

Monday 11 October 2010

- 1. Briefly give a couple of examples from Quinn Chapter 1 illustrating how a technological change led to new social or ethical issues. (15 points)**

Adoption of the calculator led to lowered wages in bookkeeping and feminization of the field. Adoption of the telephone led to a blurring of work life and private life and eroded traditional social boundaries. Invention of the printing press and newspapers made mass communication easier and aided both the Reformation and the American Revolution. The internet and the world wide web led to a multitude of issues discussed in this class.

- 2. Describe the early development of the telegraph and why it was such a big deal in the mid 1800s. (10 points)**

The telegraph was invented by Samuel More, but the first telegraph line was funded by the US government. Then private companies started building telegraph lines and those companies flourished. Communication via telegraph was virtually instantaneous — much faster than using US Mail or the Pony Express — to the point where the Pony Express became obsolete. Further, automated telegraphs could be incorporated into public police call boxes and fire alarm boxes, allowing rapid reporting of crimes or fires.

- 3. One of the first ethical theories examined by Quinn is the Divine Command Theory.**

- a. What is the Divine Command Theory? (10 points)**

Divine Command Theory says that good actions are those aligned with God's will, and bad actions are those contrary to God's will. Holy books reveal God's will, so we should use those holy books as guides for making moral decisions.

- b. In what way(s) is Divine Command Theory *similar* to Cultural Relativism? (5 points)**

Cultural Relativism allows a particular society to say what they define as being right and wrong, so if you consider those following a particular set of holy books to be a society, Divine Command Theory could be considered a form of Cultural Relativism. Neither is considered a workable ethical theory.

- c. In what way(s) is Divine Command Theory *different* from Cultural Relativism? (5 points)**

Name: _____

Cultural Relativism sets the society up as the arbiter of right and wrong, whereas Divine Command Theory casts God in that role. The society's view may also change over time, but God's definition of right and wrong may remain constant. With Divine Command Theory there is a book to consult when making decisions, but with Cultural Relativism the guidelines may not be documented.

4. What was Kant's 1st formulation of the Categorical Imperative, and what does it mean?

As written, it says "Act only from moral rules that you can at the same time will to be universal moral laws". What it means is that you should follow only those moral rules that you can justify as universally applying to everyone.

5. What does John Rawl's Principle of Justice say? (10 points)

Each person may claim a "fully adequate" number of basic rights and liberties, so long as these claims are consistent with everyone else having a claim to the same rights and liberties. Further, any social and economic inequalities must be associated with positions that everyone has a fair and equal opportunity to achieve, and must be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle).

6. Given all the spam filters that we have, together with all the other methods in place for fighting spam, we never even see most of the spam being sent, so why should we care that spammers are still sending it? (5 points)

Ultimately, we're still paying for all the network bandwidth being wasted and for the filtering software being used.

7. Kant had strong views on censorship. What were his views, and why did he hold those views? (10 points)

Kant strongly opposed censorship, arguing that should have the courage to think for themselves. This was during the "Age of Enlightenment" and was a reaction by him and others to the dominance of the monarchy and the church.

8. What does the First Amendment to the Constitution say (more or less, I don't expect you to know it word for word)? (5 points)

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Name: _____

9. The Child Internet Protection Act, among other things, requires libraries receiving federal networking funds to filter pages containing obscenity or child pornography.

a. What are the arguments *in favor of* this filtering? (5 points)

It prevents children from seeing objectionable material in libraries, and also prevents adults who don't want to see such material from seeing it.

b. What are the arguments *against* this filtering? (5 points)

It can block non-objectionable sites by mistake (e.g, breast cancer, chicken breast recipes). The definition of "objectionable" may vary from person to person. Adults can ask to have the blocks removed but may be uncomfortable asking. Some people only have internet access through libraries so deserved equal access to such material as people who have broadband in their homes.