Ethical Theories Review Sheet

Standard Theories:
- Consequence-Based (Teleological): e.g. Utilitarian Ethics
- Duty-Based (Deontological): e.g. Kantian, Divine Command ethics
- Character-Based: e.g. Virtue Ethics
- Human Rights-based: e.g. Western Liberal Individualism
- Human Nature-Based: e.g. Natural Law Ethics
- Common Sense-based theory: e.g. Common Morality

Critical Response Theories:
- Community-Based (Communitarian) Criticism:
  - Gender-Based: Feminine, Feminist, etc. Ethics
  - Story-Based: Narrative Ethics
  - Relationship-Based: Care Ethics

Modes or Methods of Moral Reasoning:
- Deductive methods
- Inductive methods
- Reflective Equilibrium
Standard Theories
Well established, universally recognized sources of authority in ethics and morality. Refined over centuries of careful reflection on the human and human experience, knowledge, and capability, these theories define the field. To know ethics and morality, you must know these theories.

1. Consequence-Based Theory:

**Utilitarianism or Consequentialism:** Sometimes referred to as “teleological” ethics because of the classical use of “telos” as the end toward which one aims a moral act. Put most simply it aims for, “The greatest good for the greatest number.” The primary concern is to promote that which is most valued by the most people in any given society, such as for instance, “well-being.” The principle of utility is the one and only (and absolute) principle to be followed. Rules and guidelines follow from this principle and shape its application.

**Founders:** Jeremy Bentham (d. 1832), John Stuart Mill (d. 1873)

1. Acts are considered morally right as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they produce the reverse.
2. Primary (but not only) focus is on the end or consequence of an action. Is your action aimed at that which is valued the most? Will your action produce more of what is valued and less of what is not valued?
3. The good (or that which ought to be done) should promote happiness/pleasure which is founded on the notion of hedonism (humans pursue pleasure and avoid pain).
4. Equal consideration of interests: All people count for one and no one counts for more than one. Utilitarianism is egalitarian in nature.

**Act Utilitarianism:** Primarily concerned with the consequences of specific acts as opposed to general rules. The movement is directly from the principle of utility to the act under consideration. Thus Utility >> actions.

**Rule Utilitarianism:** Primarily concerned with consequences of general policies or rules that have developed over time. The movement is from the principle of utility through the rules and/or guidelines that have shown themselves to produce the highest level of value. Thus Utility >> rules/guidelines >> actions.

2. Duty-Based Theory:

**Deontological Ethics, Nonconsequentialist Ethics, Kantian Ethics, Divine Command Ethics:** Any ethic that provides a universal normative statement that the listener is obliged to uphold should fall under the “duty-based” heading. The primary focus is on the act itself. Acts will produce consequences to be sure, but the primary moral concern for any given action is the act itself. If the act is morally wrong no amount of positive consequences can make it right. Even if the moral agent (the one acting) is a saint, because the act itself is wrong, the saint who engages in that action remains morally wrong.

**Founder:** Immanuel Kant (d. 1804)

A. Example: Kantianism: Kant argued that ethics must be based on reason and not particular tradition (personal, religious, cultural, or national orientation). One can only act morally when one rejects the idea that one’s self is an exception. One cannot act morally by doing the act that is best for one’s self or even someone else; one only acts appropriately when one acts for the sake of obligation. One must do the right act for the pure obligation of it. Or put positively there is only one universal rule for ethics and morality, it is called the “Categorical Imperative” and it
is expressed in at least two forms:

1. Actions are moral only when they can be consistently willed universally. “Act always on the maxim (principle) that you can consistently will as a principle of action for everyone else similarly situated.” In other words, don’t think that you and your contemplated action should be an exception to the rule.

2. “Treat every person as an end, never merely as a means to an end.” Essentially respect for persons. Personal autonomy is a crucial concept here.

B. Example: Divine Command Ethics:
Sometimes called Theological Voluntarism in its strongest form, it rejects the use of human reason altogether. If reason is allowed, it is only a tool to get you to the revelation of God which then makes all things clear. While some urge a direct, personal connection to God’s commands at every given moment, the vast majority turn to God’s revelation to humankind as the guideline for human action. Typically, in the form of scripture and usually thought to be exclusive to those who believe, God shows the way for every act we may face. All right and wrong is expressed via God’s commands and when we do otherwise we’ve gone our own way and thus acted immorally or “sinned.”

