Principles of ethics and theories

Principles of ethics (Virtues)

- Autonomy: The duty to maximize the individual's right to make his or her own decisions.

- Beneficence: the duty to do good.

- Confidentiality: the duty to respect the privacy of information.

- Finality: the duty to take action that may override the demands of law, religion, and social customs.

Principles of ethics (Virtues)

- Justice: the duty to treat all fairly, distributing the risks and benefit equally.

- Nonmaleficence: the duty to cause no harm

- Understanding/tolerance: the duty to understand and to accept other viewpoints if reason dictates.

Principles of ethics (Virtues)

- Respect for persons: the duty to honor others, their rights and their responsibilities.

- Universality: the duty to take actions that hold for everyone regardless of time , place, or people involved.

- Veracity: the duty to tell the truth.

Ethics theories

- Throughout history mankind has attempted to determine the philosophical basis from which to define right and wrong. Hence many theories have been proposed.

- 1. Ethics of obligation

- 2. Person based

Ethics theories

- **Deontology /Nonconsequentialism:** Derived from the Greek word, Deon, meaning duty. Considers that some acts are right or wrong independent of their consequences. Looks to one's obligation to determine what is ethical and answers the question: What should I do and why should I do it

Deontology

Deontology: A duty

Example: Zelda, a practitioner, believes she has a **duty** to give cardiac clients detailed information on the pathology involved in their condition even though the client has indicated that they are not ready or may be terrified to hear the information causing the client distress.

Consequentialism

- **Consequentialism**: Also called Teleological, Greek word, Telos, meaning end or consequence. Actions are determined and justified by the consequence of the act. Consequentialists consider **all** the consequences of what they are about to do prior to deciding a right action. This also answers the question: What should I do and why should I do it?

Consequentialism

Consequentialism: Action

Example: Had Zelda respected the wishes of her clients, she would have given them only the information which would have been a benefit to them and not caused them undue stress. She would have been motivated by her desire to do good (beneficence), rather than her sense of duty. This is a Deontological betrayal.

Utilitarian Ethics

- Utilitarian Ethics: Considers the greatest good for the largest number of people. Also answers the question: What should I do and why should I do it?

Intuitionism

- Intuitionism: Resolves ethical dilemmas by appealing to one's intuition, a moral faculty of a person which directly knows what is right or wrong. (A gut feeling of knowing what is right).

Social contract theory

- The moral code is created by the people who form societies. These people come together to create society for the purpose of protection and gaining other benefits of social cooperation. These people agree to regulate and restrict their conduct to achieve this end.

Ethical egoism

- This view is based on the theory that each person should do whatever promotes their own best interests, this becomes the basis for moral choices.

Natural law theory

- This is a moral theory which claims that just as there are physical laws of nature there are moral laws of nature that are discoverable. This theory is largely associated with Thomas Aquinas, who advocated that each thing has its own inherent nature, i.e characteristic ways of behavior that belong to all members of its species and are appropriate to it.

Natural law theory

- In the case of human beings , the moral laws of nature stem from our unique capacity to reason. When we act against our own reason, we are violating our nature , and therefore acting immorally.

Virtue theory

- emphasizes the role of one's character and the virtues that one's character embodies for determining or evaluating ethical behavior. Virtue ethics is one of the three major approaches to normative ethics, often contrasted to deontology which emphasizes duty to rules and consequentialism which derives rightness or wrongness from the outcome of the act itself.

Virtue theory

- This ethics theory proposes that ethical behavior is a result of developed or inherent character traits or virtues. A person will do what is morally right because they are a virtuous person.

- The most commonly accepted virtues are: autonomy, Beneficence, Confidentiality, Finality, Justice, Nonmaleficence, Understanding/tolerance, Respect for persons, Universality, Veracity.

Obligation vs. Good

	Ethics of Obligation	Ethics of the Good
Basic or Fundamental Emphasis:	Moral obligation or duty: actions must accord with duty	Good of the person: behavior must make our lives good, more human
A Basic Assumption:	People do not naturally tend or desire to live well	Most everyone naturally seeks to live well, and this desire is the starting point of ethics
Key Notion or concept:	Law (system of precepts or rules)	Virtue (the habits, feelings, and behaviors that do in fact create a good life)
Motivation for moral action:	Sense of **duty**	**Love** of the good (virtue of virtues)

Obligation vs. Good

	Ethics of Obligation	Ethics of the Good
Purpose:	Develop a strategy or rule for solving dilemmas or quandries	Develop a style of life, a way of being in the world (character)
Moral reasoning:	Deductive-inductive (General rules or principles applied to particular situations) [Principles never change]	Prudential (practical understanding one's good in terms of the situation one is in, and deliberation about adequate means to actualize one's character in this situation) [Character is in flux]
Strategy for resolution:	Rights and rules	Images, models, ideals

Case study

- John, a 32 year-old lawyer, had worried for several years about developing Huntington's chorea, a neurological disorder that appears in a person's 30s or 40s, bringing rapid uncontrollable twitching and contractions and progressive, irreversible dementia. It leads to death in about 10 years.

- John's mother died from this disease. Huntington's is autosomal dominant and afflicts 50% of an affected parent's offspring. John had indicated to many people that he would prefer to die rather than to live and die as his mother had. He was anxious, drank heavily, and had intermittent depression, for which he saw a psychiatrist. Nevertheless, he was a productive lawyer.

- John first noticed facial twitching 3 months ago, and 2 neurologists independently confirmed a diagnosis of Huntington's. He explained his situation to his psychiatrist and requested help committing suicide. When the psychiatrist refused, John reassured him that he did not plan to attempt suicide any time soon.

- But when he went home, he ingested all his antidepressant medicine after pinning a note to his shirt to explain his actions and to refuse any medical assistance that might be offered. His wife, who did not yet know about his diagnosis, found him unconscious and rushed him to the emergency room without removing the note.
- What should the care team at the emergency room do?