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Ethics in the context of society: ethics, society and the law



Box 3.2 Activity: Group activity

There are two parts to this activity, one could be carried out as an individual activity (an essay perhaps), the other as a group discussion. Or both could be done as group discussions (perhaps at different times) or as individual activities.

Everyone in the group should imagine that they are in the state of nature (see Box 3.1) and must therefore look out for themselves and their family group. There is no law and therefore no protection from the law for individuals.

1. In small groups participants should:
 - (i) try to identify the advantages and disadvantages of their situation;
 - (ii) decide whether they would like to continue to live without benefit of the law or whether they'd prefer to agree to live together according to the rule of law.

Each group should appoint a spokesperson to explain the group's view and the reasoning behind it.

2. Participants should discuss the type of government they think would be best. They might choose from (some combination of):
 - (i) anointing a hereditary monarchy;
 - (ii) electing a representative government;
 - (iii) appointing a leader for life;
 - (iv) appointing a short-term leader;
 - (v) anything else they can think of.⁶

Again each group should appoint a spokesperson to explain the group's view and the reasoning behind it.

**Box 3.3 Activity: Personal reflection**

Why do you think no (sensible) state would pass a law against lying to your friend about her hair?

Reflect on the different ways we punish those who have broken the law and those who have acted immorally. Why should there be such different sorts of punishment?

**Box 3.5 Activity: Creative writing**

It is 2020. Scientists have discovered a procedure that used once will reliably add 10 healthy years to our lives. Used a second time it produces 10 extra years, but not healthy ones. Unfortunately, each use of the procedure is very costly. But the news is out: people everywhere badly want to be able to use the procedure once to gain those extra 10 years.

Write a short piece (about 500 words) describing the thoughts of a person (the President? The Prime Minister?) who will be involved in making the government's final decision.

We will think more about this in Chapter 12.