

Session 1

1. ETHICS

1.1. Concepts of Ethics

Ethics, also known as philosophical ethics, ethical theory, moral theory, and moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct, often addressing disputes of moral diversity. The term comes from the Greek word *ethos*, which means "character". The superfield within philosophy known as Axiology includes both ethics and Aesthetics and is unified by each sub-branch's concern with value. Philosophical ethics investigates what is the best way for humans to live, and what kinds of actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances. Ethics may be divided into four major areas of study:

Meta-ethics, about the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions and how their truth values (if any) may be determined;

Normative ethics, about the practical means of determining a moral course of action;

Applied ethics draws upon ethical theory in order to ask what a person is obligated to do in some very specific situation, or within some particular domain of action (such as business);

Descriptive ethics, also known as comparative ethics, is the study of people's beliefs about morality; Ethics seeks to resolve questions dealing with human morality—concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime.

Defining ethics the word ethics in English can mean several things. It can refer to philosophical ethics -- a project that attempts to use reason in order to answer various kinds of ethical questions. It can also be used to describe a particular person's own, idiosyncratic principles or habits. For example: "Joe has good ethics." It may also be used to characterize the questions of right-conduct in some specific sphere, even when such right-conduct is not examined philosophically: "business ethics or the

ethics of child-rearing" may refer, but need not refer, to a philosophical examination of such issues. This article describes philosophical ethics, which is more or less synonymous with "ethical theory," but this is not the exclusive use of the term "ethics" in English. Even something such as "bioethics," may be addressed from a philosophical or non-philosophical perspective. For example, a non-philosopher may well have an opinion about end-of-life care, and such an opinion falls within the domain of bioethics. Thus bioethics is not an exclusively philosophical subject, just as ethics in general is not.

According to Richard Paul and Linda Elder of the Foundation for Critical Thinking, "most people confuse ethics with behaving in accordance with social conventions, religious beliefs and the law", and don't treat ethics as a stand-alone concept. Paul and Elder define ethics as "a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms sentient creatures". The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy states that the word ethics is "commonly used interchangeably with 'morality' and sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual."

Meta-ethics

Meta-ethics asks how we understand, know about, and what we mean when we talk about what is right and what is wrong. An ethical question fixed on some particular practical question -- such as, "Should I eat this particular piece of German chocolate cake?" -- cannot be a meta-ethical question. A meta-ethical question is abstract and relates to a wide range of more specific practical questions. For example, "Is it ever possible to have secure knowledge of what is right and wrong?" would be a meta-ethical question.

Meta-ethics has always accompanied philosophical ethics. For example, Aristotle implies that less precise knowledge is possible in ethics than in other spheres of inquiry, and he regards ethical knowledge as depending upon habit and acculturation in a way that makes it distinctive from other kinds of knowledge. Meta-ethics is also important in G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* from 1903. In it he

first wrote about what he called the naturalistic fallacy. Moore was seen to reject naturalism in ethics, in his Open Question Argument. This made thinkers look again at second order questions about ethics. Earlier, the Scottish philosopher David Hume had put forward a similar view on the difference between facts and values.

Studies of how we know in ethics divide into cognitivist and non-cognitivist; this is similar to the contrast between descriptivist's and non-descriptivist. Non-cognitivist is the claim that when we judge something as right or wrong, this is neither true nor false. We may for example be only expressing our emotional feelings about these things. Cognitivism can then be seen as the claim that when we talk about right and wrong, we are talking about matters of fact.

The ontology of ethics is about value-bearing things or properties, i.e. the kind of things or stuff referred to by ethical propositions. Non-descriptivist's and non-cognitivists believe that ethics does not need a specific ontology, since ethical propositions do not refer. This is known as an anti-realist position. Realists on the other hand must explain what kind of entities, properties or states are relevant for ethics, how they have value, and why they guide and motivate our actions.

Normative ethics

Normative ethics is the study of ethical action. It is the branch of philosophical ethics that investigates the set of questions that arise when considering how one ought to act, morally speaking. Normative ethics is distinct from meta-ethics because it examines standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions, while meta-ethics studies the meaning of moral language and the metaphysics of moral facts. Normative ethics is also distinct from descriptive ethics, as the latter is an empirical investigation of people's moral beliefs. To put it another way, descriptive ethics would be concerned with determining what proportion of people believe that killing is always wrong, while normative ethics is concerned with whether it is correct to hold such a belief. Hence, normative ethics is sometimes called

prescriptive, rather than descriptive. However, on certain versions of the meta-ethical view called moral realism, moral facts are both descriptive and prescriptive at the same time.

Modern normative

Traditionally, normative ethics (also known as moral theory) was the study of what makes actions right and wrong. These theories offered an overarching moral principle one could appeal to in resolving difficult moral decisions.

At the turn of the 20th century, moral theories became more complex and are no longer concerned solely with rightness and wrongness, but are interested in many different kinds of moral status. During the middle of the century, the study of normative ethics declined as meta-ethics grew in prominence. This focus on meta-ethics was in part caused by an intense linguistic focus in analytic philosophy and by the popularity of logical positivism.

Business ethics

Business ethics (also corporate ethics) is a form of applied ethics or professional ethics that examines ethical principles and moral or ethical problems that arise in a business environment. It applies to all aspects of business conduct and is relevant to the conduct of individuals and entire organizations.

Business ethics has both normative and descriptive dimensions. As a corporate practice and a career specialization, the field is primarily normative. Academics attempting to understand business behavior employ descriptive methods. The range and quantity of business ethical issues reflects the interaction of profit-maximizing behavior with non-economic concerns. Interest in business ethics accelerated dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s, both within major corporations and within academia. For example, today most major corporations promote their commitment to non-economic values under headings such as ethics codes and social responsibility charters. Adam Smith said,

"People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices." Governments use laws and regulations to point business behavior in what they perceive to be beneficial directions. Ethics implicitly regulates areas and details of behavior that lie beyond governmental control. The emergence of large corporations with limited relationships and sensitivity to the communities in which they operate accelerated the development of formal ethics regimes.

1.2. Ethics and morality

The best short definition I've heard, courtesy of my friend Sterling, is that morals are how you treat people you know. Ethics are how you treat people you don't know.

Your morality is what makes you a good wife or husband, dad or mother. A good daughter or son. A good friend. Even a good employee or boss to the people you know personally in the company.

Your ethics is what makes you good politicians. It is what makes you a statesman. It is also what makes you a good, humane CEO of any large company (and yes, you can make money and pay your employees well as Costco proves.)

When you're a politicians or a CEO, most of what you do will effect people you don't know, people you can't know, people who are just statistics to you. You have no personal connection to them, and you never will. This is at the heart of Stalin's comment that "a single death is a tragedy, a million deaths a statistic." Change the welfare rules, people will live or die, suffer or prosper. Change the tax structure, healthcare mandates, trade laws, transit spending—virtually everything you do means someone will win, and someone will lose. Sometimes fatally.

Ethics is more important than morality in creating a functioning society. This comes back to what I was discussing earlier, that it is worse to kill or harm more people than to kill or harm fewer people.

Morality dictates that you take care of your family, friends and even acquaintances first. It is at the heart of the common admonition to “put your family first.” Whenever I hear a politician say “I put my family first” I think “then you shouldn’t be in public office.”

We call the family the building block of society, but this is nonsense except in the broadest sense. The structure of the family is entirely socially based, generally on how we make our living. A hundred years ago in America and Canada the extended family was the norm, today the nuclear family is, with single parent families coming on strong. In China this transition, from extended to nuclear family, took place in living memory, many adults still in their prime can remember extended families, and were raised in them. The wealthy often have their children raised by servants (I was for my first five years), tribal societies often put all male children in to the same tent or tents at puberty, and so on. A hundred and fifty years ago children were taught at home, by the extended family, and not by professional teachers. They spent much more time with family until they were apprenticed out, if they were.

To be sure, children must be born and raised for society to continue, men and women must come together to get that done, but there are many ways to do it, and God did not come down and mandate the nuclear family.

