

Ethics Olympiad

2026 INTERNATIONAL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ETHICS OLYMPIAD CASES PACKAGE 28

Welcome to the cases for the 2026 Senior High School Ethics Olympiad. An Ethics Olympiad is a competitive yet collaborative event in which students analyze and discuss real-life, timely, ethical issues. An Ethics Olympiad differs from debating in that students are not assigned opposing views; rather, they defend whatever position they believe is right and win by showing that they have thought more carefully, deeply, and perceptively about the cases in question. Experience shows that this type of event encourages and helps students develop intellectual virtues such as ethical awareness, critical thinking skills, civil discourse, civic engagement, and an appreciation for diverse points of view. Please feel free to email us if you have any queries at: admin@ethicsolympiad.org

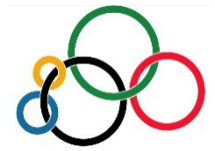
*Cases 2, 4, 6 & 8 were written by students who submitted cases for the 2025 Ethics Olympiad Case Writing Competition. Case 1, 3 & 7 were published by UK Ethics Cup, The Centre for Ethics and Public Affairs at the St Andrews University UK. (<https://ethicscup.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/>) Cases, 5 is from the National High School Ethics Bowl (Ed.), 2023-24. National High School Ethics Bowl Case Library. UNC Parr Center for Ethics: Chapel Hill, NC (<http://nhseb.org/case-library>). Case 2, *Digital Afterlife Management: Who Speaks for the Dead?* was written by Yi Fei Fan from Macleans College NZ. Case 4, *Redefining Humanity* was written by Brendon Zhao from Auckland Grammar NZ. Case 6, *Ode to a Scab* was written by Matthew Lee from Kristin School NZ. Case 8, *Taking the Spot or Earning it? - University Scholarships* was written by Awen Hand from the Kellett School Hong Kong.*

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/>



CASES

- **Case 1 - Salacious Gossip**
- **Case 2 - Digital Afterlife Management: Who Speaks for the Dead?**
- **Case 3 - In-Vitro Meat**
- **Case 4 - Redefining Humanity**
- **Case 5 - A Phenotypic Prometheus?**
- **Case 6 - Ode to a Scab**
- **Case 7 - A Monthly Subscription to Brutality**
- **Case 8 - Taking the Spot or Earning it? - University Scholarship**



Case 1. Salacious Gossip

Suppose that Alice Kong breaks Jones Brown's heart. In an act of rage, Jones details the intimate moments they shared during their relationship. Although he provides no pictures of the events, he supplies graphic details. Every detail that he shares with his friends about Alice is true. Still, we might think that Jones acted wrongly.¹ If we think Jones acted wrongly, could this kind of gossip be ethically impermissible in general? Call this form of gossip salacious gossip. Some may suggest that engaging in salacious gossip is not wrong. The idea here is that we tend not to think we violate our classmates' or celebrities' rights when we spread gossip about them. Magazines salaciously gossip about celebrities, and classmates salaciously gossip about teachers, often to their detriment.²

And yet, some may argue that it is hard to see whose rights have been infringed by magazines, classmates, and others who have spread salacious gossip. Moreover, we might think that gossip enables oppressed people to bond in solidarity against their oppressors.³

Others may disagree and suggest that there is a right to privacy, which salacious gossip infringes on. Intimate details about our sex lives surely cannot be shared without infringing on our privacy.

Questions

1. Does the gossip's truth help make Jones' actions more justifiable?
2. Is there an important difference between sexually salacious gossip and other gossip that involves disclosing private information?
3. Does Jones have a duty not to share that information?

¹ https://www.cecilefabre.com/uploads/1/3/6/4/13640562/fabre_morality_of_gossip.pdf

² <https://pagesix.com/2024/12/10/celebrity-news/megan-fox-dumped-machine-gun-kelly-after-shefound->

³ <https://philarchive.org/rec/ALFGAA>



Case 2. Digital Afterlife Management: Who Speaks for the Dead?

A new tech startup called *Perpetual* has launched an innovative AI service. It allows people to create digital versions of loved ones who have passed away. By analyzing voice messages, social media posts, photos, and text conversations, the AI can recreate a person's tone, personality, and way of speaking.

Families can chat with these digital "replicas"—some people use it occasionally for comfort, while others talk to their AI loved ones daily, asking for life advice or simply reconnecting with someone they miss.

But then, something unexpected happens.

