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Chapter Two: Approaches to Ethics

Introduction

- there are only three basic kinds of prescriptive moral theories: **teleological** theories, **deontological** theories & **virtue-based** theories

2.3. Normative Ethics

- Contain theory of obligation, theory of moral value, theory of nonmoral value
- normative theory of obligation goal is **guide** us in the making of **decisions and judgments** about actions in particular situations
- **Offers** theories or accounts of the **best way to live** by evaluate actions in a systematic way
- Includes ethical theories or approaches such as:
 - ✓ Utilitarianism
 - ✓ Deontology
 - ✓ virtue ethics
 - ✓ principlism
 - ✓ narrative ethics
 - ✓ feminist ethics

2.3.1. Teleological Ethics (Consequentialist)

- referred as —the **end justifies the means**

(nonmoral) of what is, probably will be, or is intended to be brought into being

- Teleologists differ on the question of whose good it is that one ought to try to promote:

1. Ethical egoism

- ✓ one is always to do what will promote his own greatest good
- ✓ an act or rule of action is right if and only if it promotes at least as great a balance of good over evil for him
- ✓ This view was held by Epicurus, Hobbes, and Nietzsche

2. Ethical universalism/ utilitarianism

- ✓ the ultimate end is the greatest general good
- ✓ an act or rule of action is right if and only if it is, or probably is, conducive to at least as great a balance of good over evil in the universe as a whole as any alternative would be
- ❖ utilitarians Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill are hedonists, but some utilitarians are not hedonists, for example, G. E. Moore and Hastings Rashdall, and so have been called "Ideal" utilitarians
- ❖ It would also be possible, of course, to adopt teleological theories intermediate between ethical egoism and utilitarianism
- ❖ pure ethical altruist might even contend that the right act or rule is the one that most promotes the good of other people

➤ Deontological theories

- deny what teleological theories affirm
- principle of maximizing the balance of good over evil, no matter for whom, is either not a moral criterion or standard at all, or, at least, it is not the only basic or ultimate one
- assert that there are other considerations that may make an action or rule right or obligatory besides the goodness or badness of its consequences -- certain features of the act itself other than the value it brings into existence
- example: the fact that it keeps a promise, is just, or is commanded by God or by the state

2.3.2. Egoism: Ethical and psychological Egoism

1) Ethical Egoism

- focus on the consequences of actions because believe that those consequences justify actions
- Although theory is indeed Consequentialist, it does not qualify as utilitarian, because it doesn't have the common good as its ultimate end
- It is a normative theory about how we ought to behave that advocates egoism as a moral rule
- The theory implies that we ought to be
 - ✓ Selfish
 - ✓ self-interested
- Example, case: Good Samaritan stopped to help a man whose car had broken down on the freeway. The man shot and killed the Samaritan, stole his car.

- Act-utilitarianism

- ✓ an act is right if and only if it results in as much good as any available alternative
- ✓ act-utilitarians, such as Bentham
- ✓ practical problem with act-utilitarianism
 - First: we cannot do the necessary calculations to determine which act is the correct one in each case, for often we must act spontaneously and quickly
 - Second: it seems to fly in the face of fundamental intuitions about minimally correct behavior

- Rule-utilitarianism

- ✓ An act is right if and only if it is required by a rule that is itself a member of a set of rules whose acceptance would lead to greater utility for society than any available alternative
 - ✓ Human beings are rule-following creatures
 - ✓ we don't have time to decide which action produce more utility so we need a more specific rule that passes the test of rational scrutiny
- Utilitarianism might be construed as offering a three-step action formula for action:
 1. I must project the consequences of each alternative option open to me (e.g., taking different kinds of actions or taking no action)

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