

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS:

Lecture 1: Introduction:

*"I don't know why we are here, but
I'm pretty sure that is not in
order to enjoy ourselves."*

~ Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1889-1951

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I. What is a worldview?

- Everyone has a worldview.
- A worldview is simply a habituated way of seeing and doing; it is the big picture that directs our thoughts and actions.
- A worldview is composed of at least seven fundamental elements:
 - One's view of God
 - One's view of reality
 - One's view of truth
 - One's view of knowledge
 - One's view of humanity
 - One's view of ethics
 - One's view of evil.

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II. What is the Study of Ethics?

The study of problems of right conduct in light of moral principles such as compassion, goodness, justice, rationality, responsibility, and virtue.

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Ethics:

- The word "*ethics*" comes from the Greek word "*ethos*," which means "*character*."
- Choices concerning what values to embrace and how to treat oneself and one's responsibilities to others are matters of ethics.
- The term ethics is often used interchangeably with the term "*morality*," which is derived from the Latin word "*mores*," "*customs*."

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Ethics:

- Ethics involves distinguishing right from wrong, defining good & bad, & to consider the consequences of our actions.
- Questions like "*What is the right thing to do?*" & "*Why is this the right thing to do?*" are the basis of ethical inquiry.
- Ethics inquires into why we have a sense of right and wrong at all, how ethical views are grounded, and whether or not there are universal principles.

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Ethics:

Consider the following:

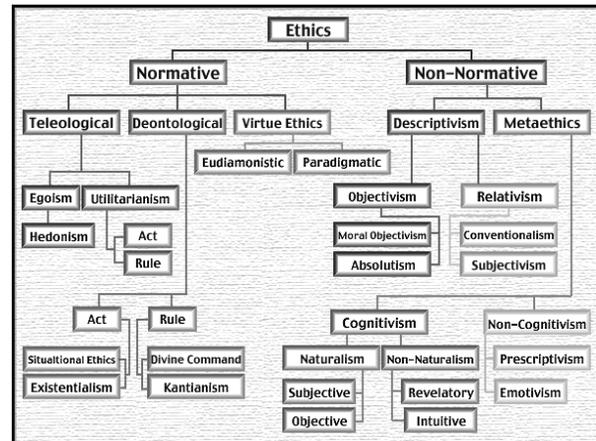
1. Some believe that our sense of right & wrong comes from God.
2. Others believe that our sense of right & wrong is a natural capacity, like our ability to reason.
3. Still, there are others have argued that our sense of right & wrong arises from our individual experiences in the world.

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II. Important Terms to Know:



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3 Major Models of Ethics:

- Let's look at the following models of ethics from a bird's eye view before we examine each of these models more deeply in future classes:

- Virtue Ethics
- Deontological Ethics
- Consequential Ethics

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From A Bird's Eye View:

- Deontological Elements: 2 Essential Premises:

1. An action is right iff it is in accordance with a moral rule or principle.

2. A moral rule is one that is:

(a) laid on us by God, (b) required by natural law, (c) laid on us by reason, (d) required by rationality, (e) would command universal rational acceptance, or (f) would be the object of choice of all rational beings.

What is essential is the link between right action, moral rule, & rationality.

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From a Bird's Eye View: What is Virtue Ethics:

- An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances;
 - A virtuous agent is one who acts virtuously, i.e., one who has & exercises the virtues.
- A virtue is a character trait a human being needs to flourish or live well. It is a habit of excellence, a beneficial tendency, a skilled disposition. Roughly speaking, a virtue is a good habit and a vice is a bad habit.

A habit is a disposition to think, feel, desire, and act in a certain way without having a tendency to will consciously to do so.

What is essential is to note the conceptual link between virtue & flourishing (living well or eudaimonia).

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From A Bird's Eye View: What is Deontological Ethics:

- Deontological Elements: 2 Essential Premises:

1. An action is right iff it is in accordance with a moral rule or principle.

2. A moral rule is one that is:

(a) laid on us by God, (b) required by natural law, (c) laid on us by reason, (d) required by rationality, (e) would command universal rational acceptance, or (f) would be the object of choice of all rational beings.

What is essential is the link between right action, moral rule, & rationality.

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From a Bird's Eye View: What is Consequential Ethics?

1. An act is right *iff* it promotes the best consequences;
2. The best consequences are those in which happiness is maximized.

What is essential to note is that it forges a link between consequences & happiness.

* How do we define or calculate what is "happiness" or what is "the best"? Who or what makes those calculations?