This may seem like an aside from the main point, but it is not. Family is not fundamental, it is not first. Society is first, and family is shaped by the needs and ideology of the society.

For a large society, a society where you can’t know everyone, to work ethics must come before morality, or ethics and morality must have a great deal of overlaps. By acting morally, you must be able to act ethically.

Our current ethical system requires politicians to act unethically, to do great harm to people they don’t know, while protecting those they do. This can hardly be denied, and was on display in the 2007/8 financial collapse and the bailout after. The millions of homeowners and employees politicians

and central bankers did not know were not helped, and the people the politicians and central bankers and treasury officials did know, were bailed out. Austerity, likewise, has hurt people politicians don't know, while enriching the corporate officers and rich they do know.

The structure of our economy is designed to impoverish people we don't know. For developed nation's citizens this means people in undeveloped nations. For the rich this means cutting the wages of the middle class. For the middle class it means screwing over the poor (yes, the middle class does the day to day enforcement, don't pretend otherwise.) We are obsessed with "lowering costs" and making loans, and both of those are meant to extract maximum value from people while giving them as little as they can in return.

We likewise ignore the future, refusing to build or repair infrastructure, to invest properly in basic science, and refusing to deal with global warming. These decisions will overwhelmingly affect people we don't know: any individual infrastructure collapse won't hit us, odds are, and global warming will kill most of its victims in the future. The rich and powerful, in particular, believe that they will avoid the consequences of these things. It will effect people other than them.

To put the needs of the few before the needs of the many, in public life, is to be a monster. But even in private life if we all act selfishly, as our reigning ideology indicates we should, we destroy ourselves. If we all put only ourselves and those we love first, and damn the cost to everyone else, our societies cannot and will not be prosperous, safe, or kind.

The war of all against all is just as nasty when it is waged by small kin groups as when it is waged by individuals.

1.3.Human Beings

Before exploring the question of who we are as children of God, it is very important that we have a clear understanding of the nature of human beings. What we understand human beings to be

will largely determine how we treat them and what we believe about a lot of other things. Professor J. S. Whale, in his book *Christian Doctrine*, wrote:

Ideologies, to use the ugly modern jargon, are really anthropologies. That is, they concern the doctrine of man...This is the ultimate question behind the vast debate, the desperate struggles of our time.

There has been a long-standing debate about where our superiority to animals lies. Keith Thomas collected a number of quaint suggestions in his book *Man and the Natural World* (1984). He points out that a human being was described by Aristotle as a political animal, by Thomas Willis as a laughing animal, by Benjamin Franklin as a tool-making animal, by Edmund Burke as a religious animal, and by James Boswell as a cooking animal. Aristotle added the peculiarity that only human beings were able to wiggle their ears. But are humans something more than just superior animals, a little higher along on the evolutionary scale?

The Bible responds with a very clear, "Yes!" According to Scripture, humans are not only the highest of God's acts of creation; they are created in the "likeness" or "image" of God. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'...So God created man in his own image...male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:26, 27). The rest of the Bible gives us many clues as to what this "likeness to God" is meant to imply. The Anglican scholar and writer, John Stott, speaking at a National Prayer Breakfast at Westminster, summed this up well.

First, he said, there is our self-conscious rationality. We are able to think and reason, to stand outside ourselves, look at ourselves and evaluate ourselves. It is true that, in terms of the vastness of the universe, we are infinitely small, and yet we are the ones who possess the intelligence to study the universe, its workings and formation.

Secondly, there is our ability to make moral choices. We have a built in moral conscience, even if, sadly, we may fail to heed it. We have an inward urge to do what we perceive to be right and a sense of guilt if we do what we believe to be wrong.

Thirdly, as our God is a creative God, there are our powers of artistic creativity. In consequence, we draw and we paint, we build and we sculpt, we dream and we dance, we write poetry and we make music. We are able to appreciate what is beautiful to the eye, the ear and the touch.

