

Chapter One

Logic and Ethical Theory

1. Recipe for an Ethical Theory

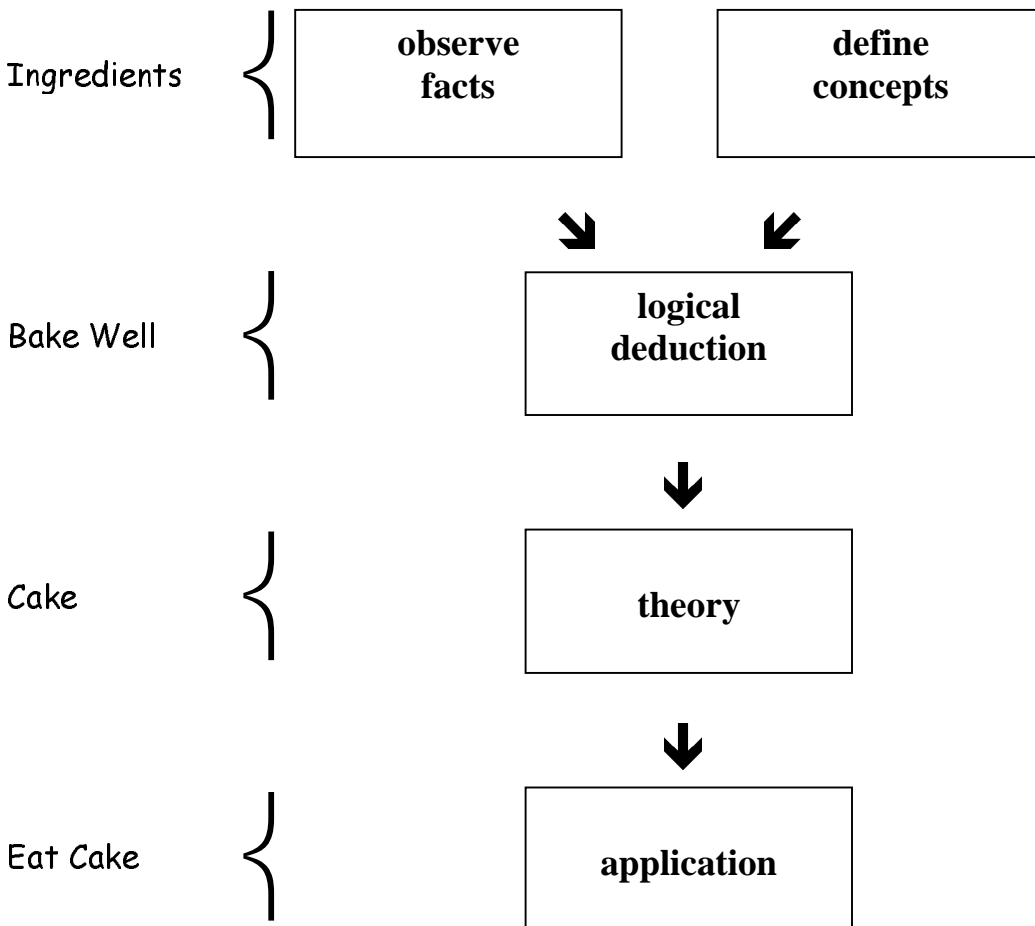
Ethics within Philosophy is limited to facts logic, and definition. Ideally, a philosopher is able to prove her theory is true and reasonable based on accurate definitions and verifiable facts. Once these definitions and facts have been established, a philosopher can develop her theory through a process of deduction, that is by showing what logically follows from the definitions and facts. She can then apply her theory to controversial moral issues.

Factual Statement:
Statement that can only be known by observation

Logic: Rules of reasonable thought

Definition: words that capture the essence of a concept

Deduction: process of applying logical principles to extend our knowledge.



2. Philosophical Etiquette

It is not enough to prove that your own theory is true and reasonable. Other philosophers will have their theories and, no doubt, there will be disagreement. Therefore, you must also show where and how other philosophers went wrong.

A true philosopher is in pursuit of truth. Therefore, we don't get angry when other philosophers attempt to prove our theories are wrong. If I have made a mistake then you are doing me a great favor by pointing out the error of my ways. If you refute a theory I've been working on for years, a theory I've staked my career on, then I should embrace and thank you rather than be devastated and angry.



3. Bad Philosophy

With the possible exception of you and I, people usually do not have logical reasons for what they believe. This is especially true for philosophical questions. Here are some examples of how not to arrive at a belief. We call them fallacies.

Musical Fallacies

1. Ad populum: everyone else seems to like rock music, it must be good.
2. Tradition: People have loved Bach for hundreds of years, it must be good.
3. Scare tactics: Bob will beat me up if I keep saying that Metallica sucks; you know, they're starting to sound pretty good!
4. Ad hominem: anyone who says that Madonna can sing is nuts.
5. Guilt by Association: the lead singer of Nirvana was a drug addict. All the other members of the band must be addicts, too.

Some Informal Fallacies

Beware, some of the examples are controversial and debatable.

1. Accident: an error based on the mistaken belief that a rule that is generally true is without exceptions. "Suicide is killing oneself--killing is murder, I'm opposed to euthanasia."
2. Ad Hominem: personal attacks, name calling, abuse. Example: "Women for euthanasia are femi-nazis."
3. Ad Populum: peer pressure, appeal to herd mentality or xenophobia. Example: "Most people don't believe in euthanasia, so it's probably wrong."
4. Ambiguity: misuse of language with more than one meaning. Example: "Bob's heart is beating, so he is alive, so to intentionally end his life would be murder."

5. Aphorism: an explanation which relies on a trite saying that, in the final analysis is meaningless. Example: "Sorry about your uncle dying, but we've all got to go sometime."
6. Appeal to Pity: belief in fact or obligation simply based on sympathy. Example: "It's horrible to use those pound dogs in experiments, I'm opposed to it."
7. Euphemism: invention in language used to avoid negative connotations of words and phrases. Example: "Bob isn't dead. He's metabolically challenged."
8. False Analogy: overextension of comparison between two things. Example: "Homosexuality increases when rats are stressed and overpopulated. That's why there are so many homosexuals in California."
9. False Authority: argument based on appeal to an expert when out of his field of expertise. Example: "Sue is a medical doctor, she says euthanasia is murder, therefore I am opposed to euthanasia."
10. False Dilemma: argument based on the assumption that there are fewer alternatives than actually exist. Example: "It's either euthanasia or long, painful suffering."
11. Guilt by Association: belief that people can always be judged by the people with whom they are seen, by their relatives, by those that belong to the same organizations, and so forth. Example: "Bob is a chemist for Revlon. Isn't Revlon the company who made rabbits go blind in their experiments? Bob is sadistic!"
12. Half-truth: argument based on only the positive half of the story. Example: "Animal research has produced loads of benefits--that's why I support it."
13. Hasty Generalization: concluding that a population has some quality based on a misrepresentative sample. Example: "My grandparents are for euthanasia, I guess most seniors are."
14. Hyperbole: an exaggeration. Example: "We owe all of our advances in medicine to animal research--that's why I'm for it."

15. Novelty: unjustified belief that new developments are better than the old. Example: "Euthanasia is the modern solution to suffering, I'm for it."
16. Questionable Studies: citing biased studies or studies that lack consensus. Example: "The Beef Rancher's Council supports a study that shows beef is low in cholesterol."
17. Scare Tactics: belief in X based on fear if X is false. Example: "Save the cows says mad cow disease is in American beef. I'd better switch to soy."
18. Slippery Slope (Domino Fallacy): belief that a first step in some direction amounts to going far in that direction. Example: "If we legalized euthanasia this will inevitably lead to genocide--I'm opposed to it."
19. Straw Man: attaching a similar, but weaker, position than that of your opponent. Example: "Those in favor of euthanasia believe all imperfect people should be killed, I'm opposed to that!"
20. Subjectivism: argument that truth varies according to personal opinion. Example: "Euthanasia may be right for you, but it's wrong for me."
21. Tradition: belief that X is justified simply because X has been done in the past. Example: "We've done well without euthanasia for thousands of years, we shouldn't change now."
22. Tu Quoque (Poisoning the Well): attack on an argument based on the circumstances of one giving it. Example: "How can you argue about euthanasia, you have never died before?"
23. Two Wrongs: belief that actions can be justified against wrongdoers based on the moral principles of wrongdoers. Example: "Dr. Kevorkian deserves to die for his crimes."
24. Wishful Thinking: believing that things are (or will be) some way simply because that is how you wish things to be. Example: "I'm sure grandma will get better. I couldn't bear to lose her."

Normative Statement:
 Not a factual statement; for example, "killing is wrong."

Valid Argument:
 conclusion strictly follows from the premise.

Invalid Argument: not a valid argument.

Premise: reasoning given to support conclusion.

Conclusion: what you are trying to prove.

Is-ought fallacy:
 argument with all factual premises and a normative conclusion must be invalid.

David Hume: English Philosopher (born 1711-1776).

4. Is-Ought Fallacy

David Hume (1711-1776) observed that often when people are debating a moral issue they begin with facts and slide into conclusions that are normative; that is, conclusions about how things ought to be. He argued that no amount of facts taken alone can ever be sufficient to imply a normative conclusion--- the is-ought fallacy.

For example, imagine that George mows down forty kindergartners playing in the schoolyard with his Uzi. Think of all the facts. There is the muzzle velocity of bullets, the physics of how bullets penetrate little bodies on impact how bodies tend to lose blood pressure when there are openings in the circulatory system, and the cries of their parents (measurable in decibels). There are certain facts about George when they apprehend him and strap him to the electric chair, running 10,000 volts through his system. From all these facts you can construct a valid argument with, "George was wrong to mow down those kids" or "we are justified in executing George" as its conclusion? I think not. To be valid, you would need at least one normative premise: "it's wrong to kill innocent people."

INVALID ARGUMENT	VALID ARGUMENT
Premise One: Fact Premise Two: Fact Etc.	Premise One: George killed innocent kids (fact) Premise Two: We are justified in executing murderers (normative)
Conclusion: Normative Statement	Conclusion: We are justified in executing George (normative)

