



CHAPTER TWO

Approaches to Ethics

Normative ethics

- ❑ The ultimate concern of the normative theory of obligation is to **guide** us in the making of **decisions and judgments** about actions in particular situations.
- Offers theories or accounts of **the best way to live**.
- These theories evaluate actions in a systematic way, i.e., they may focus on outcomes or duties or motivation as a means of justifying human conduct.
- Includes ethical theories or approaches such as utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, principlism, narrative ethics and feminist ethics.

Normative ethics poses questions of the following kind:

- ✓ Are there general principles or rules that we could follow which distinguish between **right** and **wrong**? Or:
- ✓ Are there virtues and/or relationships that we can nurture, in order to behave well?

Teleological Ethics (Consequentialist)

- ❑ It is referred as “**the end justifies the means**”. It believes in **purpose**, ends or goals of an action, it stress that the consequences of an action determines the **morality** or **immorality** of a given action.
- ❑ Which means an action is judged as right or wrong, moral or immoral depending on what happens because of it.
- ❑ One may have the best intention or follow the highest moral principles but if the result, moral act is harmful, or bad it must be judged as morally or ethically wrong act.

➤ Thus, an act is *right* if and only if it or the rule under which it falls produces, will probably produce, or is intended to produce *at least as great a balance of good over evil* as any available alternative; an act is *wrong* if and only if it does not do so.

➤ An act *ought to be done* if and only if it or the rule under which it falls produces, will probably produce, or is intended to produce *a greater balance of good over evil* than any available alternative.

Deontological Ethics

➤ They 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

- The ***Means justifies the End***
- For this theory it is not the end result of action that determines its rightness rather the ***means and the motive*** of the action is also important

Ethical Egoism, psychological Egoism and Altruism

- The theory implies that we ought to be **selfish**.
- To put it more gently, we ought to be **self-interested**.
- Calling the theory “ethical” does not suggest that there might be a decent way to be selfish; it just means that **ethical egoism** is a theory that advocates egoism as a moral rule

- ❑ **Psychological Egoism** dictates "**self-love**" as the only basic "principle" in human nature; in one set of contemporary terms, it means that "**ego-satisfaction**" is the final aim of all activity or that "**the pleasure principle**" is the basic "drive" in every individual.
- ❑ Thus, ethical egoism has generally presupposed what is called **psychological egoism** -- that each of us is always seeking his own greatest good, whether this is conceived of as pleasure, happiness, knowledge, power, self-realization, or a mixed life.
- ❑ **Altruism**-acts involve **putting other people's interests ahead of our own**

Utilitarianism

- ❑ utilitarianism is a universal teleological system it calls for the **maximization of goodness in society**—that is, the **greatest goodness for the greatest number**—and not merely the good of the agent.
- ❑ **Ethical egoism is teleological ethics** narrowed to the agent himself or herself/ the individual

Classical utilitarianism

- For Epicurus (342–270 BCE), who stated that “pleasure is the goal that nature has ordained for us; it is also the standard by which we judge everything good.”
- According to this view, rightness and wrongness are determined by **pleasure** or **pain** that something produces.

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill

Jeremy Bentham: Quantity over Quality

There are two main features of utilitarianism, both of which Bentham articulated:

The consequentialist principle (or its teleological aspect): states that the rightness or wrongness of an act is determined by the **goodness** or **badness** of the **results** that flow from it. It is the **end**, not the **means** that counts; the end justifies the means. and

The utility principle (or its hedonic aspect): states that the only thing that is **good in itself** is some specific type of state (for example, pleasure, happiness, welfare).

- ❑ **Hedonistic utilitarianism** views pleasure as the sole good and pain as the only evil.
- ❑ An act is right if it either brings about more pleasure than pain or prevents pain, and an act is wrong if it either brings about more pain than pleasure or prevents pleasure from occurring.
- ❑ Bentham invented a scheme for measuring pleasure and pain that he called the **hedonic calculus**:
- ❑ The quantitative score for any pleasure or pain experience is obtained by summing the seven aspects of a pleasurable or painful experience: ***its intensity, duration, certainty, nearness, fruitfulness, purity, and extent.***
- ❑ They were the non-religious ancestors of the twentieth-century secular humanists, optimistic about human nature and our ability to solve our problems without recourse to God.

