CHAPTER 1. MORALITY AND ETHICS.

INTRODUCTION.

Some of the greatest contributions to the study of morality and human rights were the result of reflections by philosophers and social scientists that lived in periods of turmoil of their countries. For example, Thomas Hobbes fled to France and provided translations into English of his earlier works in Latin, and wrote new books at the time of the civil war in England. His contributions to the state of nature, ethical egoism, and social contract resulted from his reflections of the political turmoil in his country. At about the same time Philosopher Zera Yacob has made great contributions to the comprehension of ethics and morality. He lived a century after the jihad over Ethiopia, and exactly when emperors of Orthodox phase were replaced by those of Catholic faith and back again by those of the Orthodox. He was tormented in the reign of Susneyos, the Catholic emperor, and was self exiled to a remote part of Ethiopia, Infraz. He argued that will is the ultimate source of morality and he inferred that God is revealed to reason and debunked organized religion as the way to comprehend God.

This chapter presents a brief discussion on ethics and morality. Though not described in detail, contributions by philosophers of ethics both of classical ethics and ethical egoism are assembled here. For ease of retrieval, references available on websites are given at the end of the chapter. The reader is encouraged to refer to the materials by those authors, as the ones given here are simple abstractions of the work of others. However, the work of Philosopher Zera

Yacob is described here in more detail, and a description of ethical Yelugnta is unique to this book. Also examples are included to aid comprehension of some ethical issues.

A) VIRTUE ETHICS:

The questions of (a) "how ought I to act", and (b)" what kind of a person ought I to be", are the domain of ethics. The later question defines the character of a person, whether the person is virtuous or full of vice, a hopeless coward or a hopeful brave one.

Like a well functioning democracy places its trust in (a) laws and in (b) judges and juries that adjudicate the laws, ethics places its trust in (a) theories, which provide rules for conduct, and in (b) virtue, which provides the wisdom necessary for applying rules in particular instances.

As Aristotle further taught us, virtue is a habit that can be learned by practicing it. We have it in our power to control our desires and sensibilities. Will is strengthened through practice. Weakness of will occurs when individuals do not control their desires. Virtue requires striking a proper balance between extremes of too much fear (deficiency) on one hand and too much confidence (excess) on the other. For example, individuals who are too confident (excess) show the following attributes. a) In attitude toward self they display arrogance, conceit, egoism, narcissism and vanity, while the virtuous response is self-respect. b) In attitude toward offences of others they display revenge, grudge, and resentment, while the virtuous response is anger, understanding and/or forgiveness. Individuals who are too fearful (deficiency) show the following attributes. c) In attitude toward good deeds of others they display suspicion, envy, or ignoring them, while the virtuous response is gratitude and/or admiration]. d) In attitude toward their offenses they display indifference,

remorselessness, or downplaying the offence, while the virtuous response is remorse and/or making amends.

Virtue requires confronting issues or things, though they might frighten one, and deriving confidence by the mitigating actions. Nichomachean has reportedly described how a coward fears both what he ought not and, as he ought not. He further argued that a coward runs away from what is troublesome and may die on flight, though it is not noble to run away from evil. Nobility, he argues, is the domain of the brave who has confidence and a hopeful disposition because he feels and acts according to the merits of the case and without submitting to faults of the coward (who fears what one should not, who fears as one should not, and who fears when one should not). Engrossed in fear the coward does not have a hopeful disposition

The above is abstracted mostly from a presentation on ethics by Professor Lawrence M. Hinman, (URL1).

B) Ayene Helina, the light of our will.

 Ayena helina is an Ethiopic (Ge'ez) word that means "the light of our will." Some translate it also as the light of our hearts (ayene lebona). Before the birth of Christ the Greeks had elucidated virtue ethics. After the birth of Christ and that of Prophet Mohammed religion gained prominence and ethics and morality were derived from the religious codes of conduct. However, not all codes of conduct, and corresponding ethics and morality, of the different religions were similar. Thus, that some morality and ethics derived from religious codes has no universality.

Through a stepwise discourse, called "hateta", the Ethiopian philosopher, Zera Yacob (1599-1692), satisfied himself that God is revealed to reason, and debunked organized religion as the way to understand God. He argued that we could understand God and morality by the light of our will. His renowned phrase is:

"As my faith appears true to me, so does another find his own faith true; but truth is one." (Zera Yacob as translated in Sumner, 1985, p. 236).

