

Introduction to Ethics and Basic Terms

1. Importance of Character in moral evaluation. Mt. 5:21-48.
2. Importance of Motives in moral evaluation. 1 Thess. 2:3, re: Paul's preaching.
3. Importance of Action itself (before the consequences) is perhaps more obvious.
 - a. Impermissible: An act you ought not to do.
 - b. Permissible: It is not your duty to do it, nor is it your duty not to do it.
 - c. Obligatory: An act you must do.
4. Importance of Consequences in moral evaluation. 1 Cor. 10:31-33.

Definition of ethics. Ethics deals with what we "ought" to do and be (value).

Descriptive, Prescriptive, Mandated. What is mandated by law may challenge the descriptive "is" and contrast with the way things "ought" to be.

Descriptive: Describes moral behavior. First level.

Prescriptive: Prescribes moral behavior. Second level of ethical analysis that evaluates actions as morally right or wrong. The discipline that produces moral norms as its end product.

Metaethics: Third level of ethical analysis that looks at the meaning of ethical terms and moral analysis. What is the meaning of right, good, and just?

Metaethical distinction between ontological and epistemological. It is important to note this distinction. The ontological question is about the actual objective grounding of morality. Is it just a social or evolutionary or linguistic construct? Or does it come from God? If the latter, then what is its relation to God? All this is the ontological question. I.e., what and why?

The epistemological question concerns how we know the moral law. By nurture? Do we just watch others? Or is it innate? Does it come through Scripture? Direct revelation from God?

Some combination of the above?

Applied ethics: the application of moral norms to specific moral cases, especially in a particular profession, such as medical, business, law, etc. The purpose is to learn something either about the moral characteristics of a given situation or the adequacy of the moral norms. (E.g., is it morally permissible for scientists to perform experiments on people without their consent?) See also the sample of documents for medical ethics.

Medical Oaths: Ancient and Modern

Hippocratic Oath – Classical Version

I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant:

To hold him who has taught me this art as equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine, and to regard his offspring as equal to my brothers in male lineage and to teach them this art - if they desire to learn it - without fee and covenant; to give a share of precepts and oral instruction and all the other learning to my sons and to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken an oath according to the medical law, but no one else.

I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice.

I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy. In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art.

I will not use the knife, not even on sufferers from stone, but will withdraw in favor of such men as are engaged in this work.

Whatever houses I may visit, I will come for the benefit of the sick, remaining free of all intentional injustice, of all mischief and in particular of sexual relations with both female and male persons, be they free or slaves.

What I may see or hear in the course of the treatment or even outside of the treatment in regard to the life of men, which on no account one must spread abroad, I will keep to myself, holding such things shameful to be spoken about.

If I fulfill this oath and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and art, being honored with fame among all men for all time to come; if I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot.

[Translated from the Greek by Ludwig Edelstein: The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation, and Interpretation, by Ludwig Edelstein.]

Hippocratic Oath -- Modern Version

I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant:

I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.

I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism.

I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.

I will not be ashamed to say "I know not," nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery.

I will respect the privacy of my patients, for their problems are not disclosed to me that the world may know. Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all thanks. But it may also be within my power to take a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God.

I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being, whose illness may affect the person's family and economic stability. My responsibility includes these related problems, if I am to care adequately for the sick.

I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure.

I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm.

If I do not violate this oath, may I enjoy life and art, respected while I live and remembered with affection thereafter. May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my calling and may I long experience the joy of healing those who seek my help.

[Written in 1964 by Louis Lasagna, Academic Dean of the School of Medicine at Tufts University, and used in some medical schools today.]

AMA Principles of Medical Ethics

Preamble

The medical profession has long subscribed to a body of ethical statements developed primarily for the benefit of the patient. As a member of this profession, a physician must recognize responsibility not only to patients but also to society, to other health professionals, and to self. The following Principles adopted by the American Medical Association are not laws but standards of conduct which define the essentials of honorable behavior for the physician.

Principles

1. A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical service with compassion and respect for human dignity.
2. A physician shall deal honestly with patients and colleagues and strive to expose those physicians deficient in character or competence, or who engage in fraud or deception.
3. A physician shall respect the law and also recognize a responsibility to seek changes in those requirements which are contrary to the best interests of the patient.
4. A physician shall respect the rights of patients, of colleagues, and other health professionals and shall safeguard patient confidences within the constraints of the law.
5. A physician shall continue to study, apply and advance scientific knowledge, make relevant information available to patients, colleagues and the public, obtain consultation, and use the talents of other health professionals when indicated.
6. A physician shall, in the provision of appropriate care except in emergencies, choose whom to serve, with whom to associate, and the environment in which to provide medical services.
7. A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to an improved community.

Code of Ethics for Nurses - Provisions
Approved as of June 30, 2001

The ANA House of Delegates approved these nine provisions of the new *Code of Ethics for Nurses* at its June 30, 2001 meeting in Washington, DC. In July, 2001, the Congress of Nursing Practice and Economics voted to accept the new language of the interpretive statements resulting in a fully approved revised *Code of Ethics for Nurses With Interpretive Statements*.