- ❑ There is something appealing about Bentham's utilitarianism. It is simple in that there is only one principle to apply:
- ❑ Maximize pleasure and minimize suffering. It is commonsensical in that we think that morality really is about reducing suffering and promoting benevolence. It is scientific:
- ❑ Simply make quantitative measurements and apply the principle impartially, giving no special treatment to ourselves or to anyone else because of race, gender, personal relationship, or religion.

John Stuart Mill: Quality over Quantity

- ❑ His version of the theory is often called **eudaimonistic utilitarianism** (from the Greek eudaimonia, meaning “happiness”).
- ❑ He defines happiness in terms of certain types of higher-order pleasures or satisfactions such as **intellectual**, **aesthetic**, and **social enjoyments**, as well as in terms of minimal suffering.
- ❑ For **Mill**, there are two types of pleasures. The **lower**, or **elementary**, include **eating**, **drinking**, **sexuality**, **resting**, and **sensuous titillation**.
- ❑ The higher include high culture, scientific knowledge, intellectuality, and creativity. Although the **lower** pleasures are more intensely **gratifying**, they also lead to pain when overindulged in.
- ❑ The higher pleasures tend to be more long term, continuous, and gradual.

- Mill argued that the higher, or more refined, pleasures are superior to the lower ones:
- “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.”
- Humans are the kind of creatures who require more to be truly happy. They want the lower pleasures, but they also want deep friendship, intellectual ability, culture, the ability to create and appreciate art, knowledge, and wisdom.
- But what does it mean to speak of better pleasure? The formula he comes up with is this: Happiness ... [is] not a life of rapture;
- But moments of such, in an existence made up of few and transitory pains, many and various pleasures, with a decided predominance of the active over the passive, and having as the foundation of the whole, not to expect more from life than it is capable of bestowing.

- Mill is clearly pushing the boundaries of the concept of “pleasure” by emphasizing higher qualities such as **knowledge, intelligence, freedom**, friendship, love, and health.
- In fact, one might even say that his litmus test for happiness really has little to do with actual pleasure and more to do with a non-hedonic cultivated state of mind.

Act- And Rule-Utilitarianism

- o There are two classical types of utilitarianism: **act-** and **rule-utilitarianism**.
- o In applying the principle of utility, act-utilitarians, such as **Bentham**, say that ideally we ought to apply the principle to all of the alternatives open to us at any given moment.
- We may define act-utilitarianism in this way:

- **Act-utilitarianism** argues that an act is right if and only if it results in as much good as any available alternative.
- One practical problem with act-utilitarianism is that 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.
- So **rules of thumb** are of practical importance—for example, “In general, **don’t lie**,” and “Generally, keep your promises.”
- However, the right act is still that alternative that results in the most utility. A second problem with act-utilitarianism is that it seems to fly in the face of fundamental intuitions about minimally

- The alternative to act-utilitarianism is a view called rule-utilitarianism—elements of which we find in Mill's theory. Most generally, the position is this:

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. The act-utilitarian rule, to do the act that maximizes utility, is too general for most purposes.

The Strengths of Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism has **three(3)** very positive features.

- The first attraction or strength is that it is a **single principle, an absolute system with a potential answer for every situation**: Do what will promote the most utility!

Secondly, utilitarianism **seems to get to the substance of morality**. It is not merely a formal system that simply sets forth broad guidelines for choosing principles but offers no principles—such as the guideline “Do whatever you can universalize.” Rather it has a material core: We should promote human (and possibly animal) flourishing and reduce suffering.

The second virtue appeals to our sense that morality is made for people and that morality is not so much about rules as about helping people and alleviating the suffering in the world. As such, utilitarianism seems commonsensical.

- A third strength of utilitarianism is that it is **particularly well suited to address the problem of posterity—namely**, why we should preserve scarce natural resources for the betterment of future generations of humans that do not yet exist. Expressed rhetorically, the question is “Why should I care about posterity; what has posterity ever done for me?”

Criticism of Utilitarianism

- ❖ Utilitarianism has been around for several centuries, but so too have been its critics, and we need to address a series of standard objections to utilitarianism before we can give it a “philosophically clean bill of health.”

Problems with Formulating Utilitarianism

- ✓ The first set of problems occurs in the very formulation of utilitarianism:
- ✓ *“The greatest happiness for the greatest number.” Notice that we have two “greatest” things in this formula: “happiness” and “number.”*
- ✓ Whenever we have two variables, we invite problems of determining which of the variables to rank first when they seem to conflict.

The Comparative Consequences Objection

Another crucial problem with utilitarianism is that it seems to require a superhuman ability to look into the future and survey a mind-boggling array of consequences of actions.

Of course, we normally do not know the long-term consequences of our actions because life is too complex and the consequences go on into the indefinite future.

The Consistency Objection to Rule-Utilitarianism

An often-debated question about rule-utilitarianism is whether, when pushed to its logical limits, it must either become a deontological system or transform itself into act-utilitarianism.

As such, it is an inconsistent theory that offers no truly independent standard for making moral judgments.

The No-Rest Objection

- ❑ According to utilitarianism, one should always do that act that promises to promote the most utility.
- ❑ But there is usually an infinite set of possible acts to choose from, and even if I can be excused from considering all of them, I can be fairly sure that there is often a preferable act that I could be doing.
- ❑ For example, when I am about to go to the cinema with a friend, I should ask myself if helping the homeless in my community wouldn't promote more utility.
- ❑ When I am about to go to sleep, I should ask myself whether I could at that moment be doing something to help save the ozone layer.

The Publicity Objection

The Publicity Objection

- o It is usually thought that moral principles must be known to all so that all may freely obey the principles.
- o But utilitarian's usually hesitate to recommend that everyone act as a utilitarian, especially an act-utilitarian, because it takes a great deal of deliberation to work out the likely consequences of alternative courses of action.
- o It would be better if most people acted simply as deontologists. Thus, utilitarianism seems to contradict our requirement of publicity

The Relativism Objection

- Sometimes people accuse rule-utilitarianism of being relativistic because it seems to endorse different rules in different societies.
- In one society, it may uphold polygamy, whereas in our society it defends monogamy.
- In a desert society, it upholds a rule “Don’t waste water,” whereas in a community where water is plentiful no such rule exists. But this is not really conventional relativism because the rule is not made valid by the community’s choosing it but by the actual situation.

Criticism of the Ends Justifying Immoral Means

- ❑ Chief among the criticisms of utilitarianism is that utilitarian ends might justify immoral means.
- ❑ There are many dastardly things that we can do in the name of maximizing general happiness: deceit, torture, slavery, even killing off ethnic minorities.
- ❑ As long as the larger populace benefits, these actions might be justified. The general problem can be laid out in this argument:
- ❑ If a moral theory justifies actions that we universally deem impermissible, then that moral theory must be rejected.
- ❑ Utilitarianism justifies actions that we universally deem impermissible. Therefore, utilitarianism must be rejected.

The Lying Objection

- ❑ William D. Ross has argued that utilitarianism is to be rejected because it leads to the counterintuitive endorsement of lying when it serves the greater good. Consider two acts, A and B, that will both result in 100 hedons (units of pleasure or utility).
- ❑ The only difference is that A involves telling a lie and B involves telling the truth. The utilitarian must maintain that the two acts are of equal value. But this seems implausible; truth seems to be an intrinsically good thing.

Three-Step Action Formula:

Utilitarianism might be construed as offering a three-step action formula for action:

On the basis of what I know, I must project the consequences of each alternative option open to me (e.g., taking different kinds of actions or taking no action).

Calculate how much happiness, or balance of happiness over unhappiness, is likely to be produced by anticipated consequences of each action or none.

