

CHAPTER TWO

Approaches to Ethics

Ethicists often disagree about the nature of moral standards and desirable qualities and follow different path in establishing standards and discovering which qualities are desirable. However, their views about ethics can be discussed, for the sake of convenience by categorizing into two broad fields of ethics. These are:

1. Normative theory of Ethics (Evaluative Ethics)
2. Non- normative theory of Ethics (Descriptive Ethics)

2.1. Normative Ethics

Normative Ethics involves an attempt to determine precisely what moral standards to follow so that our actions may be morally right or good. There are two areas of normative ethics: applied and general.

2.2.1. Applied normative ethics is the attempt to explain and justify positions on specific moral problems, such as sex outside marriage, capital punishment, euthanasia, and reverse discrimination. This area of normative ethics is termed applied because the ethicist applies or uses general ethical principles in an attempt to resolve specific moral problems.

2.2.2. General normative ethics is the reasoned search for principles of human conduct, including a critical study of the major theories about which things are good, which acts are right, and which acts are blameworthy. It attempts to determine precisely what moral standards to follow so that our actions may be morally right or good. For most of us, ethical actions spring from some standard: *“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”*. *“Act in such a way that you bring about greatest good for the greater number”*, *“Always act in your own best interest.”* Which principle should we adopt? General normative ethics, in part tries to answer this question by attempting to formulate and defend a system of basic ethical principles, which presumably is valid for everyone.

Three broad categories of general normative theories can be distinguished: teleological, deontological and virtue ethics.

Three broad categories of general normative theories are: virtue ethics, teleological and deontological. Teleological derives from the word *teleology*, which literally means *“the theory of ends or purposes.”* **Teleological theories** maintain that the morality of an action

depends on the **non-moral consequences** that the action brings about. For simplicity, teleological theories are termed to be as *consequentialist*. Three important consequentialist theories are *egoism*, *altruism* and *utilitarianism*. Egoism is concerned with the best consequences for self, altruism is concerned with the best consequences for others; and utilitarianism with the best consequences for everyone.

Deontological derives from the word deontology which refers to the theory or study of moral commitment. **Deontological theories** maintain that the morality of an action depends on factors other than consequences. For simplicity deontological theories are also named as *non-consequentialist*. Three important non consequentialist theories are *divine command theory*, *categorical imperative*, and intuitionism.

Divine command is concerned with acting in such a way that one's action conform to the laws of God. The **categorical imperative** is concerned with acting in such a way that one could wish the maxim of one's action to become a universal law. **Prima facie duties** are concerned with acting in accordance with an overriding obligation as indicated by the circumstances involved.

2.2.2.1. Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics is a type of ethical theory in which the notion of *virtue or good character* plays a central role. The proponents of virtue ethics emphasize neither consequences nor rules *but rather moral virtues or moral characters*, which are typically thought of as behavioral dispositions; *an action is morally right insofar as it is a product of such virtues*.

According to virtue theory, we ought to possess certain character traits such as courage, generosity, compassion, etc. – and these ought to be manifest in our actions. We therefore ought to act in ways that exhibit the virtues. Virtue ethicists tell us that it is the agent's character traits and motives (i.e., whether the virtuous person would do act) that makes the action morally permissible or not.

Virtue is the *habit of doing what is right*. It is a '*good habit*'. It is a habit or disposition that tends to produce good consequences. A life where virtues become ingrained is a *virtuous life*. By contrast, vices are '*bad habits*'. A life where vices become ingrained is a vicious life. Virtues and vices are character traits. Generally, the major ethical question in virtue ethics is NOT what should I do? BUT *what kind of person should I be?* In other word, virtue ethics

focuses on criteria of character development & acquisition of good character traits from habit.

According to virtue Ethicists, an action is right if it is what a virtuous agent would do in the circumstances. A *virtuous agent* is one who acts virtuously, that is, one who has and exercises the virtues. Virtue ethics emphasizes *right being* over *right action*.

According to virtue ethicists, *our character- or the sort of person we are – is more important than the rules or principles we follow*.

Historically, virtue theory is one of the oldest normative traditions in Western philosophy, having its roots in ancient Greek civilization. Socrates, Plato & Aristotle are the proponents of virtue ethics.

Socrates Understanding of Virtue

Socrates (469–399 BC) was one of the first Greek philosophers to encourage both scholars and the common citizen to turn their attention from the outside world to the condition of humankind abide by the doctrine of “*know thyself*”. Socrates presents himself as a gift to the city from the gods and a gadfly *whose role is to awaken a big sleepy horse*.

In this view, *knowledge having a bearing on human life was placed highest*, all other knowledge being secondary. *Self-knowledge was considered necessary for success and inherently an essential good*.

He posited that *people will naturally do what is good, if they know what is right. Evil or bad actions are the result of ignorance*. If a criminal were truly aware of the mental and spiritual consequences of his actions, he would neither commit nor even consider committing those actions. Any person who knows what is truly right will automatically do it, according to Socrates. While he *correlated knowledge with virtue*, he similarly equated *virtue with happiness*. *The truly wise man will know what is right, do what is good, and therefore be happy*.

Plato's Understanding of Virtue

In the Protagoras Plato, through Socrates, argues that *virtue is knowledge*. The argument begins with the premise that *everyone wants what he or she believes to be good*. From this it follows that when a person does something wrong or bad it cannot be because they want to do it, knowing it is bad, it must be that they want to do it, believing it to be good. Plato says *the soul will always choose to do good, if it recognizes what is good*. What separates the

virtuous person from the un-virtuous is not a desire for what is good, everyone desires what they think to be good, but rather *the knowledge of what the good really is*.