1. The nurse, in all professional relationships, practices with compassion and respect for the inherent dignity, worth and uniqueness of every individual, unrestricted by considerations of social or economic status, personal attributes, or the nature of health problems.
2. The nurse's primary commitment is to the patient, whether an individual, family, group, or community.
3. The nurse promotes, advocates for, and strives to protect the health, safety, and rights of the patient.
4. The nurse is responsible and accountable for individual nursing practice and determines the appropriate delegation of tasks consistent with the nurse's obligation to provide optimum patient care.
5. The nurse owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to preserve integrity and safety, to maintain competence, and to continue personal and professional growth.
6. The nurse participates in establishing, maintaining, and improving healthcare environments and conditions of employment conducive to the provision of quality health care and consistent with the values of the profession through individual and collective action.
7. The nurse participates in the advancement of the profession through contributions to practice, education, administration, and knowledge development.
8. The nurse collaborates with other health professionals and the public in promoting community, national, and international efforts to meet health needs.
9. The profession of nursing, as represented by associations and their members, is responsible for articulating nursing values, for maintaining the integrity of the profession and its practice, and for shaping social policy.

American Nurses Association, *Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements*, Silver Spring, MD: American Nurses Publishing, 2001.

History of Philosophical Ethics

-Sophists- Ancient Greek rhetoricians who taught the emerging business class how to speak well and debate different viewpoints, no matter what they believed (cf. lawyers). A sophist could easily say that every opinion is true, or every opinion is false; truth is not objective, so a sophist tries to persuade merely, rather than convince or coerce.

-Discussion of *Euthyphro*. Euthyphro first points out that what is dear to the gods is holy, and what is not dear to them is unholy. Euthyphro dilemma- Is the holy loved by the gods because it is holy, or is it holy because it is loved by the gods? If we say the first, then we have a standard that stands above God, logically antecedent to him. If the latter, then the holy is arbitrary.

Moral theory. Four cardinal virtues and their corresponding part of the soul. Prudence/Wisdom is the virtue of the rational part. Courage of the spirited part. Temperance consists in the union of the appetitive and spirited parts under rule of reason. Justice is a general virtue in which every part of the soul performs its task in due harmony.

-Aristotle- *Nicomachean Ethics*- Virtue is the golden mean—not too little, not too much. E.g., courage is the (mean) virtue between the two (extreme) vices of cowardice and foolhardiness. But, for Aristotle, ethics as practical reasoning was not as important as speculative knowledge, or theoretical reasoning.

-Later Ethical Period.

-*Epicurus* (ca. 341–271 BC). Epicurus' philosophy was grounded in Democritus' materialism, but, like most post-Alexandrian philosophers, seems to have been most interested in the good life. The gods, if they exist, do not care about our conduct, so there is neither reward nor punishment after death. The goal of life, the good, for Epicurus, is *pleasure*, defined negatively as absence of pain.

-*Stoicism* was founded by Zeno of Cyprus (334–262 BC). What is the good? *Self-control*. Goodness means acting in accord with your nature, and the passions are unnatural. Passions and affections, such as pleasure, grief, desire, and fear, are irrational and unnatural. For Stoicism, God = Fate = Providence. They were either theists (like Aratus, who said of Zeus, "We are all his offspring", and others who said, "In him we live, move, and have our being"), or pantheists (everything is god).

1. Seneca (d. 65), who was Nero's tutor and advisor, and contemporary with Paul, was a Stoic who pursued philosophy as a means to virtue. God helps those who help themselves. Not mere living, but living well is good.

2. Epictetus (50–138) (crippled former slave, who did not write, but sayings were recorded) emphasized human ability to will virtue and victory over sin. All men have God for their father and are brothers by nature.

3. Marcus Aurelius (121–180). Roman emperor.

CONTENT OF THE MORAL ORDER: GOLDEN RULE AND LOVE COMMANDS

Golden Rule (GR)—Mt. 7:12: “Therefore all things you might wish that people do to you, so also you do to them; for this is the law and the prophets.”

Love Commands (LC1 and LC2)—Mt. 22:37-40: “And he [Jesus] said to him, ‘You will love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind; this is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: You will love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets.’”

I. Golden Rule—Is the Golden Rule the highest principle of the moral order?

A. Many praise it as the heart of morality.

1. Jesus and the Christian tradition seem to give it high praise.
2. Common morality.
3. Quotes.

B. Challenges to GR as a moral standard.

1. Which form is normative?

- a. Negative—Do not do to another what you do not want done to yourself (Tob. 4:15).
- b. Positive—Do to others as you would have them do to you (Mt. 7:12).

2. What is GR’s ground for moral evaluation?

- a. Excludes the possibility of something being wrong that you might want done to you.
- b. Excludes the possibility of something being right that you might not want done to you.

-Thus, acting on the basis of GR is no guarantee of moral correctness.

II. Relationship of Golden Rule (GR) and Second Greatest Love Command (LC2) (Mt. 22:39; Lev. 19:18 [LXX])

A. No logical connection.

1. One can follow GR, without following LC2.
2. One can follow LC2, without following GR.

B. Historical assumption of a connection.

1. First Christian connection.
2. Most important advocate of the connection.

C. Justification of the traditional link. Can they be interpreted in relation to one another?

3 things connect them textually in Matthew:

1. Attitude toward or treatment of *others*.
2. Treatment of others based to some extent on *self*.
3. Matthew connects them with Law and Prophets. Mt. 5:17, 20: “Do not suppose that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill....For I say to you that if your righteousness does not abound more than the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

D. Application.

1. Are we justified in connecting them?
2. How should we use GR?

III. Two Love Commands—What do these commands mean?

A. How are the love commands alike (Mt. 22:38)? Possibilities:

1. Love
2. Greatness
3. Recapitulation
4. Interdependence

B. Love

1. What is love?

a. Emotion.

b. Not an emotion.

c. Emotion as part of love.

2. Who can love?

C. Love Your Neighbor (LC2)

1. Who is my neighbor?

2. How can we define neighbor love so as to be the fundamental requirement of morality?

D. Love God (LC1) (Mt. 22:37; Dt. 6:4-5)

1. Covenant love.

2. How we love God.

3. Why we love God.