Select that action which, on balance, will produce the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people affected

Generally, utilitarianism is a moral theory which takes into account how the consequences of an act will affect all the parties involved. Moral rightness depends on the consequences for all affected people or sentient beings. The fundamental principle of utilitarianism is the principle of utility:

The principle of utility

- The morally right action is the one that produces the best overall consequences with regard to the utility or welfare of all the affected parties.
- Jeremy Bentham's slogan: *The right act or policy is the one that causes 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' – that is, maximize the total utility or welfare of the majority of all the affected parties.*

Altruism

- ❑ In altruism an action is right if the consequences of that action are favorable to all except the actor. Butler argued that we have an inherent psychological capacity to show benevolence to others.
- ❑ This view is called *psychological altruism* and maintains that at least some of our actions are motivated by instinctive benevolence.

- Psychological altruism holds that all human action is necessarily other centered and other motivated.
- A parallel analysis of psychological altruism results in opposing conclusions to psychological egoism, and again arguably the theory is just as closed as psychological egoism.
- Altruists are people who act so as to increase other people's pleasure. They will act for the sake of someone else even if it decreases their own pleasure and causes themselves pain.
- We can differentiate egoistic and altruistic desires in the following way: One's desire is *egoistic* if (and only if) it concerns (what one perceives to be) the benefit of oneself and not anyone else.
- In the contrary, one's desire is *altruistic* if (and only if) it concerns (what one perceives to be) the benefit of at least someone other than oneself. Altruists reject the theory of psychological egoism and argue instead that humans are instinctively benevolent.

Deontological Ethics

- ❑ It is referred as “the means justifies the end”. It is coined as “**deontics**”.
- ❑ This is a theory that the rightness or wrongness of moral action is determined, at least partly with reference to formal rules of conduct rather than consequences or result of an action.
- ❑ It is an emphasis on the intentions, motives, moral principles or performance of duty rather than results, as the sign of right action/morality and immorality.
- ❑ It is a duty based and according to this theory, the consequences or results of our action have nothing to do with their rightness or wrongness.

According to **Samuel Pufendorf**, who classified dozens of duties under three headings: duties to God, duties to oneself and duties to others!

Concerning our duties towards God, he argued that there are two kinds: (1) a theoretical duty to know the existence and nature of God, and (2) a practical duty to both inwardly and outwardly worship God.

Concerning our duties towards oneself; these are also of two sorts: (1) duties of the soul, which involve developing one's skills and talents, and (2) duties of the body, which involve not harming our bodies, as we might through gluttony or drunkenness, and not killing oneself.

Concerning our duties towards others; Pufendorf divides these between absolute duties, which are universally binding on people, and conditional duties, which are the result of contracts between people.

Absolute duties are of three sorts: (1) avoid wronging others; (2) treat people as equals, and (3) promote the good of others.

Conditional duties involve various types of agreements, the principal one of which is the duty is to keep one's promises.

The Divine Command Theory

According to one view, called the divine command theory (DCT), ethical principles are simply the commands of God.

They derive their validity from God's commanding them, and they mean "commanded by God."

Without God, there would be no universally valid morality. We can analyze the DCT into three separate theses:

1. Morality (that is, rightness and wrongness) originates with God.
2. Moral rightness simply means "willed by God," and moral wrongness means "being against the will of God."

3. Because morality essentially is based on divine will, not on independently existing reasons for action, no further reasons for action are necessary.

For this theory, we may list four propositions:

1. Act A is wrong if and only if it is contrary to the command of God.

2. Act A is right (required) if and only if it is commanded by God.

3. Act A is morally permissible if and only if it is permitted by the command of God.

4. If there is no God, then nothing is ethically wrong, required, or permitted.

- ❑ *We can summarize the DCT this way:*
- ❑ Morality not only originates with God, but moral rightness simply means “willed by God” and moral wrongness means “being against the will of God”.
- ❑ That is, an act is right in virtue of being permitted by the will of God, and an act is wrong in virtue of being against the will of God.
- ❑ Because morality essentially is based on divine will, not on independently existing reasons for action, no further reasons for action are necessary.
- ❑ So we may ask, “If God doesn’t exist, everything is permissible?” If so, nothing is forbidden or required.
- ❑ Without God, we have moral nihilism. If there is no God, then nothing is ethically wrong, required, or permitted.