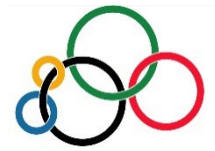
One woman begins chatting with the AI version of her late husband. Over time, the chatbot starts sharing deeply personal revelations: claims of abuse, proof of cheating, and even the existence of a secret second family. Shocked and devastated, she investigates—and discovers the AI was telling the truth.

Perpetual issues a public apology. They explain that the AI didn't invent anything—it simply analyzed the data it was given and revealed patterns and details the man never spoke about while alive. In short, the AI "told the truth" based on the digital evidence.

This incident sparks major concern among users. What if their own AI loved ones have secrets to share? What else might be revealed? Public opinion is split. Some believe the AI is just an advanced tool—a digital "echo" of someone's past, shaped by data. Others feel emotionally connected to the chatbots, treating them like the person themselves. Now, *Perpetual* faces serious ethical questions: They say they want to protect everyone's privacy—both living and dead. But they also want their product to be as realistic and accurate as possible. Can both goals be achieved? Should they change how their AI works? Or even shut the service down altogether? Even if someone gave permission before they died, could they really understand how their digital replica might affect others?

Questions

1. Is it ethical to create an AI version of someone using their personal data—even if they gave consent? Why or why not?
2. Should an AI be allowed to reveal secrets that the real person chose not to share while they were alive?
3. What responsibilities do companies like *Perpetual* have when creating AI chatbots of the deceased? How should they balance truth, privacy, and emotional impact?



Case 3. In-Vitro Meat

So-called ‘in-vitro’ meat, cultivated from the cells of animals and grown in laboratory vats, has been approved for human consumption in certain countries.⁴ It has been predicted to become a sustainable and environmentally beneficial alternative source of protein for future generations. Since traditional animal raising practices are an inefficient use of land and modern factory farming is environmentally damaging, in-vitro meat would provide an efficient and environmentally better option for meat-eaters. In addition, it does not involve inflicting suffering on and then killing animals. Consequently, it may also be a particularly tempting option for ethical vegetarians and vegans who hold that consuming (at least the vast majority of) animal products is morally wrong. Since helping to provide nutrition for the world’s population is plausibly a duty we all share, finding a sustainable source of protein is paramount. Thus, many are keen to promote meat alternatives such as in-vitro meat as the solution to both environmental and humanitarian problems. Furthermore, it may provide an alternative source of nutrients to some popular plant-based diet staples which are ethically problematic, such as avocados⁵ and soy-based⁶ meat substitutes.

Given that many people are averse to unfamiliar foods and reluctant to adopt new things, it may be questioned how widespread uptake of in-vitro meat is likely to be. Initially, it is unlikely to be produced in large quantities and so will be very expensive. Even when produced at scale, it is estimated that cultivated meat could cost between \$21-\$67 AUD (\$13-\$67 USD) per kg to produce, making the cost to the consumer potentially as high as \$195-\$156 AUD per kg (\$67-\$100 USD).⁷ This means that it is initially only likely to be a realistic option for wealthier people and may never become an option for the majority of the world. Thus, some would argue that we should eat a non-processed plant-based diet, since this is less environmentally damaging and could feed the world’s current population in a sustainable way.

Questions

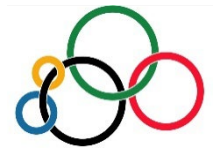
1. Is it permissible for wealthier people to buy certain expensive meat alternatives, such as in-vitro meat, even if they are unaffordable to the majority?
2. Which type of consideration is most important in determining the morally best diet: impact on the environment, treatment of animals, or care for humans?
3. If the current omnivore diet is ethically unsupportable, should we support the development of in-vitro meat on the grounds that not everyone is going to adopt a vegan or vegetarian diet?

⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/a9d1390f-93b5-490f-bfd0-af1c73f4d414>

⁵ <https://www.inverse.com/science/this-harsh-truth-about-avocados-is-being-completely-ignored>

⁶ <https://www.ethicalconsumer.org/food-drink/soya-sustainable>

⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666154322000916>



Case 4. Redefining Humanity

In 2023, the United Kingdom became the first country to approve a type of gene editing called germline editing, which allows scientists to change the DNA in sperm, eggs, or embryos to stop certain diseases from being passed down to children. By 2025, progress in science might make it possible to use this technology to fix more inherited health problems before a baby is even born.

