

Course: Ethical Thinking

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**a priori - a posteriori**

“a priori” - knowledge without prior experience. a proposition known true or false without reference to experience. “a posteriori” - knowledge only from prior experience or knowledge. a proposition known true or false contingent on past experience or knowledge of outcomes.

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**Altruism & Egoism & Conflict of Interest**

Altruism - unselfish interest in other people for their sake is a necessary condition in morality.  
Egoism - acting in one’s own best self-interest, regardless of needs of others.  
Conflict of Interest - conflict between acting in one’s own self-interest versus those of others.

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**Autonomy**

consider - deontology

Self directed freedom. The person arrives at their own moral judgements through reasoning (thinking, contemplation) not driven by other authority.  
Personal choices supercede decisions made without coercion from others.

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**Consent - Informed - Implied - Presumed**

Informed - patient has right to: whole truth; privacy and personal dignity; knowledge of risks and benefits; refuse any test, procedure or treatment; read medical records. Implied - such as by prior directives, or by knowing surrogates. Presumed - iffy “what would they want or best”.

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**Consequentialism**

consider - double effect

A general term that invites the theory that any moral rightness or wrongness is dependent upon the results the action produces..  
It is the result that matters, not the motive or intention.

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**Deontology - Deontological Ethics**

refer - Kant

A moral obligation to law and duty, with the primary emphasis on adherence to rules and laws regardless of the consequences. Only proper rules and laws need be obeyed to result in proper moral action. (compare consequentialism, utilitarianism)

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**Dialectic**

refer - Hegel, Taoism

interplay between experience and doctrine; as in, one condition colors and shapes the other (In essence, the concept of yin-yang, demonstrative-diminutive, lightness-darkness as found in Tao te Ching.)

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**Divine Command Theory (DCT) & Divine Law**

refer - scripture

Moral principles are defined in terms of God’s commands; and, moral duties are logically dependent of God’s commands.  
(Theory is dependent on the Ontological Argument - ie, the proof of God’s existence.)

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**Double Effect - aka, Principle of ... & Doctrine of ...**

An action produces two opposite results.  
One may result in proper duty, the other in bad consequences.  
The possibility that an unintended evil results from a purely virtuous act.

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**Hedonism - Hedon**

Hedon - unit measure of pleasure

Happiness is defined by pleasure, and is the sole and proper aim of human action.  
Pleasure is the positive value; pain or “unpleasant consciousness” is the negative value.  
The ethical goal is to do only that which results in most pleasure, and least pain in hedon units.

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### Imperative - Categorical & Hypothetical

Imperatives - conduct-guiding acts, such as requests or orders.

Categorical I... - a specific desired moral outcome based on a specific directed act.

Hypothetical I... - a potential desired moral outcome based on a suggested or requested act.

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### Naturalism & Natural Law

refer - Hartshorne, etc.

All that is revealed by science and nature is all there is. Laws of nature describe how things are and how they ought to be. There is no need to go beyond or outside the universe for any other explanation. Ethical decisions are made purely for the good of the human condition.

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### Objectivism & Subjectivism

Objectiveism - moral rightness or wrongness doesn't depend on social approval; certain moral truths are independent of what anyone thought or desired. Subjectivism - moral attitudes are merely a matter of personal taste; individuals determine their own valid moral principles.

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### Positivism

All knowledge of humans is within the boundaries of science and the laws of science.

Genuine knowledge is not to be altered by theology or metaphysics in order to go beyond the world of human observation as a means to satisfy those particular inquiries.

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### prima facie

The status of an initial or original principle which may be overridden by other stronger moral principles. Such as, "at first glance A seemed the right thing to do, but when B was considered, A was found not to be the best choice."

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### Relativism - Cultural & Ethical

Moral behavior and moral rules vary across cultural boundaries.

Moral judgment depends on whether the culture recognizes and accepts those behaviors and rules..

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### Slippery Slope Argument

Usually presented as a prediction that one ethical decision may open the potential for another decision of a lesser ethical stature. That is, the moral value of the first decision can be used to allow a decision of value lower than the original value.

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### Teleological Ethics

refer - Kant: ends and means.

Concern about the ends - the rightness of the consequence which flows from an action.

Evaluating the good (value) that potentially comes from certain (often unconscious) conduct.

Teleology - (teleos and logos) explanation of conduct based on the ends, not by the means.

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### Universalizability

refer - Kant

All moral judgements imply a universal judgement.

"If some act is right (or wrong) for one person, then it is right or wrong for any relatively similar person in a relatively similar situation." Consistency across all ethical decisions.

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### Utilitarianism

refer - Jeremy Bentham & John Stuart

The right action produces the best result (happiness, pleasure) for the most people.

In essence, the right decision produces more "gladness" than "sadness" for the most people affected by that decision, while being cognizant of the sadness which is produced.

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