

# This Is Philosophy - Chapter 1 Summary

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## The Normative Universe

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*The Normative Universe* is made up of shoulds, oughts, duties, rights, the permissible and the impermissible.

## Is Morality Just Acting on Principles?

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**Golden Rule** - do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Well, the Golden Rule implicitly *assumes* that **everyone has the same preferences**. That assumption seems a bit questionable. Suppose that you like backrubs. In fact, *you'd like a backrub from pretty much anyone*. The Golden Rule advises you to treat other people the way you would like to be treated. Since you'd like other people to give you unsolicited backrubs, *you should, according to the Golden Rule, give everyone else a backrub, even if they didn't ask for one*. **But some people don't like backrubs**, or don't care for strangers touching them. Intuitively, *it would be wrong to give backrubs to those people without their consent, or against their will*. Since this intuition conflicts with the Golden Rule's implication to administer unsolicited backrubs, we should conclude that maybe the Golden Rule is really iron pyrite after all.

## The Divine Command Theory

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### Divine Command Theory Premises

1. God loves (endorses, recommends, advocates) all good actions and hates (forbids, abjures, prohibits) all evil actions.
2. We can figure out which is which; that is, we can know what God loves and what he hates.

### Euthyphro Argument/Objection

#### Option A

"Things are good because God loves them. This means that it is God's love that makes things good, and his dislike that makes things bad. Prior to, or considered independently of, God's judgment, things don't have moral qualities at all. If it weren't for God, nothing would be right or wrong, good or bad. Moral

properties are the result of God's decisions"

### Option B

"God loves good things because they are good. On this option, things are good (or bad) antecedently to, and independently of, God. In other words, things already have their moral properties, and God, who is an infallible judge of such matters, always loves the good things and hates the bad things. Morality is an independent objective standard apart from God. God always responds appropriately to this standard (loving all the good stuff and hating the bad), but morality is separate from, and unaffected by, his judgments."

This objection asks which of the following options is true. And if option A is true, then God's judgment is entirely objective, and therefore so is morality, under the divine command theory. If option B is true, then following God's judgment is pointless, since things are already good and bad independent of him. Morality is then therefore independent of God.

Under Option A: *morality is random and arbitrary.*

"So there is no moral reason for God to declare murder wrong instead of right. morality is completely arbitrary; the fact that rape and murder are immoral is random. God could have just as easily made rape and murder your moral duty. What's to stop him? He's God after all"

Under Option B: *morality and religion are logically separate*

"God loves things because they are good. That is, God's judgments flawlessly track moral reality; he invariably loves the good and hates the wicked. God may be a perfect judge, but he does not make the moral law. In other words, morality and religion are logically separate, which means that whether God exists has nothing to do with whether there are moral facts or what those facts are."

## Psychological and Ethical Egoism

**Psychological Egoism** - everyone always acts in his or her own self-interest.

**Ethical Egoism** - everyone should always act in his or her own self-interest.

If Psychological Egoism is true, then people only do things because it can promote their self-interest,

altruism wouldn't exist. No one would donate to charity unless they need the tax credit. People would only give to the homeless to impress others. Studies indicate that no one should have children, since we appear to be happier without them.

But ethical egoism allows for everyone to act outside of their own self-interest sometimes, in the event that the action will provide benefit for them in the future.

## Objection 1 - Horrible Consequences

The idea that if you always act in your own self-interest then you are following ethical egoism, but then you might also be into doing some very terrible stuff. This may cause you to inflict terrible things upon your or someone else in the future. And surely it can't be moral to kill somebody or die from an overdose of heroine or go to jail as a result of your terrible actions. Basically your "ethical" actions may catch up to you in the future and not be in your best interest.

## Objection 2 - Subjectivity

"The second objection to ethical egoism is that it makes morality wholly subjective, in just the same manner as matters of taste."

There's nothing that defines what is moral and what isn't if you are always looking out for yourself. If you only ever do things to promote your own self-interest and don't take on new ideas that might not, then how can there be an agreed upon morality? Then you could not criticize someone who for example: loves to eat babies.

## Objection 3 - Equal Treatment

**Principle of Equal Treatment** - Two people should be treated in the same way unless there is a relevant difference between them.

Ethical egoism violates this idea, since if everyone acts in their own self-interest then they may not treat others the same way as each other, and probably not the same way that they treat themselves.

"In short, ethical egoism is just a form of prejudicial discrimination, and for that reason should be discarded."

## Moral Relativism

**Descriptive Relativism** - beliefs about morality and the values people possess vary across cultures divided by times and places.

**Moral Relativism** - the truth of moral claims and which values people should adopt vary across cultures divided by times and places. What is morally permissible in one culture may be morally wrong in another culture.

Moral relativism basically says that circumstance can dictate whether or not something is moral.

"Moral beliefs vary all over the world, from place to place and from time to time. The values crafted by a tribe or a nation fit their specific circumstances and may be completely at odds with the moral codes of other societies—codes that they developed given their own idiosyncratic situation."

"A second reason to reject the argument that descriptive relativism leads to moral relativism is as follows. Descriptive relativism, if true, is something that anthropologists ought to discover. Moral relativism, on the other hand, is not a matter for anthropology."

## Criticism Objection

*Criticism Objection* - if moral relativism is true, then meaningful criticism of either other societies, or one's own, is impossible.

"Under moral relativism, the moral truth itself varies from one society or culture to the next. An act might be morally wrong in one society but morally permissible or even obligatory in another—not simply believed to be permissible or obligatory, but in fact permissible or obligatory. It would therefore make no sense whatsoever for people in the first society to criticize the members of the second society for their moral views since those views are, by hypothesis, true (in that society)."

Basically if something is moral in one culture and not in another, then it makes no sense for some from culture A to judge someone from culture B for an action that is immoral in culture A, but is moral in culture B, since the act for person B, is by definition is moral thing them to do.