

Assessing moral values

Experience, Human Nature



Are the truths of moral judgements only relative to a specific viewpoint, or are some certainties absolute, or even contextual? An examination of the moral relativist viewpoint reveals elements that are pertinent to more than one perspective; some attitudes held as certainties, or absolutes, or relative per context. Is it possible to be morally relativistic while holding logically inconsistent positions? The outlook that respecting people is something that is always right to do and so not at all relative is examined.

Moral relativism is the view that ethical judgments are valid or false just with respect to some specific stance (for example, that of a culture or a recorded period) and that no point of view is remarkably favored over all others. It has regularly been referenced to in different cases about ethical quality: prominently, the hypothesis that distinctive societies frequently show profoundly extraordinary different values; the denial that there are universal moral values shared by every human society; and the insistence that we should refrain from passing moral judgments on beliefs and practices characteristic of cultures other than our own (Philosophy, n. d.).

In the health care professions, the meaning of—and implications for—‘dignity’ and ‘value’ are progressively more important, as scholars and practitioners increasingly must make value judgments when making care decisions. This paper looks at the Kantian model that is popular within the medical community: human value is foundational; human dignity, autonomy, and rights derive from the relational quality of human dignity (LLC, 2017b).

Many ethical philosophers take for granted that a human being is due, and has a right to basic respect. It is argued, however, that there is no such right;

respect is something that must be earned, not simply due by right. (LLC, 2017a).

Virtue ethics (or virtue theory) is an approach to ethics that emphasizes an individual's character as the key element of ethical thinking, rather than rules about the actsthemselfes (deontology) or their consequences (consequentialism).

There are three main strands of Virtue Ethics:

- Eudaimonism is the classical formulation of virtue ethics, and holds that the appropriate justification for a human life is Eudaimonia (“happiness”, “well-being” or the “goodlife”). A lifelong habit of “arête”, i. e. virtuous living, has the added benefit of supporting the exercise of “phronesis” (practical wisdom) handle life's issues. (Mastin, 2008).
- Ethics of Care was developed mainly by feminist writers in the 1950s. This concept was intended to bring attention to the fact that men and women think in different terms; masculine considerations would include justice and autonomy, with women fulfilling terms such as caregivers. Good traits like patience, the ability to cultivate, self-expense, etc., have been downgraded because culture has not sufficiently respected the contributions of women (Mastin, 2008).
- Agent-based speculations give a record of ideals based on our sound judgment instincts about which character attributes are commendable (e. g. consideration, thoughtfulness, empathy, and so on.), which we can recognize by considering the general population we respect, our ethical models (Mastin, 2008).

In the healthcare field, virtue ethics is critical to upholding moral standards regarding patient rights and security, as well as quality of medical attention. A career in health information management could afford the realization of the three strands of virtue ethics; reaching the goal of ‘the good life’ by practicing virtues such as ethics of care result in the status of someone’s moral exemplar.

Moral relativism dictates that ethical judgements can be validated or dismissed, with respect to certain stances. The strand of virtue ethics involving agent-based theories bases virtue on our common-sense intuitions about which character traits are admirable (e. g. benevolence, kindness, compassion, etc.), which we can identify by looking at the people we admire, our moral exemplars (Mastin, 2008); i. e., those holding certain stances.

Moral relativism holds the view that the validity of ethical judgments is valid or false based on a specific attitude and that no point of view is remarkably favored over all others; virtue ethics requires an analysis of an individual’s personal belief to determine the validity of a stance. In this case, certain points of view are preferred; those that reflect an individual’s personal ethics.

While validating ethical judgements respective to specific viewpoints, relativism indicates that we should absolutely refrain from passing moral judgments on beliefs and practices characteristic of cultures other than our own. The theories discussed share, in certain scenarios, common elements.

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