Explaining Terms – Introduction to Moral Philosophy

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20 January 2017

"Metaethics investigates where our ethical principles come from, and what they mean. Are they merely social inventions? Do they involve more than expressions of our individual emotions? ... Normative ethics takes on a more practical task, which is to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or the consequences of our behavior on others" – James Fieser, "Ethics" from *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy"*

What are some good things about this explanation of "metaethics"?

Defining terms fully and accurately

I'll focus on two tips for explaining terms. The first tip is offering a full and accurate definition. Here's a good example from Fieser: "The field of ethics (or moral philosophy) involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior."

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a triangle has four sides – not accurate. *(Note: if you're introducing your own way of using a term, accuracy mostly involves making sure you're defining it as you're actually going to use it.)*

a triangle is a certain type of polygon – not full

a triangle is a three-sided polygon – full and accurate

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It's often helpful, in clarifying a term, to contrast it with other closely related terms.

For example, here's a quote from a Ted talk by Brené Brown, which helps clarify what shame is by contrasting it with guilt: "Shame is a focus on self, guilt is a focus on behavior. Shame is, 'I am bad.' Guilt is, "I did something bad."

In addition, it's often helpful to offer examples, both of things that fall under the term, and those that don't.

For an example of examples: here's some information about the nightshade family: it includes eggplant, bell peppers, tomatoes, and tomatillos, but not cabbage or broccoli.

For each explanation, you should answer the question: what can be done to improve it?

1. "Love is a strong positive emotion, as compared with hatred, which is a strong negative emotion."

2. "Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge."

3. "Tables are flat surfaces with four legs that can be used for working or eating. For instance, a desk is a type of table, but a chair is not."

Try to explain what is meant by "bachelor"