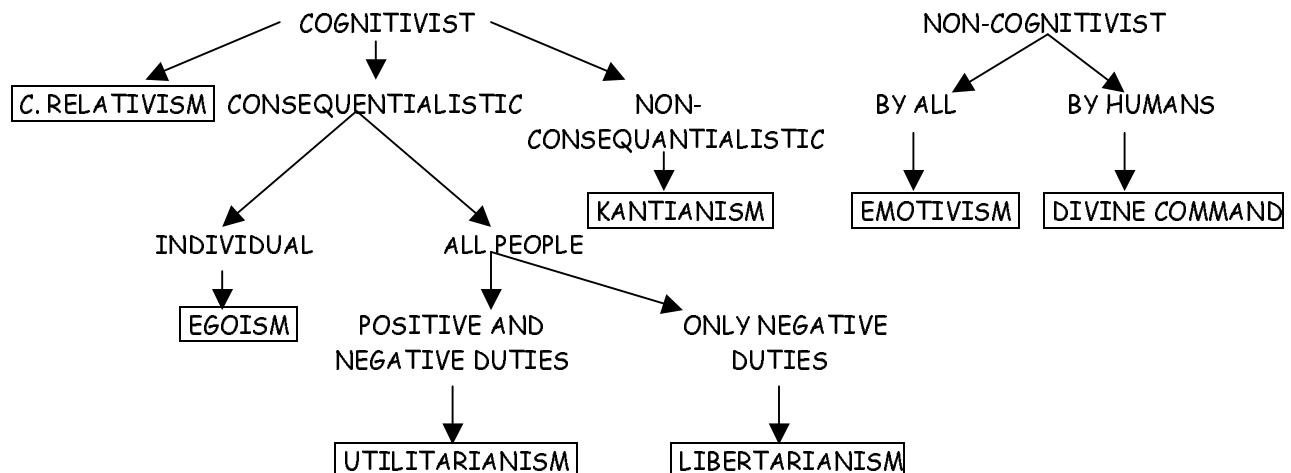
5. Ethical Theories

If we are to have valid ethical arguments then we must have some normative premises to begin with. These normative premises are either statements of ethical theories themselves or statements implied by ethical theories.

The seven most interesting, most common, and most straight forward ethical theories are:

- Egoism: An action is right if it makes me happy.
- Utilitarianism: An action is right if it maximizes the overall happiness of all people.
- Libertarianism: You should be free to do as you please as long as it doesn't harm others, unless they give their consent to be harmed.
- Kantianism: Treat other people the way you wish they would treat you. And never treat other people as if they were merely things.
- Emotivism: The meaning of ethical language is logically equivalent to a fact coupled with an expression of approval or disapproval.
- Cultural Relativism: What is right or wrong varies according to beliefs of each culture.
- Divine Command: Do as the creator tells you.

Map of Ethical Theories



6. Consequentialism

Cognitive Theories: are ones in which we can know if an action is right or wrong, that is normative statements are true or false and we have the means of knowing which ones are true or false.

Positive Duty: I mean the duty to make someone or everyone happy.

Negative Duty: I mean the duty not to create misery and pain for others.

Consequentialism: I mean that it is the effects of action that make them right or wrong.

Consequentialism is an answer to the question, "What is it about an action that makes it right or wrong?" It tells us to look at the effects of an action, or in other words, its causal properties. Another way to look at it is that consequentialism looks to the future. An action is confined to a place and time. Its effects will either be simultaneous with it or more often its effects will be later in time.

Non-consequentialist theories focus on the character of the action itself or the motivation of the person who performs the action.

That "the ends justify the means" is a fallacy even to consequentialists if by "ends" you mean only the final results of the action. Consequentialists will include all of the effects. Bob steals babies. His justification is that he gives them up for adoption to loving homes. The ends, you would probably say, do not justify the means. A consequentialist would agree. There are also the effects of the unhappy babyless families and the fear that would occur as a result of the publicity.

It's for a good cause.



7. Hedonism

Hedonism: pleasure is good, pain is bad.

Intrinsic value: valuable in itself.

Extrinsic value: valuable as a means to an intrinsic value.

John Stuart Mill: English philosopher (1806-1873)

For a hedonist, pleasure is good and pain is bad. More precisely, only pleasure has intrinsic value; all other things have extrinsic value insofar as they are productive of pleasure. For example, going to the dentist for a root canal is not pleasant, but to do so is rational for a hedonist because the present discomfort will more than be outweighed by the pain and misery of toothaches that are avoided by the procedure. Therefore, there is extrinsic value in undergoing the root canal, and there is intrinsic value in the pleasure of not having the toothache.

I can prove to you that pleasure is good and pain is bad! First, I'll lock you in a closet and beat you with a baseball bat. Then you'll sit in a hot tub with room service bringing you your favorite beverage and food. Let's go through this cycle several times. Then I ask, which is better?

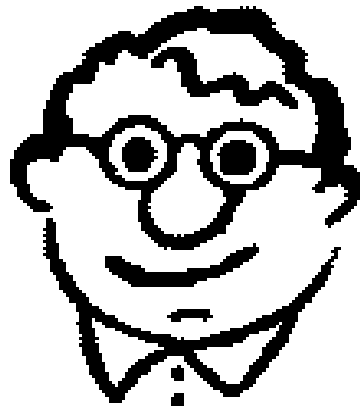
Hedonism has an undeserved bad reputation, often being associated with what is commonly called the "party animal. Now I admit that there is no lower form of life than to continually seek the pleasures of "wine, women, and song" or "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" (or to be politically correct, "mood-altering substances which happen to be currently restricted by the traditional power structure, intimate companionship of a physical nature according to one's predetermined sexual preference, and song.") But there are more thoughtful hedonists who carefully choose nature hikes, attend poetry readings, and occasionally share a glass of fine wine with good company.

John Stuart Mill claims that there are higher pleasures and lower pleasures, and that without the higher pleasures one can never attain real happiness. Examples of the higher pleasures are reading good literature, scientific research, appreciation of the beauty of nature and fine art, and what I'll call "true love."

How do you know which pleasures are the higher pleasures? Mill tells us it is through the experience of "competent judges." These would be people of wide experience, who are open-minded and whose brains have not been destroyed by overindulgence of mind altering substances or by banging their heads against the wall too long while listening to Metallica and AC/DC. This is difficult for people to accept these days. We live in a world that seems to have rejected authority.

Many believe that each person decides what is a higher pleasure for themselves. Mark likes to shoot up methamphetamines and go on axe-murdering rampages. Who are we to judge? I guess that meth and bloodbaths are higher pleasures for Mark.

It may be true for you that the earth is a sphere, but it's not true for me.



