

The Philosophic Dialogue

Due: December 9th, 2015

Assignment

Part A - Write a dialogue with these features:

- Between two or more characters
- The dialogue is clearly on the philosophical question: “Are humans inherently good or evil/bad?”
- One of the characters represents your thoughts and beliefs
- Minimum of 500 words (about two pages double spaced), 12 point, times new roman

Part B - Ethical Normative Systems Connections:

- Either by writing on the page, inserting a comment, or indicating on a separate page you are asked to identify what ethical normative system each argument best fits and why.
- It may fit into many and you can address this, but justifying why you see it fitting that system is the key.
- This can be brief - name of system and 1-2 sentences for justification

Background/Support

Dialogue

- Plato wrote philosophy in the form of dialogues which are presented as written versions of the discussion between individuals.
- To write a dialogue is to think through the way that we talk about an issue. This can be a challenging effort, since many of us have never really consider how it is that we converse. Writing your dialogue in an authentic voice requires listening to your own voice and that of others.
- When people listen to themselves (really listen) they experience insight and change. This assignment has a goal of opening the opportunity for a transformation in how you communicate with others and how you understand yourself and your thinking and learning.

How to Start

- This assignment can be easy so don't stress. All you need do is to start a conversation about the question “Are humans inherently good or evil/bad?”
- The dialogue should aim toward a better understanding of a topic rather than convincing someone of a particular viewpoint.
- Do your best to keep the conversation on the issue -- you may have to repeatedly bring everyone back to the main subject, just as Socrates does in his dialogues.
- The point is to hear yourself as well as others. When you have a good sense of who you are as a conversant, then you have a basis to write your own dialogue.
- Use your own voice and ideas as elements of that expression. How you set the scene and construct the characters is a creative task.

Multiple Views

- One challenge that dialogue writing presents to us is the need to speak for a variety of viewpoints, even those that are opposed to our own. This can be very difficult. It is tempting to portray those who have ideas other than and opposed to our own as shallow or weak.
- Casting our opponents as fools and villains is a cheap way out. It lacks intellectual power. Treat the opponents in your dialogue as intelligent and informed. Treat their positions as the strongest versions of their positions that they can give.
- Plato's dialogues never end with a conclusion. Plato almost never declares to have solved the issue at hand. During his dialogues, various arguments, definitions, and positions are decisively refuted. Some ideas are made stronger and shown to be the best among the alternatives.
- Few of the ideas presented, however, are settled on by Plato and his characters as final and certain. This is not because Plato disagreed with the notion of final and certain beliefs. On the contrary, his philosophy is majorly characterized by a commitment to seeking objective truth.
- Being fair and genuine to alternate views is not at all the same thing as agreeing with them or refusing to decide between them.
- In writing this piece I have no expectation that you will water down your own beliefs or avoid criticizing ideas that oppose. Rather the task is to do all this in an intellectually robust fashion.

Success Criteria for Philosophic Dialogue: Are humans inherently good or evil/bad?

| | Level 4 | Level 3 | Level 2 | Level 1 | Total |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| Knowledge/ Understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment shows extraordinary knowledge of philosophical dialogue form. • Dialogue has excellent arguments; separate ideas and analysis; excellent proper use of philosophical terms and concepts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment shows considerable knowledge of the philosophical dialogue form. • Dialogue shows considerable arguments; separate ideas and analysis; good proper use of philosophical terms and concepts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment shows some knowledge of the philosophical dialogue form. • Dialogue has some arguments; some separate ideas and analysis; some proper use of philosophical terms and concepts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment shows limited knowledge of the philosophical dialogue form. • Dialogue has weak arguments; lacks separate ideas and analysis; weak use of philosophical terms and concepts. | /10 /30 |
| Thinking/ Inquiry | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraordinary examples are used from ethical normative systems. • Very insightful analysis of the ethical question. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considerable examples are used from ethical normative systems. • Considerable insightful analysis of the ethical question. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some examples are used from ethical normative systems. • Some insightful analysis of the ethical question. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient examples are used from ethical normative systems. • Insufficient analysis of the ethical question. | /30 |
| Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no errors in diction, syntax, spelling, grammar and punctuation • Writing demonstrates excellent flow and style. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are few errors in diction, syntax, spelling, grammar and punctuation • Writing demonstrates considerable attention to flow or style. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are some errors in diction, syntax, spelling, grammar and punctuation • Writing demonstrates some attention to flow and style. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are frequent errors in diction, syntax, spelling, grammar and punctuation • Writing demonstrates little attention to flow and style. | /10 |
| Application | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfers knowledge and skills to new contexts with extraordinary effectiveness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfers knowledge and skills to new contexts with considerable effectiveness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfers knowledge and skills to new contexts with some effectiveness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfers knowledge and skills to new contexts with limited effectiveness. | /20 |