

What is the relation between reason and ethics

[Philosophy](#)



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Relationship between Reason and Ethics Many philosophers have been making attempts of developing arguments that link reason to ethics. Therefore, each of the philosophers has developed a form of relationship of the linkage between reason and its effects on ethical values. Reason denotes the act of making a rational judgment while ethics refers to the moral behaviors. The question that has been posed to explain the relationship between the two is whether reason contributes to ethical behavior. This paper will discuss the relationship between the two (Cottingham 29).

Plato is one of the philosophers who developed an argument that linked reason to ethics. Notably, Plato identified the hierarchy of forms in which ethical behavior which he denoted as the form of the good was at the topmost position in the hierarchy. In his argument, he asserted that ethical behavior denoted as true goodness only existed in the intelligible domain. Therefore, such true goodness which refers to ethics can only be understood by the intellect or reason. This is the reason why Plato highlighted that one must use the power of reason in order to exhibit ethical behavior. However, this perspective is challenged by the fact that it is God who gives command of what is ethically right. This changes the role of the power of reason and poses an additional question whether ethics depend on obedience to God. According to Plato and Aristotle, reason remains to be a core defining aspect of humanity and is of critical contribution to ethical behavior (102).

Other philosophers have expanded the argument linking reason with ethics highlighting that, an agent in this case an individual must have explanatory and justification reasons for taking a certain action. One's actions may violate certain rules, but are subject to excuse if the individual offers a rational explanation of a stronger obligation than that indicated in the rule.

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Therefore, this means that individuals can rely on the power of reason to justify their actions. This argument is partly based on the views of Aristotle, who highlighted that a virtuous life must take into consideration the power of reason. According to him, there two kinds of reason existed; one of them was an intellectual reason which determines what is true or false (78). On the other hand, practical reason helps an individual decide on the right way to do things. Both of these types of reasons determine the action of an individual and hence affect the affects the ethics of that person.

Work Cited

Cottingham, John. Philosophy and the Good Life: Reason and the Passions in Greek, Cartesian and Psychoanalytic Ethics. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003. Print.