

What is Ethics?

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- **Utilitarianism:**
- John Stuart Mill expressed that utilitarianism is to increase happiness or "utility"
- A person's utility is what satisfies the person's needs and values
- An action might decrease utility for some people and increase it for others

What is Ethics?

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- We should consider the consequences the benefits and damages to all affected people and calculate the change in aggregate utility
- An act is right if it tends to increase aggregate utility and wrong if it tends to decrease it

What is Ethics?

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- **Variations of Utilitarianism:**
- Utilitarian principle applies to individual actions and for each action we consider the impact on utility and judge the action by its net impact known as "**act utilitarianism**".
- There are numerous problems with act-utilitarianism. It might be difficult or impossible to determine all the consequences of an act. A more fundamental or ethical objection to act-utilitarianism is that it does not recognize or respect individual rights. It has no absolute prohibitions and so called allow actions that many people consider always wrong.

What is Ethics?

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- For example, if there is a convincing case that killing one innocent person (perhaps to distribute his or her organs to several people who will die without transplants), or taking all of a person's property and redistributing it to other community members, would maximize utility in a community, utilitarianism could justify these acts. A person has no protected domain of freedom

What is Ethics?

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- **Rule utilitarianism:** Applies the utility principle not to individual actions but to general ethical rules. A rule utilitarian might argue that the rule "Do not lie" will increase total utility, and for that reason is a good rule. Rule-utilitarianism suffers far less than does act-utilitarianism
- A rule utilitarian thinks, before acting, about the consequences of people following that rule. If the outcome is regarded as positive, she might decide that it's good to follow that rule in general, and will apply it in future.

Act. Vs. Rule Utilitarianism

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- An act utilitarian doesn't generalise the act, but regards it as a single action with a single outcome. She will have to weigh the possible consequences each and every time she acts.
- Therefore, rule utilitarianism is considered to be more practicable, countering the anti-utilitarian argument that weighing each and every possible outcome each and every time is just not the way we want to (or can) spend our time.

Act. Vs. Rule Utilitarianism

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- An example:
- A **rule utilitarian** drives at night and sees a red intersection light. Thinking "it would have good consequences if people would stick to the rule and not cross red lights, so **everyone is safe** while waiting for a short while", she would apply that rule to herself and **wait for it to turn green.**
- Meanwhile, **the act utilitarian** might think "well, I certainly hope that people, who aren't me, in general follow that rule and stay put, but as there's **no one around** who might get influenced by my act, since there's **no police** around to fine me, and since I would see an approaching car as it's dark, **I might as well cross right now.**"

Natural Rights

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- Suppose we wish to treat people as ends rather than merely means and we wish to increase people's happiness. These goals are somewhat vague and open to many interpretations in specific circumstances.

Natural Rights

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- One approach we might follow is to let people make their own decisions, to define a sphere of freedom in which people can act freely according to their own judgment without coercive interference by others, even others (including us) who think they are doing what is best for the people involved or for humanity in general. This approach views ethical behavior as acting in such a way that respects a set of fundamental rights of others, including the rights to life, liberty and property. These rights are sometimes called natural rights.

Natural Rights

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- **Some important Distinctions:**
- A number of important distinctions affect our ethical judgments but are often not clearly expressed or understood.

Natural Rights

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- **Right, Wrong and Okay**
- In some situations with ethical dilemmas, there are often many options that are ethically acceptable with no specific one ethically required. Thus it is misleading to divide all acts into two categories: Ethically right and ethically wrong. Rather it is better to think of acts as ethically obligatory, ethically prohibited, or ethically acceptable

Natural Rights

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- **Negative rights and Positive right**
- Negative rights or liberties are rights to act peacefully without interference. The only obligation they impose on others is not to prevent you from acting. They include:
 - the right to life (in the sense that no one may kill you)
 - the right to be free from assault
 - the right to use your property
 - the right to use your labor
 - skills and
 - mind to create goods and services and to trade with other people in voluntary exchanges.

Natural Rights

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- Positive rights or claim-rights are rights that impose and obligation on some people to provide certain things for others.
- A positive right to a job means that someone must hire you regardless of whether they voluntarily chosen to or that is right, or obligatory for the government to set up job programs for people who are out of work.
- A positive right to life means that some people are obligated to pay for food or medical care for others who cannot pay for them.