

Ethical Considerations

Thomas/Morgan

KIN 161

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The Realm of Ethics

- Ethics serve as a guideline for action
- *Normative* - prescribe how we should act in certain circumstances
 - Urges one to act in a particular way AND marshals convincing arguments for that action
- Allows us to examine behavior/actions and determine if they are “right” or “wrong”
- Ethics are most often *practical* in that they deal with real-life social issues

Three Fields of Ethics

- **Meta-Ethics:** Investigates the nature of ethical standards, i.e. What is “goodness”
- **Normative Ethics:** Examines standards for rightness and wrongness of actions. Determines *practical moral standards* – Good habits, Duties, and Consequences
- **Applied Ethics:** Practical and particular. Takes Normative theories of ‘goodness’ and applies them to ethical situations
 - Medical, Business, Legal, Environmental...

Three Kinds of Ethical Questions

Normative	Objective	Subjective
What college or university should I attend?	At what temperature does ice freeze?	What is your favorite month of the year?
Was Picasso a great artist?	What is the chemical composition of salt?	Do you like three-piece or two-piece suits?
Would you assist a terminally ill family member to end his or her life if asked to do so?	On what date was Abraham Lincoln shot?	What reality television show do you like the best?

Morgan, W. (2007). Ethics, ethical inquiry, and sport: Introduction. *Ethics in Sport* (2nd Ed.). Champaign: Human Kinetics

Normative Ethics

- Not just a subjective opinion!
- According to Morgan (quoting Blackburn 2007) the retort, “that’s just your opinion” when having an argument about a normative ethical topic (ex. is PED use in sport wrong) are off-putting because the response *does not offer any justification*.
- Must engage in the larger debate and “own” our reasoning if they are to have any currency

Normative Ethics (cont.)

- Must distinguish between “motivating reasons” and “normative reasons”
- *Motivating reasons* are the “various psychological states and beliefs” that accompany intentional action (Morgan, 2007, p. xvi)
- Normative reasons are typically explained as rational deliberations NOT desires and beliefs
 - Exercise bicycle example (p. xvi)

Values and Normative Judgments

- **Prudential:** concerns the value we place on our own well being. Must consider long-term implications of our action on this perspective
- **Aesthetic:** more concerned with “how” than “what.” Focus on the way we view the world around us from the perspective of beauty & grace for example
- **Moral:** These judgments relate to our relationships and interactions with others

Values and Normative Judgments

Prudential questions	Aesthetic questions	Moral questions
Should I consider a vocational school if I don't get into college?	Can you detect any patterns in Pollack's abstract paintings?	Is capital punishment justifiable?
What diets work best for keeping one's blood sugar level in a healthy range?	What is the point the author is trying to make in this novel?	What do you mean by equality?
Are high-performance sports healthy?	Do sports have aesthetic properties?	Is it right to intentionally foul your opponent in a game?

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Values and Normative Judgments

- Moral values center on the question: “how should we do right by others” contributing to both our own good as well as the good of others (Morgan, 2007, p. xviii).
- The notion of “fairness” in sport gets at this point.
- (distinction between doing the ‘right’ thing and doing the ‘good’ thing)
- So...”moral questions must take into account ways of life that contribute to a good life, to ends or practices that are worthy of our pursuit, and to questions of fairness and justice the importantly bear on the conduct of such practices (Morgan, 2007, p. xix)

Three Categories for Guiding Ethical Behavior

1. **Legal:** Strictly applied in all situations to all people
 - Explicitly says what is allowed and what is prohibited (in sports too!)
 - Consequences for going against the rules
 - Legal standards are strictly defined

Three Categories for Guiding Ethical Behavior

2. **Moral:** Has to do with social acceptability
 - Not as tight as legal rules still give us strong ideas about right and wrong action
 - Open to interpretation and often context-specific
 - Look at the struggle to define “obscenity” can vary widely (based on geography for example)
 - Even sporting contexts vary: What is considered acceptable depends on the context (Playground B-Ball v. Intramurals for example)

Three Categories for Guiding Ethical Behavior

3. **Professional:** Most professional associations have a set of standards of acceptable practice
 - Guidelines for conduct
 - Often “legalistic” but sometimes more loosely defined
 - Represent values and beliefs that a group has about the way they should conduct their work (often to protect both the client and society at large)

How are Values Transmitted?

- Values are said to have two “bases”
 - A Social Base
 - An experiential base
- Can be both static and dynamic
- Personal Value Systems are complex expressions of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that represent both personal and societal influences
- Values can change over time for a number of reasons
- Some remain the same over time however

How are Values Transmitted?