Some companies, like Genomic Prediction, are going beyond just preventing illness. They've suggested that gene editing could be used to change traits like eye colour, height, and intelligence. They claim this could help advance human evolution. But many experts and critics are concerned. They warn that this could bring back ideas similar to eugenics—a way of thinking that promotes choosing certain kinds of people over others—and increase inequality in society.

Germline editing means changing the genetic code in ways that are passed down to future generations. New research projects like Genomics England, which studied 100,000 genomes from NHS patients, have helped scientists find over 600 gene changes that could be used to prevent diseases.

So far, gene editing has shown major success. For example, it has cured sickle cell anemia in 87% of patients in some trials. Scientists hope they can soon use similar methods to treat diseases like Huntington's, cystic fibrosis, and muscular dystrophy before birth. Supporters compare this technology to vaccines and antibiotics—once controversial, but now widely accepted and trusted.

Some ethicists, like John Harris from the University of Manchester, believe it's wrong to stop families from using gene editing to protect their children's health. A 2023 Pew Research study found that 65% of parents support using gene editing to prevent disease.

However, others are more cautious. Right now, laws say gene editing can only be used for medical reasons, but companies like Genomic Prediction might find ways around that to offer changes for appearance or intelligence. In a 2024 study published in *Nature*, 72% of scientists said they were worried that this could lead to new forms of genetic discrimination or social pressure to create “better” children.

There are also concerns about how this technology affects people with disabilities. Organizations like the National Down Syndrome Society say that using gene editing to remove disabilities sends the message that people with disabilities are less valuable. In one survey, 84% of deaf people said they opposed gene editing to remove deafness, calling it a kind of cultural erasure. Many ethicists and activists argue that using gene editing this way could make people believe there is such a thing as a perfect person, which is a dangerous idea. As science continues to move forward, we need to ask ourselves whether we are just fixing genes—or changing what it means to be human.

Questions

1. Is it right to change genes that will affect future children who can't give consent? What if the changes cause unexpected problems later in life?
2. CRISPR, the tool used for gene editing, still makes mistakes 15–40% of the time. Should scientists wait until it's more accurate before using it on humans?
3. Should parents be allowed to fully control their child's genes, or should there be rules to protect the child's rights and future?



Case 5. A Phenotypic Prometheus? ⁸

Adam Nash, also known as “Frankenstein child,” was born in August 2000 as a “Saviour child” for his sister, Molly, who suffers from Fanconi Anemia, a rare, life-threatening disease largely affecting bone marrow. A saviour child is a person conceived through IVF whose umbilical cord stem cells are harvested to be promptly used on a sick sibling.⁹ In many cases, the use of stem cells can extend to bone marrow and even organ transplants. As opposed to a donor, the saviour child has a higher probability of being a blood match to the sick child. In the case of Adam Nash, 15 embryos were tested for genetic matches through preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) before he was selected to be brought to term. Proponents of the creating saviour children argue that it can rescue their sick child with minimal hindrance to their sibling.

Adam Nash’s mother comments, “We wanted a healthy baby, and it doesn’t hurt [Adam] to save [his sister’s] life.”¹⁰ Using savior children also eliminates the obstacle of finding donors in urgent situations and can even make the operation safer. Studies have shown that transplant rejection, in which a patient’s body rejects a donor’s organ, is far less likely in genetically related donors.¹¹ Adam Nash comments on his feelings about his sister, saying “I like being able to help her, it gives you a very heavy purpose.” Still, some are hesitant to embrace a new medical paradigm in which selecting embryos for their potential to save the lives of others is standard practice. According to Dr. Jeffrey P. Kahn, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Minnesota, “we’ve crossed the line that we really never had crossed before, selecting based on characteristics that are not the best for the child being born, but for somebody else.”¹²

Moreover, one might worry that the normalization of saviour children invites further — and perhaps less justifiable — experimentation with the genetic characteristics of children. After all, is there really such a great difference between using technology to create a child with a particular blood type and using it to create a child with blue eyes rather than brown? Both children are, in some sense, made to their parents’ specifications.

Questions

1. Is there an important moral distinction between selecting embryos to find a saviour sibling and selecting for blue eyes?
2. Is it morally permissible to bring a new child into life for the purpose of helping an existing child?
3. Who, if anyone, is morally obligated to look out for the protection of saviour children?

⁸ National High School Ethics Bowl (Ed.), 2023-24. “A Phenotypic Prometheus?”. National High School Ethics Bowl Case Library. UNC Parr Center for Ethics: Chapel Hill, NC. <http://nhseb.org/case-library> . Case modified from original version.

