

Normative ethics

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Normative ethics is the new "it" branch of philosophical ethics concerned with classifying actions as right and wrong.

Normative ethics attempts to develop a set of rules governing human conduct, or a set of norms for action. It deals with what people *should believe* to be right and wrong, as distinct from descriptive ethics, which deals with what people *do believe* to be right and wrong. Hence, normative ethics is sometimes said to be *prescriptive*, rather than *descriptive*.

Moreover, because it examines standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions, normative ethics is distinct from meta-ethics, which studies the nature of moral statements, and from applied ethics, which places normative rules in practical contexts.

Normative ethical theories

- Consequentialism (Teleology) argues that the morality of an action is contingent on the action's outcome or result. Some consequentialist theories include:
 - Utilitarianism, which holds that an action is right if it leads to the most value for the greatest number of people (Maximizes value for all people).
 - Egoism, the belief that the moral person is the self-interested person, holds that an action is right if it maximizes good for the self.
- Deontology argues that decisions should be made considering the factors of one's duties and other's rights. Some deontological theories include:
 - Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative, which roots morality in humanity's rational capacity and asserts certain inviolable moral laws.
 - The Contractarianism of John Rawls or Thomas Hobbes, which holds that the moral acts are those that we would all agree to if we were unbiased.
 - Natural rights theories, such that of John Locke which holds that human beings have absolute, natural rights.
- Virtue ethics, which was advocated by Aristotle, focuses on the inherent character of a person rather than on the specific actions he or she performs. There has been a significant revival of virtue ethics in the past half-century, through the work of such philosophers as G. E. M. Anscombe, Philippa Foot, and Rosalind Hursthouse.

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

See also

- Normative
- Norm (philosophy)

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