I think not. The fallacy of subjectivism seems to rule these days. Of course, some things are a matter of taste. I like scrambled eggs smothered in green taco sauce and you don't. There's nothing illogical about that. But when everything becomes a matter of personal preference and there is no objective authority, then we are reduced to the absurd position that we are in no position to say Mark's values are wrong.

8. Egoism

Egoism seems to be an absurdly selfish doctrine. If Betty is an egoist then Betty believes that everything of value in the world is only of value to her. Egoists believe that their only duty in life is to make themselves happy so egoism is a form of hedonistic consequentialism.

Maybe it is true that we really can't help other people no matter how hard we try. Sometimes I wonder if this isn't true. Charity and welfare programs never seem to be as successful as we hope they would be, for they often take away the incentive of the recipients to find a solution to their own problems. You might believe that if everyone minded their own affairs and didn't meddle in the affairs of others then it would be a better world.

An egoist, then, analyzes every moral issue by asking, "what's in it for me?" Don't confuse egocentricity with egoism. The latter position is that no one ever has a duty to help another person, but every person has a duty to help themselves. The former is that everyone has a duty to help me, but I don't have a duty to anyone else but me.

Ayn Rand in *The Virtue of Selfishness* argues for a form of egoism she calls "Objectivism." Objectivism says that we ought to act in what is rationally our own self interest, not merely what we happen to believe to be in our own self interest, i.e., a drug addict should not necessarily use more drugs. Her main argument is refutation of altruism... the theory that being moral is essentially a matter of self-sacrifice. She sees altruism as implying that:

1. A negative attitude towards ethics, since ethics are seen as being contrary to one's self-interest--ethics are the "enemy."
2. Altruism equates a wealthy capitalist to a bank robber, which is absurd!
3. The decision to live (which is natural and universal) is usually within one's self-interest and, therefore, is evil.

In defense of utilitarianism, Kantianism, and other ethical theories, they all seem to have some duties towards one's own self-interest and, therefore, altruism is not the only alternative to egoism.

Utilitarianism: what we ought to do, that is, the basis of ethical theory, is to produce pleasure, satisfaction, and/or happiness for some group, usually humans.

Consequentialism: the theory that only properties relevant to an action's being right or wrong are its effects, that is, its consequences.

Actual Consequentialism: it is the actual effects of the action that count towards its being right or wrong.

Expected Consequentialism: it is the effects that most reasonably would be expected to come from the action that count towards its being right or wrong.

Hedonism: the theory that only pleasure is "the good" or that which has ethical value.

Egotistic Behavior: is the view that only MY pleasure has ethical value.

Universal Hedonism: is the view that all (or everyone's) pleasure has ethical value.

9. Utilitarianism

1. Definition of Utilitarianism

That which has "utility" is that which is useful to us. Ultimately, that which is useful to us, we might suppose, is that which brings us pleasure, satisfaction, and/or happiness. According to utilitarianism, what we ought to do, that is, the basis of ethical theory, is to produce pleasure, satisfaction, and/or happiness for some group, usually humans.

There are several varieties of utilitarianism. Generally, utilitarian theories identify some quality or end-state as "the good," that is, that which has ethical value. Usually, this is the pleasure, satisfaction, and/or happiness of humans. Utilitarianism also includes the claim that actions are right or wrong to the extent that they produce "the good." Different varieties of utilitarianism are generated by different opinions about exactly what is the "good" and exactly how it is that we are obligated to produce it.

UTILITARIANISM is the combination of two theories: Consequentialism and Universal Hedonism.

CONSEQUENTIALISM is the theory that only properties relevant to an action's being right or wrong are its effects, that is, its consequences. According to consequentialism, the motivation behind the action (good or bad intentions) and the kind of action it is (theft or telling the truth) is irrelevant to the question of whether the action is right or wrong; only its effects count. There are two main versions of consequentialism. According to ACTUAL CONSEQUENTIALISM, it is the effects that most reasonably would be expected to come from the action that count towards its being right or wrong. My example of a drunk driver who accidentally saves twenty innocent victims is an example of an action that is right according to actual consequentialism but wrong according to expected consequentialism.

Universal hedonism is a version of HEDONISM, the theory that only pleasure is "the good" or that which has ethical value. EGOISTIC BEHAVIOR is the view that only MY pleasure has ethical value. UNIVERSAL HEDONISM is the view that all (or everyone's) pleasure has ethical value. Different versions of hedonism are generated by different theories of pleasure and

Sensation Theory of Pleasure: a pleasant episode is one in which a pleasure sensation occurs and no pain sensations occur.

According to the Desire Theory of Pleasure: a pleasure is the satisfaction of our greatest desire, the desire for happiness.

different theories of the value of pleasure from person to person. Animal pleasures might also be included. According to the SENSATION THEORY OF PLEASURE, a pleasant episode is one in which a pleasure sensation occurs and no pain sensations occur. According to the DESIRE THEORY OF PLEASURE, a pleasure is the satisfaction of our greatest desire: the desire for happiness.

2. Consequentialism

I am now speaking of consequentialism in the context of utilitarianism, meaning the position that actions are right or wrong insofar as they affect the happiness, preferences, etc. of some class of sentient beings, usually humans. Consequentialism is not a trivial theory because it specifies a narrow range of properties as being the determining factors in regard to actions being right or wrong. Actions have many properties other than their effects on the happiness, preference, etc., of humans, including the kind of action it is, the motivation behind the action, and other consequences (broadly taken), for instance, the consequence of having violated someone's rights or having broken a promise. Here is an argument for consequentialism:

- (P1) Assume that there are several actions that you might perform at some given moment (a_1, a_2, a_3, \dots);
- (P2) And assume that each of these actions produces a net gain or net loss of good (g_1, g_2, g_3, \dots);
- (P3) Also assume that there is action ($a!$) that produces good ($g!$) such that ($g!$) is the highest net gain of good.
- (C1) ($a!$) is appealing. It is the right action.

Any (a) other than ($a!$) will give us less than the good produced by ($a!$), and why settle for less? At a deeper level, The Main Argument is based on the assumption that it is up to us to make the world better, which is based on the assumption that the product of some human actions is better than the product of others.

3. Universal Hedonism

Hedonism is the theory that only pleasure (and/or happiness) has intrinsic ethical value. Things that produce pleasure (and/or happiness), under this theory, have extrinsic ethical value.

Egoistic hedonism, the theory that nothing but each person's own pleasure is valuable to that person, is not easy to prove or disprove. In a world in which only one person exists, it seems reasonable to hold that all that matters is that person's happiness. In a world in which there are two persons, both might believe that his or her own happiness is as valuable as the happiness of the other, or maybe not. One might argue that humans are animals of a species, and that, in nature, we are approximately equal, as each zebra is equal to the next.

The best proof that only happiness has intrinsic value is that most people seem to value it for themselves. The only proof that I can see for the idea that the happiness of one person is approximately equal in value to the happiness of any other person is a tradition of democratic values.

Some say that Mill has committed the FALLACY OF EQUIVOCATION in his argument for hedonism. A fallacy is an error in the reasoning process. "Equivocate" means to call two different things by the same name. If, in an argument, you begin by using one sense of a word then you must continue using only that sense. If you say, "Of course, you can carry two cases of beer two miles from home. It's LIGHT beer" you are equivocating the word "light." Madonna sings that she lives in a material world, so she believes she must be a material" (that is, materialistic) girl. But, aren't there two senses of "material" here? Mill argues that only happiness is DESIRABLE, since he finds that it is only happiness that people seem to desire. There are two senses to "desirable," that which CAN be desired and that which OUGHT to be desired. Perhaps, Mill is shifting from one sense to the other, and therefore, he might have made an error in reasoning.

Others say that Mill has committed the FALLACY OF COMPOSITION at a later stage of his argument. Usually, but not always, if every part of a whole has some property then the whole has that property. Each part of my house is made of wood. I have a cedar roof, pine walls, a maple floor, and a mahogany door; therefore I may conclude that my house is made of wood. There are exceptions to this type of argument. Each and every member of the elk herd is mortal and will become "extinct" some day. It does not necessarily follow that the herd will someday be extinct. Mill argues that from the premise "each person's happiness is a

Quantitative Hedonism:
there is a formula
[$Vp = (I \times D) +/- E$]
by which we can
calculate the value
of the pleasure
and/or pain
produced by each of
our actions.

Qualitative Hedonism:
the amount of
pleasures would be
compensation for a
life without the
higher pleasures.

good to that person." To him the conclusion "the general happiness is a good to be aggregate of all person."

4. *Quantitative Hedonism*

According to QUANTITATIVE HEDONISM, there is a formula [$Vp=(I \times D +/- E)$] by which we can calculate the value of the pleasure and/or pain produced by each of our actions. For example, I hit my thumb with a hammer the other day. The average intensity of the pain was a -4 and the duration was 15 minutes ($I \times D$), which equals -60 hedonic units. An upward adjustment of five units (E) is made for the positive effect that I will be more careful in the future. Therefore, the net value of the episode is -55.

5. *Qualitative Hedonism*

Utilitarianism is the combination of consequentialism and universal hedonism. Consequentialism has two basic forms, actual consequentialism and expected consequentialism. No decision has been made which is the best of these, although the example of drunk driver who saves twenty hostages influenced most of you to go with expected consequentialism. Utilitarianism based on universal hedonism has two basic forms, quantitative utilitarianism and qualitative utilitarianism.

Qualitative hedonism has its roots in ancient philosophy. Both Plato and Aristotle claim the superiority of pleasure of the intellectual life. The most important formulation and arguments for qualitative hedonism are in the first dozen paragraphs of chapter two of John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism. I shall begin with Mill's definition, which is as follows (with my added notation):

"If I am asked what I mean by the difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, [1] except it being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, [2] if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, [3] irrespective of any feelings of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the most desirable pleasure. If one of the two is, [4] by those who are competently acquainted with both, placed so far above the other that they prefer it, [5] even thought

knowing it to be attended with a greater amount of discontent, and [6] would not resign it for any quantity of the other pleasure which their nature is capable of, we are justified in ascribing to the preferred enjoyment, [7] a superiority in quality so far outweighing quantity as to render it, in comparison, of small account."

This paragraph is a careful summary of several points that Mill develops in support of his position. Point #1 is clear statement that Mill's view is not quantitative hedonism. A qualitative theory can admit some quantitative comparisons, but is not limited to them. By "quality" of pleasure, at this time, Mill seems to mean superiority in value apart from quantitative comparison, for he is allowing for pleasure of lesser quantity to have greater value.

Points #2, #4, #5, and #6 are a summation of Mill's view on how we are to know which pleasures are superior. Mill does not say that the higher pleasures can be known by some intrinsic quality they all share. There is a tendency on the part of qualitative hedonists to identify the higher pleasures with those with a higher degree of intellectual activity, but Mill does not clearly commit himself to the view that intellectual activity is the mark of higher pleasures. Experience of the higher pleasures is the key to knowing that they are of superior value, but Mill does not say that our preference of them makes them higher pleasures. Instead, his view seems to be that there is no single intrinsic quality by which the higher pleasures can be known, and that is why experience of them is the only way that they can be identified. It is possible that something at one time is classified as a higher pleasure and with the further refinement of the judgment process the classification is overturned. Thus, the preference of competent judges does not make something a higher pleasure. Rather, their judgment is the best method by which the higher pleasures can be known.

