

ETHICS

How should we act?

Joëlle 2012



ETHICS AND MORALS (?) / DEFINITION

Good and bad/ Right or wrong?

Ethics = Definitions (What *ought to be* correct)=Principle

Moral = Behaviour (what *is* correct)=Outcome

Values = attitudes, standards by which we measure the worth of everything: from material objects to goals of life

FUNCTIONS OF MORALS

WHY DOES IT MATTER ?

Community depends on a common moral base in order to insure **cohesion**

=

A "CONTRAT SOCIAL"

(Jean Jacques Rousseau 1712-82)

This basic understanding both **tacit and explicit**, allows cohesion within small and large communities.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Tacit and explicit:

= "**I AM TRUSTWORTHY**"

I can be trusted, I do not lie, steal, cheat, rape, pillage!

If not life would be

"War of all against all"

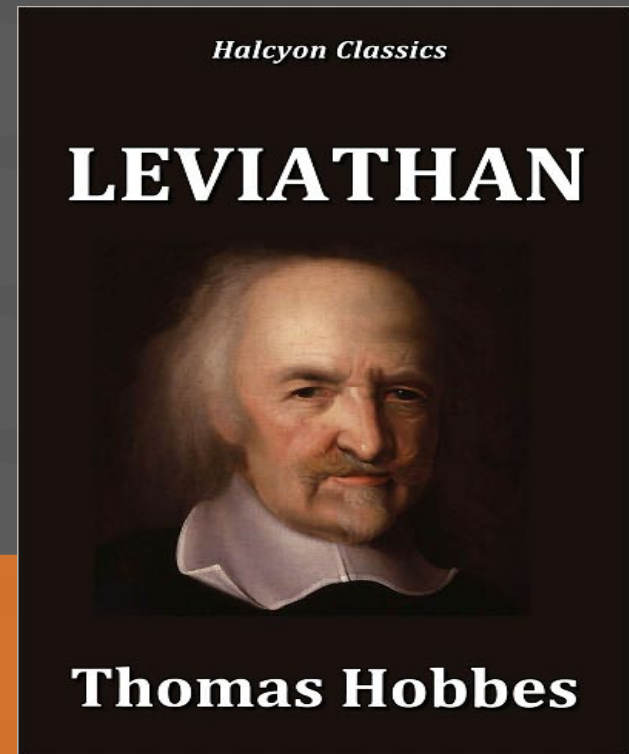
(Thomas Hobbes 1588-1679)

An eye for an eye !

Applied the INDIVIDUAL

within for exemple the close sphere of family, friends, etc...

eg. Marriage



THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

And/or explicit

=

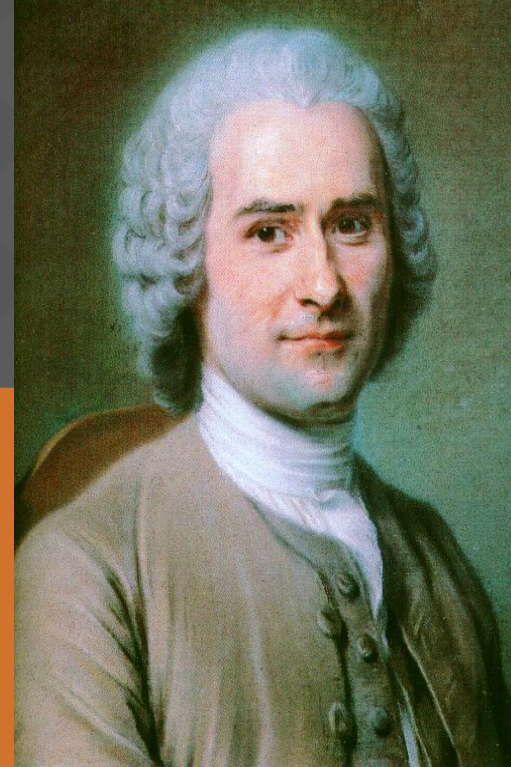
People give up some of the natural rights (freedom) to an authority (the law) in exchange for peace and protection ("L'ÉTAT DE DROIT")

Such a contract depends on the spoken or unspoken value of **RECIPROCITY**

Applied to the GROUP

Laws of a country/international agreements

Declaration of Human Rights / Geneva Convention



NATURE OF OUR ETHICAL KNOWLEDGE?

