28. “society will often have an idea of what the norm should be for a certain ethical standard. If this will seek to enforce this standard upon those that live within this society. The majority will soon adapt rather than continued to be outside of the societal norm.”

29. “everyone has his or her own set of personal ethics that they feel are a fair standard to live their life by, whether it is right or wrong” after a textbook definition of ethics.” “This basically says to me that everyone has standards or beliefs that they have adopted that helps understand what is right or wrong.” “A decision is measured right or wrong based on personal and society standards...the problem is people have different sets of standards.” “Each individual decides what is the right decision for them even if it is wrong.”

30. “I will attempt to look at the external influence that help us form our moral beliefs.” “After that stating changes occur->
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104. "although I personally have always believed that you are born either ‘good’ or ‘not-good’"

31. "we are all taught different things at young ages because everyone has different standards and ideas of what is right and wrong.” Inspirational people in children’s lives may have different opinions of what is right and wrong." so exploration of ethics is how children learn "there is no list of right and wrong things” I have to develop what I feel is good ethical behavior,” “there is no ethical behavior and unethical behavior and the definitions of these are different to many people in the business world.”

32. Very textually driven/ sees that ethical judgments differ.

33. "I am aware that although morality is the basis of ethics, there cannot be the presumption that morality does not define ethical. For that to be true there would be cultural specifics.

34. Ethics can be taught. "People are taught and learn ethics by growing up in their families, friends they hang around with, and…what ethics really are.”

35. "when faced with the question whether or not ethics can be taught I am filled with mixed emotions.” to me, ethics is the decisions of right and wrong. "By this time, hopefully, a person has the basic ideas of right and wrong in their minds.” An individual uses their personal morals when making this decision "one person’s morals are something that is personal to you...ethics are more social and related to society.

36. Everyone has their own set of ethics.” Ethics is a continual learning process throughout life.

37. "Ethics simply take the morals that we have made for ourselves and put them in a different perspective” this will allow them to begin to learn what is ethically right and wrong..." I feel even though in some circumstances there are universal moral standards such as one should not murder.” A person can be taught...but in the end the final decision is a personal one.” Ethics can be taught to a very diverse group of people through the discussions of universal morals. “On the other hand, other moral principles are not universal.”

38. "If morals had no been taught...we would have no standards to conclude that acts of terrorism are evil. The rescue efforts of thousands of firefighters would not be seen as good either.”

39. "Actually learning and practicing good ethics is one hundred per cent completely up to the individual.” “Which ethical approach is chosen is right and which ethical approach chosen is wrong is a debatable topic.” Ethics “can be taught if done tastefully and thoughtfully.” Ethics should be taught as a subject that has no final answer. “The fact that what is right for one person is not necessarily right for the next.” there is no real way to say what the best answer is” profs should teach that “there are no right or wrong answers.” There are "no completely correct answers but yet some that are better than others.”

40. "good’ and ‘right’ have different meanings for all people.” Although ethical behavior may mean something completely different to each individual it is something that can be taught to a willing mind.” many people...have different views on what ethical behavior is.” “Common ground” - people can agree “Although no one will ever agree on what is right and good, it doesn’t mean that you should not bother teaching or learning the basis of ethical behavior.” “No two people will ever have the exact same views on what is ethical” “the idea of what is good and right is generally the same.”

41. Kohlberg->at the post conventional level, a person starts defining what is right and wrong from a universal point of view rather than from group norms or loyalty.” Ethics can be taught. It transcends through culture...its boundaries are without limit with reference to religion or race.

42. "People need a set of skills that enable this level develops moral principles that are no right or wrong "no two people have the exact point of view is placed before students—academic relativism is okay.” “If ethical relativism are okay and there were no ‘Universal Moral Standards, total and utter chaos would result and what happened September 11th would be justifiable.”

43. “I feel however that you cannot teach people to be ethical, but you can teach them what is ethical.” Discussion of Kohlberg in the paper/ no mention of the word ‘universal’

44. “The outcome of learning ethics in a class wholly depends on the person” “an ethical perspective” “By saying that ethics cannot be learned is not taking responsibility for your own decisions.”