Plato begins with an argument concerning the postulating the *Tripartite theory of the soul*. Like a just state, *a just soul has three elements: Reason, will to power (spirit) and appetites*. Appetite is the part of the soul that is animal like, lusting for bodily pleasure and itches, reason that which is concerned with calculation and rational thought, and spirit the part associated with emotions. *Each element of the Soul has its own corresponding virtue*: The virtue of rational part of the soul is *Wisdom*; *Courage* is the virtue of the spirited part of the soul and *temperance* is the virtue of the appetitive part of the soul. Temperance is *the harmony of the relation* when the spirited element and the desires are ruled or are in control of reason. This implies that *justice is the harmonious relationship between the parts of the soul*. *Injustice is disagreement among the parts of the soul* where irrational desire and emotional parts of the soul dominate reason.

Thus, *the just man is a person whose knowledge, emotion and desire work in perfect harmony*, no part of the soul tyrannizing over the rest, each part exercising its due activity. *The just person is the virtuous person*.

Aristotle's Virtue Theory: The *Nicomachean Ethics*

Aristotle tells us that *happiness must be explained in terms of reason, man's distinctive function or activity*. Just as the acorn actualizes its unique *potentiality* by becoming an Oak, so man actualizes his distinctive or defining potentiality *by living the life of reason*. To Aristotle, this means that *happiness depends upon the actualization- the full realization - of man's rationality*.

For him, as for other Greek philosophers, *"virtue refers to the excellence of a thing, i.e., the disposition to perform effectively its proper function*. For example, a virtuous knife cuts well and a virtuous physician successfully restores his patients to health. By the same token, Aristotle argues, *a virtuous man lives according to reason, thus realizing his distinctive potentiality*.

Virtuous people, who live a life of harmony, are the only type capable of reaching their goal as humans: happiness. *The good life avoids the extremes of both excessive repression and excessive indulgence*. *Virtue strikes the mean: Virtue is golden mean between two extremes*: For instance, excessive indulgence is as much a vice as the excessive repression of desires.

Self-control, therefore, is a virtue. Likewise, courage is the mean between rashness and cowardice.

2.2.2.2. Teleological (Consequentialist) Theory of Ethics

Teleological comes from the Greek word '*telos*', which literally means end, purpose or goal. Therefore, teleological theory is "*the theory of ends or purposes.*" This ethical theory stresses on the consequences of actions and even makes the consequence of actions the criterion, or test of their rightness. In other words, an action is judged as right or wrong, moral or immoral as a result of it, its "*pay off*" or a cost-benefit analysis. Or an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favorable than unfavorable. This view is often expressed as the aphorism "***The ends justify the means***". There is a great emphasis on consequences of actions rather than on the nature of actions themselves.

Consequentialist normative principles require that we first tally both the good and bad consequences of an action. Second, we determine whether the total good consequences outweigh the total bad consequences. If the good consequences are greater, then the action is *morally proper*. If the bad consequences are greater, then the action is *morally improper*.

The defining feature of consequentialist moral theories is the weight given to the consequences in evaluating the rightness and wrongness of actions. In consequentialist theories, the consequences of an action ***generally outweigh other considerations***. Consequentialists consider the ratio of good to evil that an action produces. The right action is the one that produce, will probably produce, or intended to produce at least as great a ratio of good to evil as any other action. The wrong action is the one that does not.

There are some questions that many consequentialist theories address:

- ❖ What sort of consequences count as good consequences?
- ❖ Who is the primary beneficiary of moral action?
- ❖ How are the consequences judged and who judges them?

According to utilitarianism, a good action is one that results in an increase in a positive effect, and the best action is one that results in that effect for the greatest number. Depending on ***whose good is in question***, that is, which consequences count as good states of affairs, consequentialism is divided into: **egoism** (*the good of the agent*): Epicurus, Ayn Rand & **utilitarianism** (everyone's good): Bentham, Mill; **altruism**. All egoism, altruism &

utilitarianism focus on the consequences of an action and all are advocating the pleasure principle or hedonists.

Consequentialist theories became popular in the 18th century by philosophers who wanted a quick way to morally assess an action by appealing to experience, rather than by appealing to gut intuitions or long lists of questionable duties. In fact, the most attractive feature of consequentialism is that it appeals to publicly observable consequences of actions. Most versions of consequentialism are more precisely formulated than the general principle above. In particular, competing consequentialist theories specify which consequences for affected groups of people are relevant.

Hedonism: The Pleasure Principle

The term hedonism is derived from the Greek word *hedone*- which means “*pleasure*”. Hedonism is a general ethical theory which views *pleasure as the good*. Or it is the ethical doctrine that *pleasure is the highest good*, and *the production of pleasure is the criterion of right action*. According to the hedonistic principle, *pleasure is thus the criterion or standard of right action*.

Hedonism posits that *the principal ethic is maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain*. There are several schools of hedonist thought ranging from those advocating the indulgence of even momentary desires to those teaching a pursuit of spiritual bliss. In their consideration of consequences, they range from those advocating self-gratification regardless of the pain and expense to others, to those stating that the most ethical pursuit maximizes pleasure and happiness for the most people.

Hedonism has three branches: *egoistic hedonism*, *social hedonism* and *altruism*. As a form of hedonism, each of these advocates pleasure as the good. But the question is ***whose pleasure?*** *These three moral theories* answer this question in quite different ways. Accordingly, egoistic hedonism emphasizes on self-gratification, while social hedonism focuses on the pleasure of the masses or the majority and altruism focuses on the pleasure of others at the expense of the self.

A. Egoistic Hedonism

We are familiar with the term hedonism, but the issue still needs defining what egoism is. Egoism comes from the Greek word *ego* – means “I”. It is, therefore, literally “I-sm”. Egoism, thus, *makes the self the central concern, the beginning and end of all considerations*. Some

ethicists believe that in deciding the morality of an action, we should consider only the consequences of ourselves. These ethicists are called egoists. Egoism contends that we should always act in such a way that promotes our own best long-term interests. Although egoists argue about what actions will do this, they agree that once such actions are determined, we should take them.