The idea behind point #3 is that, at the initial stages, our preconceptions of what pleasures are legitimate should be disregarded. The best possible evidence of the value of a type of pleasure is the testimony of those who have no strong preconceptions about the value of that type of pleasure before

they have experienced it. Mill is saying in point #7 that the difference in preference need not be absolute in order to justify making a qualitative distinction. He can still put a small value on the lower class of pleasures, but there is such a gap between them and the higher class that the distinction is well founded. Claiming that one class of pleasure is qualitatively superior does not imply that other classes are without value. The point is that no amount of the lower class is compensation for a life devoid of pleasures of the higher class. Assuming that sufficient higher pleasures are included in one's life, then there is value in the occasional experience of the lower pleasures. If experience of the higher pleasures is not possible, there is still some value in the experience of the lower pleasures. The key point of the distinction is that a life barely sufficient in the higher pleasures is more desirable than a life lacking them, but rich in the lower pleasures.

Libertarianism: if an act is freely chosen and doesn't harm others, unless they have given their consent, then the act is permissible.

10. Libertarianism

The concepts of right and wrong are not as important as the concept of permissibility in libertarianism. If an act is freely chosen and doesn't harm others, unless they have given their consent, then the act is permissible. If an act is permissible, then other people do not have the right to interfere with your chosen action. Libertarianism is like utilitarianism in that you have an obligation not to cause pain and misery for others, but it also different in that you have no obligation to promote the happiness and welfare of others.

The concepts of harm to others and freely-given consent are crucial in libertarianism. Harm to others need clarification. It seems that the relevant harm is of a direct, usually physical or financial form. For example, if you are offended by Bob's spiked purple hair and rivets in his forehead, this is not the kind of harm that concerns libertarianism, for you have chosen to be offended. If Bob goes on a shooting spree and kills you, or if he cheats you, that is the kind of harm that counts.

Charity is not a duty of libertarians. If you choose to give, then that is fine; but, if you do not choose to give, then that is fine, too. So, Kantians, utilitarians, and divine command theorists have charity as a duty. Charity is optional for libertarians and charity is wrong for egoists.

Libertarians support a minimal government that protects people's rights only. So they support national defense, police, and the courts. They do not support government welfare programs such as food stamps, farm subsidies, public roads, etc. Taxation to support welfare programs is a form of theft, in their view. Thus, the "fight crime, abolish the IRS" bumper sticker.

Libertarians tend to support legalization of heroin, cocaine, and other dangerous drugs. I see this as an error on their part, since people who use these substances are not merely harming themselves, they are putting all of society in danger.

Kantianism CI#1: don't choose a rule for yourself that you wouldn't want everyone else to obey.

Kantianism CI#2: don't treat humans (including yourself) merely as things.

11. Kantianism (Rights Theory)

Let me begin with Kant's analysis of the features of action that truly has moral worth (in other words, a right action). His is an ethics centered around rules, in particular, what he sees as the supreme law of morality, the categorical imperative. It says (in so many words) "Don't choose a rule for yourself that you wouldn't want everyone else to obey." Although we have only one supreme law, it has two distinct formulations, the second being, "don't treat humans (including yourself) merely as things." These two formulations express the same principle, according to Kant. The categorical imperative, if you hadn't noticed, bears a close resemblance to the 'Golden Rule' of Christianity and other religions.

Rules play an important role in Kant's ethics. He says that the purpose of an action doesn't make an action right or wrong and, instead, we must look to the rule by which the action was undertaken. I'm not sure exactly what he means by "purpose" here. Let's say you're going to the supermarket to buy refreshments and snacks for a party. The "purpose" of your action is to be prepared for the party. Kant is trying to prove that consequentialism is false, since, for the most part, the purposes of our actions are to achieve consequences: in this case, the effect of having refreshments and snacks for the party. The view is non-consequentialistic. His is a version of the "good intentions" variety of ethical theory. How the action is motivated is the key point, ethically speaking, for him. According to Kant, an action has moral worth only if it is performed out of respect for the supreme law of morality, the categorical imperative. Think of Pollyanna and Scrooge (similar to the characters in fiction). Pollyanna bakes cookies and takes them to her next door neighbor who is not feeling well, just because doing so comes naturally to Pollyanna, a good-hearted person. Our Scrooge buys a goose for Tiny Tim's family even though he is a miser at heart, he does so because he recognizes it's his duty because he would appreciate a goose if his family lacked one for Christmas Eve. (Okay, the real Scrooge is frightened into it, but that won't work for what I want to show here.) On Kant's theory, Pollyanna gets zero points moral credit, while Scrooge gets a bunch. Pollyanna's action were not motivated out of a respect for the supreme law of morality. It

seems that almost no actions are ever morally worthwhile, on Kant's theory, because of these strict requirements.

1. Sue's parents save to send her to college because they love her = no moral worth.
2. Sue's parents save to send her to college because they want her to be happy = no moral worth.
3. Sue's parents send her to college because they would have wanted their parents to have supported them and they wish that everyone would adopt this rules = moral worth.

If Sue's parents have all three kinds of reasons at once, according to Kant, only the third is relevant to the question of their actions being right or wrong, which seems too narrow.