45. “Ethics is a set of standards that is obtained at a young age and then continuously reinforced through experiences in life.” Note: The student is unaware that ethics come from within or that they change

46. Every individual analyzes every situation differently.

47. “There are no concrete answers to what is right and what is wrong. These vary by cultures and societies, even neighbors.” Because of the obscurity in the determination of right and wrong varies between people and cultures. Moral standards cannot be taught.” “Standards are observed and internalized. ‘Assuming right and wrong could be defined seriously could be taught, it would still be impossible to teach ethics.” “There is no clear definition of right and wrong to set moral standards.”

48. “Accepting that ethics can be taught, just implies that you can stand back and observe your morals in a comparative and analytic way.”

49. Everyone has their own definition and their own views on what is considered ethical behavior and what is not.” “Who says what is right or wrong?” “everyone...shares different views on what is right and what is wrong” “there is no clear black and white definition of what constitutes as ethical.”

50. Each person has different ethics and no one person’s ethics can be labeled as right or wrong.’no two people have the exact
same ethical beliefs. “After repeatedly asserting that children have the ethics of their parents) he sees the problem but does not see the solution
60 “it may take many years for a person to believe and follow the ethical standards of society.” “it is a person’s choice as to whether or not he is going to be open to society’s moral standards.”
61 “ethical codes, from one culture to another, are more alike than different people” invoking golden rule for all societies clear understanding of universal ethics
62 “argument occurs because ethics means different things to different people” ethics begins when we critically examine the moral standards we have accepted from family, friends, society ethics is life long “business activities cannot exist unless some minimal standards of ethics exist.”
63 The question of right and wrong “I believe ethics can’t be taught in its entirety, but people can be made aware of the values and regulations and the punishments that would result of those guidelines weren’t followed.” “Teaching ethics ultimately the student… must be willing to accept that material.”
64 “the real question is who is right or what about the individual may inherently believe, it is critical that he or she strictly adhere to those beliefs in all situations are encountered.” “we are mature enough to develop our own versions of ethical standards.” “we must learn to create our own values.” “whether this is ethical in the business world is in the eye of the beholder”
65 “the best teachers can be people we look up to… it is really hard job to do because many times they do not know exactly what is ethical or what is not.” “it is sometimes very difficult to figure out what the right thing to do it.” From a foreign student/ ethics = knowledge
66 “Ethics are a set of morals and values that everyone possesses. However, everyone has a different set of morals and values… most people have a relatively similar set of ethics but not all.” “every person who enters the business world will bring their own ethics.”
67 Everybody has their own set of moral standards, each society has its own moral standards, too, which allows for a wide variety of personal ethics. “The key to teaching these ethics is to provide more or less a system of guidance that someone can choose to follow or not follow.”
68 “Whether these [moral] standards are reasonable or not. This is determined by the individual situation that is being faced by the person or organization.” Kohlberg's stage 5 “The person sees the conflicting views; all of these views and beliefs should be accepted in society.” 
69 “I think people have values and morals that they go by and those are impossible to change for anyone.” As I grow older, I’ve changed a few of those values.” That I learned from my family what’s legal what’s ethical.” The student sees this point.
70 “With corporations going globally, it can even be harder to distinguish what is ethical because culture moral change that are created. Where in the United States to torture women is wrong, in Afghanistan is not.” (written by a foreign born student – hence the language is a second language)
71 “Every person has his or her own ideas about right and wrong as well as what is fair and unfair. No matter what each individual may inherently believe, it is critical that he or she strictly adhere to those beliefs in all situations are encountered.” “we are mature enough to develop our own versions of ethical standards.” “we must learn to create our own values.” “whether this is ethical in the business world is in the eye of the beholder”
72 “The real question is who is right or what about the individual may inherently believe, it is critical that he or she strictly adhere to those beliefs in all situations are encountered.” “we are mature enough to develop our own versions of ethical standards.” “we must learn to create our own values.” “whether this is ethical in the business world is in the eye of the beholder”
73 “Everyone has personal ethics to which they adhere. The grounds by which these personal ethics are made or learned differ from person to person.” “whose personal values should the business reflect?”
74 “Without ethics in business… everyone would be acting in an unethical manner, or personal manner.” Ethics “is a topic that requires both diligence and careful examination.” “It is possible to make a student aware of the ‘proper’ or ‘acceptable’ ethical standards one should abide by.”
75 “What we determine as right and wrong become our set of ethics that we live by.” “an individual can be taught what ethical behavior is considered to be by another individual, but in the end, people must determine their own ethical standards.” “how people develop their set of ethics is much like picking our clothing…The ethics you have in your own life fit you and who you are. ” “There must be moral standards that are developed and followed.”
76 “Ethics is a very gray subject.” “I also believe that people’s ethics are different all over the world.” “You have to have someone there to tell you what is right and wrong according to what your society believes in.”
77 “Ethics are the principles and morals that are norms in society.” “The real world.” “anyone…can easily be educated about what is socially acceptable in society.” “Teaching ethics is simply studying morality and applying it to social situations.” “When teaching ethics, it is important to accept and acknowledge all different views and opinions from there, emphasis should be on certain moral standards that would be accepted in society.”
78 “Each and everyone of us have our own definition of ethics results different views and opinions from there, emphasis should be on certain moral standards that would be accepted in society.”
79 “But no one can say which of us is right or wrong. Our views are what we feel as being ethical.”
80 “everyone has a different standard of what is acceptable.”
81 “The first step is to educate our society about what is socially appropriate in the real world.” “anyone…can easily be educated about what is socially acceptable in society.” “Teaching ethics is simply studying morality and applying it to social situations.” “When teaching ethics, it is important to accept and acknowledge all different views and opinions from there, emphasis should be on certain moral standards that would be accepted in society.”
Appendix B: Student Responses from a Chemistry Course