- Simon & Raths argue for three approaches to teaching values
 - **Moralizing:** The telling of “what should be” Inculcate adult values on youth. Can articulate the values of a given subculture or society (the family, a neighborhood, social class)
 - **Modeling:** An attempt to *show* an individual what is important. An example of appropriate behavior. Often unintentional as there are many competing models.
 - Can you think of sport examples?

How are Values Transmitted?

- **Laissez Faire:** Each person has to develop their own value system.
- Confusion as to what one should do, leads to ambiguity and egocentrism (with no guidance)
- Relativistic

How do we learn moral thinking?

- Kohlberg’s six stages of moral reasoning
- Move from *dependence on others* to *autonomous thinking*
- From self to a more universal (sort of like Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs)
- Depends on an increasing capacity to think sophisticatedly about issues beyond oneself
- Based, in part, on Piaget’s work on child development

How do we learn moral thinking?

- Stage 1: Obedience and punishment orientation
 - Egocentric deference to superior power or prestige, or trouble-avoidance.
 - Objective responsibility.
- Stage 2: Naively egoistic orientation
 - Right action is that which is instrumental in satisfying the self’s needs and occasionally others’.
 - Relativism of values to each actor’s needs and perspectives.
 - Naive egalitarianism, orientation to exchange and reciprocity.

How do we learn moral thinking?

- Stage 3: Good-boy/good-girl orientation
 - Orientation to approval, to pleasing and helping others.
 - Conformity to stereotypical images of majority or natural role behavior.
 - Action is evaluated in terms of intentions.
- Stage 4: Authority and social-order-maintaining orientation
 - Orientation to “doing duty” and to showing respect for authority and maintaining the given social order or its own sake.
 - Regard for earned expectations of others.
 - Differentiates actions out of a sense of obligation to rules from actions for generally “nice” or natural motives.

How do we learn moral thinking?

- Stage 5: Contractual/legalistic orientation
 - Norms of right and wrong are defined in terms of laws or institutionalized rules which seem to have a rational basis.
 - When conflict arises between individual needs and law or contract, though sympathetic to the former, the individual believes the latter must prevail because of its greater functional rationality for society, the majority will and welfare.

How do we learn moral thinking?

- Universal Ethical Principle Orientation
 - Orientation not only toward existing social rules, but also toward the conscience as a directing agent, mutual trust and respect, and principles of moral choice involving logical universalities and consistency.
 - Action is controlled by internalized ideals that exert a pressure to act accordingly regardless of the reactions of others in the immediate environment.
 - If one acts otherwise, self-condemnation and guilt result.

Ethical Theory

- Four general approaches
 - Consequentialist/Teleological
 - (balance of good over evil)
 - Deontological
 - (duty)
 - Contractarian
 - (rooted in agreement of all those who are subject to its constraints)
 - Virtue ethics
 - (focused on the development of moral character)

Utilitarian	Deontological	Contractarian	Virtue
Focused on the consequences of our actions	Direct attention to the intrinsic features of our actions (rather than consequences)	Moral principles are derived from the agreement of all who are subjects to their dictates	Ethics should devote itself foremost to the development of moral character
Ask what act or rule produces the greatest balance of good over evil	Ask what our moral obligations are in specific circumstances or according to general rules of conduct	Generally claims that moral principles are compromises people make in order to get what they want, or are derived from the equal moral respect all agents are owed (conventional solutions to moral problems)	Argue that the cultivation of virtues and the pursuit of excellence in all its forms are essential to good character
Equate the morally good with some notion of pleasure or happiness	Equate the right or good with our basic moral duties	Equate the right and the good with what people can reasonably agree to	Equate the right and the good with what persons of moral character would do in certain contexts

Ethical Theory

- Authoritarianism
 - Absolute good is present in society or have been determined by custom or law
 - Rules of the game in sport
 - Lack of freedom of choice (to live outside the rules)
 - The greatest good for the greatest number (utilitarianism) supersedes the individual
 - Normative and prescriptive

Ethical Theory

- Relativism
 - Individual is the sole agent of decision
 - No principles or guidelines
 - Elimination of codes or laws as guideposts
 - No absolute truths or universal good
 - Since there is no Utilitarian notion, the self becomes the moral referent
 - All bets are off as this applies to sport

Ethical Theory

• Situational Ethics

- Decision making guidelines have a guideline beyond the individual though the individual is responsible for their actions
- Love is the guide principle in this theory of ethics
- Love is necessary to improve the human condition
- Based on a feeling of reciprocity not romantic love
- A caring for fellow human beings
- The state of the system at the time of an act must be included in consideration of the act.