Since truth is one, the different "truths" reported by separate religions cannot be true, neither can the corresponding dissimilar moral codes. He examined the different codes of conduct and accepted only those that have universal applicability. His piercing analysis demonstrated that truth and morality are universal and cannot be obtained through the dictates of organized religion or, as we may now infer, language-centered

politics. Rather, Zera Yacob declared that truth is to be revealed through reason, or by the light of our will.

He exposed the falsity of religious tenets on fasting, celibacy, so-called disallowing of copulation during a woman's monthly period, marrying more than one wife; he criticized slavery as well as any form of violence against humans. Moreover, in his book of 1667, Zera Yacob proclaimed that a man and woman are one in marriage and have equal property rights. Accordingly, Zera Yacob is also the first person to write on women's rights, and human rights in general.

Zera Yacob wrote: "God the master of morality created man to choose to be good or bad. Man can choose to be bad or a liar until he receives his punishment. Moreover, since man is of the flesh he pursues happiness. Good or bad man pursues all avenues to please him (his flesh) (Zera Yacob as translated in Daniel Worku Kassa, 1995 E.C., p.15). Later, the pursuit of happiness and pleasure, have been independently explored more fully by John Locke (1632-1704), Jeremy Bentham (1748- 1832), John Stuart Mill (1806- 1873) and others, who have been credited for exploring ethical Utilitarianism. Pursuit of happiness and pleasure viewed from the perspective of the self is known as ethical egoism. Egoism has been explored more fully by Thomas Hobbes (in his book, the Leviathan, 1665), Fredrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Ayn Rand (in her book on the virtue of selfishness, 1964), and is described under ethical egoism. Whereas utilitarianism and egoism are goal-oriented, the first to make the world a better place for all, and the latter to make the self the beneficiary, another form of morality called deontology, or duty- based ethics,

measures morality by the action taken and not by the outcome it might produce. Similar to Zera Yacob, but working independently about a half a century later, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) has explained that the will is the means for evaluating morality, and that actions have to be evaluated irrespective of outcomes. Kantian categorical imperative is not to use humans merely as a means, but as an end, and ties in nicely with Yacobian strictures against violence to humans.

Philosopher Zera Yacob may be regarded as the founder of universalizable ethics and morality, which subsequently have been explored by others under utilitarian ethics, duty-based ethics, ethical egoism, and ethical yelugnta.

C) UTILITARIANISM: UTILITY ETHICS

The Utilitarian moral theory holds that the consequences of our efforts must promote the greatest good (benefit) to the greatest number of individuals so as to make the world a better place. This makes Utilitarianism a goal-oriented ethics. In particular, it defines that the purpose of morality is to make the world a better place.

Because it focuses on consequences, Utilitarianism allows examining a number of different actions that my lead to the same consequences. Since it is possible to quantify and determine which actions can provide the greatest benefit for the greatest number of individuals, Utilitarianism permits the merger of mathematics and ethics. The calculations result not only in showing which consequences have positive or negative qualities but also the degrees to which they are positive or negative.

Questions regarding Utilitarianism arise on a number of fronts. Some of the questions are as follows.

1) What (intrinsic value) constitutes the greatest good (benefit)?

Different parameters that constitute the greatest benefit have been suggested, and four people are often quoted for the suggestions.

a) Increasing or augmenting <u>pleasure</u> does it according to Jeremy Bentham 1748- 1832).
b) <u>Happiness</u> does it according to John Stuart Mill (1806- 1873).

c) <u>Maximizing ideal values such as freedom, justice, knowledge, and beauty</u> does it according to G. E. Moore (1873-1958).
d) <u>Preference satisfaction</u>, i.e., allowing people to choose what they value does it according Kenneth Arrow.

2) What happens when the different benefits, such as love and beauty, are not quantifiable and hence not determinable by numbers? Do we fall in to the danger: "if it can't be counted, it doesn't count." [URL 2]

3) Do we calculate utility each time the act is performed (Act Utilitarianism), or do we calculate the overall utility of accepting or rejecting the rule each time everyone follows a particular rule (Rule Utilitarianism)? Rule utilitarianism might violate human rights and other important moral values, whereas Act Utilitarianism might not, under certain circumstances.
4) Who does the calculating? For example, "In Vietnam, Americans could never understand how much independence counted for the Vietnamese." [URL2]

5) Who is included or considered in the calculations? [In an language-centered party only members who speak that language are included. Clearly, language-centered governance over a multilingual country is immoral an unethical.]