1. “God said it, I believe it, that settles it.”
2. All right and wrong, morally conceived, is purely as God wills it, not as we perceive it. This is so, especially because human reason is, at its core, flawed and in need of divine revelation/guidance.

3. Character-Based Theory:
   **Virtue Ethics:** The primary focus is on being persons of moral character as opposed to focusing on the acts persons commit or the consequences of those actions. We might refer to such a person as compassionate, humble, consistent, honest, trustworthy, magnanimous, or friendly. From the place of the observer who watches someone act in certain ways that are friendly, trustworthy, and compassionate, one cannot know if the person is virtuous or not. It is the case that someone may engage in acts that we proclaim to be virtuous, but internally deplore each and every act. In other words I can help you up off the floor while saying to myself the entire time, “what kind of idiot would fall down this way….I shouldn’t even be helping this idiot!” I can go to church all my life long because I have to (as a Divine Command ethics would demand) not because I want to. But this doesn’t make me a virtuous person. In addition to being this way at one’s core, one engages in these character traits with appropriate emotions as well. Some debate remains about which comes first, the desire to be honest, or the obligation to be honest whether you want to or not.

   **Founders:** Socrates (d. 399 bce), Plato (d. 347 bce), Aristotle (d. 322), Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (d. 1198), Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), etc.

1. A virtue is something a person is at his/her core, which includes motivation to act in certain ways. Morality is that which a virtuous person does....A virtuous person does what is moral.

2. A virtue is an excellence of personal cognitive and affective character traits. It is a personal trait of character that is routinely expressed or habituated by the person.

   a. **Cardinal virtues of Greek philosophy:**
      - Wisdom
      - Justice
      - Courage
      - Temperance

   b. **Additional virtues of Christian theology:**
      - Faith
      - Hope
      - Love

3. Modern resurgence of interest understands virtue as an acquired human quality that allows us to experience the particular good(s) of our community.

4. Typically combined with another system of ethics. It is not good enough to be a virtuous Pirate.
4. Human Rights-Based Theory:

**Western Liberal Individualism**: Emerges from the Enlightenment period and is fundamentally individualistic. Ethical truth is sought not in history, tradition, or religion but in universal tenets of rationality. Ethics and morality is objective and universal, applicable to all times and places. A Right is a well established claim that I (we) can make for myself (ourselves) which obliges others in one of two ways: either to leave me (us) alone or do something for me (us). Thus we have positive and negative Rights. My assertion of a Right to be left alone (a negative Right) obligates you to leave me alone. Your Right to healthcare obligates the society to provide some form of healthcare to you. But we all must agree on these matters to make Rights work. Thus I cannot assert a Right that I desire but everyone else rejects. In such a case I simply don’t have a Right. Rights reasoning is rule based, the assertion of a Right is to uphold a rule the breaking of which is immoral.

**Founders**: John Locke (d. 1704), Samuel Pufendorf (d. 1694), Hugo Grotius (d. 1645)

1. Emerging from religious assertion of “natural” Rights given by God, today, based on a secular foundation we enter into agreements to uphold Rights and obligations of persons, governments and nations on a global scale.
   a. Human Rights are “basic moral guarantees that people in all countries and cultures allegedly have simply because they are people” *(Encyclopedia of Ethics)*.
   b. Examples: Rights to life, liberty, property. But Rights may not be absolute; property is routinely taken by cities and nations for community interests, liberties are routinely limited by things like seat belt laws, and even the right to life may be overruled for instance by killing in a time of war.

2. Often referred to as “contractarian.” That is, we contract or agree with each other that these things exist. Rights are correlative with obligations but a Right precedes an obligation. I have no obligation to help pay for your healthcare until such time that the country decides healthcare is a right. I do have an obligation to pay taxes to support our nations military and our national system of education. Why? Because we have established the agreement (the contract) that we must have both the capability to defend ourselves as a nation and we must educate our children through the 12th grade.

3. A commitment to the individual as the unique focus of moral concern. Rights theory is understood in the West as a primarily individualistic ethic, only secondarily interested in the communal good. In many other nations, less individualistically based, they are primarily understood to be communal first and only secondarily individualistic.