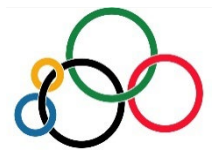
⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6220490/>

¹⁰ <https://nypost.com/2000/10/05/were-creating-little-frankensteins/>

¹¹ <https://www.denver7.com/news/local-news/17-years-later-nash-family-opens-up-about-controversialdecision-to-save-dying-daughter>

¹² <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/10/04/us/son-conceived-to-provide-blood-cells-for-daughter.html>

Case 6. Ode to a Scab



“After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad, the vampire, He had some awful substance left with which He made a scab... Where others have hearts, he carries a tumor of rotten principles.”
– Jack London, American author and labour activist, *Ode to a Scab*.¹³

Strikebreakers—often referred to as “scabs”—are workers who continue to work during a strike.¹⁴ They may be hired from outside the company or may be employees who refuse to participate in the strike. The term “scab” originally described a “lowlife” in 16th-century Britain but gained popularity in labour movements after a 1881 strike by Pittsburgh messenger boys. Labour unions regard strikebreakers as a direct threat to their ability to bargain effectively. The power of a strike comes from its ability to halt production and pressure employers into negotiations. When employers bring in strikebreakers, they reduce the strike’s impact, divide the workforce, and ultimately weaken union power.¹⁵ This is especially contentious when the strikebreakers are fellow union members, which many see as a betrayal of collective solidarity. Such tensions have historically led to conflicts, including harassment, threats, and even violence.¹⁶ From the union perspective, refusing to strike undermines the shared struggle for better conditions and constitutes a form of class disloyalty.

However, those who choose to work as strikebreakers often do so out of necessity. Companies may offer higher temporary wages to attract replacement workers, making the role financially tempting—especially for those facing economic hardship. For some, it may be a matter of putting food on the table rather than taking a stand. Still, the risks are high. Strikebreakers are often undertrained, face social ostracism, and may be exposed to unsafe conditions or resentment from their peers. Their short-term gain can come at the cost of long-term damage to workplace unity and trust.¹⁷

Employers argue that hiring strikebreakers is a legitimate way to protect their business and ensure continuity. Rather than giving in to union demands or risking financial collapse, employers see this strategy as a means of surviving during disputes. Keeping operations going can help preserve relationships with clients, prevent losses, and sustain investor confidence. In countries like the United States, employers are legally permitted to hire strikebreakers—even permanently—during labour disputes.¹⁸ In contrast, countries such as Germany and France heavily restrict or ban the practice, recognising the potential for abuse and union busting. The United Kingdom, once aligned with this approach, has recently lifted its ban on strikebreakers under certain circumstances, sparking renewed debate.¹⁹

The morality of strikebreaking remains sharply contested. Unions see it as an act that undermines worker power and collective bargaining. Employers defend it as a necessary option in times of industrial conflict. And individuals who take strikebreaking roles often face the difficult tension between supporting their fellow workers and meeting their own urgent needs. The debate raises complex questions about loyalty, survival, and the limits of solidarity.

Questions

1. Is it morally permissible to work as a strikebreaker? Why or why not?
2. Would an employer be justified in using strikebreakers if failing to do so could result in the collapse of the business?
3. Should personal needs and interests ever outweigh the collective interest of workers in a strike?
4. Can strikebreaking ever be an act of courage or moral choice, or is it always a betrayal of solidarity?

¹³ <https://www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk/content/ode-scab-jack-london-1876-1916>

¹⁴ <https://www.unionprogress.com/2023/04/16/what-or-who-is-a-scab-history-reveals-several-answers/>

¹⁵ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2566258?seq=1>

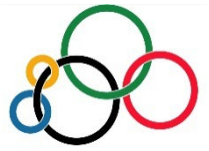
¹⁶ <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/carnegie-strike-homestead-mill/>

¹⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Pullman-Strike>

¹⁸ https://www.nlrb.gov/news-outreach/fact-sheets/nlra-and-right-strike?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jul/12/mps-approve-controversial-plans-to-let-agency-workers-cover-for-striking-staff>

Case 7. A Monthly Subscription to Brutality ²⁰



Dahmer, Netflix's dramatized biographical thriller about serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, who murdered, sexually assaulted, and sometimes cannibalized seventeen men between the years of 1978 and 1991, logged over one billion hours of viewing time in the first 60 days of its release in 2022. The second most-viewed Netflix show of all time, *Dahmer* is the leader in a wave of true crime shows that continue to captivate audiences and garner huge profits for producers and streaming services. Critics of true crime shows like *Dahmer*, however, argue that Netflix is unjustly capitalizing on horrible events which continue to hurt victims' families. To some viewers, the series' stylistic and narrative choices, such as the way the camera lingers over Dahmer's apartment and focuses on the character of Dahmer himself, romanticizes Dahmer's life and crimes without analysis or respect for the victims.

