

Christian Ethics (CL3)

Ethics, Morality and Religion

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Christian Ethics (CL3)

Oct. 1 – Intro to Ethics; Christian Ethics

Oct. 8 – Ethics, Morality and Religion

Oct. 15 – Biblical and Theological Ethics

Oct. 22 – Duty Ethics (Deontology)

Oct. 29 – Goal Ethics (Consequentialism)

Nov. 5 – Virtue Ethics

Nov. 12 – Christian Ethics & Modern Society

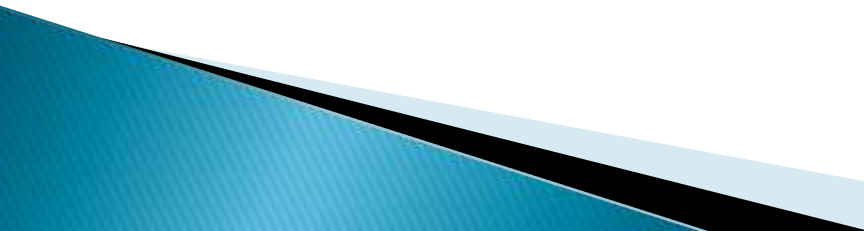
Nov. 19 – Conclusion; Final Exam



What is Ethics?

- **Ethics, or moral philosophy**, is the branch of philosophy that deals with determining the proper course of action for humanity, involving systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior.
- Ethics investigates the questions ***“What is the best way for people to live?”*** and ***“What actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances?”***
- In practice, ethics tries to resolve questions of human morality by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, crime and justice.

Philosophy of Ethics – What is right?

- **The problem is that it's sometime difficult to discern what course of action is best.**
 - How do we discern moral truth?
 - What principles are there to guide us in moral decision-making?
 - Or is there even such a thing as moral truth?
 - Is morality just a matter of opinion and emotions?
 - And what role does religious belief properly play in ethics?
 - **The philosophy of ethics seeks to confront the need to find a connection between ethical theory and ethical practice, especially since some ethical situations are not morally clear.**
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Ancient Ethics vs. Modern Morality

▶ Ancient Ethics (*agent centered*):

- Living the “Good Life” (versus good action)
- Achieving happiness thru *Virtue* (“moral ought”)

▶ Modern Morality (*action centered*):

- Achieving the greatest good (*consequentialism*)
- Acting out of duty (*deontologicalism*)

Historically, ***ethics*** has been concerned with pursuit of happiness or well-being via private lifestyle, that is, how we should live to make good lives for ourselves. ***Morality*** has to do with other people’s interests and constraints of law or duty. ***Ethics*** are the underlying principles; *morality* is what you do to be ethical.

Ethics of the Ancient Greek Philosophers

Socrates – the pursuit of and love of the goodness itself (the “form of good,” rather than any particular good thing) is the chief aim of education and especially of philosophy.

Plato – a “good” person achieves internal harmony. Plato's ethical ideal resembles Homer's concept of ethical success – the internal harmony of a leader of a tribe or city who runs things well, with little mention of moral obligations.

Aristotle – the highest good is goodness embodied in a flourishing human life, based on the idea of *Eudaimonia* – “happiness,” “flourishing,” “success.”

Jewish Ethics

- The origin of “Ethical Monotheism”
- Predates Socrates, Plato and Aristotle
- Bases for Jewish ethics:
 - *Torah/Tanakh* (Written & oral Hebrew Bible)
 - *Halakhah* (*Talmud*/Rabbinic religious literature)
- Influence of Greek ethics
 - esp. Maimonides’ interpretation of Aristotle
- “Justice, Peace and Truth”
- *Chesed* (“loving-kindness”)

Modern Morality

- Ever increasing emphasis on *moral action* rather than more traditional focus on *moral agent*
- Middle Ages – Natural Law Ethics
 - Thomas Aquinas & Scholasticism
 - Roman Catholic Casuistry
- Immanuel Kant, duty & Categorical Imperatives
- Utilitarianism in 19th Century England
- Early 20th century philosophical meta-ethics
- Late 20th century (post WWII & later) revival of casuistry & increase of applied ethics

Religious Ethics

Most religions have an ethical component

- Buddhism
 - Confucianism
 - Taoism
 - Hinduism
 - Islam
 - Christianity
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