Fourthly, as our God is a God who exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, persons who have always existed together in love relationships, so there is our capacity for relationships of love.* He gave us the capacity to love and to be loved. Our greatest joys in life come from loving relationships, just as our greatest sorrows come through spoiled relationships. We are relational beings. It is not an accident that the first and greatest commandments are to love God and our neighbor. Fifthly, there is our insatiable thirst for God. Neither the secularism nor gross materialism of the West, nor the failed communistic philosophy of the East can satisfy the longings of the human spirit. The human "spirit" is constantly mentioned in the Bible (e.g. Zechariah 12:1 and often in the New Testament). Whereas the term "soul" or "life" is used of animals (Hebrew—Genesis 1:21, Greek—Revelation 16:3), "spirit" never is. God is spirit and we were created for fellowship with him.

In considering the relationship of humans to animals, we could use the analogy of the relationship between a jet plane and a motor car. They have many similarities. Both have wheels, are made of metal, can transport people, and possess engines that propel them forward on the ground. However, when one studies the shape of the jet plane, its engines and the shape of its wings, one gets the impression that it was made to fly. Similarly, though possessing many qualities in common with animals, we were created for something far greater than they. G. K. Chesterton put it like this:

Man is not a balloon going up into the sky, nor a mole burrowing merely in the earth: but rather a thing like a tree, whose roots are fed from the earth, while its highest branches seem to rise almost to the stars.

However, if it is God who planned our existence before the creation of the universe and who loved us into being, we are going to be stuck in a dead end if we leave him out of the picture. Eugene Peterson, in *Run with the Horses*, says: Our lives are not puzzles to be figured out. Rather, we come to God, who knows us and reveals to us the truth of our lives. The fundamental mistake is to begin with ourselves and not God. God is the center from which all life develops. If we use our ego as the Centre from which to plot the geometry of our lives, we will live eccentrically.

Our greatest claim to nobility is our created capacity to know God, to be in personal relationship with him, to love him and to worship him. Indeed, we are most truly human when we are on our knees before our Creator.

1.4. The object of study of ethics

The ultimate purpose in studying ethics is not as it is in other inquiries, the attainment of theoretical knowledge; we are not conducting this inquiry in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, else there would be no advantage in studying it. —ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 2, Ch. 2

Ethics is a lot like air: It is pretty much invisible. In fact, for many centuries, people did not realize that such a substance as air even existed. So too we often fail to recognize the existence of ethics or morality until someone fails to heed it. The term ethics has several meanings. It is often used to refer to a set of standards of right and wrong established by a particular group and imposed on members of that group as a means of regulating and setting limits on their behavior. This uses of the word ethics reflects its etymology, which goes back to the Greek word *ethos*, meaning “cultural custom or habit.” The word moral is derived from the Latin word *moralis*, which also means “custom.” Although

some philosophers distinguish between the terms ethical and moral, others, including the author of this text, use the two terms interchangeably. The identification of ethics and morality with cultural norms or customs reflects the fact that most adults tend to identify morality with cultural customs. Philosophical ethics, also known as moral philosophy, goes beyond this limited concept of right and wrong. Ethics, as a philosophical discipline, includes the study of the values and guidelines by which we live and the justification for these values and guidelines. Rather than simply accepting the customs or guidelines used by one particular group or culture, philosophical ethics analyzes and evaluates these guidelines in light of accepted universal principles and concerns. More important, ethics is a way of life. In this sense, ethics involves active engagement in the pursuit of the good life—a life consistent with a coherent set of moral values. According to Aristotle, one of the leading Western moral philosophers, the pursuit of the good life is our most important activity as humans. Indeed, studies have found that even criminals believe morality is important—at least for others. Although criminals may not always act on their moral beliefs, they still expect others to do so. Almost all criminals, when asked, state that they do not want their children to engage in immoral behavior and would get angry if one of their children committed a crime.

1.5. Fundamental ethical values

Ethics is the study of how humans ought to live as informed by the Bible and Christian convictions. So wrote Stanley Grenz in his book *The Moral Quest*. This is the Christian view.

Both the Christian and the secularist draw on the ideas of the Greek philosophers in understanding ethics. Western thinking on the subject has been significantly influenced by Plato and Aristotle. Their teaching centered largely on virtuous living. Traditional philosophy of ethics is based on reason.

