

"For do you see, Callicles, that our conversation is on the subject of which should engage the most serious attention of anyone who has a particle of intelligence: in what way should one live one's life."

—Plato, *Gorgias*

Introduction: what is the right and the good?

- Might is right
- Mores are right
- Man is right
- Human race is right
- Moderation is right
- There is no right
- Pleasure is right
- Greatest good is right
- What is desired for its own sake is right
- God's will and word is right

I. Definitions of Basic Terms and Three Reasons to Study Ethics

A. Axiology

B. Ethics

C. Definitions of ethics

The study of right and wrong in terms of moral behavior; of what one ought to do and what one ought not to do. It also concerns the study of virtue or the qualities that constitute worthy character, and includes the search for the *summum bonum*—the greatest good or the best way to live one's life

Ethics is that branch of philosophy and theology which concerns the theoretical formulation, epistemic justification, and application or practice of moral obligations of human beings to God, themselves, others, and other aspects of the created order (animals and material world).

Ethics is that branch of philosophy (moral philosophy) and theology (moral theology) which concerns the nature of moral

theory and practice and which determines the rules of right conduct, setting forth the moral obligation of human beings to God, self, and others, and the world, and animals and aiming to give a philosophical and theological basis of discrimination between right and wrong.

I. Consequentialist ethics (soft or general normative ethics)

A. Egoism (Ayn Rand)

1. Psychological egoism
2. Ethical egoism
3. Psychological altruism
4. Ethical altruism

B Utilitarianism—J. Bentham, 1748-1832; John Stuart Mill, 1806-1873

“The greatest good for the greatest number over the long haul.”

C. Situationism—Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*

1. Legalism
2. Antinomianism
3. Love

II. Non-consequentialist ethics (rules/duties)

Non-consequential Consequential

1. Rules

1. Results

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 2. Principlal | 2. Pragmatic |
| 3. Commands | 3. Consequences |
| 4. Intrinsic value | 4. Extrinsic results |
| 5. Means | 5. Ends |

A. Christian ethics/Divine Command Theory: rules based on revelation

a. Determined by God

- 1.) Voluntarism
- 2.) Essentialism

b. Disclosed by revelation

- 1.) Natural
- 2.) Special

c. Discovered by human beings

- 1.) Covenantal
- 2.) Authoritative

B. Kantian ethics: rules based on reason (categorical imperative)

- Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."
- Act as though the maxim of your action were by your will to become a universal law of nature."
- Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only."
- So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle establishing universal law.
- Nothing in the whole world, or even outside of the world, can possibly be regarded as good without limitation except a good will.

C. What happens when rules conflict?

- 1.) Non-conflicting absolutism

- a.) Conflicts are apparent, not real. There are no conflicts in God's laws and God cannot contradict himself by commanding opposite duties.
- b.) Never lie to save a life. There is only one duty: truth telling. The problem is not lying or killing; the dilemma is lying and letting someone else kill, an act for which you are not responsible.
- c.) Never sin to avoid sin: lie to avoid murder, commit suicide to avoid torture; kill to avoid rape.
- d.) Trust the providence of God: He will deliver (so Daniel).
- e.) Real dilemmas when they happen are our own fault.

2.) Conflicting absolutism: do the lesser of two evils.

- a.) There are real moral conflicts not of our own making. In fact they are unavoidable in the real world.
- b.) Ought does not imply can. Conflicts prove that sometimes, what one ought to do can't be done: tell the truth and save a life.
- c.) Absolute nature of universal norms: it should always be done no matter what; no exceptions, qualifications, exemptions, etc.
- d.) In a conflict, do the lesser of two evils. Break the law that prohibits the lesser evil.
- e.) Forgiveness is available when this happens if we confess.

3.) Hierarchicalism: do the greater good.

- a.) There are real conflicts, personal and unavoidable.
- b.) One is not responsible for unavoidable conflicts.
- c.) There are higher and lower laws: greatest commandment of all; weightier matters of the law, etc.
- d.) In a conflict, do the greater good
- e.) We are not held responsible by God if in doing a greater good we violate a lesser law (Rahab, Hebrew midwives, etc.)

II. Anti-normative or Anti-nomian Ethics: Fredrich Nietzsche

A. The death of God and the good

B. Re-evaluating good and evil (transvaluation of the ethical)

C. The rejection of all absolute value

III. Virtue Ethics: Aristotle and the vices and virtues tradition

A. Happiness

B. Purposes and virtues

1. Moral and intellectual purposes

2. Moral and intellectual virtues

a. Moral virtues

b. Intellectual virtues

C. Community

D. The seven deadly sins: pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice (greed),
gluttony, lust

E. The seven cardinal virtues: faith, hope, love (theological virtues), courage,
justice, temperance, prudence (philosophical virtues)