Republic of the Philippines

Polytechnic University of the Philippines

Quezon City Branch

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL

on

GEED 10093

ETHICS

Compiled by:

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GEED 10093 – ETHICS
Module 5

Week 6 & 7: Normative Ethical Theories

Topics

1. Two General types: Teleological vs. Deontological
2. Three Types of Teleological Normative Ethical Theory
3. Two Types of Nonconsequentialist Ethical Theory

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand the classical and modern ethical theory as classified in terms of two general types: teleological and deontological;

Teaching Learning Activities

1. 5th 3-hour video conferencing lecture session;
2. Read the following Readings in Ethics:
   a. Tom L. Beauchamp and Leroy Walters, "Ethical Theory and Bioethics," Contemporary Issues in Bioethics, 3rd Edition (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1989), pp. 3 – 7.
3. Watch the following YouTube links:
   a. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_t4obUc51A
   b. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoHJhwh4mVQ
   c. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51DZteag74A
   d. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TuPgS9fMQU
   e. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1yW5IsnSjo

Assessment Activities

1. Do Exercises # 4 and 5 and submit.
2. Submit Reflection Paper # 5 based on the readings and discussions.

Course Materials

Normative Ethical Theories

At present we are not concerned with a theory of practice but rather with the theories that underlie practice. In the earlier topics, meta-ethics was characterised as the inquiry into the meaning of the key concepts (for example, 'right', 'duty' and

'autonomy') as well as the inquiry into whether there is a correct method for answering moral questions. Meta-ethical questions, however, by no means exhaust a moral philosopher's interest in ethics. A second main area of inquiry is commonly referred to as normative ethics. Philosophers engaged in normative ethics attempt to go beyond the questions concerning the meaning and method that arise in eta-ethics; the goal they set themselves is nothing short of determining what moral principles are valid – those principles, that is, by which all moral agents ought morally to be guided.

A structured normative ethical theory is a system of principles used to determine moral obligations. Modern ethical theory has come to be classified in terms of two general types: deontological/nonconsequentialist theory and teleological/consequentialist theory.

Teleological Normative Ethical Theories or Consequentialist Theories

Roughly speaking, the one common and peculiar characteristic of every wrong action, they have theorized, is that it leads to bad results, whereas the common and peculiar characteristic of every right action, again roughly speaking, is that it leads to good results. Philosophers who accept this type of view commonly are referred to as consequentialists, an appropriate name given their strong emphasis on results or consequences. Theories of this type also are called teleological theories, from Greek word *telos,* meaning "end" or "purpose," another fitting name since, according to those thinkers, actions are not right or wrong in themselves; they are right or wrong, according to these theories, if they promote or frustrate the purpose of morality – namely, to bring about the greatest possible balance of good over evil consequences.

In summary, the consequentialist ethical theory determines the morality of an act based on the intrinsic goodness or badness of the consequences of an act. There are at least three different types of teleological normative ethical theories.

1. **Ethical Egoism**: According to this theory, roughly speaking, whether any person (A) has done what is morally right or wrong depends solely on how good or bad the consequences of A's action are for A. How others are affected is irrelevant, unless how they are affected in turn alters the consequences for A.
2. **Ethical Altruism**: According to this theory, roughly speaking, whether any person (B) has done what is morally right or wrong depends solely on how good or bad the consequences of B's action are for everyone except B. how B is affected is irrelevant, unless how B is affected in turn alters the consequences for anyone else.
3. **Utilitarianism**: According to this theory, roughly speaking, whether any person (C) has done what is morally right or wrong depends solely on how good or bad the consequences of C's action for everyone affected. Thus, how C is affected is relevant; but so is how others are affected: how everyone concerned is affected by the good or bad consequences is relevant.

Write your own criticisms/critique paper on Teleological Theories.

Deontological Normative Ethical Theory or Nonconsequentialist Theories

'Nonconsequentialism' is a name frequently given to normative ethical theories that are not forms of consequentialism. Deontologists argue that moral standards exist independently of utilitarian ends and that the moral life should not be conceived in terms of means and ends. (the Greek word *deon*, or binding obligation, is the source of the term "deontology.") An act or rule is right, in the view of a deontologist, insofar as it satisfies the demands of some overriding principle(s) of obligation.

Deontologists urge us to consider that actions are morally wrong not because of their consequences but because the action type – the class of which the actions are instances- involves a moral violation. Because of the wide diversity in these theories it is hard to find the unity, but the following two conditions are close to the heart of deontological theories. First, the justification of principles and actions is not entirely by appeal to the consequences of adopting the principles or performing the actions. Second, some principles must be followed or actions performed irrespective of the consequences. Thus, there are not only justificatory grounds of obligation that are independent of the production of good consequences, but these grounds are at least sometimes sufficient to defeat the consequences no matter what the consequences are.

In summary, any theory that states that moral right and wrong are not determined solely by the relative balance of intrinsic good over intrinsic evil commonly is called a nonconsequentialist ethical theory. Such theories have two types:

1. **Extreme nonconsequentialist Ethical Theory**: it holds the view that the intrinsic good and evil of consequences are totally irrelevant to determining what is morally right or wrong. In other words, a radical deontologist will argue that consequences are irrelevant to moral evaluations. An act is right if and only if it conforms to an overriding moral obligation and wrong if and only if it violates the overriding moral duty or principle.
2. **Moderate nonconsequentialist Ethical Theory**: holds that the intrinsic good and evil of consequences are relevant to determining what is morally right or wrong but that they are not the only things that are relevant and may not be of the greatest importance in some cases.

There are reasons why some philosophers have attracted to such theory. In particular is the *idea of justice*. A central argument advanced against all forms of consequentialism by many nonconsequentialists is that no consequentialist theory (no form of ethical egoism, ethical altruism, or utilitarianism) can account for basic convictions about justice and injustice – for example, that it is unjust to allow policies that discriminate against people on the basis of race or sex. The point these deontologists make is that such discrimination is not only wrong; harming the people

who are discriminated against wrongs them. Fundamentally, according to these thinkers, it is because people are wronged when treated unjustly, quite apart from the value of the consequences for the victim or others, that all consequentialist theories ultimately proven to be deficient.

A number of such theories following this deontological tradition have been advanced. And they will be separately discussed in detail in the succeeding sections of this learning material.   St Thomas Aquinas' Natural Law and Rawl's Theory of Justice are among the prominent   . But the one associated with the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) is unquestionably the most influential.

EXERCISE # 5

Write your own criticisms/critique paper on Deontological Theories.

In the succeeding sections of this learning material on Ethics, we will provide some introductory discussion to this ethical theory by treating various normative theories in depth namely Classical Ethics, Natural Law Ethics, Kantian Ethics, Utilitarianism, Social Contract Ethics and Situational Ethics.