4. The primary conceptual document is the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948). The document and the theory are now as important politically as they are philosophically. Statements of human Rights have now emerged all over the world. See the *Cairo Declaration of Human Rights* (1990) issued by the Organization of Islamic Conference. See also the *Bangkok Declaration* by the Ministers of Asian States (1993) jointly issued in preparation for the World Conference on Human Rights in Austria in 1993.

5. Human Nature-Based Theory:

**Natural Law Ethics**: Natural Law ethics is built upon the ontological argument that there is an objective moral order in the universe and that all humans can come to know that order and use it for human relations. There is a moral order set by either nature or God for human beings that, based upon their nature, is both knowable and desirable. Despite intense and on-going debate about human nature, Natural Law theorists argue than an ethic for human interaction is possible based upon our knowledge of human nature and an objective order in the universe. The difficulty arises when specific content for this law is asserted as a moral norm or rule. For instance, if murder (or the unjustified killing [because not all killing is unjustified] of a human) is condemned as wrong all across the
globe, can it be understood as an essential part of the Natural Law about human relations? Arguably, we could have such a discussion but when the specific rule about abortion in the U.S. is called "murder," we will launch into an interminable and unresolvable discussion over the specifics of the universal objective order.

Founders: Jewish and Greek philosophers. Islamic and Christian scripture. Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) developed it most clearly. More than any other method of moral argument, within Roman Catholicism, Natural Law theory shapes teaching and doctrine for bioethics.

1. First principle of this ethic: “Do good, avoid evil.”

2. Modern derivative rules: (Grisez and Finnis, Roman Catholic interpreters).
   a. self-integration
   b. peace of conscience
   c. peace with others
   d. peace with God
   e. life and death
   f. truth and beauty
   g. play and skill

6. Common Sense-based Theory:

   Common Morality Theory:
   A set of rules or norms toward which any person who takes morality seriously will feel a level of obligation. These ideas are shaped over millennia by human experience and rational reflection regardless of local differences in culture. The common morality is universal. All humans intuitively and by education understand it to be important for society to exist. But even if a society lives it out poorly or without any coherence that does not count against the idea. The foundations for any given expression may differ, but the rules and norms are common across the world. Pluralism is real but not determinative in the form of relativism. Intuition is important but not absolute. Principles and rules are determinative but not absolute.

   Some people go beyond the keeping of the principles and their determinative rules and attain “saintly” status. That is, their personal traits of character fully integrate the underlying values associated with these rules. While not all are expected to be saintly, it is common to hold aspirations to be like these virtuous persons.

Founders: There are no founders as it is not well established. Present proponents: Bernard Gert, James Childress, Dan Beauchamp

1. Some possible rules (non-absolute, prima facie binding):
   a. Do not steal
   b. Do not cause pain
   c. Do not kill
   d. Do not punish those who are not guilty
   e. Keep the law
   f. Keep your promises
   g. Prevent harm from occurring
   h. Help others in danger
   i. Care for the young and the old

2. Any theory or approach to the moral life that does not account for these matters of common-sense universal rules and aspirations will fail in its specific application. Our common morality should not be shaped from above, that is, a purely rational theory that has no applicability to human experience. Rather our theory should emerge from our lived experience.

3. Any given issue may be resolved in a number of different ways using principles from the common morality. The universal relevance does not dictate unanimity of expression.
Addendum to Standard Theories
or a few “isms” to contemplate

1. **Relativism:**
   - **Descriptive (Cultural) Relativism:**
     The observed reality that cultures differ in the ways they live; how they raise children, bury their dead, engage in committed relationships, etc. No one can truly argue against this. Anthropologists have shown how this is true as they have studied other cultures with as much objectivity as is possible.

   - **Normative (Moral) Relativism:**
     This is the idea that the various societies around the globe differ in both their standards of ethical behavior and how they apply these standards. Thus, universal normative claims about ethics cannot be stated. Nothing can be stated with universal or absolute certainty about ethics. However, others counter this claim. For example, killing is accepted in virtually all societies if it is properly justified according to that society’s standards. Examples include capital punishment, war, abortion, etc. But every society also has notions of unjustified killing; this is what we call in English, murder. Notions of murder are likely present in any given society.

     **Pros:** It does make us pause and realize that there are important differences in culture that should affect our moral reasoning and statements of normative content. We should be non-judgmental and recognize the differences.