Egoistic hedonism has **two** branches. The first one is **psychological egoism**- is a doctrine about human nature, claiming that *everyone by nature pursues primarily his or her own interests*. The second one is **ethical egoism**- involves a **value judgment**, claiming that *everyone ought to pursue primarily his or her own interests*. It is sometimes observed that egoistic hedonism is perhaps the most widely practiced moral philosophy. The two best examples of egoistic hedonism are Cyrenacism and Epicureanism.

Cyrenacism

Cyrenacism is so- called because Cyrene is the place where Aristippus (the founder of this school) is come from (about 400 B.C.). This philosophy states that we should act in such a way as to maximize our own pleasurable sensations. Cyrenacism is most interested in the *lower pleasures*. The point is to enjoy as much *bodily pleasure* as possible and *as immediately as possible*. It says *double your pleasure, double your fun, and eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we may die*.

Founded by Aristippus of Cyrene, Cyrenaics supported *immediate gratification or pleasure*. "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may die." Even fleeting desires should be indulged, for fear the opportunity should be forever lost. There was *little to concern with the future*, the present dominating in the pursuit for immediate pleasure. Cyrenaic hedonism encouraged the pursuit of enjoyment and indulgence without hesitation, believing pleasure to be the only good.

Epicureanism

Another, and more important, form of hedonism is **Epicureanism**, named after its founder, Epicurus (300 B.C.). While cyrenacism emphasizes on bodily and immediate pleasures, Epicureanism stresses on *health of the body and peace of the mind (higher pleasures)* or *tranquility/serenity of the mind and health of the body*. Going to the dentist may be pain, but in the long run it is worth, for it means a freedom from toothache over an even longer period. It is not haphazard and unrestrained sensual indulgence that will add up to a life of

genuine pleasure or serenity, but *freedom from bodily and mental pain* and an *attention to the elevated and refined pleasure, especially those of the mind*.

Epicurean ethics is a hedonist form of virtue ethics. Epicurus "presented a sustained argument that pleasure, correctly understood, will *coincide with virtue*" He rejected the extremism of the Cyrenaics, believing some pleasures and indulgences to be detrimental to human beings. Epicureans observed that indiscriminate indulgence sometimes resulted in negative consequences. Some experiences were therefore rejected out of hand, and some unpleasant experiences endured in the present to ensure a better life in the future.

To Epicurus the *summum bonum*, or *greatest good*, was prudence, exercised through ***moderation*** and caution. Excessive indulgence can be destructive to pleasure and can even lead to pain. For example, eating one food too often will cause a person to lose taste for it. Eating too much food at once will lead to discomfort and ill-health.

Pain and fear were to be avoided. Living was essentially good, barring pain and illness. *Death was not to be feared*. Fear was considered the source of most unhappiness. Conquering the fear of death would naturally lead to a happier life. Epicurus reasoned if there was an afterlife and immortality, the fear of death was irrational. If there was no life after death, then the person would not be alive to suffer, fear or worry; he would be non-existent in death. It is irrational to fret/worry over circumstances that do not exist, such as one's state in death in the absence of an afterlife.

To summarize, both cyrenaics and epicureans are hedonists, both are egoistic, and both believe in the "calculation" of pleasure and pains. But the difference between the two is that the cyrenaics emphasized on the *positive pleasures*, bodily pleasures, and (as much as possible) immediate pleasures. On the other hand, the epicureans emphasized on *negative pleasures* (or the absence of pain), mental pleasures, and sustained (though more moderate) pleasures over a long period of time.

B. Altruism

Altruism states that *an action is right if its consequences are favorable to all except the actor*. Ethical altruism can be seen as a consequentialist ethic which prescribes that an individual take action that have the best consequences for everyone except for himself: *Live for others*. Ayn Rand argues, in her criticism of altruism, that altruism declares that any

action taken for the benefit of others is good, and any action taken for one's own benefit is evil. Thus *the* beneficiary of an action is anybody other than oneself, anything goes.

According to altruism, a young man who gives up his career in order to support his parents and never rises beyond the rank of grocery clerk is regarded as morally superior to the young man who endures an excruciating struggle and achieves his personal ambition. A person who is acting to benefit others is regarded as moral, but not himself. But, it does not make sense to say that an individual must sacrifice himself and all his values to promote the interest of others. Morality is considered as self-scarifying and in its view man is sacrificial animal. If your action benefits you other than the people, it is wrong or immoral.

In short, altruism (or *ethical altruism*) is an ethical doctrine that holds that individuals have a **moral obligation to help, serve or benefit** others, if necessary at the **sacrifice of self-interest**. More precisely, an action is **morally right** if the consequences of that action are ***more favorable than unfavorable to everyone except the agent***. This view is severely criticized by Nietzsche and Ayn Rand.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) believed that we should all strive to satisfy our own will to power. We should accomplish this even if we must exploit and dominate others. If we do not do this, others will do this to us. Friedrich Nietzsche held that *the idea that it is virtuous to treat others as more important than oneself is **degrading** and **demeaning** to the self, and hinders the individual's pursuit of **self-development**, **excellence** and **creativity***. He maintained that it was an **ideology fabricated by the weak for the weak**, and masks self-poisoning **resentment** about individual and collective **powerlessness**.

The objectivist **Ayn Rand** (1905 - 1982) is on record as stating that **most problems** in the world come from the doctrine of Altruism, and argues that *there is **no rational ground** for asserting that sacrificing yourself in order to serve others is **morally superior** to pursuing your own self-interest*. Furthermore, if the state were to **enforce** Altruism as a moral ideal, this could ultimately result in the state forcing everyone into a **collectivist** political system. We saw that ethical egoism, the doctrine that each individual ought to seek primarily his or her own good, is the basis of egoistic hedonism. To reject ethical egoism, therefore, is to reject egoistic hedonism as well. In fact for most readers ethical egoism will stand in immediate conflict with the idea of *altruism*, the principle that we ought to, as much as possible, seek the good of others.

