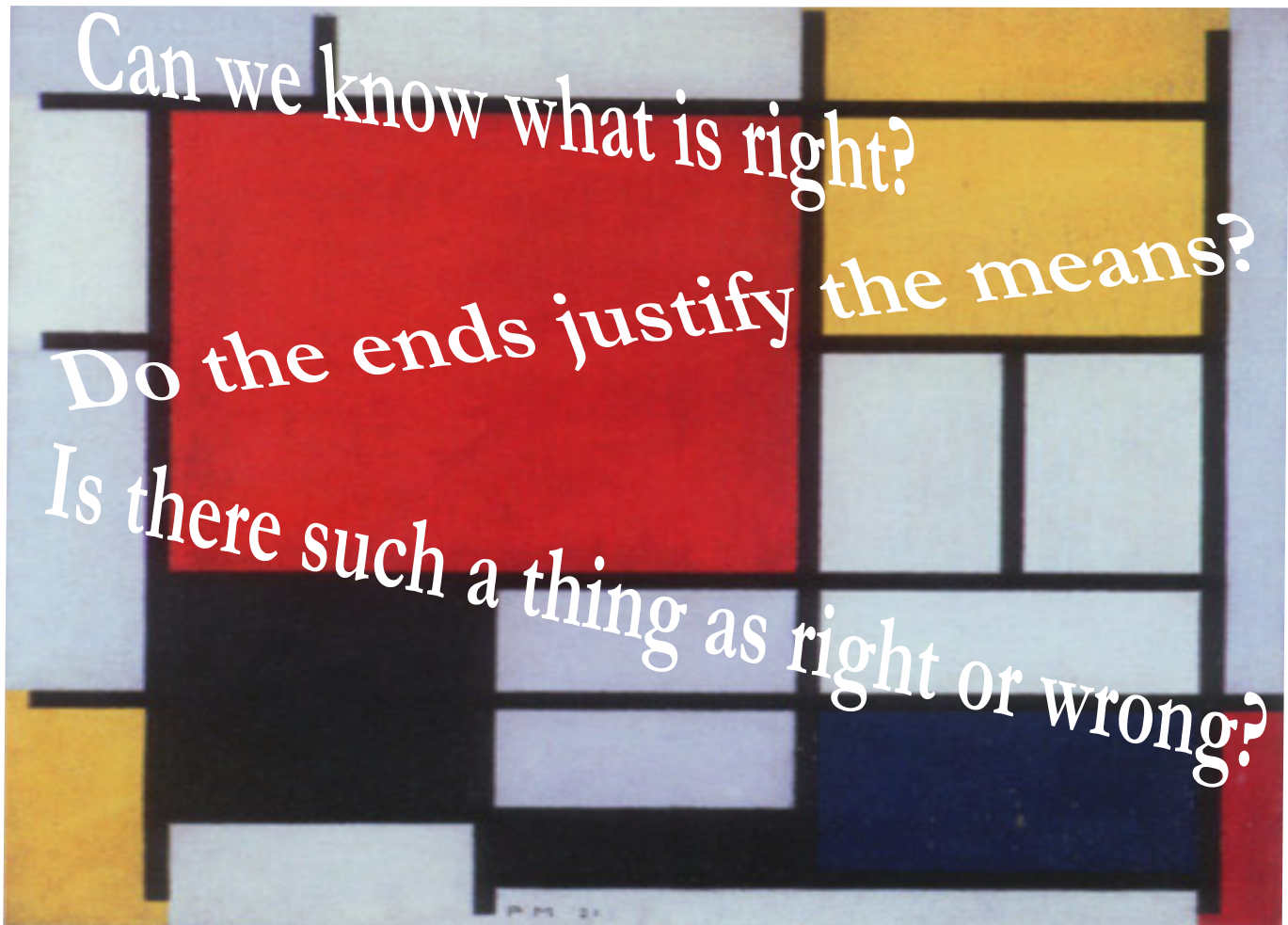


Philosophy 475/575: Ethical Theory
Spring 2012
MW 1:30-2:45 Winston 005
Professor Robert Mabrito



Philosophy 475/575 examines several fundamental ethical questions. Are there any moral constraints on what one may do in the service of a good cause? Are there some actions—for example, torture or killing the innocent—that are morally forbidden no matter how much good will result from performing them? The two major approaches to ethics differ over the answers to these questions. Consequentialists say there are no such constraints and no such actions while deontologists say that there are. We investigate the rationales behind and the problems with both of these approaches. Other questions concern metaphysical, epistemological, and semantic issues that arise in the study of ethics. Is there room in our ontology for ethical properties such as rightness and wrongness? And even if there is, how is it possible for us to know what is right and what is wrong? Is moral language even in the business of describing the world in the first place or does it have some other function? Attempting to answer these questions in ethics forces one to grapple with fundamental questions in metaphysics, epistemology, and semantics.