     **Cons:** Recognizing cultural relativism doesn’t necessarily mean that we should not speak out in a normative manner. It may be possible to come to some consensus on appropriate behavior on an international or cross-cultural perspective. In the proclamation that we cannot judge another person or culture, the position establishes a universal tenet of ethics, namely, you cannot judge another person or culture in any circumstance, which is directly contradictory to one assertion of relativism, namely, that there are no universal tenets of ethics and morality.

2. **Ethical Egoism:**
   Ethical egoism claims that action is morally appropriate if and only if it demonstrates self-interest. Not only is it essential that an act be oriented toward self-interest, it is also sufficient in itself. Put otherwise, no other concern need be attended to in order to act morally. When one orders one’s actions based upon this principle of self-interest, one must realize that each person stands in need of others in order to get what is best for one’s self. If I assume others are also acting in self-interest we will all, therefore accord moral weight toward others, knowing that we all need each other. That is, if we’re all looking out for ourselves in the knowledge that we need each other to get what we want, we will purposefully cooperate in this effort. But this doesn’t necessarily mean we will always and immediately do what we want to do at any given moment. Sometimes we know that it is in our best interests to put off until later that which we may presently, intensely, desire.

     **Pros:** The theory may help motivate us to act well toward others. Fits well with our common-sense notion that each of us is primarily looking out for ourselves.

     **Cons:** It may undercut levels of common decency toward others if we lose the underlying assumption that others are acting in such a way as to honor our own self-interest.

3. **Intuitionism:**
   Moral knowledge is self-justified or self-evident. One doesn’t need any objective or concrete physical evidence to shape one’s beliefs about a given moral event. One cannot deductively or inductively arrive at one’s beliefs. Rather they emerge from things like a priori mathematical axioms, sense perception (or what is
often called the moral sense). Most commonly expressed simply as “it felt like the thing to do.” Or “I just know it.” Some theorists in ethics claim that all humans have a sense, like our other senses of taste, smell, etc. that is aware of and focused on ethics and morality; thus the Moral Sense.

**Pros:** We all have some measure of awareness of our intuitions…and despite the common proverb that women’s intuition is always correct, both males and females have and follow intuitions. Intuition works best when combined with another theoretical perspective.

**Cons:** We often follow it blindly to our detriment. We may “follow our heart” right down the road to broken promises and ruptured relationships. Intuition works best when combined with another theoretical perspective.

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**Critical Response Theories**

Theories that attempt to correct the weaknesses of the standard theories. While they emphasize those things that will expose and counteract the weaknesses of the standard theories, they do not entirely refute those theories. Neither do they assert themselves as comprehensive theories that may stand alone.

1. **Community-Based Theory:**

   **Communitarian Ethics:** Generally put, all of our guiding norms can be traced to distinct ethical traditions and ways of life. We cannot place ourselves outside of this context and find the ethical norms for guidance. Particular notions of right and wrong behavior emerge from social convention, religious teachings, cultural traditions, family values, national interests, and the like. Actions that uphold and support communal forms and norms and values are those that should be considered morally appropriate. Anything that denigrates such matters or lifts the individual over these communal concerns is morally inappropriate.

   **Founders:** While no single founder or group of exponents is responsible for this perspective it does have present-day proponents: Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, and Michael Walzer

   1. Ethical truth is particular, not universal. That is, it cannot be imagined as something for which all persons and societies will agree.
   2. Communitarian theories eschew the individuality upheld by Utilitarian emphasis on personal happiness, the individual autonomy asserted by Kantian notions of agents acting under obligation, and would position themselves toward Rights primarily expressed through the community and not the individual.
   3. Focus on:

      - Common good  **not**  individual good
      - Shared values  **not**  individual values
      - Healthy community  **not**  happy individual

**NOTE:** All of the theories that follow are, in my view, forms of communitarian ethics.

1a. **Story-Based Theory:**

   **Narrative Ethics:** Central claim is that morality is, at its root, constituted by stories. Our judgments about right and
wrong and good and evil and our resulting actions are dependent upon stories we hear, tell, and live out. Stories about “Uncle Joe’s” alcoholism, for instance, shape the family position toward alcohol consumption. Stories about the “founding fathers” of the United States shape our ideas of what is right and wrong on a national scale. Stories about Jesus help us figure out what he would do in any given moral quandary.

