

EDE 9816  
ETHICAL ISSUES IN  
ORGANIZATIONS

Fall 2013

Day 1

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# ETHICS

The study of human conduct

# Conduct: conscious, intentional (rational?) action

- ▣ The ultimate goal of ethics is to establish **standards of conduct** –
- ▣ How **should** people conduct themselves?
- ▣ What is a **good** way to conduct one's self?
- ▣ What is the **right** way to conduct one's self?
- ▣ What is the **moral** thing to do?
- ▣ What sort of person **should** I be?

# Ethical Issues in Organizations

- ▣ What is “fair”?
- ▣ What should the purpose of schooling be?
- ▣ How should institutions serve the public good?
- ▣ How should schools serve the individual teacher/student/administrator/family?
- ▣ What is moral leadership?
- ▣ How should institutions be organized?
- ▣ What is a good way to lead organizations?

# Ethical Issues are not:

- ▣ What laws/regulations to organizations currently face?
- ▣ What is the most effective way to lead or organize institutions?
- ▣ How could organizations/institutions/programs be changed?

# Generally speaking, we will be concerned with:

- ▣ The ends, not the means (although we will consider ethical conduct to meet ethical ends)
- ▣ The ideal, not the reality (although you can discuss how the reality does or does not meet the ideal)
- ▣ The theoretical, not the immediate (although you should be able to frame general concepts with real examples)

# Normative Ethics

- ▣ The study of human conduct

# Meta-ethics

- ▣ The study of conditions that affect normative ethics



# Three approaches to the study of Normative Ethics

- ▣ The utilitarian perspective
- ▣ The deontological perspective
- ▣ The virtuous perspective

# Utilitarian Perspective

- ▣ No action is intrinsically ethical or unethical
- ▣ The consequences of an action should maximize good (or pleasure) or minimize bad (or pain)
- ▣ Jeremy Bentham/John Stuart Mill

# Deontological Perspective

- ▣ Adherence to moral rules or duties
- ▣ Goodness or badness of a given action
- ▣ Agent-neutral (universal)

# Virtuous Perspective

- ▣ Qualities that shape the very core of who people are as persons
- ▣ “What sort of person should I be?”

# Virtuous Perspective

- ▣ Integrate a person's emotional and intellectual life in such a way as to facilitate ethical conduct
- ▣ Must be cultivated over time (weakened if neglected)
- ▣ Flexible and adaptable to the milieu within which people must act

# Virtues

- ▣ Prudence: foundational virtue permeating all decision making
- ▣ Justice: distributive, legal, and commutative
- ▣ Fortitude: helping administrators overcome obstacles and look beyond fears
- ▣ Temperance: balance between responsibility and pleasure

# Making Ethical Decisions

- ▣ Approaches to ethical decision making: strict consequentialism, mixed consequentialism, and deontology

# Making Ethical Decisions

Strict consequentialism (Fletcher)

- ▣ Identify the problem
- ▣ List alternative courses of action
- ▣ Predict the consequences of each alternative
- ▣ Assign a value to the good produced by each alternative
- ▣ Select the alternative with the greatest good



# Making Ethical Decisions

Mixed Consequentialism (Knauer, Schuller, Fuchs, Janssen)

- ▣ Identify the problem
- ▣ Analyze the problem
- ▣ Analyze the values that are influenced by a person's beliefs and convictions
- ▣ Identify norms that should guide the action that protects the person's values

# Making Ethical Decisions

- ▣ Explore the consequences of the action
- ▣ Compare the consequences with the values
- ▣ If the consequences and the values are inconsistent, explore other alternatives and test them
- ▣ If the consequences and the values are consistent, perform the action

# Making Ethical Decisions

Deontologism (Grisez, May, Ramsey)

- ▣ Identify the problem
- ▣ Match up alternative courses of action with corresponding norms of morality
- ▣ The higher norm is the one which should be acted on.

# Making Ethical Decisions

Conscience:

- ▣ An inclination that helps a person decide how to act in relation to a particular ethical dilemma
- ▣ A skill acquired through experience that a person can use to make an informed judgment

# Ethical Norms

- ▣ Situating one's specific conduct within the context human activities in general.
- ▣ Based upon thought, reflection, and liberty which is “operationalized through human experience, understanding, and judgment.”

# Ethical Norms

- ▣ Classical worldview: the world is a finished product and ethical principles will remain forever valid
- ▣ Contemporary worldview: the world is dynamic and evolving and the path to right conduct is through induction from experiences

# Ethical Norms

- ▣ Often grounded in **Natural Law**

# Natural Law

- ▣ Not the same thing as “the law of nature”, i.e. might makes right or only the strongest survive
- ▣ Not a concrete set of rules
- ▣ Is what follows from the “essential nature of humanity”



# Natural Law

- ▣ Discoverable through discourse, research, and/or reflection upon humanity
- ▣ There are levels (hierarchy) within natural law
- ▣ Deliberation concerning natural law must take into account the social dimension of humanity
- ▣ It allows people to enter into rational debate concerning our collective humanity.

# Developing a personal approach to ethics

Good and sincere people may be implicated in:

- ▣ Structures (patterns of relationships),
  - ▣ Institutions (complexes of actions that control conduct), or
  - ▣ Systems (complexes of structures and institutions)...
- ▣ that inflict injustices on others.

# Social Ethics

- ▣ Unethical actions can have a power that reaches beyond the individual and influence other to be unethical.
- ▣ People inherit the unethical actions of past generations.

# Social Ethics

- ▣ “A discouraging realization about unethical institutions is that complexity plays a major role in efforts to change them; political and socioeconomic relationships and structures take on a life of their own, which would be threatened by efforts to eradicate the unethical component of the institutions. Patterns of behavior and relationships are difficult to break down once the embodiment occurs.”

# Social Ethics

- ▣ Personal and social unethicity must be understood in relation to each other.
- ▣ Unethicity is: external, inherited, overbearing, seductive, freely chosen, incurs blame, powerful, fascinating, additive, and alluring.

# Consequences of Human Actions

- ▣ Unethical decision progressively restricts a person's freedom and can become internalized.
- ▣ Self-centeredness results in isolation and loneliness, and anxiety.
- ▣ An ethical administrator should integrate attitudes, powers, and tendencies towards ethical relationships with others.