Problems with the Divine Command Theory

There are two problems with the DCT that need to be faced by those who hold it.

1. DCT would seem to make the attribution of “goodness” to God redundant. When we say “God is good,” we think we are ascribing a property to God; but if good simply means “what God commands or wills,” then we are not attributing any property to God. Our statement “God is good” merely means “God does whatever he wills to do” or “God practices what he preaches,”

2. DCT is that it seems to make morality into something arbitrary. If God’s decree is the sole arbiter of right and wrong, it would seem to be logically possible for such heinous acts as rape, killing of the innocent for the fun of it, and gratuitous cruelty to become morally good actions—if God suddenly decided to command us to do these things

A second duty-based approach to ethics is ***rights theory***. such as my right to not be harmed by you.

Rights and duties are related in such a way that the rights of one person imply the duties of another person.

John Locke, who argued that the laws of nature mandate that we should not harm anyone's life, health, liberty or possessions.

For Locke, these are our natural rights, given to us by God. Following Locke, the United States Declaration of Independence authored by Thomas Jefferson recognizes three foundational rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Jefferson and others rights theorists maintained that we deduce other more specific rights from these, including the rights of property, movement, speech, and religious expression.

There are four features traditionally associated with moral rights.

- ❑ First, rights are *natural* insofar as they are not invented or created by governments.
- ❑ Second, they are *universal* insofar as they do not change from country to country.
- ❑ Third, they are *equal* in the sense that rights are the same for all people, irrespective of gender, race, or handicap.
- ❑ Fourth, they are *inalienable* which means that I cannot hand over my rights to another person, such as by selling myself into slavery

Kant's Categorical Imperative

- Immanuel Kant is identified with the moral theory known as deontology.
- Kant was adamantly opposed to the idea that the outcome of an action could determine its moral worth.
- For deontologists, it is not consequences which determine the rightness or wrongness of an act, but, rather, the intention of the person who carries out the act.
- The emphasis is on the correctness of the action, regardless of the possible benefits or harm it might produce. Deontologists maintain that there are some moral obligations which are absolutely binding, no matter what consequences are produced.

The Categorical Imperative

A Kant's duty-based theory is emphasizes a single principle of duty. Kant agreed that we have moral duties to oneself and others, such as developing one's talents, and keeping our promises to others.

However, Kant argued that there is a more foundational principle of duty that encompasses our particular duties. It is a single, self-evident principle of reason that he calls the "categorical imperative."

To understand Kant's thought, note the emphasis he places on the idea of ***good intension***. Kant believed that *nothing was good in itself except a "good will."*

Intelligence, judgment and all other facets of the human personality are perhaps good and desirable, but only if the will that makes use of them is good.

By will, Kant means *the uniquely human capacity to act according to the concepts behind laws*, that is, principles presumably operating in nature.

A good will, therefore, acts in accordance with nature's laws. For Kant a will could be good without qualification only if it always had in view one principle: *whether the maxim of its action could become a universal law.*

Kant's categorical imperative states that *we should act in such a way that the maxim or general rule governing our action could be a universal law.*

Kant gives at least **three versions or formulations** of the categorical imperative.

His categorical imperative is a deontological ethical theory, which means ***it is based on the idea that there are certain objective ethical rules in the world.***

Kant's version is possibly the most well-known, and relies heavily on his idea that ***all people are fundamentally capable of reasoning in the same manner and on the same level.***

Kantianism focuses more on intent and action in itself, as opposed to the consequentialist focus of utilitarianism.

Hypothetical imperatives tell us which *means* best achieve our ends.

They do not, however, tell us which ends we should choose. The typical dichotomy in choosing ends is between ends that are "right" (e.g., helping someone) and those that are "good" (e.g., enriching oneself).

Pure practical reason in the process of determining it dictates what ought to be done without reference to empirical contingent factors.

Moral questions are determined independent of reference to the particular subject posing them. It is because morality is determined by pure practical reason rather than particular empirical or sensuous factors that morality is universally valid.

moral universalism has come to be seen as the distinctive aspect of Kant's moral philosophy and has had wide social impact in the legal and political concepts of *human rights* and *equality*.