An important distinction in Kant's theory is the difference between persons and things. Sometimes I use the term "human," but humanity as a biological species isn't the point here, it's rationality, the ability to reason and act according to rational principles so that, conceivably, "persons" includes intelligent extra-terrestrials and maybe even really smart dolphins, like Flipper. Persons are extra special, according to Kant's theory, because they alone can recognize the validity of the categorical imperative and govern their actions out of a respect for it. Cats, dogs and rocks can only act out of inclination, the feelings that are strongest at the moment (or, in the case of the rock, the strongest force that bears on it). His view is that what's wrong about kicking your dog is that this might lead to a cruel attitude, and eventually, you'll be kicking people, too. You can't do the dog injustice because it's just a "thing." Putting the animal question aside, Kant's view is admirable in the respect for people that comes out of it. Prostitution is wrong, for example, because one is treating oneself merely as a means to sexual gratification and/or money. Is working for a living wrong, too? Is the wrong in being a wage slave and selling yourself to your employer? Well, I guess not, if you are provided a living wage, safe working conditions, and you aren't humiliated, etc...

Kant tries to apply his ethical theory to four carefully chosen examples: suicide, promises, self-improvement, and charity. I think these examples are chosen to show the contrast

between his theory and consequentialism (utilitarianism and libertarianism). Even these theories weren't formally set forth several years later by Mill. The examples fall into four separate categories: perfect duties to oneself, perfect duties to others, imperfect duties to oneself, and imperfect duties to others. By "perfect," Kant means there is only one proper course of action, while in "imperfect" cases there are several ways one might act properly.

1. *Suicide*

Imagine that you are in a hopeless situation all that awaits you is a life of misery and unhappiness. According to utilitarianism (strangely enough) you might actually have a duty to kill yourself, as this would result in the greatest overall happiness and the minimum of unhappiness. According to libertarianism, it would be permissible to commit suicide, as long as you didn't harm others in the process. Kant says this is wrong because, according to *CI#1*, you couldn't will this to be a universal law of nature. Personally, I don't see what he's getting at here. Of course, you aren't willing that everyone and everything kill themselves at the drop of a hat. Kant seems to fall back on a different philosophical view that is not part of the view stated in his book. Suicide, he claims, is a perversion of the principle of self-love (self preservation) that has as its purpose the continuance of life, not its destruction. His application of *CI#2* makes more sense. In committing suicide, your rational side (the part that makes decisions) is treating your non-rational side (your body, in this case) merely as a thing; that is, a means of escaping pain and unhappiness. What's bad about suicide, in this view, is not that your friends will miss you or that there'll be a big mess to clean up, but that you would be treating yourself in a dehumanizing way, as if you were simply a tool to be used in order to achieve some effect, in this case, alleviating misery.

2. *Promises*

Imagine that you've got a big weekend coming up and that you're short on funds. You make a promise to your roommate, "Loan me fifty dollars. I've got a check coming in the mail next week and I'll pay you back then," when you know that there is no

such check coming. You're making a lying promise without any intention of repaying the loan as promised. What's wrong about this action? According to utilitarianism, perhaps, it's not maximizing happiness because the misery of your roommate will exceed the fun you'll have. According to libertarianism, this is not permissible because it harms others without their consent. In Kant's view, what's wrong is that you couldn't will that your personal maxim, "I'll make a promise without repaying," would become the universal law, "I wish everyone would regularly make such lying promises," because if it were a universal law then promises would be worthless and your roommate wouldn't give you the money! (Get it?) CI#2 works well in this case, too. What's wrong about the lying promise is that you're treating your roommate merely as a thing (like a bank machine), not keeping in mind that he (or she) might have his (or her) own plans for the money.

3. *Self-improvement*

According to utilitarianism, one has a duty to improve oneself because this leads to the maximum happiness for everyone (might not apply to pre-law students). According to libertarianism, it is permissible not to be improving oneself, as long as this neglect doesn't harm others. CI#1 works well here. Imagine that you're a pre-med student doing cancer research, but you're getting bored of school, so you drop out and become a beach bum in Key West, sleeping on the beach and panhandling off the tourists. What's wrong with this? (It's a tempting thought, sitting here at my computer on this winter day.) Well, what if you cut your foot on a piece of broken glass while frolicking in the surf? Wouldn't you wish that others had stayed in school, improved themselves, so that you may rely on their expertise to restore your health? You couldn't wish for a universal law that people neglect to develop their talents and, therefore, it's wrong that you dropped out of school. This is an imperfect duty, since there are several different ways to choose to fulfill this duty. I don't follow Kant on how CI#2 works here. Got any ideas?

4. *Charity*

Imagine that you're walking along skid row, looking at down-and-out people sleeping in the alleys and on the benches. Should you give them a handout? According to utilitarianism, you should do so only if this will create more happiness than unhappiness. One could argue that this just discourages them from getting a job and moving into the suburbs. I suppose, though, that the happiness derived from a \$5 handout will exceed the unhappiness you will have from being short \$5, if it's used to buy a meal for a hungry person, when compared to your going to a movie. According to libertarianism, it's permissible that you don't give them a handout (it's okay, if you want to), since doing so doesn't harm anyone. According to Kant, if you were down-and-out, you would want others to be charitable to you, so you can't will it to be a universal law that one has no obligation to be charitable to others; therefore, you do have a duty to help these people. Again, I don't understand how CI#2 applies in this case.

12. Emotivism

We use a sentence to express a (proposition). When I write the sentence 'It is raining this morning,' I am referring to the concepts of area, precipitation, and time in a specific way. The same proposition is expressed by the sentence, 'Es regnet diese morgen.' Two different sentences in the same language can also be used to express the same proposition. 'John loves Mary' and 'Mary is loved by John' is an example. Since different sentences can be used to express the same proposition, sentences are a different kind of thing than propositions. In mathematics, several different numerals can be used to express the same number. The numerals '7' and 'VII' both have the same meaning. The relation of numerals to numbers is like the relation of sentences to propositions.