Conclusion
Questions are raised to better understand ethical theory and to expose weaknesses and strengths of the theory.
Utilitarian ethical theory defines the role of morality to be making the world a better place. Our society must be one in

which more people have their preferences of pleasure, happiness, and/or imperative ideal values of freedom, justice, knowledge and beauty satisfied. In conditions where unethical individuals are catapulted to high offices of society it is unlikely that a greater number of the citizenry will have its preferences for good outcomes satisfied. So, education in ethics fostered through ethical parents and/or through formal education is important to having a wholesome society.

D) DUTY-BASED ETHICS: DEONTOLOGY.

Deontology is derived from the Greek work "deon" which means obligation or duty. Deontology refers to duty-based moral law.
Two types one called Act Deontology and another Rule Deontology are briefly descried below.

Part A. Act Deontology of a German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
    A1. Universality Test or Formula
    A2. Respect Test or Formula
Part B. Rule Deontology of a Scottish philosopher, Sir William David Ross (1877-1971).

Part A.   Kant's moral law is founded on and enacted by **reason**. He argued that **all good**, and therefore **moral duty or law** is derived from **goodwill**. He went on to assert that the **will** alone acts in conformity to moral law, respects moral law, and is not partial to experiences or consequences. He inferred that "moral duty or law" is the **maxim**, or motive of the will, and that it is necessary and universally applicable. [URL9] For Kant an action has intentionality and does not merely involve bodily movement. He also observed that an action ought to be evaluated both by its efficiency and by whether or not it is intrinsically right. [URL7]

A1. Universality Test or Formula.
The universalisability of moral duty led Kant to his formula for moral law:

"Always act in such a way that the maxims of your actions can be willed as a universal law of humanity."

A2. Respect Test or Formula
Declaring that neither necessity and universality nor the moral law originate from experience or follow from analysis of conception, but that they originate in pure reason, Kant argued that determining the **law of reason** has the nature of a command or **imperative**. The command is "not a **hypothetical imperative**, which enjoins actions only as means to an end and implies a merely conditional necessity, but a **categorical imperative**, which enjoins actions for their own sake and hence involve absolute necessity." [URL9]

Kant conceived will as a faculty that determines itself according to certain laws. The self-determination of the will results in it being and end in itself. Accordingly, man as a rational being, "is an end in himself, a person, and must in all actions, whether in regard to self or in others be respected." [URL9] The respect for human beings led Kant to enunciate the categorical imperative as follows:

"Always treat humanity, whether in yourself or in other people, as an end in itself, and never as a mere means."

A3. Publicity Test proposed by L. Hinman (URL4).
Hinman suggested the following useful observation as a duty-based ethics.
"Always act in such a way that you would not be embarrassed to have your actions described on the front page of the New York Times."

Below we use stories to explore Kantian philosophy and Rossian prima facie duty, which help select the best morally right duty among alternatives.

Story 1. After members of a British expedition traveled for days from Addis Ababa to Nairobi and the Ethiopian guide, Dejazmatch Haile, continued to encourage the expedition that Nairobi is just across the hills, the captain of the expedition asked Haile whether it would take less time to return to Addis or to go forward towards Nairobi. Haile replied: **it depends on what you want to do**. Between Addis and Nairobi, Dej. Haile and his helpers had cumulatively traveled many times. Though Haile was asked if he could serve as a guide by his emperor, he accepted the task voluntarily and was not doing the task as an order. Haile took the job without any commitment to the time the expedition would take or if the expedition would be successful. Was Haile's action morally right?

Story 2. John had amassed wealth by cutting corners and through what others called strange ways. Mike needed to buy a car and burrowed money from John promising to repay him within a year though he was determined not to repay it at all because he believed that John was a crook. Was Mike's action morally right?

Both examples will be used to examine Deontology or duty-based ethics.

The universality formula may be determined as follows. Firstly, " think that **maxims** are subjective rules that actually motivate a person." [URL7] Then:
       a. Take an action

　　　　b. You or another person can determine if the action is universalizable by pursuing the following algorithm.
　　　　1. Determine your maxim based on some kind of experience by you or others.
　　　　2. Generalize the maxim by dropping references to particular person including yourself.
　　　　3. Check if the generalized maxim is consistent with the affairs of a wholesome society.
　　　　4a. If the answer to 3 is correct, the maxim is unversalizable, and the action was a categorical imperative, and the action is morally right.
　　　　4b. If the answer to 3 is incorrect, the maxim is not unversalizable, and the action is morally wrong.