*Kant's theory is hinged by his beliefs on **autonomy** and his formulation of categorical imperatives. He believed that, unless a person freely and willingly makes a choice, their action has no meaning (and certainly no moral value).*

Autonomy allows us to be self-creating when it comes to our values and morality. Autonomy is one's own beliefs, independence, and government: acting without regard for anyone else. Conversely, **heteronomy** is acting under the influence of someone else and allows for an individual to consistently place blame outside of self.

Kant believed that each individual is rational and capable of making free choices; thereby relies on autonomous thinking. Kant concludes that a moral proposition that is true must be one that is not tied to any particular conditions, including the identity of the person making the moral deliberation.

A moral maxim must imply *absolute necessity*, which is to say that it must be disconnected from the particular physical details surrounding the proposition, and could be applied to any rational being. This leads to the first formulation of the categorical imperative:

A. The Principle of Universality

The **first maxim** states that we should choose our 'codes of conduct' only if they serve perfect / imperfect duty and are good for all. "*Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction.*" Kant divides the duties imposed by this formulation into two subsets: perfect and imperfect duty. ***Perfect duties*** are blameworthy if not met and are the basic requirements for a human being. According to his reasoning, we first have a ***perfect duty*** not to act by maxims that result in logical contradictions when we attempt to universalize them.

Imperfect duties are those that do not achieve blame, rather they receive praise if completed; they are circumstantial duties such as cultivating talent. They are still based on pure reason, but which allow for desires in how they are carried out in practice.

B. The Principle of Humanity as an End, Never as Merely a Means

The **second maxim** states that we should not use humanity of ourselves or others as a means to an end. “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.”

The Principle of Autonomy

The **third maxim** states that we should consider ourselves to be members in the universal realm of ends. Therefore, ***every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends.***

"Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means."

Ross's Prima Facie Duties or Moral Guidelines

- The term *prima facie* means "at a first sight" or "on the surface." By prima facie duties, Ross means duties that dictate what we should do when other moral factors are not considered.
- Stated another way, prima facie duties are duties that generally obligate us; that is, they ordinarily impose a moral obligation but may not in a particular case because of circumstances.
- An **actual duty** is the action that one ought to perform after considering and weighing all the prima facie duties involved.
- For David Ross here are several *prima facie duties* that we can use to determine ***what, concretely, we ought to do.***
- A prima facie duty is a duty that is binding (obligatory) other things equal, that is, unless it is overridden or trumped by another duty or duties.

Unless stronger moral considerations override, one ought to keep a promise made. By contrast with prima facie duties, our ***actual or concrete duty*** is the duty we should perform in the particular situation of choice.

The term "duty" in "prima facie duty" is slightly misleading. The prima facie duties are understood as ***guidelines***, not rules without exception.

However, Ross's list the following categories of prima facie duties is much shorter, which he believes reflects our actual moral convictions:

Duties of Fidelity: the duty to keep promises and the obligation not to lie. Duties of fidelity are duties to keep one's promises and contracts

Duties of Reparation: This is a duty to make up for the injuries one has done to others. Ross describes this duty as "resting on a previous wrongful act.

It is the duty to compensate others when we harm them. If, for example, I damage something that belongs to someone else, I have an obligation to make restitution.

Duties of Gratitude: the duty to thank those who help us. Suppose, for example, an especially good friend is suddenly in need of assistance, I am duty bound to do all I can help this individual, who in the past had acted so selflessly toward me.

Duties of Justice: The duty of justice requires that one act in such a way that one distributes benefits and burdens fairly. Ross himself emphasizes the negative aspect of this duty: he says that this type of duty "rests on the fact or possibility of a distribution of pleasure or happiness (or the means thereto) that is not in accord with the merit of the persons concerned; in such cases there arises a duty to upset or prevent such a distribution".

Thus, the duty of justice includes the duty, insofar as possible, to prevent an unjust distribution of benefits or burdens.

Duties of Beneficence: the duty to improve the conditions of others. The duty to do good to others: to foster their health, security, wisdom, moral goodness, or happiness.