Logical positivists accept the bifurcation (splitting into two separate classes) of propositions. Every proposition, according to this theory, is either a logical proposition or an empirical proposition. (Sometimes these are called analytic and synthetic propositions.) A LOGICAL PROPOSITION is self-

evident. You do not need to make an observation in order to tell if it is true or false. It is usually known to be true or false on account of its logical structure or from knowing the meaning of the terms of the sentence used to express it. We can know if the sentence 'Either it is raining or it is not raining this morning' is true or false without looking outside (or through any other observation). The sentence is true on account of its logical structure— P or $\sim P$. We know that 'Blue is a color' is true through knowing the meaning of 'blue,' 'is,' and 'color.'

An EMPIRICAL PROPOSITION can be known only through observation (either through the senses or through introspection). 'The administration building is mostly brick' is an example. There is no way of knowing this without some kind of observation, either by looking yourself or by making "observations" of what other people say or by pictures in a catalogue.

Logical propositions are necessarily true or false, as opposed to empirical propositions, which are contingently true or false. It is true that either it is raining or it is not raining this morning and it is not even possible that it could be false. Blue is a color and it is not possible that it could not be a color. On the other hand, even though it is true the administration building is mostly brick, it is possible for it to have been constructed from mostly wood or sandstone. Empirical propositions include all the facts of the world, since, conceivably, any fact of the world might have been otherwise.

The main tenet of logical positivism is the VERIFICATION PRINCIPLE. An empirical proposition, according to this principle, has meaning only if there can exist a situation in which observations are made that verify it as being true or false. If no conditions can be described then what seems to be an empirical proposition is really meaningless or "nonsense." There is sense to the proposition 'My body temperature is 98.6 degrees,' since there can exist the situation in which someone inserts a thermometer into my mouth for the proper time and then takes an accurate reading.

According to logical positivists, many propositions within metaphysics, ethics, and theology that have often thought to be meaningful are really meaningless propositions. Examples are 'I

have free will,' 'There exists a transcendent God,' 'All of our experience might be a dream,' and 'A person ought to reach their full potential,' Rather than attack the methods and proofs offered by metaphysicians, ethicists, and theologians, logical positivists attack the propositions themselves. The question, "Does a transcendent God exist?" is rejected, since this does seem to assert a fact about the world that might be false, but our observation does not admit of transcendent things. Therefore, there cannot exist a situation in which this proposition is verified or falsified, and therefore, the question is claimed to be meaningless.

Logical positivists only require that it be theoretically possible for the observations to be made that verify or falsify a meaningful empirical proposition. 'There are mountains on the dark side of the moon' was impossible (in one sense) to verify in 1936, since they had no spacecraft at the time. But it was theoretically possible to construct a means to make observations of the dark side of the moon in 1936, so the proposition is said to be meaningful. It seems that it can change (or perhaps, we cannot know) what are and are not meaningful empirical propositions. 'That there exists a parallel universe' (as described in science fiction) is not a meaningful proposition, since, in theory, there is no way of verifying or falsifying this proposition. Is it possible to construct a "parallel universe detectometer?"

In his *Meditations*, Descartes claims that we can doubt whether all of our experience is dreaming, which amounts to doubting that all of the objects of our experience are real or unreal. He claims the most indubitable proposition is 'I exist.' Ayer claims that 'Is all of my experience a dream' is a meaningless proposition, since it seems to make an assertion of fact and there can be no observations which show it to be true or false. 'I am dreaming that there is a spacecraft in the lawn' is verifiable, since there are further observations that can be made by myself and others that will confirm or disconfirm that proposition.

Three problems that arise in this theory are

- 1) What is the status of the verification principle itself? It is a law of propositions that is not true by logic or semantics. What observations can be made to verify or falsify it? Is it a meaningless proposition?
- 2) Propositions are odd entities. Their existence cannot be verified or falsified. It seems odd for logical positivists to have a theory about such entities.
- 3) Logical positivists admire empirical science. They want the same methods applied to traditional topics in philosophy. Is the verification principle consistent with modern empirical science, as actually applied? Perhaps, propositions like 'atoms exist,' 'forces exist,' and so forth, are meaningless when the verification principle is applied.

13. Cultural Relativism

According to cultural relativism, what is right or wrong depends on the values of each particular society. If most Americans believe that eating beef is permissible, then eating beef is permissible in America. Most Hindus believe it is wrong to eat beef, so beef eating is wrong in India; "When in Rome do as the Romans."

In favor of cultural relativism is the apparent fact that values have arisen and evolved separately within each society. The more one travels, the more one is tolerant of the values of other cultures. The main problem of cultural relativism is that cross cultural comparisons can only lead to the conclusion that one society is different from another, but there is no way of ascertaining that one is better, or more moral, than the other. This seems absurd. Nazis valued world conquest by what they believed to be the legitimate master race. Mayans placed value on human sacrifice. Americans are materialistic. Aren't these "bad" features of the societies?

14. Divine Command

Suppose there exists a creator of the universe. Obviously, such a creator would be quite intelligent and powerful. Suppose that this creator revealed to humans what he/she/it believed to be a set of rules that governed ethical behavior. It would be quite logical to believe that these rules are valid. An interesting characteristic of the divine command theory is that it is cognitive for the creator but non-cognitive from the human perspective; which is to say that the creator knows why these rules are valid, but the reasons are beyond human comprehension.

There is a connection between utilitarianism and divine command theory because the moral roles proposed by most major religions have the implicit promise that if the people follow the rules then the happiness of society will be maximized and if we don't follow the rules there will be literally hell to pay.