

Chapter 2 – Introduction to Ethics

Chapter begins with a quote: “No man is an island,...; every man is a piece of a continent,...”, p. 53

- What is a purpose/meaning of this quote?
- Why start the chapter with this quote?
- What is a community?
- Is there a price associated with being part of a community?

Terms:

society – an association of people organized under a system of rules designed to advance the good of its members over time

morality – rules of conduct describing what people ought and ought not to do in various situations

ethics – the philosophical study of morality, a rational examination into people's moral beliefs and behavior

Discuss road network analogy, p. 55 (drivers on/off roads, observers floating above)

Ethics is based on reason, people are required to explain why they hold their opinions. Ethics focuses on the voluntary, moral choices people make.

- Is it decided what color to get for a new car an ethical choice?
- Suppose a driver swerves to miss a pedestrian, loses control, kills another pedestrian. Is this an ethical choice?
- Suppose the above driver had been drinking which may have caused him/her to lose control of the car. Is this an ethical choice?

Pick a scenario from section 2.1.2, do it with the class. (I like #1, the gifted student)

2.1.3 Who was Socrates? Who was Plato? What is the Crito?

Theories of Ethics

Author presents about ~8 theories. He rejects half as non-workable, but keeps half.

Rejected Theories:

2.2 Subjective Relativism – right and wrong is subjective for each person

2.3 Cultural Relativism – right and wrong is subjective for each culture/society

2.4 Divine Command Theory – good actions are those aligned with the will of God and bad actions are those contrary to the will of God. God – a single creator of the universe and human beings are part of that creation. Sacred writings contain God's revelation.

2.5 Ethical Egoism – Each person should focus on his/her self interest.

Workable Theories: **Objectivism**

2.6 Kantianism – Categorical Imperative

Rational explanation of right and wrong, Focus on what we ought to do – **dutifulness**

First Formulation: “Act only from moral rules that you can as the same time will be universal moral laws”

Second Formulation: “Act so that you always treat both yourself and other people as ends in themselves, and never only as a means to an end.”

What would occur if everyone did this or I did this everytime?

2.7 Act Utilitarianism

“An action is right (or wrong) to the extent that it increases (or decreases) the total happiness of the affected parties.”

Every act can have both good and bad consequences. Do the good outweigh the bad?

2.8 Rule Utilitarianism

We adopt rules that will lead to the greatest increase in total happiness.

When applying this to an action, we must first think of a rule that is appropriate.

Issues again both Act and Rule Utilitarianism

- use of a single scale to evaluate all kinds of consequences
- ignores unjust distribution of good/bad consequences

2.9 Social Contract Theory

Civilized society needs two things:

- establishment of a set of moral rules to govern relations among citizens
- establishment of a government capable of enforcing these rules

“Morality consists in the set of rules, governing how people are to treat one another, that rational people will agree to accept, for their mutual benefit, on the condition that other follow those rules as well.”

- rights and duties, negative rights (you have it if no one else interferes – free expression), positive rights (must be given – free education), limited and absolute rights

John Rawl’s Principles of Justice

1. Each person may claim a “fully adequate” number of rights and liberties, ... so long as these claims are consistent with everyone else having claim to the same rights and liberties.
2. Any social and economic inequalities must satisfy two conditions: everyone has a fair and equal opportunity; they are “to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle).