Answer Key: Categorical Imperatives & Social Contracts: 11th Grade Ethics

Students sharpen their moral reasoning by applying complex frameworks like Contractarianism and Prima Facie duties to modern geopolitical and tech dilemmas.

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1. A state governor restricts travel during a pandemic, citing Thomas Hobbes' view that citizens trade certain liberties for collective security. This aligns with which framework?

Answer: B) Social Contract Theory

> Social Contract Theory, associated with Hobbes and Locke, posits that individuals give up some freedoms to a governing body in exchange for social order and protection.

2. In Immanuel Kant's 'Categorical Imperative,' an action is only moral if you would be willing to make that action a universal law that everyone must follow.

Answer: A) True

> Kant's first formulation of the Categorical Imperative requires that we act only according to maxims that we can consistently will to become universal laws.

3. An AI developer decides to include a 'kill switch' in a robot even if it reduces efficiency, because they believe the safety of humanity is an absolute rule, or a _____ duty.

Answer: B) Deontological

> Deontological ethics focuses on duties and rules (the Greek 'deon' means duty) rather than the consequences of an action.

4. W.D. Ross proposed 'prima facie' duties. Which of the following best describes this concept in a moral dilemma?

Answer: C) Self-evident moral obligations that may conflict, requiring us to find the 'actual duty'.

> Ross argued that we have multiple competing obligations (like honesty vs. preventing harm); the correct action depends on which duty is most pressing in a specific context.

5. John Stuart Mill, a famous Utilitarian, argued that 'higher pleasures' (intellectual and moral) should be weighted more heavily than 'lower pleasures' (physical).

Answer: A) True

> Mill refined utilitarianism by distinguishing between qualities of pleasure, famously stating it is better to be a human dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.

6. In the context of the 'Veil of Ignorance,' philosopher John Rawls suggests we should design social systems as if we don't know our own status, aiming for _____.

Answer: C) Justice as Fairness

> The 'Veil of Ignorance' is a thought experiment used to determine the morality of social issues by stripping away personal bias to ensure fairness for all.

7. A scientist refuses to falsify data even though doing so would unlock a grant that could fund a cure for cancer. This scientist is likely following which ethical approach?

Answer: B) Kantianism

> Kantianism (Deontology) forbids lying regardless of the potential positive outcome, as the act of lying is inherently wrong.

8. An 'Ethical Egoist' believes that humans are incapable of acting in anything other than their own self-interest.

Answer: B) False

> Ethical Egoism is a normative theory stating how people *should* act (in their self-interest). Psychological Egoism is the descriptive theory that people *do* act that way.

9. Aristotle's 'Golden Mean' suggests that virtue is found in the balance between two extremes. What is the virtue between 'Cowardice' and 'Rashness'?

Answer: C) Courage

> In Virtue Ethics, courage is the mean state between the deficiency (cowardice) and the excess (recklessness or rashness).

10. When a software company prioritizes releasing a buggy product to stay in business rather than following safety protocols, they are prioritizing _____ over Deontology.

Answer: A) Consequentialism

Consequentialism (like Utilitarianism) focuses on the results of the action, such as the survival of the company, rather than the adherence to strict rules.