**Founders:** Iris Murdoch, Martha Nussbaum, Stanley Hauerwas, Alasdair MacIntyre

1. Important conceptual notions include vision, virtue, character, tradition.
2. Five things we do with stories: (Hinde Lindeman-Nelson).
   a. Read them
   b. Tell them
   c. Compare them
   d. Analyze them
   e. Invoke them

### 1b. Gender-Based Theory:

**Feminist Ethics:** A critique of the standard account of morality. The primary effort is to argue for the reality of the experience of women in moral understanding and ethical systems.

**Founders:** Some notable philosophical precursors: Mary Wollstonecraft (d. 1797), John Stuart Mill (d. 1873), Frederick Engels (d. 1895), and Simone de Beauvoir (d. 1986) and present day activist Gloria Steinem; psychologist Carol Gilligan, educator Nel Noddings, and theologian Margaret Farley.

1. **Difficulties in definition:**
   a. **Feminine ethics:** A basic respect for women’s moral experience. Basic concern is for women’s morality in the context of ongoing societal reflection on morality and ethics.
   b. **Feminist ethics:** Not just an effort to respect women’s moral experience but to correct past injustice. Feminist ethics is typically very politically minded.
   c. **Womanist ethics:** The specific moral experience of black women in America. See the famous talk given by Sojourner Truth in 1851 at the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention called “Ain’t I Woman.”
   d. **Mujerista ethics:** The specific lived moral experience of women of Latin America. See the work of Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz.
2. **Minimally stated:**
   a. Women and men cannot be assumed to be similarly situated in any given moral situation.
   b. We must understand individual actions in context of broader social practices.
   c. We must be able to provide guidance on issues of private life; namely intimate relations, sexuality, child-bearing and rearing. This is where women often are and it is an area ignored by those studying morality. These are issues not typically attended to by the justice perspective.
   d. We must take the moral experience of women seriously.

### 1c. Relationship-Based Theory:

**Care Ethics:**
A newcomer to reflection on ethics and morality that has ancient roots in all theories within which human affection and relationships are important. Often compared and contrasted to the “Justice” perspective which supposedly views the moral life in terms of personal autonomy, objectivity, and independent decision making. Care ethics pushes for a deeper understanding and appreciation for personal interdependence over autonomy, subjectivity in balance with objectivity, and decision making based upon a full exploration of the relevance of one’s relationships with others who matter most.

**Founders:** Carol Gilligan in moral psychology; Annette Baier in moral philosophy; Nel Noddings in ethics

**Essential aspects:**
1. Focus on mutual interdependence in relationships. A moral response is attached attentiveness and not detached, objective analysis.
2. A role for the emotions. That is, one cannot appropriate care for another without emotional attentiveness. One cannot appropriately enter into meaningful relationship without emotional attachment.
3. Value of relationships: sympathy, compassion, fidelity, discernment, and love.
4. It is: care for, emotional commitment to, and willingness to act on behalf of persons with whom one has a significant relationship.
5. It is not: universal rules oriented, impartial utilitarian calculus and individual rights.

Modes of Moral Reasoning

These are not theories. Rather than attempt to posit an overall, comprehensive account for ethics and morality, these methods focus in how humans think through ethical difficulty and resolve moral quandary.

1. **Deductive method:**
A top-down form of reasoning that demands the application of a general norm in the form of a theory, principle, rule, right, etc. It is sometimes referred to as applied ethics because the flow of logic is from theory to application, namely, the application of the theory toward the resolution of the moral quandary at hand.

   A. **Impartial Rule or Rationalism Theory:** The idea here is that a rational person, someone who will necessarily remain impartial in the face of moral quandary, will apply this rationality toward the resolution of the conflict. The primary proponents of this approach are Bernard Gert and his co-authors, H. Danny Clouser and Charles Culver. The rational person, according to Gert, et. al., will uphold the following rules at a minimum:
   1. Do not kill
   2. Do not cause pain
   3. Do not disable
   4. Do not deprive of freedom
   5. Do not deprive of pleasure
   6. Do not deceive
   7. Keep your promises
   8. Do not cheat
   9. Obey the law
   10. Do your duty

   B. **Principlism:** The most pervasive deductive method of moral reasoning in healthcare professions. An approach to moral problems that uses a number of commonly accepted mid-level principles to guide response to a specific case. Early versions of Principilism espoused by Beauchamp and Childress in their influential book, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, inferred the deductive method in its assertion of the authority of four principles. They are: Respect for Autonomy; Nonmaleficence; Beneficence; Justice.