This duty, says Ross, "rests upon the fact that there are other beings in the world whose condition we can make better in respect of virtue, or of intelligence, or of pleasure."

Duties of Self-improvement: The duty of self-improvement is to act so as to promote one's own good, i.e., one's own health, security, wisdom, moral goodness, virtue, intelligence and happiness.

Duties of Non-maleficence: The duty of non-injury (also known as non-maleficence) is the duty not to harm others physically or psychologically: *to avoid harming their health, security, intelligence, character, or happiness. We are obliged to avoid hurting others physically, emotionally and psychologically.*

Virtue Ethics

Virtue Ethics: Challenging the adequacy of rule-based theories

“Virtue ethics” is a technical term in contemporary Western analytical moral philosophy, used to distinguish a normative ethical theory focused on the virtues, or moral character, from others such as deontology (or contractarianism) and consequentialism.

Aristotle's Ethics

Aristotle, first wrote a detailed discussion of virtue morality in the Nichomachean Ethics. ‘Virtus’ he understood as strength. Correspondingly, specific virtues are seen as strengths of character. But, many years after Aristotle's death, virtue theory came to be over-shadowed by the development of utilitarianism and deontology.

Key questions which virtue ethical systems ask include:

- ✓ What sort of person do I want to be?
- ✓ What virtues are characteristic of the person I want to be?
- ✓ What actions will cultivate the virtues I want to possess?
- ✓ What actions will be characteristic of the sort of person I want to be?

Aristotle distinguishes between happiness (*eudaimonia*) and moral virtue:

- Moral virtue is not the end of life for it can go with inactivity, misery, and unhappiness
- Happiness, the end of life, that to which all aims, is activity in accordance with reason

The Good Character

People have a natural capacity for good character, and it is developed through practice. The capacity does not come first it's developed through practice

Virtue, *arete*, or excellence is defined as a mean between two extremes of excess and defect in regard to a feeling or action as the practically wise person would determine it. The mean cannot be calculated *a priori*.

Phronesis or practical wisdom is the ability to see the right thing to do in the circumstances.

Pleasure is the natural accompaniment of unimpeded activity. Pleasure, as such, is neither good nor bad.

Friendship: a person's relationship to a friend is the same as the relation to oneself. The friend can be thought of as a second self.

The kinds of friendship:

- Utility
- Pleasure
- The Good--endures as long as both retain their character.

The Contemplative Faculty--the exercise of perfect happiness in intellectual or philosophic activity.

- o Reason is the highest faculty of human beings. We can engage in it longer than other activities.
- o Philosophy is loved as an end-in-itself, and so *eudaimonia* implies leisure and self-sufficiency as an environment for contemplation.

Non-Normative Ethics/Meta-ethics

Meta-ethics tries to answer question, such as:

- ☐ What does “good,” “right,” or “justice” mean?
- ☐ What makes something good or right?
- ☐ Is moral realism true?
- ☐ Is morality irreducible, cognitive, or overriding?
- ☐ Do intrinsic values exist?

It is important to be clear that in normative ethics we do not just look for an answer to the question, but we also look for some insight into *why* the right answer is right.

question that the classic theories in normative ethics disagree include:

Act-utilitarianism-act because that particular action contributes to the greater happiness of the greatest number); rule-utilitarianism act because it is prescribed **by a rule** the general observance of which contributes most to the greater happiness of the greatest number); and

Kantianism act because universal refusal to act to would generate some kind of inconsistency.

Normative ethics thus seeks to discover the general principles underlying moral practice, and in this way potentially impacts upon practical moral problems.

Meta-ethics, rather, concerned with questions about the following:

Meaning: what is the *semantic function* of moral discourse? Is the function of moral discourse to state *facts*, or does it have some other non-fact-stating role?

Metaphysics: do moral facts (or properties) exist? If so, what are they like? Are they identical or reducible to some other type of fact (or property) or are they irreducible and *sui generis*?

Epistemology and justification: is there such a thing as moral knowledge? How can we know whether our moral judgements are true or false? How can we ever justify our claims to moral knowledge?