The following question immediately suggests themselves: Is not an altruistic ideal as ingrained in us as our most selfish inclinations? And even if not, can we easily discard it in favor of ethical egoism? And even if we could, could we feel good about it? And even if we could, should we feel good about it?

The principle of altruism is deeply embedded in our western moral conceptions: “you are your brother’s keeper,” “you shall love your neighbor as yourself,” and (the Golden Rule) “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”

C. Social Hedonism (Utilitarianism)

The objection to egoism arises from holding a collective rather than a strictly subjective value. In fact many consequentialists focus not on self-interest but on the interests of all involved. Such is the emphasis of the normative theory termed *utilitarianism*.

Utilitarianism asserts that *the promotion of everyone’s best interest is the standard of morality*. In brief utilitarianism claims that *we should always act so as to produce the greatest possible ratio of good to evil for **all concerned***. As formulated and developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), utilitarianism maintains that what is of intrinsic value or what is good in itself is pleasure, or happiness. Bentham moves from the pleasure and pain experienced by an individual to that experienced by the group. In so doing, he lays the basis for the utilitarian principle that actions are right to the extent that they promote happiness and pleasure for all, wrong to the extent that they tend to produce pain and the absence of pleasure.

*In his Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (1780), Bentham argues that **the principle of utility** should be the basis of morality and law, and by utility he understands **whatever promotes pleasure and prevents pain**. “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do.”*

By the principle of utility is meant that principle which *approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever*, according to the tendency it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words to promote or to oppose that happiness. By **utility** is meant *that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness*, (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to

prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community: if a particular individual, then the happiness of that individual.

An action then may be said to be conformable to the principle of utility, or, for shortness sake, to utility, (meaning with respect to the community at large) when the tendency it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any it has to diminish it. A measure of government (which is but a particular kind of action, performed by a particular person or persons) may be said to be conformable to or dictated by the principle of utility, when in like manner the tendency which it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any which it has to diminish it.

A man may be said to be *a partisan of the principle of utility*, when the approbation or disapprobation he annexes to any action, or to any measure, is determined by and proportioned to the tendency which he conceives it to have to augment or to diminish the happiness of the community: or in other words, to its conformity or unconformity to the laws or dictates of utility.

Of an action that is conformable to the principle of utility one may always say either that it is one that ought to be done, or at least that it is not one that ought not to be done. One may say also, that it is right it should be done; at least that it is not wrong it should be done: that it is a right action; at least that it is not a wrong action. When thus interpreted, the words ought, and right and wrong and others of that stamp, have a meaning: when otherwise, they have none.

We can get at the real nature of utilitarianism in **three stages**. **First**, at the heart of utilitarianism lies the **Principle of Utility**. The word “utility” simply means “usefulness,” but the utilitarians employ it to mean that which *promotes the greatest balance of good over evil*. Thus, utilitarianism is:

1. The doctrine that we ought to act so as to promote the greatest balance of good over evil.

But, there must be more, for we have not yet been told what the good is. In fact, *second*, utilitarianism has always gone hand in hand with hedonism, which, as we have seen, certainly specifies the nature of the good- *it is pleasure*. Thus, utilitarianism is:

2. The doctrine that we ought to promote the greatest balance of **pleasure over **pain**.**

But there is more, for we have not yet been told **whose pleasure** is to be maximized. In fact, third, utilitarianism (as the word is usually used) has always gone hand in hand specifically with *social* hedonism, and indeed may be regarded as identical with social hedonism.

Like egoistic hedonism social hedonism or utilitarianism is hedonistic in the conception of right action: it judges the rightness of an action by its production of *pleasurable consequences*. But the two views differ at a critical point. Whereas the egoistic hedonist is motivated out of self-interest and aims at self-satisfaction, the social hedonist or utilitarian is motivated out of an interest for the greatest possible number of persons and aims at their satisfaction. In place of the egoism of egoistic hedonism, social hedonism or utilitarianism substitutes the **Benevolence Principle**: Happiness is to be distributed as widely and as equally as possible among all people. Thus utilitarianism is, finally,

3. *The doctrine that we ought to act in order to promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number.*

Thus, utilitarianism or social hedonism is the ethical doctrine that an action is right if and only if it promotes the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people.

Bentham's Version: Quantity over Quality

Historically social hedonism or social utilitarianism is identified with the English philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. These two thinkers, however, represent two different forms of utilitarianism, though the difference reduces more to **a matter of emphasis**: in one case an emphasis on **quantity** of happiness, and in the other an emphasis on **quality** of happiness.

The founder of modern utilitarianism was Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). For Bentham, the process of making moral decisions is quite simple. All you do is this: **first**, consider the various courses of action open to you; **then**, taking in to account all persons affected, and counting yourself as only one of them, **calculate** the pleasures and pains involved; then **choose** that course of action which will result in the greatest balance of pleasure over pain. As already indicated, when Bentham stresses for the greatest balance of pleasure over pain, his idea of pleasure is purely quantitative one. The greatest pleasure for the greatest number means for Bentham the **most pleasure**. Bentham's purely quantitative notion of pleasure is apparent from his well-known statement that: "*prejudice apart, the game of*

push-pin is of equal value with arts and science of music and poetry. If the game of push-pin furnish more pleasure, it is more valuable than either."