   Other versions of principlism include the:
   - The World Medical Association’s *Declaration of Helsinki* set out many principles for guidance of human research.
   - UNESCO’s Universal *Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights* sets out fourteen principles to be followed.

   As a method of reasoning:
   1. The principles are not universal and absolute, rather they are “prima facie” and serve as sort of moral rules of thumb.
   2. The principles are mid-level between universals and derivative rules and maxims. Rules and maxims are also important methodological tools and Beauchamp and Childress detail many rules established by the
four principles.
3. The principles are intended to serve a justificatory role. They justify our actions.
4. To use principles as a method of reasoning the four principles must be balanced against each other after specifying which of them is relevant in any given case.

2. **Inductive method:**
The inverse of the deductive method argues that humans reason from the bottom up. That is, we reason from the particular details of the issue we are grappling with as our starting point. Principles and other more general rules, maxims, or theories only become important over time as we see the resolution of particular cases emerging along similar lines.

**Casuistry:** An approach to moral reasoning that upholds the particular aspects of the case at hand to be of utmost importance. Casuistry is a method that compares and contrasts features of the present case with those of prior cases. The prior or paradigmatic cases establish themselves over time and reflection upon how well they turned out. Primary proponents today are Al Jonsen, Mark Siegler, and William Winslade whose, *Clinical Ethics: A practical Approach to Ethical Decisions in Clinical Medicine* is now in its 6th edition.

Some details of casuistry
1. Upholds particulars; downplays universals.
2. Does not reject the need for principles but insists that they emerge from the cases; not that we bring the principles to the case.
3. Uses analogical reasoning. If we don’t know whether or not we should have universal right to healthcare in our country, we look at other countries and reason from there toward our situation. In a general sense, if something worked well in one case, our idea is that it will likely work well in similar present or future cases. To use an illustration from Islam: Alcohol use was forbidden by Muhammad, but neither the Qur’an nor the Prophet said anything about using Hashish. By analogy, if alcohol is forbidden, so also is Hashish forbidden.
4. A taxonomy of cases develops; what some call a morisprudence.
5. The principles that emerge are very porous, in that they are not timeless and universal. They are weighted according to the details of the specific case.

3. **Reflective Equilibrium:**
In deductive methods of moral reasoning justification is found in the proper application of general rules. In inductive methods of moral reasoning justification is found in details of the case particulars as understood through paradigm cases and practical reason. For reflective equilibrium justification is found the expression of both deductive and inductive reasoning. Without both inductive and deductive reasoning we fail to provide sufficient justification for our efforts to resolve any given moral quandary. Justification for one’s actions then does not simply lie in the fact that you have upheld some universal truth, like “Thou Shalt Not Lie.” Neither does justification lie simply in the fact that you have focused your attention on the patient’s particular need, like for pain relief, for instance. Rather, justification lies in the in-between. Moral certitude lies in the sense of fit or coherence between our responses to individual persons and their cases and the more abstract principles that guide our thinking. Martha Nussbaum calls this method a “loving conversation” between universal principles and particular case details.

John Rawls (d. 2002) established “reflective equilibrium” in his highly influential book *A Theory of Justice*, 1971. The idea is that our moral beliefs are always in a state of equilibrium between the greater principles toward which we are all inclined (such as those proposed in the Common Morality) and the specific details of any given ethical crisis with which we are presently engaged.

Examples:
-Civil Rights:
That all citizens have rights is a general principle that was challenged by American Blacks in the Civil Rights movement. The challenge was not to the principle, rather to the perception and application of the principle among the majority of citizens who believed it did not apply to African Americans.

-Marriage:
Marriage is a principle of societal organization under which male and female vow to remain committed to each other and if possible and desirable raise a family. The present day challenge of Gay and Lesbian groups is for us to consider whether or not the force of this principle is found in the sexuality of the committed partnership or the commitment of those parties (i.e. the relational fidelity) is the primary force of the principle.

-Others examples may include:
* The principle of health as fundamental to life does or does not include access to healthcare as a universal right.
* The principle of national self-defense does or does not include pre-emptive strike options.
* The principle of responsibility for a professor does or does not include periodic grade updates throughout the quarter?