

## Youth should not stop talking about morality



Connor Stangler

I recently found an abandoned cellphone on a desk. For a brief moment, I considered my ethical obligations. Should I invade the owner's privacy and sift through his or her contact list to find a number I can call for the purpose of returning the lost property? Or should I respect their property and hope they return to pick it up, thereby saving me time and hassle? I didn't mention this ethical dilemma to my friend with me. It seemed too serious, or maybe too trivial.

Either way, it seems like I, and my generation, can't or won't talk about moral and ethical obligations. Either way, I think we should.

The New York Times columnist David Brooks referenced in his Sept. 12 column a 2008 study in which psychologists interviewed young adults about morality and their lives. Brooks pointed out that the young adults who participated in the study had difficulty thinking and talking about morality. When asked to discuss a moral dilemma they had dealt with, two-thirds of the respondents couldn't come up with one, and most of the ones who did described situations that were not moral. One student recounted a time when he/she did not have enough quarters for the parking meter. They could specify what obviously is wrong, like murder, but when it came to issues of murkier content, like lying or cheating, the students were disturbingly ambivalent or clueless.

Maybe our generation doesn't struggle with as many Earth-shattering moral dilemmas as past ones did. I admit I had a difficult time coming up with a personal moral dilemma. Why is that? Have I become so immoral during my college years that I can't recognize how defective my inner compass is? Or has society and my upbringing conditioned me to balk at the mere mention of a universal moral standard?

Let me state that relativism is not bad. While I support a universal standard for human rights, a relative awareness and respect for others' beliefs is immeasurably valuable. Besides the Student Conduct Code, I don't advocate the establishment of a moral standard on campus. But at a university that values the free exchange of ideas and the absence of bigotry, the avoidance of absolutism sometimes can go too far.

It's not that our nation, generation or campus has opted for immorality, but that we seem to settle for amorality. The complexities of moral dilemmas have forced us to plead relativism: When we can't decide the tough issues, we liberate the solutions. If moral dilemmas and obligations are left to the individual's preferences, then he or she is free from the constraints of an oppressive system. Morality, according to this, is best-suited for the free market, and each individual is the arbiter.

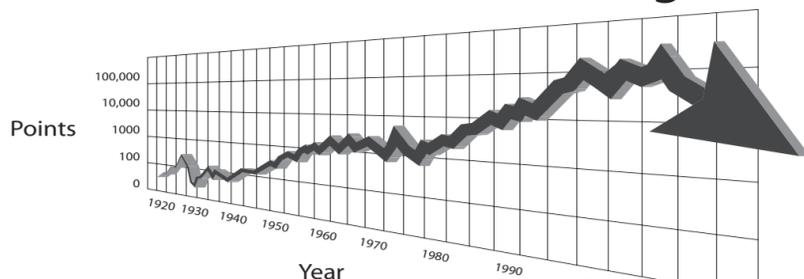
The problem arises when laissez-faire morality leads to ambivalence, or worse, a complete withdrawal from moral discussion. If we've individualized our sense of right and wrong, there's no point in discussing obligations or awareness, only our own insulation. Amorality can lead to right or wrong behavior because, in essence, there is no right or wrong. But we shouldn't stop talking about the distinction between the two. Moral absolutism might react too dangerously to differences, but moral relativism might react too complacently. That complacency deprives us of an important sense of our relationships and interactions.

We don't suffer from a lack of universality but a lack of discourse. If we can't talk about morality, or if we think it too much the property of the individual and thus not worth discussing, then we lose what has been so fundamental to our history, our literature, our narratives and our civilization. Don't limit meaningful discussions about worth, validity or morals to ethics class or your church service.

I sincerely apologize to the cellphone's owner. I hope you found it eventually.

Connor Stangler is a junior political science major from Columbia, Mo.

## Dow Jones industrial average history



Source: <http://observationsandnotes.blogspot.com/2008/10/100-years-of-stock-market-history.html> Colleen Glaeser/ Index

## Economic uncertainty reveals unstable American psyche



Zach Vicars

For nearly a century, the stock market has been a pretty good indicator of America's collective psychology. If that's true today, then we are all clinically bipolar.

If you keep up with market news — or, better yet, have a portfolio of your own — you know that during the last few months the stock market has been a frightening roller coaster at best, a foolish gamble at worst.

As college students, many of us might not have a vested interest in the economy, but that soon will change. As tuition, student loans and other educational expenses start to be paid off, we will be looking for other areas to invest. Whether you invest in real estate, venture capital, stocks and bonds, more education or a little bit of everything, having a basic understanding of economics and the American psyche will help you tread these risky waters.

Our nation's intimate connection to the stock market really began in the 1920s, when we were filled with a naïve hope for world peace. In typical American fashion, we responded to that hope with greed — buying things we couldn't afford with loans we couldn't pay off. The economy grew at unchecked rates until the Great Depres-

sion. Then, after a slow recovery, our economy and our collective consciousness entered into a time of honest, conservative progress — the 1950s. Twenty years later, we started to experience some shake-ups in the market as the 70s were shaking up our culture.

After another steep downturn during the late 80s, the American people started to gain confidence and the economy came into its own. Then, at the turn of this century, just as things were starting to look up, we did it again. We became arrogant and greedy. We foolishly assumed the good times never would end. People took out loans on homes they couldn't afford, banking on record-levels of appreciation to carry them through.

Then, in 2008, the bottom layer of our house of cards fell. Reeling in fear, the brave, progressive American people shrunk back to their holes of economic uncertainty.