1. Note some anger “Each person can have his or her moral standards”
2. group invoked: “majority rules” “ethics is group morality” yet, “ethics is...a very individual idea”
3. “society or government...”
4. can’t teach by lecturing; teach by example, especially from parents
5. no clear or useful indicators or language
6. “it is my feeling that we all have a set of ethics...” parents
7. ethics requires openness and will; ethics involves “a thought process”
8. “a person’s moral beliefs come from family”
9. knowing ethics does not equal being ethical
10. ethics can only be taught at an early age “morals should closely relate to the ethics of a society”
11. “rules are made by businesses, lawmak- ers...” for this person, rules are outside or external to the individual
12. “can instill ethics in others by expressing how they feel...” It’s “up to the individual to agree or not”
13. “a well-educated person is more likely to be ethical” “society influences ethics, too, though”
14. handwriting too hard to read
15. “a set of ethics must be consistent”; ethics are “taught at an early age”
16. “ethics can be taught to certain extent”; doing is not the same as thinking
17. respondent suggests that people should assume personal responsibility for moral decisions; ethics are learned from birth “through our entire lives” “decisions must have support”
18. parents invoked; development is observed in people
19. I’d like “a class which teaches what ethics is, what is part of it, what is considered ethical, and what considerations must be made for an ethical decision”
20. “Teaching a person ethics is like teaching a person faith. It cannot be done.” (intrac-table isolation/retrenced multiplicity)
21. “I’m not sure.” We must “uphold the dignity of humanity and nature.”
22. “ethics can be learned but not taught... learned by observation”
23. “society and government...” “everyone has their own idea about ethics”
24. “the will to learn is key” respondent states that people can’t/don’t change their char-acter
25. ethics is taught by mentors
26. “ethics are formed’ at a young age”
27. “ethics is something that can never be taught” “ethics is inherent in all individu-als”
28. “...code of ethics are the laws that you agree to follow”
29. “I don’t think a person can be taught to be ethical.”
30. “parents...” reinforced in classrooms “It’s the little voice that tells you...”
31. “No, no one can tell you what to do”
32. “You can clue people into behavior and mannerisms that are acceptable”
33. “Ethics can be taught...the rules you should follow and why can also be taught” “No teacher, especially at the collegiate level, has much of an impact in the develop-ment of a person’s ethics.”
34. Ethics are “the principles or standards of human conduct” people must be open and willing to learn
35. “environment teaches...” “in the end, everyone has to make their own choices based on what they feel is right”
36. “culture teaches...”
37. “society...” the will is important
38. Ethics is “what society in general believes to be proper” Ethics are “hard to teach because students are not faced with ethical challenge”
39. “Everyone has their own beliefs and opin-ions”
40. “It is dangerous to teach ethical behavior” because it “conflicts with human ability of free thought and reasoning.” Ethics is “collective morality”