

Applied ethics

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Applied ethics is a discipline of philosophy that attempts to apply 'theoretical' ethics, such as utilitarianism, social contract theory, and deontology, to real world dilemmas. Topics falling within the discipline include medical ethics, legal ethics, environmental ethics, computer ethics, corporate social responsibility, or business ethics.

Many considerations of applied ethics also come into play in human rights discussions.

Applied ethics seeks to engage formal ethics in attempts to solve actual dilemmas. In doing so, it illuminates the potential for disagreement over the way theories and principles should be applied. Strict, principle-based ethical approaches often result in solutions to specific problems that are not universally acceptable. Drawing on medical ethics for an example, a strict deontological approach would never permit the deception of a patient about their condition, whereas a utilitarian approach would involve consideration of the consequences of so doing, and might permit lying to a patient if the result of the deception was 'good'. The example demonstrates that a deontologist can derive a different solution to a dilemma than a utilitarian.

Contents

- 1 Modern approach
- 2 List of subfields of applied ethics
- 3 See also
- 4 Bibliography
 - 4.1 Anthologies
 - 4.2 Journals
- 5 External links

Modern approach

One modern approach which attempts to overcome the seemingly impossible divide between deontology and utilitarianism is case-based reasoning, also known as casuistry. Casuistry does not begin with theory, rather it starts with the immediate facts of a particular case. While casuistry makes use of ethical theory, it does not view ethical theory as the most important feature of moral reasoning. Casuists, like Albert Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin (*The Abuse of Casuistry* 1988), challenge the traditional paradigm of applied ethics. Instead of starting from theory and applying theory to a particular case, casuists start with the particular

Ethics

Theoretical

Meta-ethics

Normative · Descriptive

Consequentialism

Deontology

Virtue ethics

Ethics of care

Good and evil · Morality

Applied

Bioethics · Medical

Engineering · Environmental

Human rights · Animal rights

Legal · Media

Business · Marketing

Religion · War

Core issues

Justice · Value

Right · Duty · Virtue

Equality · Freedom · Trust

Free will · Consent

Moral responsibility

Key thinkers

Aristotle · Confucius

Aquinas · Buddha

Christ · Hume · Kant

Bentham · Mill

Kierkegaard · Nietzsche

Hare · Rawls · Nozick

Lists

List of ethics topics

List of ethicists

case itself and then ask what morally significant features (including both theory and practical considerations) ought to be considered for that particular case. In their observations of medical ethics committees, Jonsen and Toulmin note that a consensus on particularly problematic moral cases often emerges when participants focus on the facts of the case, rather than on ideology or theory. Thus, a Rabbi, a Catholic priest, and an agnostic might agree that, in this particular case, the best approach is to withhold extraordinary medical care, while disagreeing on the reasons that support their individual positions. By focusing on cases and not on theory, those engaged in moral debate increase the possibility of agreement.

List of subfields of applied ethics

- Medical ethics / bioethics
- Business ethics
- Hospitality ethics
- Environmental ethics (e.g. global warming)
- Human rights issues (e.g. gender ethics / sexism, racism, Capital punishment)
- Animal rights issues
- Legal ethics
- Computer ethics
- Media ethics / journalism ethics
- Research ethics
- Marketing ethics
- Education ethics
- Sports ethics
- Military ethics (e.g. just war theory)
- International ethics (e.g. world hunger)
- Public administration ethics

See also

- Ethics
- Ethical codes
- List of ethics topics

Bibliography

- Chadwick, R.F. (1997). *Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics*. London: Academic Press. ISBN 0-12-227065-7.
- Singer, Peter (1993). *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-43971-X. (monograph)

Anthologies

- LaFollette, Hugh (2002). *Ethics in Practice (2nd Edition)*. Blackwell Publishing. ISBN 0-631-22834-9.
- Singer, Peter (1986). *Applied Ethics*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-875067-6.
- Frey, R.G. (2004). *A Companion to Applied Ethics*. Blackwell. ISBN 1-4051-3345-7.

Journals

- Ethics (<http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/ET/home.html>) (since 1890)

- The Journal of Ethics (<http://www.kluweronline.com/issn/1382-4554/contents>)
- Journal of Applied Philosophy (<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0264-3758>)
- International Journal of Applied Philosophy (<http://www.pdcnet.org/ijap.html>)
- International Journal of Philosophical Practice (<http://www.aspcp.org/ijpp/html/contents.html>)

External links

- Rock Ethics Institute at Pennsylvania State University (<http://rockethics.psu.edu/>)
- Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics at Australian National University, Charles Sturt University and University of Melbourne (<http://www.cappe.edu.au>)
- Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University (<http://www.scu.edu/ethics>)
- W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics at the University of British Columbia (<http://www.ethics.ubc.ca>)
- Association for Practical and Professional Ethics at the University of Indiana (<http://www.indiana.edu/~appe>)
- Chris Young, How to teach an introduction to applied ethics (<http://www.chrisyoung.net/writings/how-to-teach-intro-to-applied-ethics.html>)
- HospitalityEthics.com (<http://www.hospitalityethics.com>)

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