Since then, we have been stuck in a cycle of volatile price shifts. As a people, we can't make up our mind if we are going to be manic or depressive during this time in our nation's history. One minute we are excited about the future of industry and willing to invest in start-up companies, the next we sense an economic apocalypse and dump our money into gold — hoping at least that ancient commodity will hold some value. Throw in foreign factors like the rise of the Chinese economy and the decline of Europe's, and things start to become really weird really fast.

As members of the market who are on the verge of entering the workforce, it's easy to feel like we're about to jump into a car with an impulsive friend. There's a good chance it will be

fun, but there's an equally good chance it'll end in a crash.

Fortunately for us, the news isn't all bad. You see, even after some really rough patches toward the end of the summer, the economy is still climbing. Humans steadily have been progressing for the last 500 years and quirks like the Greece debt crisis won't be able to stop that powerful momentum. In fact, the S&P 500, an effective economic thermometer, has gained 7 percent in the last year. That won't make you rich quick, but it's certainly a better return than the under-the-mattress savings plan.

There's an old saying: Things are never as good as they seem, but they're never as bad as they seem, either. That's certainly true of today's economic situation. It's true: interest rates, unemployment, the value of the dollar and the Dow Jones Industrial average sometimes seem like tiny glass ornaments waiting to fall off a withered tree. Still, you can be assured that good, old-fashioned common sense will win the day in this chapter of economic history.

If something seems too good to be true, that's because it is. If it seems like a bad idea to invest all your money in one commodity, that's because it is. If you think in this high-risk, high-volatility market there's a chance to be a big winner, that's because there is.

Zach Vicars is a senior philosophy/religion and linguistics major from St. Charles, Mo.

## AROUND THE QUAD

### Do you believe recent fluctuations in the stock market will have an effect on your job outlook?



"The stock market doesn't affect my skill set as much as the demand for publishing needs."

Casey Henderson junior



"No. I understand that the market experiences fluctuations from day-to-day. [But] At the end of the day, I want to be doing what I love."

Broderick Olson sophomore



"I do think it will affect my outlook in finding a job, but I still have a couple of years before I have to worry about that."

Lizzie Salsich sophomore



"There is a distinct possibility, though I don't think it will permeate into every job in the market."

Alexander Lowry freshman

## Civil War grudge should not affect university mascot



Molly Skyles

Truman State should remove the Bulldog as its official mascot. Once, when I was 8 years old, a bulldog bit my finger and drooled on my new sneakers. It was a traumatizing life event and I really would appreciate it if the bulldog were to be replaced with something less distasteful. A butterfly might be nice.

Okay, of course I'm going a bit overboard, but how ridiculous does this sound? Just about as ridiculous as the tiny Missouri town of Osceola, I assume. Osceola, population 950, located in southwest Missouri, is asking the University of Kansas to drop its Jayhawk

mascot because of a 150-year-old grudge.

In 1861, approximately 2,000 Jayhawkers attacked Osceola, killing hundreds and destroying the town, according to a Sept. 18 Kansas City Star article. The Jayhawkers were anti-slavery, guerrilla fighters in a border war with the pro-slavery state of Missouri during the Civil War era. The city of Osceola claims they never have been able to rebuild their population and apparently the Jayhawk to them is similar to saying "bomb" on an airplane.

Maybe this grudge is a little (note the use of "little") more understandable than my bulldog anecdote. Yes, many people were killed, but still, this happened 150 years ago. During the last century and a half, this country has faced two world wars and currently is dealing with a battle regarding terrorism, but what are our concerns — fear that the blue and red bird with the yellow boots who dances around throwing free T-shirts to the crowds at KU games is going to bring up old Civil War wounds?

Today, a Jayhawk also is a nickname for someone born in Kansas. While I'm not from Kansas, even though Osceola is making me

wish I wasn't from Missouri, I would assume that knowing you come from an anti-slavery state would be something on which to pride yourself, and what better way than with the name Jayhawk?

In Osceola's resolution to KU, they also are requesting Missourians stop spelling Kansas and KU with a capital letter, because it "neither is a proper name or a proper place," Osceola Mayor Larry Hutsler said.

Osceola has some nerve. They were not quite innocent all those years ago. Osceola was pro-slavery and angry that the Jayhawkers had the guts to stand up to their inhuman ways. I'm sure many innocent people were killed, but it was the Civil War. Osceola was not the only casualty. The fact that they are this concerned about defending their "victim" stance on the attack makes me question their modern-day beliefs. Not to say they still are pro-slavery, but wouldn't you at least be a little ashamed that your town believed in slavery and it took a horrific event like the Jayhawkers attack to make them change their ways? There is no point in bringing up old news, old embarrassing news at that.

KU is not the only university that has received negative attention regarding their mascot. The Florida State University Seminoles, Central Michigan University Chippewas, Miami University Redhawks, University of North Dakota "Fighting Sioux" and University of Utah Utes all have been targets of Native American upset, and rightfully so. A man with face paint and feathers in his hair wearing animal hide is offensive to the traditional Native Americans who still exist on reservations throughout the country. A cartoon bird decked out in primary colors and big yellow boots, though, is just laughable.

Lighten up, people. I'm sure the Jayhawkers did a lot of damage in Osceola some 150 years ago, but times have changed. Slavery is wrong, wars still are happening. Deserve your modern-day attention and Kansas cannot be to blame for your low population.

Molly Skyles is a senior communication major from St. Louis