



Pre-Enlightenment Ethics

- Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Children should be trained to respond virtuously to life's demands
- Therefore, moral education is more character education

Relativism and moral ethics

- Moral philosophers try to anchor moral life and ethical views in universal terms
- Problem - they may be relative to particular societies or communities
- Which one is right?
- What are we as a society willing to accept?

A scenario



- A man is admitted to the hospital, unconscious, with a history of serious health problems and a high blood alcohol level. He has no identification and no family with him. On his chest, he has a tattoo: "Do Not Resuscitate."
- What would you do?

Enlightenment Ethics

- Where did the Middle Ages go?
- Influence of church and religion during this time
- Need to order life on earth and not to better it
- Order, obedience, tradition acceptance



Utilitarianism

- John Stuart Mill – *On Liberty* (1859)
- A vision of good predetermines what is right
- Classical utilitarianism – optimising the ratio of happiness over pain
- Comprehensive system linked to individual and societal behaviour
- Response to social conditions at the time



What is utilitarianism?

- Several variations of utilitarianism
- How do we define happiness?
- 'Rule' utilitarians
- Some critiques – complex viewpoint

Enlightenment Ethics

- Brought ideal of freedom from authority of the Church and the opportunity of reason
- Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is the key philosopher in this regard – ethics is considered in line with logic
- Act in a way that you would like others in a similar situation to act
- We are responsible for our own choices, and our choices are moral if and only if they are logically derived from the absolute principle of duty.



- Kantian ethics – *deontological* ethics
- Emphasis on duty over love
- Effects of his ethical stance –
 1. Emphasises human rationality
 2. Enhances notion of autonomy
 3. Emphasis on logic
 4. Absolute principles
- Human beings become legislators of their own law through reason

Deweyan Ethics

- Like utilitarianism is consequentialist
- Does differ with utilitarians
- Human needs are dynamic and changing
- Responsibility of individuals and institutions – ethical behaviour is about accepting responsibility for your actions
- Can't be judged moral just by your acceptance of a situation but you need to consider it from others' perspectives

Scenario

- *One of your fellow students on the course, who is also a close friend, confides that he or she has cheated in an examination. Do you report the student in question to tutors in charge of the course or not?*
- Discuss the above scenario and make a note of the main reasons for your choice.