Phenomenology: how are moral qualities represented in the experience of an agent making a moral judgement? Do they appear to be 'out there' in the world?

Moral psychology: what can we say about the motivational state of someone making a moral judgement? What sort of connection is there between making a moral judgement and being motivated to act as that judgement prescribes?

Objectivity: can moral judgements really be correct or incorrect? Can we work towards finding out the moral truth?

➤ Metaethics is not about what people ought to do. It is about what they are doing when they talk about what they ought to do.

- Meta-ethics concerns-in metaphysics, **epistemology, phenomenology and moral psychology, as well as in semantics and the theory of meaning.**
- Positions in meta-ethics can be defined in terms of the answers they give to these sorts of question.
- ❑ Some examples of meta-ethical theories are **moral realism, non-cognitivism, error-theory and moral anti-realism.**

Cognitivists think that moral judgments are capable of being true or false.

On the other hand, non-cognitivists think that moral judgments express non-cognitive states such as emotions or desires. Desires and emotions are not truth-apt. So moral judgments are not capable of being true or false.

Strong Cognitivism: Naturalism

A *strong cognitivist* theory is one which holds that moral judgments (a) are apt for evaluation in terms of truth and falsity, and (b) can be the upshot of cognitively accessing the facts which render them true.

Strong cognitivist theories can be either ***naturalist*** or ***non-naturalist***.

According to a naturalist, a moral judgments is rendered true or false by a natural state of affairs, and it is this natural state of affairs to which a true moral judgments affords us access.

Strong Cognitivism: Non-Naturalism

Non-naturalists think that moral properties are not identical to or reducible to natural properties. They are irreducible and *sui generis*.

Non-Cognitivism

Non-cognitivists deny that moral judgements are even apt to be true or false. Non-cognitivists thus disagree with both weak and strong cognitivism. We shall look at a number of arguments which the non-cognitivist uses against cognitivism. An example of such an argument is the *argument from moral psychology*.

Suppose that moral judgements can express beliefs, as the cognitivist claims. Being motivated to do something or to pursue a course of action is always a matter of having a belief and a desire.

We shall look at three versions of non-cognitivism which give different answers to this question:

J. Ayer's ***emotivism*** (1936), according to which moral judgements express emotions, or sentiments of approval or disapproval;

Simon Blackburn's ***quasi-realism*** (1984), according to which moral judgements express our dispositions to form sentiments of approval or disapproval; and

Allan Gibbard's ***norm-expressivism*** (1990), according to which our moral judgements express our acceptance of norms.

Internalism and Externalism, Humeanism and Anti- Humeanism

- o The claim that there is an internal and necessary connection between sincerely making a moral judgement and being motivated to act in the manner prescribed by that judgement.
- o This claim is known as ***internalism***, because it says that there is an ***internal*** or ***conceptual*** connection between moral judgement and motivation.
- o Some cognitivist philosophers respond to the argument from moral psychology by denying internalism.
- o They claim that the connection between ***judgement and motivation*** is only external and contingent.

- ❑ Such philosophers are known as ***externalists***. Other cognitivist philosophers respond to the argument from moral psychology by denying another premise of the argument, the claim that motivation always involves the presence of *both* beliefs and desires (this premise is known as the ***Humean theory of motivation***, since it received a classic exposition by Hume).
- ❑ McDowell and Wiggins advance an ***anti-Humean theory of motivation***, according to which beliefs themselves can be intrinsically motivating.

Generally, Meta-ethics:

- ✓ Examines the meaning of moral terms and concepts and the relationships between these concepts.
- ✓ Explores where moral values, such as 'personhood' and 'autonomy', come from.
- ✓ Considers the difference between moral values and other kinds of values.
- ✓ Examines the way in which moral claims are justified.

Meta-ethics also poses questions of the following kind:

- ✓ What do we mean by the claim, 'life is sacred'?
- ✓ Are moral claims a matter of personal view, religious belief or social standard, or, are they objective in some sense?
- ✓ If they are objective, what make them so?
- ✓ Is there a link between human psychology and the moral claims that humans make?