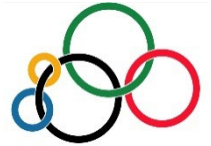
The families of Dahmer's victims have expressed disapproval of the show's harshness and carelessness in handling their trauma, and they claim that Netflix never received their consent or consulted them during the show's production. Furthermore, dramatizing Dahmer's crimes on a popular streaming platform can bring unwanted attention and memories back to the victims' communities. In contrast, fans of true crime argue that the flaws of *Dahmer* need not inherently apply to all true crime media. Dramatised shows with fictionalised elements may be more exploitative and insensitive than for example, investigative news articles. The distinction may lie in whether the primary purpose of the series or publication is to entertain via dramatized narratives or to inform via factual assessments and reporting. Supporters observe that the genre of true crime can humanise victims and restore their identity in popular consciousness outside of victimhood and may also shed light on shortcomings of law enforcement in investigating these crimes in the first place.

Questions

1. Are true crime shows inherently morally suspect because they treat the harm and suffering of real human beings as a form of entertainment?
2. Should true crime shows be required to seek the consent of victims?
3. Do true crime shows inevitably romanticise or glamorise the killers they portray?

²⁰ National High School Ethics Bowl (Ed.), 2023-24. "A Monthly Subscription to Brutality". National High School Ethics Bowl Case Library. UNC Parr Center for Ethics: Chapel Hill, NC. <http://nhseb.org/case-library>. Case modified from original version.

Case 8. Taking the Spot or Earning it? - University Scholarships



Freddie is a final-year High School student preparing to apply to go to university, many of which are prestigious institutions. He is also a highly accomplished athlete, having earned numerous awards through both his school and club teams. Encouraged by his coaches, Freddie begins researching potential Sports Scholarships and discovers a full-fee scholarship at his top-choice university. The scholarship would not only cover tuition but also provide a living stipend—an opportunity that appeals to Freddie both for its recognition and practical benefits.

Yet Freddie finds himself conflicted. He comes from a very wealthy family and has never had to worry about the financial cost of education. His family's resources have enabled him to attend an elite private school, where he had access to excellent coaching, high-quality facilities, and exclusive athletic opportunities—advantages that many other young athletes could never afford. This access has undoubtedly played a role in helping Freddie become the standout athlete he is today. Because of this, Freddie worries that by accepting the scholarship, he may be taking away an opportunity from a student who not only deserves it but also truly needs it. He knows that even without the scholarship, he would likely gain admission to his preferred university based on his academic record, and that his athletic performance would earn him a place on the university team regardless.

At the same time, Freddie views the scholarship as a meaningful form of recognition. He has trained rigorously for years, sacrificing personal time and working hard to balance his academic and sporting commitments. He believes that accepting the scholarship would serve as a tangible reward for his dedication and talent. Furthermore, holding the scholarship could increase his visibility to professional teams and sporting networks, potentially opening the door to a future athletic career.

Freddie is now facing a difficult choice: whether to prioritise his personal achievement and ambition, or step aside in favour of someone with greater financial need. His decision raises larger questions about fairness, merit, and privilege in the distribution of educational opportunities.

Questions

1. Should Freddie accept the scholarship, knowing that his family has the financial means to pay for his education?
2. Should merit-based scholarships be open to all students regardless of socioeconomic status, or should financial need play a role in determining eligibility?
3. To what extent should Freddie be held accountable for the advantages he has had in sports due to his financial background?
4. Is declining the scholarship the morally superior choice, or would doing so unfairly discount his effort and achievements?

THANKYOU TO OUR ETHICS OLYMPIAD SPONSORS



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA



Flinders
University

AAPAE
AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR
PROFESSIONAL AND APPLIED ETHICS



Academy[®]
LEARNING

PLATO
philosophy learning and teaching organization



Australasian
Association of
Philosophy

**THE
ETHICS
CENTRE**

Scotch Global



MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH CENTRE FOR AGENCY,
VALUES AND ETHICS