

Solution 1.10

Claude is a fourth-year engineering university student who has just been informed by his instructor that he made a very low grade on his Spanish language final test for the year. Though he had a passing score prior to the final, his final grade was so low that he has now flunked the entire year and will likely have to extend his graduation another semester or two.

Throughout the year, Claude, who hated the course and his instructor, has copied homework, cheated on tests, and never seriously studied for anything in the course. He did realize during the semester that he was doing something that even he considered wrong morally and ethically. He knew he had done badly on the final. The classroom was reconfigured for the final exam in a way that he could not get any answers from classmates, and, cell phones were collected prior to the exam, thus removing texting and using WhatsApp possibilities to friends outside the classroom who may help him on the final exam. Claude is now face-to-face with the instructor in her office. The question to Claude is “What have you been doing throughout this year to make passing scores repeatedly, but demonstrate such a poor command of Spanish on the final exam?”

From an ethical viewpoint, what options does Claude have in his answer to this question? Also, discuss some of the possible effects that this experience may have upon Claude’s future actions and moral dilemmas.

Solution:

This is structured to be a discussion question; many responses are acceptable. Responses can vary from the ethical (stating the truth and accepting the consequences) to unethical (continuing to deceive himself and the instructor and devise some on-the-spot excuse).

Lessons can be learned from the experience. A few of them are:

- Think before he cheats again.
- Think about the longer-term consequences of unethical decisions.
- Face ethical-dilemma situations honestly and make better decisions in real time.

Alternatively, Claude may learn nothing from the experience and continue his unethical practices.