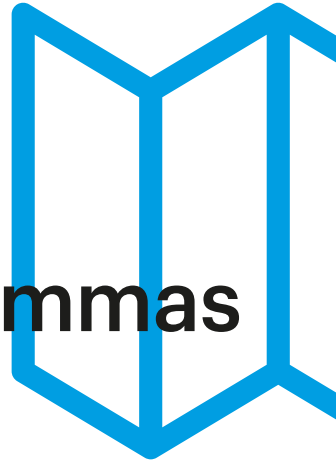


Debating



Ethical

Dilemmas



in the

Classroom



Floris Velema
Devin van den Berg
Natascha Kienstra (eds.)

ISVW Uitgevers

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	5
Floris Velema	
I Introduction to using debate in the classroom	8
Matija Pušnik & Lucija Ivanuša	
II Debating civil disobedience: A proposal for a general approach to debating ethical dilemmas	34
Floris Velema & Devin van den Berg	
III Ethical dilemmas in science, technology, and public policy	86
Torbjørn Gundersen	
IV Debate on values: Challenges and pitfalls	132
Marcel Becker	
V Kant's ethics of duty	152
Ivan Kolev	
VI Value-laden narratives and normativity: Debating morals in popular culture and media	180
Ricardo Gutiérrez Aguilar	
VII Teaching ethics in high school: Alternatives to the exclusive use of debate	206
Stelios Virvidakis	
About the authors	227
Bibliography	231
Index	239
WORKSHEETS	
1 How to approach ethical dilemmas	252
2 Stakeholder analysis	254
3 Flow sheet	256
4 How to evaluate arguments	258
5 Jury form	260

Preface

Floris Velema

This book is the product of a partnership between several European schools, universities, and associations. Their extensive collaboration was initiated in 2017 by Natascha Kienstra and Floris Velema under the title *A Community of Ethics Teachers in Europe* (COMET).¹ The project then continued into 2020 as COMET 2.² Since then, the partnership consists of two secondary schools (Wolfert Bilingual School Rotterdam and Gymnasium Weilheim), five universities (Tilburg University, Oslo Metropolitan University, University of Alcalá, Sofia University, and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), and three associations (the Croatian philosophical association *Mala Filozofija*, the Slovakian philosophical association *Filoe*, and the Slovenian debate association *Za in Proti*).

The aim of this book is to offer high school teachers a comprehensive method to debate ethical dilemmas in the classroom. In chapter 1, Matija Pušnik and Lucija Ivanuša start by explaining what we mean by debate, how debate can be implemented in the classroom, and why debate can be an effective method to teach ethics. In chapter 2, Floris Velema and Devin van den Berg develop a general approach to debating ethical dilemmas, while using civil disobedience as an example case. Then, Torbjørn Gundersen offers a collection of eight ethical dilemmas in chapter 3. We invite you to apply the approach developed in chapter 2 to each of the cases described in chapter 3. While experimenting with debate in the ethics classroom, we noticed that students often tend to argue in terms of harms and benefits (a utilitarian approach), while arguing in terms of values and principles is perceived as more challenging. Therefore, Marcel Becker elaborates on the topic of values in chapter 4, and offers several useful tips on how to deal with values in a debate context. Ivan Kolev continues in chapter 5 with an analysis of Immanuel Kant's ethics of duty, in order to give debaters a proper foundation for deontological arguments. As debates are not only about *what* is said, but also about *how* it is framed

or portrayed, Ricardo Gutiérrez Aguilar expounds on narrative techniques in chapter 6. In order to incorporate the pro and contra format of debate into this teacher's guide, Stelios Virvidakis then concludes the book in chapter 7 with some reservations about the use of debate in the ethics classroom.

On the title page of each chapter, we have added certain icons and tags that characterize its content. These icons can also be found on the online platform <https://ethics.community>, where they are used to categorize the available digital resources. We invite you to visit the platform, where you will find curriculum descriptions and teaching materials from ethics classrooms in the European regions represented in the COMET project.

At the back of this book, we have added five worksheets that facilitate the effective implementation of our debate method in the classroom. A PDF version of these worksheets (A4/A3) can also be found on the ethics.community platform.

I would like to thank Luca Scarantino for supporting the COMET project in its initial phase. I would also like to thank Andrzej Kaniowski for his invitation to present our project idea at the University of Łódź, during the 2016 conference of the *Association Internationale des Professeurs de Philosophie* (AIPPh). A special thanks to the early contributors to the COMET project: Miha Andrič, Barbora Baďurová, Zoran Kojčić, and Rolf Roew. Lastly, I would like to thank Michael Paroussis, for giving us the opportunity to present the first copy of this book during the XXXI International Philosophy Olympiad in Olympia, Greece, May 2023.

