

KNOWLEDGE MAP: PHILOSOPHY—MORAL DECISIONS

SUMMARY

This unit builds on the study of Human Rights and Moral Issues in Society by focusing on some of the different philosophical approaches taken to making ethical/moral decision in the past and present. The unit examines some of the most significant approaches to ethical decision making, ranging from Humanism to Deontology. Studying these different approaches to moral decision making, both from religious and non-religious perspectives prepares pupils for further study of Philosophy and Ethics in KS4.

KEY TERMS

Philosophy: 1. the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline. 2. a theory or attitude that acts as a guiding principle for behaviour.

Ethics: 1. moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity. 2. the branch of knowledge that deals with moral principles

Morality: 1. principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour. 2. the extent to which an action is right or wrong.

Atheist: a person who disbelieves or lacks belief in the existence of God or gods.

Agnostic: a person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (such as God) is unknown and probably unknowable. broadly : one who is not committed to believing in either the existence or the nonexistence of God or a god.

Deontological ethics: an ethical theory that uses **rules** to distinguish right from wrong.

Teleological ethics: Teleological Ethical Theories are concerned with **the consequences of actions** which means the basic standards for our actions being morally right or wrong depends on the good or evil generated.

HUMANISM

The word 'humanist; has come to mean someone who:

trusts to the **scientific method** when it comes to understanding how the universe works and rejects the idea of the supernatural (does not believe in God/gods and is therefore an atheist or agnostic)

makes their **ethical decisions based on reason, empathy,** and a concern for human beings and other sentient animals

believes that, in the absence of an afterlife and any discernible purpose to the universe, human beings can act to give their own lives meaning by **seeking happiness in this life and helping others to do the same.**



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UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that determines right from wrong by focusing on outcomes. It is a form of consequentialism.

Utilitarianism holds that **the most ethical choice is the one that will produce the greatest good for the greatest number.**

However, because we cannot predict the future, it's difficult to know with certainty whether the consequences of our actions will be good or bad. This is one of the limitations of utilitarianism.

Utilitarianism also has trouble accounting for values such as justice and individual rights.



SITUATION ETHICS

Situation ethics is a theory where **the situation is taken into account first, before deciding on the rules of right and wrong.**

There is no set of rules, because what might be considered immoral in one situation could be considered the most moral thing to do in another.

This approach is focused on the purpose and reason for the actions rather than the actions themselves.

As each situation is different, the outcome therefore will be too. This approach allows the individual to focus on all the factors involved and weigh them up. Situation ethics state that there are no moral laws or rules and that the context is important. The general rule of this approach is that the correct action should be the most loving action.



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VIRTUE ETHICS

Virtue ethics is arguably the oldest ethical theory in the world, with origins in Ancient Greece.

It defines good actions as ones that display embody virtuous character traits, like courage, loyalty, or wisdom.

A virtue itself is a disposition to act, think and feel in certain ways.

Bad actions display the opposite and are informed by vices, such as cowardice, treachery, and ignorance.

DEONTOLOGY

Deontological ethics is a type of ethics and ethical theories. **It judges actions based on whether they follow certain rules.** It is sometimes described as "duty" or "obligation" or "rule" -based ethics, because rules "bind you to your duty". The Ancient Greek word deon is commonly translated as obligation or duty.

One of the most well-known philosophers to define deontological principles was **Immanuel Kant**, the 18th-century German founder of critical philosophy.

NATURAL MORAL LAW

Natural law is an ethical theory that claims that humans are born with a certain moral compass that guides behaviours. These inherited rules essentially distinguish the "rights" and "wrongs" in life. Under natural law, everyone is afforded the same rights, such as the right to live and the right to happiness.

Most commonly associated with St Thomas Aquinas (1224 -1274).

Natural Law is based on five primary precepts (rules), revealed to humans by God.

They are:

1. Self-preservation/preservation of the innocent
2. Continuation of the species through reproduction
3. Education of children
4. To live in society
5. To worship God