”Despite the fact that values are often seen as the pour relation of facts, there is a sense in which there are fundamental to the entreprise of knowledge. For any intellectual endeavour is based on the assumption that the knowledge it gives us is worth discovering and has some kind of instrumental or final value.

One of the key issues in ethics is whether ethical values are objective or subjective.

Despite a widespread tendency in liberal culture towards subjectivism, it could be argued that our fundamental moral intuitions are as certain as any other kind of knowledge.

A related issue concerns the extend to which different cultures share common underlying values and we might as whether or not it makes sens to speak of universal human rights.

Ethics also raises interesting questions about the relation between knowledge and acton: We often know what to do and yet are quite unable to do it”

R. Van de Lagemaat

THE ROLE OF THE WOK (3) IN ETHICS

. Language

“The pen being mightier than the sword”

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

*“WHAT DO YOU **MEAN** BY STEALING, LYING, CHEATING , KILLING....”?*

(=agreed upon meaning can be difficult)

VALUES involve abstract language, they are CONCEPTS that needs clear attention in terms of analysis (**VAGUENESS** and **AMBIGUITY**)

Often generate battles between PRINCIPLE AND OUTCOME

There are seldom disagreement about values, but about examples of that value

- Reason/ Moral reasoning

Very basicallyvalue-judgements need to be supported with reasons:

"Cheating on a test is wrong

Tom cheated on the test

Therefore, what Tom did was wrong"

- Emotion / "Moral emotions"/Feeling of right and wrong

Strong moral convictions are rooted in feeling*, not in reason

"People have gut feelings that give them emphatic moral convictions, and they struggle to rationalize them after the fact "

Stephen Pinker

*For example **THE YUK FACTOR!**

SOURCES OF MORALITY ? FOUNDATIONS OF MORAL JUDGEMENTS

HOW DO WE JUSTIFY RIGHT AND WRONG ?

- Self-interest
- Moral relativism
- Religious ethics
- Duty ethics
- Utilitarianism
- The law (political codex)

SELF- INTEREST THEORY + ALTRUISM

Basic stands for good behaviour:* (rooted in our biological inheritance)

- SELV-INTEREST

- selfishness

- fear for punishment

- hidden benefits (praise/positive image)

"HELPING OTHERS IS HELPING MYSELF"

- ALTRUISM:

- empathy

- We ought to sacrifice our interest to those of others Carol Gilligan=

"ETHIC OF CARE"

.Selv-regarding and other regarding desires

MORAL RELATIVISM

All moral judgments are relative to the society and situations in which individuals find themselves (laws and traditions).
A rather subjective approach

A tolerant "LIVE AND LET LIVE ATTITUDE" to other cultures.

There are no universal values – no rights to impose values on other people

RELIGIOUS ETHICS

Based on some major ancient documents such as:

The CODE OF HAMMURABI

HANALECT*

THE KORAN

THE BIBLE

Both theist and non-theist religions teach code of morality based on the will of a supreme being

(Jehovah, God, Allah) or other forces beyond the material world:

Major concepts: "DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE BY"
THE GOLDEN RULE

DUTY ETHICS/ DEONTOLOGY

"THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE" *

Rules of behaviour which are claimed to be right or wrong regardless of the consequence=
ABSOLUTE moral RULES

=

matters of PRINCIPLES/laws/ objective duties/concept of universalizability

Historically coined by I.Kant:

It is our duty to treat all people as ends in themselves, not means to end.

Based on 4 characteristics: REASON- THE GOLDEN RULE-MOTIVES- OBJECTIVITY

UTILITARIANISM*

The rightness or the wrongness of an action depends entirely upon the **EFFECTS** (results/outcome) which the action has:

- MAXIMIZE HAPINESS
- "THE GREATEST HAPINESS FOR THE GREATEST NUMBER"*

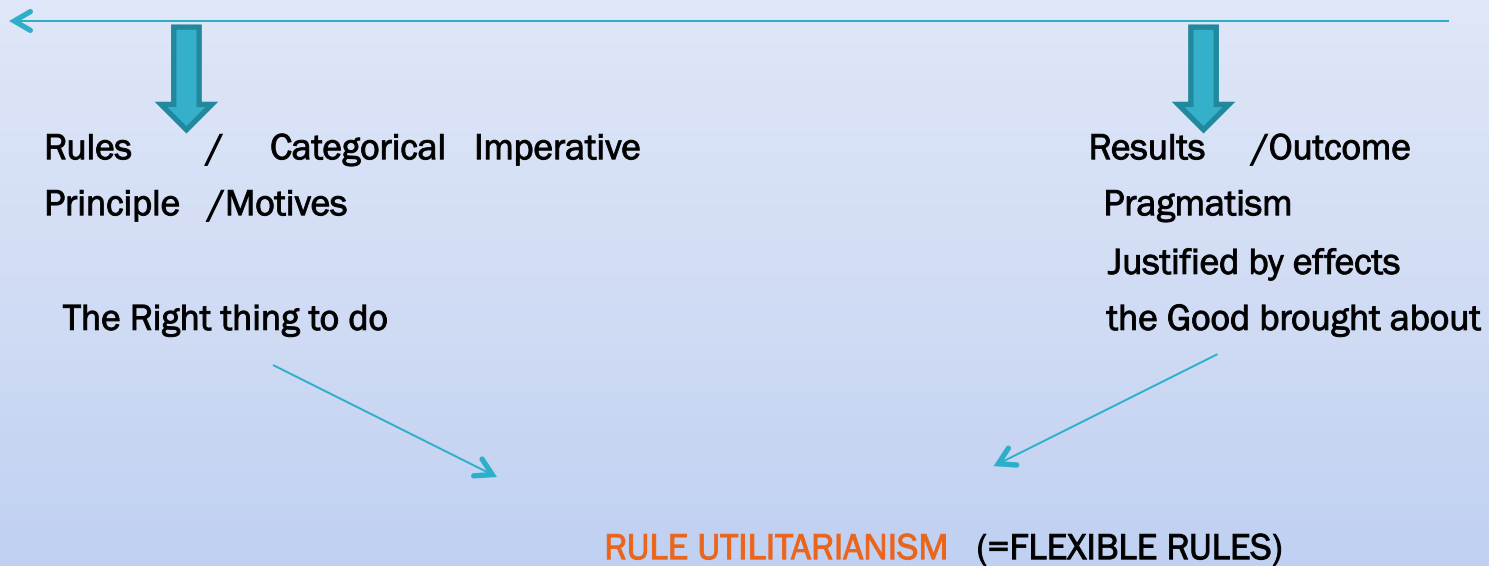
*John Stuart MILL (1806 -73)

FROM DEONTOLGIST TO CONSEQUENTIALIST

SHADES OF MORAL ATTITUDES

DUTY ETHICS
DEONTOLOGY

UTILITARIANISM
CONSEQUENTIALISM



PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS OF ETHICAL SOURCES

- Self-interest argument:

A major counter-argument to this theory is that empathy and altruism are as much part of our biological inheritance as selfishness.

- Moral relativism:

The rejection of core universal values= If all values are "equal", it allows in principle the notions of genocide, torture, murder, etc..

- Religious ethics:

Religion does not settle all the questions, does not free us from responsibility.

Following the "letter" of a moral code rather than the "spirit" can lead to the "idolatry of literalism"/religious absolutism/fanatism

- Duty ethics/deontology:

Too focused on reason at the expense of feelings. Too absolutist and can lead to rule worship. Leaves no way of resolving conflicts of duty (MORAL DILEMMA).

- Utilitarianism::

Mesuring happiness, adding pleasures on a common scale, correct prediction of long term outcome are difficult enterprises. There are "bad" and empty pleasures.

It might not take into account our belief in human rights and moral obligations,

(= Might sacrifice the one for the sake of the many)

SHARED UNIVERSAL VALUES ?

The notion of **EQUITY*** (= fairness and justice)

Which is demonstrated in the following principles:

- *It is wrong to steal what does not belong to you,*
- *that someone works for you without payment,*
- *to kill an innocent human being*

- *Recent research in biology, neurosciences, economics and anthropology show that we are equipped with the biological disposition to respect the others.*

IT SEEMS THEN THAT WE SHARE A CORE OF

"OBJECTIVE" ETHICAL VALUES ?