1 *A Community of Ethics Teachers in Europe* (COMET). Programme: Erasmus+; Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; Action Type: Strategic Partnerships for school education; Start: 01-09-2017; End: 31-12-2020; Project Reference: 2017-1-NL01-KA201-035219.

2 *A Community of Ethics Teachers in Europe 2* (COMET 2). Programme: Erasmus+; Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; Action Type: Strategic Partnerships for school education; Start: 01-09-2020; End: 31-08-2023; Project Reference: 2020-1-NL01-KA201-064702.

Chapter 1

Introduction to using debate in the classroom

Matija Pušnik & Lucija Ivanuša

1 Do we still live in a moral world?

After the end of the Cold War, authors, such as Francis Fukuyama, prophesied the end of history: the whole world was to embrace the principles of liberal democracy. The underlying optimism of the 90's did not only concern the settling of world affairs; rather, humanity was supposed to start solving its problems in a coherent, rational, inclusive, and—in some form or another—constitutional way.

Not only has the optimism of that era waned—one could argue that the exact *opposite* has in fact occurred. Since then, 9/11 has happened and ushered in the era of a new state paternalism and the sacrifice of individual rights for safety. Although there were many paternalistic regimes in the history of humanity, none had at its disposal such a variety of tools: never before has there been such a diversity of information that can be gathered, and never before has there been such computing power to organize this data in a meaningful way. The apparent demise of the US-led liberal world order introduced concepts such as “alternative fact” and “fake news”—the harbingers were the two infamous campaigns of 2016, which saw, against all odds, Donald Trump winning the presidency and the UK opting to leave the EU. The rise of right-wing populism has been accompanied by growing mistrust and politicization of the media. Just when the world was supposed to become *alright*, it, in fact, presented new problems and challenges.

Education has not been left untouched: all around the world, teachers are feeling the pressure to adjust their teaching to better reflect the values of those in power. In Hungary, teachers already are severely limited—by the government—in making their curriculum LGBTQ+ inclusive. Poland, at the time of writing this chapter, is well on its way to introducing similar limitations. Such limitations and interventions should be a cause of concern and alarm: teachers have a

Debate: euthanasia should be legalized

	Proposition speaker	Opposition speaker
1	<p>A presents the basic deontological argument for bodily autonomy</p> <p>B explains that in the <i>status quo</i> doctors already technically stop patient care at some point</p>	<p>A presents the argument for the sanctity of life</p> <p>B responds to the Proposition's deontological argument</p>
2	<p>A presents the utilitarian analysis of suffering</p> <p>B explains that the argument for the sanctity of life actually shows that euthanasia <i>should</i> be legal</p>	<p>A presents the argument of abuse</p> <p>B explains how utilitarian analysis of suffering would not apply if we had proper palliative care</p>
3	<p>A rebuilds the deontological argument</p> <p>B explains why Proposition is winning both on deontological and utilitarian grounds</p>	<p>A explains how the question of abuse is more important than any other utilitarian claim</p> <p>B tries to show why the argument on the sanctity of life remains the most important point in the debate</p>

Post-debate

- the class discusses the debate
- the teacher might help foster further discussion with questions

Chapter 2

Debating civil disobedience: A proposal for a general approach to debating ethical dilemmas

Floris Velema & Devin van den Berg

1 Introduction

In this chapter, we propose a general approach to debating ethical dilemmas. This approach consists of five steps: (1) preparation, (2) argument generation, (3) argument development, (4) argument evaluation, and (5) conclusion. These five steps will be further explained by applying them successively to an example debate case. The example—in the form of an ethical dilemma and corresponding debate motion—will be introduced in paragraph 2, after which the process of building a debate case according to the five steps is described in paragraph 3. Paragraph 4 contains two example debate speeches: an opening speech for the Proposition and an opening speech for the Opposition. We conclude this chapter with some practical advice on the implementation of our approach in the ethics classroom.

2 Example case

Civil disobedience and the climate crisis

In response to the latest publication of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 4 April 2022), UN Secretary-General António Guterres characterized our current predicament as follows:

The jury has reached a verdict. And it is damning. This report of the IPCC is a litany of broken climate promises. It is a file of shame, cataloguing the empty pledges that put us firmly on track towards an unliveable world. We are on a fast track to climate disaster. Major cities under water. Unprecedented heatwaves. Terrifying storms. Widespread water shortages. The extinction of a million species of plants and animals. This is not fiction or exaggeration. It is what science tells us will result from our current energy policies. We are on a pathway to global warming of more than double the 1.5°C limit agreed in Paris. Some government and business leaders are saying one thing, but doing another. Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic. This is a climate emergency (United Nations, 4 April 2022).

