

Considerations in Ethics



JOHN RAWLS

JUSTICE AS FAIRNESS
SOCIAL CONTRACT ETHICS

Review



- Aristotle
 - Virtue Ethics
- Kant
 - Universal Ethics
- Utilitarianism
 - Greatest Good - Utility

Aristotle: Virtue Ethics



- Intentions (and ends)
- *Areté* – Excellence (at what you do)
- **Virtues**
- Moving to “Mean” – eg. Courage.
- Seeking “Contentedness”
 - Success + Reputation?

Kant



- Kant's Epistemology
 - **Old:** We Adhere to "reality"
 - **Kant:** We give "reality" form
- "Categorical Imperative"
 - Intent vs. Outcome
- CI = not just "right," but "obligatory" (**DUTY**)
- "Good Will" = absolute good.

Utilitarianism



- The Principle of Utility =
The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number
- A matter of “pain” v “pleasure” (or contentedness?)
- The **Ends** of an action are its *only* measure (v. intent)
- May NOT intentionally cause any harm (animals too?)

John Rawls (d. 2002)

- American, 20th Century
- Academic, taught at Harvard
- Rejects Utilitarianism.
- “Contractualism”



Where will Ethics come from?



- There are no absolutes in Human understanding.
- No real “Social Contract”
- How we might actually treat each other originates from:
 - Political Interaction
 - Economic status

Liberty v. Equality

Liberty

- Free Market
- Open democracy
- Emphasize individual

Equality

- Socialism
 - Communism?
- Social Welfare State
- Limited vision of individual

Reflective Equilibrium



- For Rawls Ethics is political (and economic).
- There is no universal principle – consensus.
- One's beliefs must be coherent. (specific to general and back)
- **Specific:**
 - Imprisonment without trial is unjust.
- **General:**
 - All citizens ought to have basic rights.
- **Abstract:**
 - All people ought to be free and equal.

Reasonable Pluralism



- Public Political Culture
 - Allow for free and reasoned agreement
 - Gain a political concept of **justice**
 - ✦ Citizens **FREE** and **EQUAL** = Fair Cooperation
- Stability from:
 - **Overlapping Consensus**
- **Private values CAN influence, NOT justify public values.**

Justice as Fairness



- NO ONE more deserving than other at birth.
 - **TWO PRINCIPLES of JF**
 - ✦ Equal Basic liberties (no can claim).
 - ✦ **Reciprocal Advantage** – fair opportunity
 - Greatest benefit to least advantaged.
- Citizen and “**Two Moral Powers**”
 - **Sense of Justice** = Cooperation
 - **Conception of the Good** = Value on Human life/experience.

Equality Based Reciprocity



- **Four types of Economy**

	Least-Advantaged	Middle	Most-Advantaged
A	10,000	10,000	10,000
B	12,000	15,000	20,000
C	20,000	30,000	50,000
D	17,000	50,000	100,000

Egalitarian Base-line.

“The Original Position”



- What are **FAIR** terms of social cooperation for free and equal **citizens**?
- What **TERMS of COOPERATION** would free and equal **citizens** agree to under *fair* conditions?
- **Rawls:**
 - “Injustice, then, is simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all.”

The Citizen



- **Primary goods** are:

1. The basic rights and liberties;
2. Freedom of movement, and free choice among a wide range of occupations;
3. The powers of offices and positions of responsibility;
4. Income and wealth;
5. The social bases of self-respect: the recognition by social institutions that gives citizens a sense of self-worth and the confidence to carry out their plans.

“VEIL OF IGNORANCE”



- Create a “thought experiment”
- Necessary to NOT know to be FAIR... (cake slicer)
- **DO NOT KNOW:**
 - Race, gender, age, income, wealth, beliefs, the natural endowments, or where in history. Also political system, class structure, economic system or level of development.
- **DO KNOW:**
 - Citizens will have different views, will want more stuff, that stuff is limited (enough for the basic). Basics of social life, common sense and simple science.

Meta-Ethics



- “The most stable concept of justice, is the one that is perspicuous (plain) to our reason, congruent to our good, and rooted not in abnegation (denial) but in affirmation of the self.”
- Creating basic liberties for all citizens that allow use of the two moral powers.