

Ethics, Moral Reasoning, & Professional Ethics

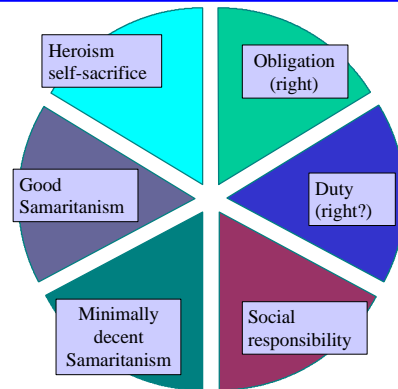
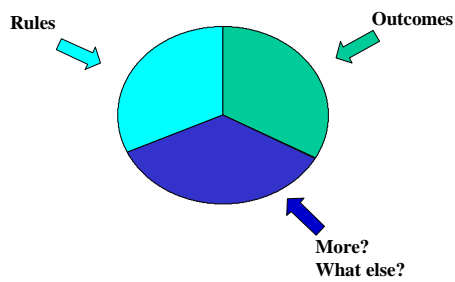
Stephen Cohen
School of Philosophy

Moral = Ethical

vs.

- prudential
- political
- preference
- artistic
- ...
- ...

Ethics

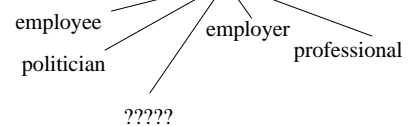


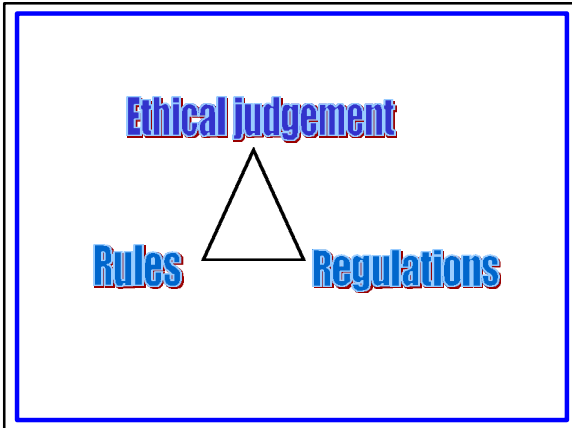
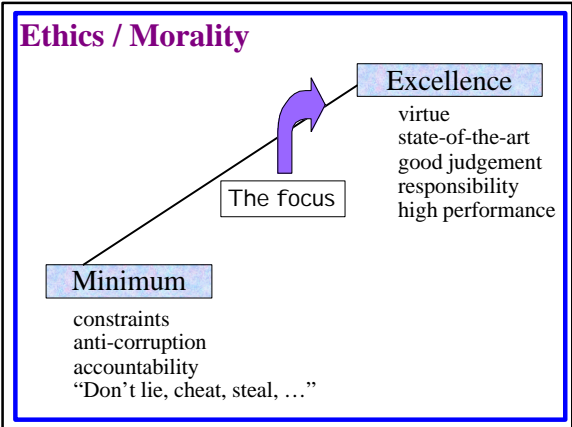
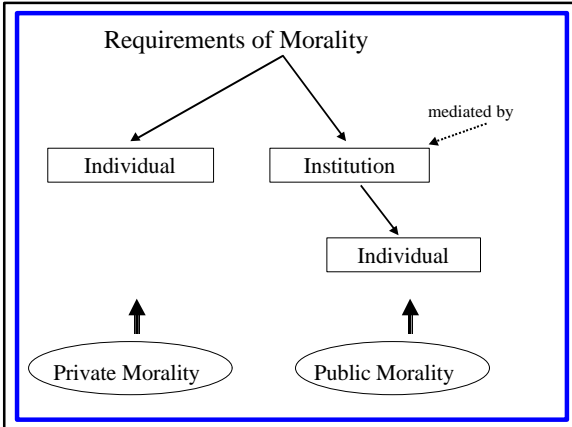
Ethics in public and private life

Public & Private Morality

Individual

In a Role





Matters of judgement.

Exercise discretion.

Situation is not black and white.

It depends on how you see it.

Problems

$2 + 2 = ???$

Triangle ABC is a right triangle. Side A is 3.27 metres long. Angle α is 25 degrees. How long are sides B and C? How big is angle β ?

Someone is having serious trouble at the side of the road. Would it be a good thing if you did something to assist them?

You are responsible for overseeing the tender process in a public service organisation. A contractor offers you a \$10,000 bribe to help see that his tender receives “a favourable hearing”. Is this ok?