The secular foundation of ethics goes no further than reason. The highest good is found in the self. Ethics is based on what a man seems to be beneficial to himself or his society. That is, if a well-ordered society can be maintained and it does no harm to the individual, the act in question is moral.

In questions of morality, it is not inappropriate to consider the effects of our words and deeds on ourselves or others. But, for the Christian, reason is only a tool we use to further our ethical goals. Reason helps us in the application of ethics, not in the initial knowledge of what is ethical. We appeal to something beyond our ken, beyond ourselves, beyond our society, even beyond our universe.

We appeal to the Creator as the author and judge of all ethics. Ethics is founded on God's nature, on his character. Man can only be truly ethical when he reflects the character of God. We learn of his nature through his revelation of himself" revealed in nature, revealed in conscience, and most importantly revealed in the Holy Scriptures and in the person of Jesus Christ.

Moral standard does not begin or end"with himself. He is not the judge of good and evil. Instead, good is defined by God's nature, and evil is defined by that which is contrary to God's nature, that which seeks to supplant God's authority and God's will.

The Ten Commandments serve as a succinct enumeration of God character, but there is meaning that goes beyond the plain words. Throughout the Scriptures, we see the application of those commandments to all of life. We find, for example, that the prohibition of murder is about more than killing; it also involves justice and respect for the dignity of all men; it includes respect for man and honor for God. Christian's summary of the law is morally binding on the conscience and will of man.

In seeking to live ethically, we find our ultimate example in the life of Christ. He lived to honor the Father, and so must we live. We honor him in obeying his commandments, by walking in his ways.

The secular philosopher will never lead us to this standard of behavior. Reason will help us understand ethical living, but it will never lead us to the unmovable standard. Good derives meaning not

from self-reflection but from God-reflection. If we seek to understand transcendent values by limiting ourselves to finite things, we find no answers to the question of what we ought to do.

The man who rules himself will find he is ruled by a despot and a tyrant. The ruler changes his mind based on the unbridled passions of his heart. In looking to the True Ruler, we learn what is truly ethical “and we also find mercy

1.6. The Moral Act

A human act. One performed with knowledge and free will. It is called a moral act because it is always either morally good or bad. Every consciously deliberate action is therefore a moral act.

The moral act is a complex association of thinking and acting. One can think morally without doing anything about it. One may act in a way that is later judged to be moral without giving it any thought. In this chapter we will consider the interaction of thinking and acting that make up the deliberate moral act. Modern physics recognizes that light can be thought of as a wave or as a particle. Different conditions at the beginning of an experiment can make light seem to be one way or another. Somewhat analogous, the moral act can be viewed in several different ways. These are not mutually exclusive but give different appearances that provide us additional information. We will begin with a very modern concept. Rest suggests that the moral act can be considered as having four components:

1. Moral sensitivity
2. Moral judgment
3. Moral discrimination
4. Moral courage

All of these are required in order to act morally; three out of four are not good enough.

1. Moral sensitivity is the ability to recognize an issue as having a moral dimension. If you do not see a situation as being a moral issue, you will not make any attempt to think about it morally. For example, one's residence determines, to an astonishing extent, what type of education is available. If one views this as just an example of how society is constructed, and does not realize that this is an issue of justice for little children, it will not seem immoral.

2. Moral judgment is the process of looking at a situation, gathering all of the information available concerning it, and making a judgment.

3. Moral discrimination is the ability to rank the importance of a moral judgment against other claims. A physician who worked for a for-profit medical company owned a great deal of stock in the company. He was able to make good medical decisions and treatment plans for his patients, but if these were likely to cost the company a great deal of money, he would not recommend them but would rather choose a cheaper, usually less effective treatment. He described himself as a "company whore;" a very insightful remark.

4. Moral courage is the ability to act out a moral decision in the face of opposition. Moral courage requires stamina, endurance, perseverance, and persistence. It is the ability to withstand opposition to doing the right thing. A university president one of us once worked for had a deficiency in moral courage. He was able to make excellent moral judgments, for he could choose that these have priority over competing interests. But he wilted under pressure.