How do we measure the most pleasure? There is a principle called *Hedonic Calculus*, developed by Bentham. According to Bentham, in attempting to calculate a pleasure we must, as it were, measure or weigh it in seven ways, taking in to account its

1. *intensity*, or how strong it is
2. *duration*, how long it will last
3. *certainty*, how likely it is to occur
4. *propinquity*, how near at hand it is
5. *fecundity*, its ability to produce still further pleasure
6. *purity*: *to what extent it is free from pain*
7. *extent*, the number of people affected by it

Mill's Version: Quality over Quantity

Though Bentham was the founder of modern utilitarianism, his successor was certainly the most famous utilitarian of all: John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Where Mill really split with Bentham was over Bentham's purely *quantitative* view of pleasure. Without denying that quantity is a consideration in the calculation of pleasure, it is not as important as the consideration of *quality*.

Mill defines utilitarianism as a theory based on the principle that "***actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.***" Mill defines happiness as pleasure and the absence of pain. He argues that pleasure can differ in quality and quantity, and that pleasures that are rooted in one's higher faculties should be weighted more heavily than baser pleasures. Furthermore, Mill argues that people's achievement of goals and ends, such as virtuous living, should be counted as part of their happiness.

Mill delineates how to differentiate between ***higher- and lower-quality pleasures***: A pleasure is of higher quality if people would choose it over a different pleasure even if it is accompanied by discomfort, and if they would not trade it for a greater amount of the other pleasure. Moreover, Mill contends, it is an "unquestionable fact" that, given equal access to all kinds of pleasures, people will prefer those that appeal to their "higher" faculties. A person will not choose to become an animal, an educated person will not choose to become

ignorant, and so on. Even though a person who uses higher faculties often suffers more in life (hence the common dictum "***ignorance is bliss***"), he would never choose a lower existence, preferring instead to maintain his dignity.

For Mill, as for most, it hardly needs arguing that push-pin may be more fun than poetry, it yields an inferior happiness. And can the joy of the body really compare with the joys of the intellect? (The answer is No) or to use Mill's language, ***wouldn't you rather be a dissatisfied human than a satisfied pig, or a dissatisfied Socrates than a satisfied fool?***

For Mill, as for Bentham, that action is to be pursued which makes the greatest happiness for the greatest number. But whereas for Bentham "*greatest*" mean ***most***, for Mill it means ***best***.

Granted that two pleasures may differ in quality, who is to say which is the best? Mill answers that the decision must rest with those who have experienced both. And those who have experienced both invariably opt for the higher or more qualitative pleasures. He argues that utility is not simply a measurement of the psychological feeling of pleasure; rather, there are different qualities of pleasure, and only people with a broad range of experiences can dictate which pleasures are of a higher quality. Thus all actions and experiences are not judged by one reductive standard, but rather according to a variety of different qualities of pleasure in correspondence with the type of experience. Higher pleasures would be weighted heavily by utilitarianism, and Mill argues that they are therefore not cheapened by the utility measurement.

Act and Rule utilitarianism

Act utilitarianism is the normative position that contends that *we should act so as to produce the greatest happiness for the most people*. In other words, before acting ask yourself: what will be the consequences of my action not only for myself but also for everyone else involved? If the consequences are good (that is, they are calculated to produce more happiness or pleasure than any other action will produce), the action is right; if they are bad (that is, they are so calculated), then the action is wrong. In effect, for the act utilitarian, *the end justifies the means*. However, this can raise problems.

What is an action that promises good for the greatest number, such as imprisoning an innocent person, appears to be apparently wrong? The consequences of removing chronic public threat, although never certain, appear to provide greater safety and happiness for

the vast majority of people. Yet suppose that in this particular case the individual is innocent.

But **rule utilitarianism** maintains that *we should act in such a way that the **rule** governing our actions produces the greatest happiness for the most people*. What we should be concerned with is the consequences of keeping or breaking the operative rule under which a particular act falls, is the position of rule utilitarians. The consequences of breaking the rule may not constitute as much collective happiness as abiding by it. If not, rule utilitarians argue, acting in a way that violates this rule would be bad, where as acting in a way that promotes the rule would be good.

3.1 Deontological (Non-Consequentialist) Theory of 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. The common forms of theory, which advocate the deontological ethical position, are:

- A. Immanuel Kant categorical Imperative
- B. Divine command theory
- C. Intuitionism

A. Immanuel Kant (Categorical Imperative): Categorical imperative requires that we should respect for the humanity and dignity of all person and that, we treat each other in accordance we think should be universally practiced. “Act as if the maxim you choose to follow always become a universal law of nature”, “Always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other never simply as a means, but always also as an end”

- ☆ **Only Good will is good without qualification-** it refers that “nothing in the world is good, without qualification except a good will”. Will is part of person that reasons about and decides what he will do. When persons will is morally good, it is good under all conditions, which means its goodness does not depend upon

anything outside of itself. For instance, intellectual talents, such as intelligence, cleverness and good judgment and character traits such as courage, determination and perseverance have value to the extent that they aid us in doing what is right but they become evil when they are used for evil ends.

- ☆ **Good will and external action-** we do not say a person has a good will merely because the person performs certain external action. A person can have a good will and may try to do what is right, but may be prevented from doing it by physical circumstances such as paralysis. Instead, we determine whether a person has a good will by looking only at the persons “willing” which means by looking at the reason on which the person bases his decisions concerning what he will do.
- ☆ **Good will and the three types of motivation-** A person may do his duty “**out of self interest**”, by “**direct inclination**”, which means by the immediate satisfaction or pleasure it gives him/her. Doing something simply because he believes it is the morally correct thing to do, or **acting from duty**. It is doing something absolutely, directly and objectively.

B. Divine Command Theory

The *Divine Command Theory* is a single rule non-Consequentialist normative theory that says we should always do the will of God. In other words, whatever the situation, if we do what God wills, then we do the right thing; if we do not do what God wills, then no matter what the consequences, we do wrong.

Notice that this theory does not state that we should obey God’s law because we will therefore promote our own or the general good or be faithful to some virtuous principles. Perhaps we will accomplish these ends, but the sole justification for obeying God’s law is that God wills it. The theory also does not defend the morality of an action by promising some supernatural reward to the faithful. True, perhaps the faithful will be rewarded, and perhaps behaving righteously is in their best long-term interests, but divine command theorist wouldn’t justify moral actions on such egoistic grounds.