Dilemmas

We could either retrench six of our employees, or else ask all twenty of the staff to take a pay cut. What should we do?

You happened to hear someone reveal some confidential and sensitive information to someone else, just as you were walking by the office. Is it morally permissible for you to make use of this information?

Exception which proves the rule

Counterexample

Anomaly

Informed Reasoning

Not simply

- Reactions
- Gut feelings
- Situation ethics

Moral Judgements

Principled Judgements

Justifiable

Integrity

Moral Behaviour

Principled Behaviour

Justifiable

Avoidance of hypocrisy

Hypocrisy

**a “practical” inconsistency
between what a person
believes about themselves,
and how that person
actually behaves**

A tale of hypocrisy

“Your business is very
important to us.”



“You are the 38th person on hold
right now. We’ll get to you in
approximately 57 minutes.”

List the four or five most important ethical characteristics possessed by someone you greatly admire.

Amazing Coincidence

Dispelling the significance of *relativism*

Honesty

Integrity

Fairness

Compassion (caring)

Openness



Moral Reasoning

Moral reasoning occurs only in the presence of an issue

This issue is a *stimulus*

Business or Profession

Profession

- member of a profession
- specialised body of knowledge
- credentialing body
- public interest is paramount
- client's interest
- exercise of judgement
- code of ethics
- public trust
- self-regulation (mainly)
- limited external regulation

Business

- "professional"
- specialised body of knowledge (maybe)
- credentialing body (maybe)
- code of ethics (maybe)
- limited self-regulation
- external regulation (mainly)

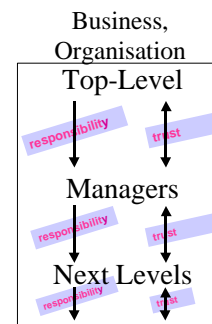
Accountability

- historical track
- tick the box
- reveals liability

Responsibility

- proactive
- "take responsibility for"
- discretion
- ethical empowerment

Ethical Empowerment / Ethical Authorisation



The Fundamental Principles of Professional Conduct (ICAA)

- The Public Interest
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Independence
- Confidentiality
- Technical & Professional Standards
- Competence and Due Care
- Ethical Behaviour

Code of Ethics

Code of Conduct

general
values / principles
judgement
“empowering”
“aspirational”

specific
prescriptions / directives
uniformity
enforceable statement of something specific

At work, you don't leave your private, personal values at the door!

Who's to judge?

The answer to this question is always the same:

You, as an individual.

Systematically –

- Get straight on what the issue is.
- Write it down.
- Listen! Do you understand the argument?, the other side's position", etc.?

- Write down the various concerns, etc. – possible ways of dealing with the issue.
- Consider them; and deal with the issue.

Avoid “moral negligence”

Rules of thumb:

- Light of day test
- If the question occurs to you, “Is it ok for me to do this?”, then most likely the answer is ‘no’.

Adequate preparation, sensitivity, awareness, knowledge, and conceptual apparatus

- to avoid “moral blindness”
- to cultivate and exhibit “moral competence”

Professional Independence / Objectivity

Conflict of interest \neq being adversely affected by a conflict

A person’s *having* a conflict of interest is not the same thing as a person’s *being affected by* a conflict of interest.

Dirty Hands

A situation in which –
doing something that is right carries with it something for which you are responsible which is wrong (morally bad), which, itself, does not evaporate simply in virtue of the rightness of your act.

Expression of sympathy

“I’m sorry about what happened to you.”

“I’m sorry for your loss.”

Apology

“I’m sorry.”

“I’m sorry for what I did to you.”

Research findings from ICAC



Key research findings

Staff are more likely to:

Copy their superiors

than to:

Adhere to ethics policy



Key research findings

- ❖ **Statements from the CEO on stance on ethics**

Have more effect on behaviour than

- ❖ **People's own ethical goals and beliefs.**



Leadership Means

- ❖ Identifying organisational values
- ❖ Leaders following these values themselves
- ❖ Promoting values to others
- ❖ Ensuring values reflected in all actions & decisions
- ❖ Having the courage to insist on ethical conduct



Leadership involves

- ❖ authorising and empowering others to behave ethically

Key research findings

- ❖ **Strong, clearly stated values =**

ethical decisions being the easiest way to go



Overall – encouraging ethical behaviour

People are more likely to behave ethically when:

- ❖ managers behave ethically
- ❖ organisational values are clear
- ❖ ethical behaviour is rewarded
- ❖ sanctions for unethical behaviour are clear
- ❖ there is practical ethics training



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