Given the clear need for immediate emissions reductions in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C, and the failing of governments and businesses to do so, it is understandable that the climate emergency has led to numerous campaigns from environmental NGOs and to mass protests from citizens around the world. However, some were dissatisfied with the limited impact

Chapter 3

Ethical dilemmas in science, technology, and public policy

Torbjørn Gundersen

Introduction

This chapter presents eight cases involving ethical dilemmas, the contents of which can be used for debate purposes. All eight cases include a debate motion, and students will be assigned to argue for or against it. The cases revolve around current issues in science and public policy, such as artificial intelligence, climate change, medical research, and trust in experts. These issues are among the most serious ethical problems of our time. All dilemmas are based on actual cases. The main aim of the cases is to provide a rich context for debate. However, for each case, we include additional questions that might stimulate further discussion, reflection, and communication between pupils and teachers.

Case 2

Artificial intelligence in medicine: potential benefits and the accountability problem

Chest X-ray showing a radioLogists' mark-up of airspace opacity (Light), compared to the AI saliency method (dark). From article 'Benchmarking saliency methods for chest X-ray interpretation' by A. Saporta, X. Gui, A. Agrawal et al. (2022) / CC BY 4.0 license

Recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence (AI) hold great promise for solving practical problems. For instance, many now argue that medical practice will become more efficient and accurate if AI replaces medical doctors in making diagnoses and recommending treatments (see, e.g. Topol, 2019). In particular, forms of AI such as machine learning and deep learning have proven to be particularly promising for medical application. Machine learning consists of algorithms that are able to improve their performance based on previous results, without intervention by human designers. Through the ability to analyze vast data sets much faster, more cheaply, and more accurately than medical doctors, the use of machine learning can help detect diseases at an earlier stage and with greater accuracy than medical doctors.

VII

**Teaching ethics
in high school:**

**Alternatives to
the exclusive
use of debate**

Stelios Virvidakis

Chapter 7

Teaching ethics in high school: Alternatives to the exclusive use of debate

Stelios Virvidakis

1 Introductory remarks

There are many reasons one can invoke in support of introducing the practice of debate as a basic way of teaching ethics in high schools. However, one may also express certain qualms about the exclusive adoption of debating as a method for the study of most issues presented in ethics courses and in the relevant modules of philosophy courses. Hence, it is worth exploring alternative approaches which may be regarded as equally, if not more suitable for the pursuit of the educational goals aimed at.

In what follows, I shall try to outline some of these approaches. I will proceed by first summarizing the main goals to be attained, as they are usually described in the curricula of upper division or senior classes of secondary schools, and by venturing a sketch of the core elements of their content, before examining some of the teaching methods which could be employed. My discussion refers mainly to ethics conceived as a basic, autonomous course, or as an integral, substantial component of comprehensive introductions to philosophy. Thus, I am not going to deal with ethics designed for curricula of either religious or civic education. I shall also draw on introductory courses offered to College and University students (at the freshman or sophomore level).¹

1 My personal teaching experience comes for the most part from mandatory introductory ethics courses (as well as from advanced electives) included in undergraduate programs of Colleges and Universities. However, as the author of ethics chapters of high school philosophy textbooks, I have also consulted and interacted with colleagues in secondary education, whose classrooms I have visited on many occasions. Thus, the primary object of my analysis is the syllabus for the main philosophy course originally designed for Greek high schools, which has just been revised by a committee of the state Institute for Educational Policy.

Worksheets

- 1 How to approach ethical dilemmas
- 2 Stakeholder analysis
- 3 Flow sheet
- 4 How to evaluate arguments
- 5 Jury form

Worksheet 4 How to evaluate arguments

	Is it a practical argument...	What is the likelihood of the harms and benefits?
	...or a principled argument?	How is the rationale behind the right or obligation explained?
1st argument of the Proposition	<input type="radio"/> Practical <input type="radio"/> Principled	
2nd argument of the Proposition	<input type="radio"/> Practical <input type="radio"/> Principled	
3rd argument of the Proposition	<input type="radio"/> Practical <input type="radio"/> Principled	
1st argument of the Opposition	<input type="radio"/> Practical <input type="radio"/> Principled	
2nd argument of the Opposition	<input type="radio"/> Practical <input type="radio"/> Principled	
3rd argument of the Opposition	<input type="radio"/> Practical <input type="radio"/> Principled	

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This book is a valuable resource for educators looking to foster critical thinking and ethical reasoning in their students. It presents a variety of thought-provoking ethical dilemmas and offers structured debate frameworks to help students develop the skills to articulate and defend their viewpoints. While debating values, principles, harms and benefits, students will not only learn how to analyze and evaluate ethical issues, but also how to respect and consider the perspectives of others.

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