

# Knowers & Knowing

Ethics  
TOK L10



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## Key Questions

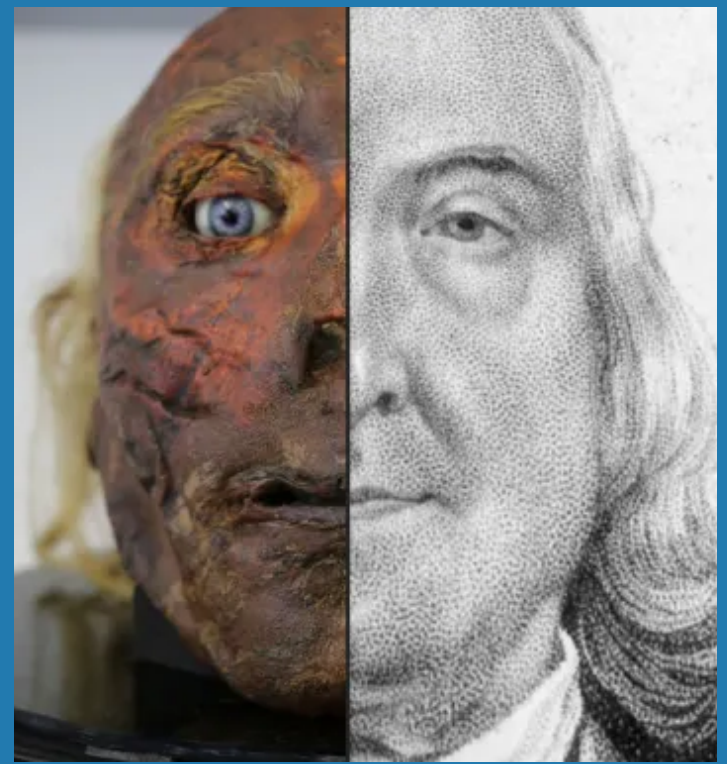
- How might the knowledge we pursue be limited by ethical restraints?
- Does following the rules make an action ethical?
- What is the basis for our ethics? Religion? Morality? Custom? Agreement? Outcome? Majority rule? How do we resolve conflicts in our understanding of what is ethical?

### Common Ethical Dilemmas:

*The “Greater Good” Argument; the “Good Lie;” the “Legal Loophole;” etc.*

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# Ethical Theories (see Handout)



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## For Discussion

### Virtue Ethics

You have a friend at school who is really nice and well-intentioned, but who tends to be disorganized and often procrastinates. Out of the blue, your friend steps forward and publicly commits to plan a secret retirement party for Mr. Nigro. The idea generates quite a bit of excitement among the IB students. The director's task will involve contacting all of Mr. Nigro's former students and coordinating all the event details: venue, catering, announcements, finances, etc. What do you do?



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## For Discussion

### Deontological Ethics

You have some “bad” friends that your parents have forbidden you from seeing. Your best friend says she will dump you if you hang out with them. But it is almost the end of school and you decide to secretly attend their unchaperoned party anyway. You are aware that a Peeping Tom has been seen in the neighborhood; while you are in the backyard with your buddies, you see him peeking at the house next door; you recognize that the peeper is one of your “good” friends, the class Valedictorian! If you report him, trouble will be coming your way on several fronts. Should you?



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## For Discussion

### Utilitarianism

A retired Sumo wrestler-turned tour guide is leading a group of people out of a cave on a coast when he becomes stuck in the mouth of that cave. In a short time the high tide will be upon them, and unless he is unstuck, they will all be drowned except him, whose head is out of the cave. Someone in the party—fortunately or unfortunately—has brought along some dynamite. There seems no way to get the tour guide loose without using the dynamite, which would probably kill him; but if they do not use it everyone will drown. What should they do?





## Emotions as a source of ethical knowledge

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Leon Kass (1939–) has coined the phrase “the wisdom of repugnance” – morally significant knowledge which is “beyond reason’s power to articulate.”

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Counter-claims: *the wise nature fallacy; uninformed emotions; egocentric emotions; unreliable emotions.* (See also the work of Martha Nussbaum re: literature.)

## The *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster



On March 6, 1987, the car ferry Herald of Free Enterprise capsized shortly after leaving Belgium for Dover in the UK.

The immediate cause of the disaster was that the ship set sail with its bow doors still open. The ship took on water, flowing the length of the car deck, which had no watertight compartments.

193 passengers and crew were killed.

**HW:** Do some Internet research on this event and consider the facts on the following screen to address the following questions. Make notes on your answers to discuss next time in class.

*Who is morally responsible for the sinking?*

*What action makes this person or persons responsible?*

*What theory of Ethics is most applicable in your judgment?*





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- Assistant B/S Mark Stanley was asleep in his cabin when he should have been on hand to close the bow doors before the ship set sail.
  - Captain David Lewry gave the order to sail because he believed the doors were closed because the ship was built without a bow door status indicator on the bridge and the design of the ship prevented him from visually checking the status of the bow doors from the bridge.
  - First Officer Leslie Sabel was required to stay on deck G to ensure that the doors were closed. He saw they were open but assumed that Stanley would close them shortly so made his way up to his harbor station on the bridge.
  - B/S Terence Ayling, who was the last person on deck G, could have closed the doors but did not. He claimed that it was not his duty.
  - The ship was owned by Townsend Thoresen. The company was not inclined to implement expensive changes to the ship's design. The ship was built by Schichau-Unterweser of Bremen.
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