Let us apply the algorithms to the examples given above. Consider the action of Haile, Story 1 above.
1. Haile's maxim ("subjective" rule) was 'I will serve as a guide because I know the route.'
2. The corresponding generalization (objective rule) is 'Everyone will serve as guide if they know the route.'

3. Haile "has to determine if this generalized maxim can become a moral rule in a society. That is, he must consider what would happen when everyone acted on the same maxim. " Is everyone morally justified to serve as a guide to places they know?

4a. Can we rationally will (want) that everyone follow the same rule?" The answer is yes. It is universalizable. So Haile's action is morally right.

As another example, consider Mike's action in Story 2 above.

1. Mike's maxim is " I will borrow money from John by promising to pay it back, although I know that I will not fulfill the promise."
2. The corresponding generalization is 'Everyone will borrow money with a promise to pay back, although all know that the promises will not be fulfilled.'
3. Is everyone morally justified if they will not fulfill their promise to pay their debt?

4b. Can we rationally will (want) that everyone follow Mike's maxim? The answer is no. As suggested by Kant, a society will not function properly with such a maxim. It is not universalizable. Thus, Mike's action is not morally right.

Criticisms of ethics of Kantian duty include the following
1) It does not require heartfelt feelings (morality minimalism). [URL4]
2) It is alienated from feelings (moral alienation). [URL4]
3) Since the end does not justify the means, and actions either pass or fail the test of duty ethics, with no chance of a middle ground or "gray area", "polite lie" is not permitted as Kant considers that lying is always wrong. [URL8]

Part B. Ross' Prima facie duties, Also called Rule Deontolgy. [URL6]

'Prima facie duty' or 'conditional duty' is a brief way of referring to the characteristic of an act, such that "whether an act is a duty proper or an actual duty depends on all morally significant kinds it is an instance of" (Ross: The Right and the Good, pp. 19-20 as quoted in URL7).

The following are seven kinds of prima facie (or conditional) duties of:
1. fidelity
2. reparation
3. gratitude
4. justice
5. self-improvement
6. non-malfeasance
7. benevolence

"An action, A, is morally right if and only if (iff) no alternative to this action is a more stringent prima facie duty." [URL7] The imperatives of Ross' deontology are conditional, i. e., they involve doing X to get Y, until and actual imperative, which is the weightier among the alternatives, is selected.

Conclusion.
According to Kant, actions derived from the dictates of reason should be evaluated to pursue duty-based morality, without regard to outcomes. Ross' prima facie duties are a means of assigning priority of duties and result in a resolution of conflicting duties.

E) ETHICAL EGOISM AND ETHICAL YELUGNTA

E1. Ethical Egoism
Ethics focuses on identifying moral behaviors suitable for coexistence and successful living of humans. The perspectives that good behaviors are examined from vary. Egoism focuses on the perspective of the self, the individual. A description of egoism lies in the field of psychology. How individuals ought to act as examined from the perspective of their own self-interest, ethical egoism, is a subject of philosophy. Philosophers have identified, personal, individual, and universal aspects to ethical egoism.

Whereas all ethical egoism doctrines deal with the perspective of an individual acting from self-interest they have the following differences.

In personal ethical egoism nothing is stated about the motives of others.

In individuals ethical egoism all others are said to act to serve the self-interest of one individual (the egotist).

In universal ethical egoism all persons should serve their self-interest exclusively. [URL10, URL11]

Three arguments are proposed in support of ethical egoism. The first was championed by Nietzsche and considered that altruism demeans the folks to whom help is considered or rendered. [URL10] [This concept ill-defines help for no one in a social setting can claim that he/she survived without help from others.]

The second considers that selfishness creates a better world. [If true, this is an argument for utilitarian ethics and not for egoism. [URL10]]

The third argument indicates that, "ethical egoism does not create such a different world after all." It is argued that we should remove our hypocrisy for even those who claim altruistic rational do things selfishly. [However, if such concept is applied, "children and people at risk or in need, they would be put in further jeopardy." [URL10]

Among the major criticism of ethical egoism is that it cannot be universalize. That is to say, we cannot have society in which all act altruistically to satisfy the selfish needs of one among them. However, in sports, teams win according to this maxim. [URL10] Another criticism is that ethical egoism is inconsistent with moral sensitivity for the suffering of others may not sway the egotists.

