

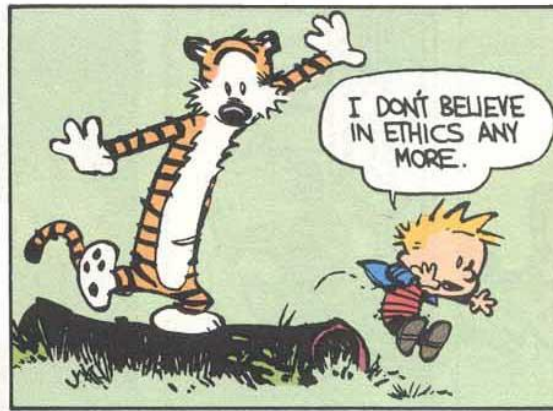
## ***60 Minute Ethics: A Very, Very, Very Short Outline for Moral Reasoning***

Jack Green Musselman, Ph.D. from  
St. Edward's University Center for Ethics and Leadership  
(on-line at <http://www.stedwards.edu/ethics>)  
talking to faculty and staff on Everyday Ethics  
on March 25<sup>th</sup> 2009

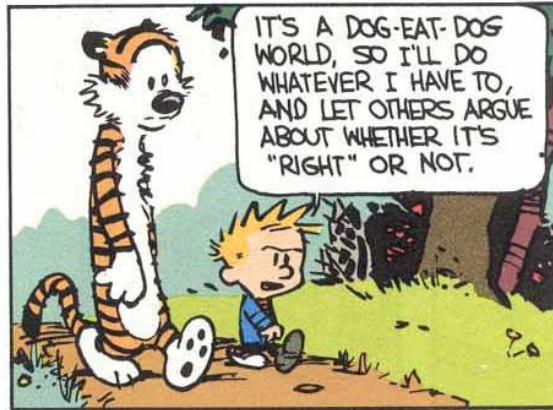
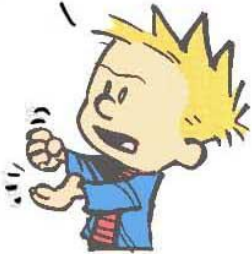
1. **Introduction:** caveats, process over product, Socratic Method, role play
2. **Two case studies:** Tom the math tutor and asking one's spouse about your pants
3. **Some basic questions:** Are your ethical judgments here just about your *culture*? Or whatever makes *you* happy? Is there something else that can help?
4. **Definition of morality:** "*Morality is an informal public system applying to all rational persons, governing behavior that affects others, and has the lessening of evil or harm as its goal*" (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Bernard Gert at web page <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/morality-definition/>). Sometimes you'll see definitions like "Rules governing how we should treat others in order to do the right thing and live a good life."
5. **How you can make sense of this definition of morality:** When you make moral judgments you likely consider what someone else does, why she does it, what kind of person does that kind of thing and what the outcome of doing that might or will be. Consider my three case studies from above and think about how you answer each of these questions. Using this definition of morality, you are likely talking or arguing with a friend (*informal public system*) about how others should act, or about how every agent (*all rational persons*) has intentions (*goal*) when she does things (*behavior*) that help or hurt other people (*that affects others*).
6. **Some moral values that may follow from this definition of morality:** As you work with this definition you might find yourself returning again and again to certain moral values, goals or principles. If they pop up again and again you might even think they are pretty common and useful. Here are some you might spell out that ethicists spend a lot of time discussing: *nonmaleficence* (one should avoid harms and if one cannot one owes reparations to others one harms) and *benevolence* or *benevolence* (one should provide help to those who need it); *respect for persons* (one should treat others with great moral respect just because they are persons or one should not merely treat others as things) and *autonomy* (one should honor the ability of others to make informed, reasonable and independent choices to advance their own interests as they define them); *fairness* and *justice* (one should treat others as one wishes to be treated, or treat all the same, or treat like cases alike, or distribute social goods by need or merit or work, and only do otherwise for a really good reason); *virtues* (e.g. courage, generosity, honesty, loyalty, charity) and *vices* (e.g. pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth); net social happiness, pleasure or good consequences (or outcomes or satisfaction of preferences or state of affairs) should be greater than (or outweigh) the social unhappiness or bad consequences (e.g. suffering).
7. **Some more case studies:** see the other handout
8. **More information on-line:** Lawrence Hinman (<http://ethics.acusd.edu/index.asp>) has some terrific pages called *Ethics Updates* and you can talk to me (see web page above for all my contact information).

# Calvin and Hobbes

BY WATKINSON



GET WHAT YOU CAN WHILE THE GETTING'S GOOD - THAT'S WHAT I SAY! MIGHT MAKES RIGHT! THE WINNERS WRITE THE HISTORY BOOKS!



## ***Everyday Ethics***

### **Ethical Dilemmas**

February, 2009

#### **Case Study 1**

You good friend, Betsy, tells you that her long-time girlfriend, Sally (whom you've never met), is interested in applying for a job at St. Edward's. Betsy asks if you can discreetly find out what the search committee is "really" looking for; that is, what skills, knowledge, and experience Sally should emphasize in her resume and application. Betsy wants to know if it is worth Sally's time to apply for the job at all, since if she isn't what the hiring committee is looking for, she won't bother applying. Betsy also asks if you could write a letter of reference for Sally if she does decide to apply for the position.

What should you do?

#### **Case Study 2**

You learn that one of your students, Angelina, a 22 year-old undergraduate with a 4.0 GPA, is in a consensual, romantic relationship with a faculty member in another department, Brad, who is 29. The relationship has gone on for nearly a year, and Brad has become a father figure to Angelina's five year-old son, Maddox. Both Angelina and Brad have let you know that they are aware that this is in violation of the university's consensual relationship/conflict of interest policy, even though Angelina isn't in any of Brad's classes and will graduate at the end of the semester. Both of them have asked you to keep their relationship confidential because they are truly in love, and they are concerned about how a break-up will affect Maddox. You (and they) are pretty darned sure that reporting the relationship will likely result in one of them having to leave the university or ending their relationship.

What should you do?

#### **Case Study 3**

You are part of a team considering applicants for a new position in your area. While on Facebook at home one evening, you accidentally come across the page of one of the applicants, Steve. The page contains information and photos that suggest Steve is a real "party animal" and has been involved in illegal activities. For example, in one photo Steve is on a couch with six people, all of whom are drinking from red cups, and Steve's hand-made cigarette seems to be making him smile quite a lot. You also see that he has put in his profile that he "prefers a bong to a pipe." What should you do?

#### **Case Study 4**

You are having dinner with friends one evening on 6<sup>th</sup> Street when you happen to see a group of St. Edward's students come into the establishment and order beer. You recognize all of them from campus, but you only know one of them, Hayden, a former student worker whom you know is under 21. The waiter does not ask any of them for IDs. As the evening progresses, the students continue to order more drinks, but do not become rowdy or appear to be out of control.

What should you do?