

Genetics and You

Moral Philosophy and Decision
Making

I. Why Moral Philosophy?

- Life is a problem-solving sequence
- Decisions are made with reason/thought
- A person's culture, norms and morals determine their reasoning
- Genetics and medicine offer difficult questions that have moral implications
 - Life and Death

I. Why Moral Philosophy?

- Remaining lectures will present you with current issues in genetics and you will be asked to formulate decisions and solutions based on reasoning and thought
- The purpose of this lecture is to help you to determine how and why we make decisions

II. What is Morality?

- “How we ought to live” – Socrates 390 B.C.
- “Right and wrong”
- **Dilemma** – by what standards and who’s values are used to determine what is right or wrong?

Requirements of Morality

- Reasoning
- Impartiality

The Concept of Morality

- “Morality is, at the very least, the effort to guide one’s conduct by **reason** – that is to do what there are the best reasons for doing – while giving **equal weight** to the interests of each individual who will be affected by one’s conduct”

III. Cultural Relativism

- **Dilemma** – By what standards and who’s values are used to determine morality?
- Example – funerals of ancient Greeks and Callatians
- Can different societies have opposing norms of morality and can they both be “right”?

III. Cultural Relativism

1. Different societies have different moral codes
2. The moral code of our own society has no special status
3. There is no “universal truth” in ethics
4. We should adopt an attitude of tolerance toward the practices of other cultures

III. Cultural Relativism

- Consequences of Cultural Relativism
 1. Cannot say the customs of another society are morally inferior to our own
 2. Examples
- Are there common values?
 - Truth, Killing – necessary for society to exist

Decision-Making Philosophies

I. Why Moral Philosophy?

II. What is Morality

III. Cultural Relativism

- Egoism Approach
- Utilitarian Approach
- Categorical Imperative Approach

IV. Egoism Approach

- **Impartiality** – treat each person/situation the same
- Morality recommends unselfishness
- **Egoism** – each person will look out for own interests
 - Human nature –
 - Giving Money?

IV. Egoism Approach

- **Egoism** – no duty to do something other than what is best for ourselves – duty to yourself
 - Can promote other's interests when the act promotes your own
 - Should not do act that will cause future grief
 - do what's best for you in long run
 - Duty not to harm others
 - Duty not to lie
 - Duty to keep promises
- } To own advantage

V. Christian Approach

- Morality is determined by God's Laws
 - Moral people follow these laws
- God's Laws do not change and apply to all people/situations
- **Golden Rule** –

VI. Utilitarian Approach

- “Morality is the attempt to bring about as much happiness as possible in the world”
- **Principle of Utility** – whenever we have a choice between alternate actions, we must choose the one that has the best overall consequences for everyone concerned
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VI. Utilitarian Approach

- Example – Euthanasia (“mercy killing”)
- Utilitarian Argument
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 - Euthanasia may be moral
- Christian Tradition
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 - Euthanasia is not moral

VII. Categorical Imperative

- Morality is a matter of following absolute rules that admit no exceptions – Immanuel Kant
 - Example –
- Moral obligations do not depend on your desires but are **categorical**
 - “You ought to do such-and-such”
- **Categorical** “oughts” are **imperative** for society and moral people must follow them

VII. Categorical Imperative

- How to know if something is moral?
- “act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”
 - 1.
 - 2.
- Moral people follow **universal laws** that hold true without exception
- Examples

Applying Approaches

- Egoism Approach – Act on own interests
- Christian Approach – Golden Rule
- Utilitarian Approach – Greatest good
- Categorical Imperative Approach – Universal Law

- Euthanasia
- Abortion
- Genetic Screening
- Genetically Modified Foods