Understandably, divine command theorists would see no intrinsic worth or value in such things as pleasure, power or knowledge; instead, they would propose something like a union with God as taking the form of heavenly salvation. The great Christian theologian and

philosopher Thomas Aquinas, writing in one of his most important ethical works, *Summa contra Gentiles*, refers to the human's ultimate happiness as being the contemplation of God.

He arrives at this conclusion after arguing that human happiness does not consist in wealth, worldly power, or sensual pleasures.

This state of eternal bliss is the ultimate goal of all human endeavors; it is the only thing of intrinsic value. What is valuable is independent of what any individual thinks or likes and what any society happens to sanction. Moral laws are established by God; they are universally binding for all people and are eternally true, regardless of whether they are universally obeyed. Such God-established laws are generally interpreted in a religious tradition. The Ten Commandments are a good example. These laws, claim their adherents, apply to everybody everywhere and their value does not depend on what produces human satisfaction, either individually or collectively.

The justification of such moral laws is usually divine authority and its supposed expression through humans and their institutions. Thus the Bible or the Koran/Quran may be appealed to as an authority as may a religious institution or leader.

A cursory look at the divine command theory reveals a couple of weakness

First, we don't know what God has commanded. True, divine commanded theorists frequently point to sacred books or scriptures as guidelines yet, how do we know that these writings represent the inspired word of God? Some would assert that the scriptures say so. But such circular reasoning will not do. After all, how do we know that there is a God at all? And if there is, can we be sure that He or She expressed Himself or Herself in one source and not in another? In addition, the divine command theory can't satisfactorily explain why God commands something.

In other words, does God command something because it is right, or is something right because God command it?

C. Moral Intuitionism

Moral intuitionists (also known as "moral non-naturalists") think that observation is insufficient to explain all of our moral knowledge and at least some of our moral knowledge

is based on intuition or contemplation that enables us to know self-evident facts. Once we fully understand a moral statement that can be enough to know if it's true. For example, it might be self-evident that all pain is intrinsically bad to anyone who fully understands what "pain" and "intrinsically bad" refer to. This is much like our knowledge of mathematics and logic. We can know that " $2+2=4$ " just by understanding what the statement is saying. Moral intuitionists don't necessarily think moral facts are natural because they don't think we can know all moral facts through observation of the natural world. They tend to disagree that moral facts are identical to natural facts.

We must decide what is right or wrong in each situation by consulting our conscience or our intuitions. Now let's consider the moral theory of William David Ross (1877-1971) who is one of the proponents of act-intuitionism. "Ross suggests '*prima facie* duty' or 'conditional duty' as a brief way of referring to the characteristic (quite distinct from that of being a duty proper) which an act has, in virtue of being of a certain kind (e.g. the keeping of a promise), of being an act which would be a duty proper if it were not at the same time of another kind which is morally significant. Whether an act is a duty proper or actual duty depends on all the morally significant kinds it is an instance of." An act is a ***prima facie* duty** when there is a moral reason in favor of doing the act, but one that can be outweighed by other moral reasons. An act is a ***prima facie* duty** when it has at least one right-making feature. An act is a ***prima facie* wrong** when there is a moral reason against doing the act, but one that can be outweighed by other moral reasons. An act is a ***prima facie* wrong** when it has at least one wrong-making feature.

For example "if I have promised to meet a friend at a particular time for some trivial purpose, I should certainly think myself justified in breaking my engagement if by doing so I could prevent a serious accident or bring relief to the victims of one." Let's make this more explicit. I promise to meet a friend for lunch. On the way there, I witness an accident. If I keep my promise to meet my friend, someone will die. If I break my promise, I can help at the accident and save a life. I thus have a *prima facie* duty to meet my friend (since I promised that I would meet him, and that I promised to do something is a reason in favor of doing it). But I also have a *prima facie* duty to help at the accident (since this would prevent serious harm to someone, and that an act would prevent serious harm is a reason in favor of doing it). I thus have a conflict of *prima facie* duties. Ross makes a distinction between

“*Prima facie* duties” and “*all things considered* duties”. According to Ross *prima facie* duties are duties we seem to have “at first blush” and obligate us to act certain ways, *assuming everything else is equal*, can be overridden by other considerations.

All things considered duties: are those duties what we must do after balancing all the conflicting *prima facie* duties we may have.

Ross lists seven sources of *prima facie* duties. These are:

1. **Duties of fidelity:** first there are duties stemming from our explicit and implicit promises. *The cases of the two moving friends.* If I’ve promised one friend I’d help him move, I should help him, and not another friend, even if the other friend has more stuff. Implicit promises have many sources. Consider e.g. *the case of the dining friends.* Kim and Shelley eat together in their dorm every day. Kim has come to expect this. On one busy day, however, a “cute boy” comes and wants to sit next to Shelley. Should Shelley let him sit there?

2. **Duties of reparation:** these are duties stemming from our past wrong-doings towards others. *The brothers and the bike:* Sam gets mad at Gus for no reason and breaks his bike. It would seem that at least until Gus ought get a new bike, Sam to loan his bike to Gus.

3. **Duties of gratitude:** these are duties to repay or redo favors or simply thank others for their kindness towards us. *Frasier and Daphne:* Frasier offers to pay for Daphne’s wedding. Daphne is obligated to invite Frasier to the wedding and give him a thank you card.

4. **Duties of justice and fairness:** these are duties involving distributing goods and services in a fair and equal manner whenever possible. *The tax break:* Due to a good year financially, the government can give many taxpayers a partial tax rebate. It would be morally wrong simply to give these rebates to some people and not others.

5. **Duties of beneficence:** these are duties to try to bring about the happiness of other people if possible. *The new car:* I am trying to decide between buying a red or blue car. My wife strongly prefers red. If I don’t care between them, I ought to get the red car.

