

My Ethical Dilemma

Today I found a pair of sunglasses in class. I felt that I should turn the sunglasses into the Lost and Found, but first I looked at them. They looked somewhat beat up, and they were not an expensive brand. Thus, I decided to turn the sunglasses in. My ethical dilemma seemed easily resolved; however, should I have had to examine the condition and brand of the sunglasses before I turned them in?

By examining the sunglasses, I exhibited an intent to keep them if the sunglasses were actually worth something to me: finders keepers losers weepers. Even though I knew that the law probably was not on my side, I still had the thought in my mind to keep them if they had some value to me. Someone set them there on the desk intentionally, and would probably return to the premises to retrieve them. Consequently, as I have learned in my Property class, these sunglasses clearly belonged in the "mislaid" category of lost property. Therefore, I should turn them in to the owner of the premises, the law school.

Unfortunately, I think this says much about human nature. Even if I did not know the law, I would have known that the owner was in my class and he or she would have recognized the glasses if I kept them. I would not have been stealing the glasses, but I would have to return them or their value if the owner brought suit. Even if I had no legal training, I would know that the owner would be

looking for them, that someone probably saw me pick them up, and that I would have to hide that I had kept the glasses if I wanted to retain them or their value.

Almost instinctively, humans know that it is immoral to take other people's stuff. Why had I even considered keeping them, even for a moment? I think that our human nature pushes us constantly and selfishly to seek gain. However, we have to temper that nature with our morality. In contrast, looking at the sunglasses to examine their value was not a crime. Then again, examining them was also more than mere curiosity. In the end, I turned the sunglasses in. Consequently, I did the morally correct thing but still had some lingering guilt. Humans should not feel guilty for the immoral thoughts that we have, only consider the results and the ethical consequences of putting those thoughts into force. After that, if we choose the high road, we can feel satisfied that we are ethical people.