Egoism is a natural tendency of humans, requiring a social contract entered under an authority figure, which Thomas Hobbes described in the Leviathan. Otherwise he felt that the life of man would be 'nasty, short and brutish'. John Locke had showed that an authority figure was not necessary for people to have a social contract, though he did not negate the egotistic right of the individual to rights and liberty and the pursuit of happiness. However, the ways by which the adherence to self-interest is expressed does not have to be naturally derived. In some cultures, for example, where the male had to castrate other males and wear human organs as trophy in order to entice a female has no naturalness to it. However, it is done in pursuit of

self-interest, which, as we can clearly see, is defined by the society rather than by nature. Ayn Rand's virtue of selfishness indicates that the selfish interests of one do not have to rely on the destruction of another.

For some people ethical egoism is internally contradictory (URL12), and most adherents of religious philosophies find it objectionable, e.g., (URL13). Yet, the self is natural and many practice ethical egoism. Infusing the values of ethical egoism might benefit societies and groups who are gripped by a different form of selfishness called "yelugnta," which is described next.

E2. Ethical Yelugnta

Similar to egoism Yelugnta focuses on the perspective of the self, the individual. However, unlike in egoism, in yelugnta an individual ought to act on the basis of his/her perception that others will benefit from or appreciate the action.

Honor killing, in which a member of a family kills another, is based on yelugnta. The killer is performing a very selfish act. He satisfies his selfish interests by performing an act that he perceives will benefit his group or that of the members of his group will appreciate it. He does not ask nor seek the views of his group before he kills a member of his family. Certainly, he is a killer, and killing is unethical. Therefore, yelugnta is not necessarily ethical.

Some might argue that the honor killer is obtaining the laws and edicts, written or unwritten, of certain religious sects. A ration person ought not implement immoral acts against humans. Zera Yacob has debunked the creed of cults, sects, or of organized religion when he argued that God is revealed to reason, and that he does hate or destroy humans. Likewise Kantian morality teaches that humans must not be used as merely a means to and, but as an end in themselves. There is no morally acceptable foundation for honor killing.

Ethical yelugneta requires that the act performed must be morally right. Ethical yelugnta (a form of selfishness) in the act mode is:

act according to what you perceive that others might say or feel about the act, and only in ways that the act is morally right.

Though some might think that such action should be discussed under duty-based ethics, ethical "yelugnta" is better comprehended when contrasted to ethical egoism. The goal of ethical egoism is to assign the good to the self under all conditions. In contrast, the goal of ethical "yelugnta" is to assign the good to the self by acting in ways based on the perception that others may like the act or that they may feel good about it. Unlike ethical egoism, which is better suited for a society of strangers, ethical "yelugnta" is suited for a society of the preferred.

Note that ethical yelugnta, unlike uitiltarianism, does not set aside the self for the greater good of the society. Yelugnta is a selfish act but one that is conducted on the perception that the act is good as seen by others.

Criticism of ethical yelugnta.
a) Ethical yelugnta focuses on perceived interests of others as its goal. While pretending to be mindful of the interest of others, it demeans them because it does not leave for others the right to define and work for their own interests. It also demeans the self for it relegates its functions to be dependent on perceptions about what others may like.
b) Authoritarian rulers, dictators or cult leaders, who promote their self-interests, will have an easy time ruling over a society that promotes ethical yelugnta.

c) A society governed by ethical yelugnta might stifle creativity and progress, which is based on productivity,

which in turn heavily depends on psychological egoism and the derived ethical egoism.

d) Ethical yelugnta results in segregating people into different groups that pursue separate customs, cultures, and functions. Groups of people that wear uniforms, similar bodily decorations, ordered and codified vestments, or any type of group identifying epitaphs practice ethical yelugnta. Gang members killing one among them for perceived misdeeds, soldiers court-marshalling one of their own, customs of "honor Killing" that lead a person to kill one of his/her family on the perception that the pertinent family member has brought dishonor to the family by her/his actions result from ethical yelugnta.

Conclusion

Though ethical egoism and yelugnta are to be derived by the will of a person, and both are derived from selfish motives, the former focuses on self-interest as its goal, while the latter focuses on perceived interests of others as its goal. As L. Hinman (URL10) put it: "Ideally, we seek a society in which self-interest and regard for others converge."

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