6. **Duties of self-improvement:** these are duties involving making the best ourselves and making our lives the best they could be. *The video game question:* Roger wants to play his new video game but needs to study for his ethics exam the next day. What should he do?

7. **Duties of non-maleficence:** these are duties not to hurt, harm or sadden other people. **Grandma Edna:** Grandma Edna sure is taking her time getting across a crosswalk. No one is around. Late for work, Francine could just run her down and continue on her way.

According to Ross when deciding what to do, we need to consider all the *prima facie* duties that are relevant. These duties often conflict; need to be weighed and balanced. How are we supposed to *know* which duties apply in which cases, and which are stronger? Ross responds: we can know what duties we have simply by “intuition”.

4.1. Non- Normative Theory of Ethics

Is either a factual investigation of moral behaviors or analysis of the meaning of terms used in moral discourse and an examination of the moral reasoning by which moral beliefs can be shown to be true or false.

Non- normative ethics has two aspects (fields). These are:

1. Scientific/Descriptive study
2. Meta-ethics study

1. Scientific/ Descriptive study: this study of morality involves factual investigation of moral behavior. It is concerned with how people do in fact behave, that means how people actually behave/acting something. A descriptive one describes actual human conduct. Again scientific or descriptive study can be subdivided into two doctrines. These are:

1. Ethical Absolutism
2. Ethical Relativism

1. Ethical Absolutism: is the doctrine that states there is one and only one moral code. Absolutists maintain that this code applies to everyone, at all times and everywhere. They advocates, what is a moral duty for me must also be a duty for you. For example, if euthanasia is wrong, it is wrong for everyone, at all times and everywhere.

They do not necessarily claim that their interpretation of the absolute standard is true and valid one but they do insist that there is a true moral code and that this code is the same for all people in all ages.

i. Objectivism (Ethical objectivism) the view that moral principles have objective validity whether or not people recognize them as such; that is, moral rightness or wrongness does not depend on social approval, but on such independent considerations as whether the act or principle promotes human flourishing or ameliorates human suffering.

Objectivism differs from **absolutism** in allowing that all or many of our principles are overridable in given situations.

- 2. Ethical Relativism:** is a doctrine that denies there is a single moral standard that is universally applicable to all people, at all times. They insist that there are many moral codes, which take root in diverse social, soil and environment. Which means morality is relative to time, place and circumstances in which it occurs.

They do not merely saying that what is thought right in one part of the world is frequently thought wrong in another. Rather, they assert that precisely the same action that is right in one society at one time can be wrong in another.

For example, putting to death 80 years old can be right in the jungles of New Guinea and wrong in US.

i. Conventionalism (conventional ethical relativism) the view that there are no objective moral principles but that all valid moral principles are justified (or are made true) by virtue of their cultural acceptance, recognizes the social nature of morality.

ii. Subjectivism (Subjective ethical relativism) is the type of ethical relativism stating that it is the individual who determine valid moral principles.

B. Meta Ethics

The second field of non-normative ethics is called Meta-ethics. Meta ethics is the highly technical discipline investigating the meaning of ethical terms, including a critical study of how ethical statements can be verified.

Meta Ethics is concerned with the meanings of such ethical terms as *right, wrong, obligation and responsibility*.

Accordingly, Meta ethicists would be more concerned with the meanings of such words as *good or bad* than with what we think is good or bad. If you maintained, for instance, that an act of euthanasia was right, the Meta ethicist might ask; just what do you mean by right? Meta ethical positions often are classified as representative of Naturalism, Non-naturalism and Emotivism.

Naturalism maintains that ethical statements can be translated into non ethical statements. One naturalistic position, autobiographical naturalism, contends that an ethical

statement simply expresses the approval or disapproval of the speaker. For example, when you say, "That act of euthanasia was right." You mean "I approve of that act of euthanasia." Another naturalistic position, sociological naturalism, holds that an ethical statement simply expresses the approval or disapproval of the majority. Thus, "That act of euthanasia was right" means "the majority approves of that act of euthanasia." Still another naturalistic position, theological naturalism claims that an ethical statement expresses divine approval or disapproval. Accordingly, "That act of euthanasia was right," in effect, means "God (or some equivalent reference) approves of that act of euthanasia."

Non-naturalism, in contrast to naturalism, is the position that holds that an ethical statement defines translation into a non ethical form. Non-naturalists insist that at least some ethical words can be defined only in terms of other ethical words.

Thus Non naturalism might argue that the statement "that act of euthanasia was right" can only be translated into other ethical statements, such as "That act of euthanasia was proper" or "That act of euthanasia should have been performed," or "That act of euthanasia was good." In other words, words like *good, right, and should* are so basic in ethics that there are not other words by means of which to define them.

Given their position, non-naturalists clearly come close to asserting that ethical statements cannot be verified, that they cannot be determined true or false. How then does the Non-naturalism handle ethical statements? More advises that we reflect on them and determine as well as we can, whether we believe the statements are true. There are no empirical observations, no mathematical or logical calculations, which would enable us to discover the truth of ethical statements.

Emotivism (or non-cognitivism) can be broadly defined as a meta-ethics position which claims that ethical statements are used to evoke a predetermined response or to encourage a predetermined behavior. According to emotivists, ethical statements can be used, indeed are used, to make someone feel or behave in a certain way. For example, if a teacher says to a student, "cheating is wrong," the teacher may not be expressing a moral position on cheating but rather trying to still in the student a certain attitude toward cheating. Ethical statements, therefore, among the commands such as "Don't cheat" or "Don't lie" or "Don't

break promises.” The essential difference between autobiographical naturalism and emotivism is that the former holds that ethical statements are subjective and verifiable, while the latter believes that they are subjective but not verifiable.

Civic Virtues

Civic virtue is morality or a standard of righteous behavior in relationship to a citizen’s involvement in society. The Greek word for virtue is *arête*, which means *excellence*. Civic virtue helps people understand their ties of the community and their responsibility with in it. Civic virtue is the moral understanding of how a citizen relates to society. Without an understanding of civic virtue, citizens are less likely to look beyond their own families, friends, and economic interests. They are less likely to help others in the community, to volunteer their time, to give money to nonprofit organizations, or to participate in a group that benefits society.

It is viewed that the citizen committed to civic virtue as one who watches both sets of values—those of the public good and those of freedom, diversity, and individual rights and who acts on the basis of the best informed judgment that profoundly study and active participation can be provided. It is believed that civic virtue embraces rational thinking and acting in such a way that individual rights are viewed in light of the public good and that the public good includes the protection of individual rights. Whether one prefers to stress balance, equilibrium, or tension between these traditions, or views them as a blend, mixture, or tapestry it is believed that the effort to identify and understand their ingredients is the first major step toward the practice of civic virtue. Civic virtue is described in terms of civic dispositions and civic commitments.

- 🕒 Civic Virtue
- 🕒 Civic Disposition
- 🕒 Civic Commitment

A. Civic Dispositions refers to those attitudes and ingrained habits of mind that are conducive to behavior that leads to the healthy functioning and common good of the democratic system. These dispositions also enhance the individual’s ability to participate competently and responsibly in the political system.

Dispositions of the citizen conducive to the healthy functioning of a constitutional democracy include the following:

1. *Civility*: - is a polite way of acting or behaving towards others. It is the need to respect others. This includes the respect and politeness we show to those with whom even we may disagree. In this case, thus, we are expected to respect the rights of those who are in dispute with us. It is an element of civilized behavior. Moreover it is a way of peaceful living and co-existence with others.

In its civic context, civility has the following characteristics:

A. *Respect*. Civility includes treating others with respect and as individuals inherently worthy of regard whether or not one agrees with their positions.

B. *Civil discourse*. Civility includes a disposition to take part in public debate and in doing so to adhere to commonly accepted standards of discourse such as:

- a. Addressing the issue. Debate should be based on the substance of opponents' argument or positions on the issue and not on personal attacks on their character.
- b. Respecting the right of others to be heard. Disruptive tactics that undermine debate in a public forum should be avoided. However, when people are unjustly denied their right to express their views, disruptive tactics such as civil disobedience and similar non – violent activities can be justified.

2. *Individual responsibility*: - refers to the moral and legal obligation of citizens, and hence citizens should be disposed to care for and take responsibility for themselves and their actions and activities.

3. *Self – discipline*: - Virtuous citizens freely adhere to the fundamental rules required for the maintenance of a system of constitutional government without requiring the imposition of external authority. In all situations, there are some rules and regulations to be observed. These rules and regulations help to guide our actions. Thus, we should be able to respect these rules and standards in our day-to-day activities. When we do this freely and from our own initiative, our actions can be referred as self-disciplined. Thus self-discipline comes from inside of us without being forced or controlled by outside expectations or impositions.

4. *Civic – mindedness*: - this refers to citizen's readiness and desire to give concern to the public. Thoughtful citizens recognize that there is often a tension between private interest

and the common good. Citizens should understand that there are times when they should place the common good above their personal interests. Civic-mindedness is unselfish behavior that enables us to do good and make sacrifice ourselves to the society and to our nation.

5. *Open-mindedness:* - This is the disposition to be receptive to different ideas and arguments. This includes the following attributes:

- A. *Openness:*** - citizens should be open to considering opposing positions and changing or modifying their own positions. Openness to opposing positions and arguments, however, does not mean that all views are of equal value or validity.
- B. *A healthy skepticism:*** - A healthy skepticism is an appropriate response of the citizen to unsupported generalizations and dogmatism.
- C. *Recognition of ambiguity:*** - citizens should recognize that actions and situations are sometimes capable of more than one interpretation and that the character of political and social reality is therefore sometimes ambiguous. It may therefore be difficult to achieve full understanding or certainty.

6. *Compromise (Negotiation/bargaining):* - is one form of behavior that should be observed in settling conflicts peacefully. It involves the readiness and willingness to spare something on both sides of the conflict in favor of the peaceful resolution of the problem and its outcome. That means, whenever we are in conflict with others on a certain issue, there is a need to give up some of our positions or interests. However compromise never allows abandoning basic principles and interests.

Therefore, compromise is based on the principle of give and take spirit and hence involves concession and counter concession by each party or individual person engaged in conflict.

7. *Toleration of diversity:* The disposition to tolerate, appreciate, and support diversity includes respect for the right of others to differ in ideas, ways of life, customs, and beliefs etc. Support for diversity in everyday life should be based upon an understanding of benefits of having people of diverse beliefs and ethnic and racial backgrounds as a part of the community.

8. *Patience and persistence:* - Citizens should understand that forming or changing public policy usually requires a great deal of time and persistent effort. They should not be

dissuaded from this fact or by the inevitable delays and failures that result when trying to exert influence on governmental decision-making.

9. *Compassion:* - Compassion is the disposition to empathize with others and show concern for their welfare, and hence, it is an essential attribute of citizens in a society devoted to the common good.

10. *Generosity:* - Generosity means the disposition to expend time, effort, and resources in a civic context for the benefit of others. The virtuous citizen shows generosity to others and to the community at large.

B. Civic Commitment and Internalization

Civic commitments are reasoned devotion or commitment expected to be discharged or fulfilled by all citizens of a given state. Civic commitment is profoundly applied or practiced if and only if citizens and students conspicuously and persistently internalized the aforementioned and other civic virtues, and thereby, making them part and parcel of their behavior conduct. It is only if civic commitment is essentially practiced by each and every citizen that our social system and solidarity get effective, and hence not fragile.