

Morality of drug use

[Health & Medicine](#), [Drugs](#)



In his book entitled “ Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues,” Vincent Ryan Ruggiero formulated a criteria consisting of three elements, which criteria relates to respect for persons as a theoretical construct and a practical ethical standard for everyday decision making (Ruggiero, 78). These three criteria are obligations, moral ideals and consequences, which are all applicable to the determination of proper conduct in relation to drug use (Ruggiero, 79).

Moral Ideals.

Ruggiero explained his concept of moral ideals as distinct from obligations. For him, ideals are goals that characterize excellence, which goals are aimed at by different individuals (Ruggiero, 78). In particular, and in relation to respect for persons, he discussed that moral ideals assist a person in achieving respect for persons (Ruggiero, 80).

He also explicated that moral ideals could be composed of various categories, such as the “ cardinal virtues” of old and the theological virtues of religious thinkers. He likewise posited that moral ideals could vary from person to person, or from culture to culture (Ruggiero, 81). This is an important proposition, because the differences in moral ideals determine the differences in treatment given by each person on varying actions. Thus, one person could regard a moral ideal as more than just that, for example as an obligation that requires compliance.

Applying this concept to the ethical issue of drug use, it would be concluded that the perspective could be viewed from a number of different perspectives, which also have varying moral ideals. This means that drug

use could be viewed positively or negatively by different cultures or population, depending on their respective moral ideals.

For example, a population of medical practitioners such as doctors would hold on to the ideal that drug use is necessary in certain cases, such as in situations of a disease or illness that could only be cured by the administration of particular drugs. On the other hand, a population consisting of the religious whose faith dictates the avoidance of drugs would hold on to the exact opposite moral ideal. Thus, an ethical decision hinges on the moral ideals to which the population concerned adhere, because such moral ideals determine the kind of ethical decision that would probably be made in any given situation.

Obligations.

Ruggiero also discussed the notion of obligations as a criterion for determining respect for persons. His concept of obligations refers to the element of compulsion into doing a certain act, as determined by the situation involved or the relationship between or among parties (Ruggiero, 80). He likewise explained that different kinds of situations and interpersonal relations dictate the kind of obligations that are imposed on a person.

Viewing drug use in the light of Ruggiero's concept of obligations, drug use could be ethically justified by formulating a situation such that the administration or prescription of medicinal drugs and the corresponding use is seen as an obligation on the part of the doctor and the patient to maintain the latter's good health and long life.

Consequences.

Finally, Ruggiero discussed the concept of consequences, which refer to the effects of an action on a person (Ruggiero, 81). He states that the effects could be classified into beneficial or harmful effects, or grouped according to kind, such as whether they are physical or emotional (Ruggiero, 81).

The most important aspect of Ruggiero's discussion of the topic is his position that the benefit or harm caused by a specific act is determined by the impact of such an act on all persons involved, including the actor (Ruggiero, 81).

This criterion is relevant in the issue of drug use, because ultimately, any ethical decision on this matter hinges on its effects on the user. Therefore, drug use could be ethically justified if it is shown that there are health benefits that could favor the user or his community. On the other hand, proof that drug use only leads to individual or collective harm would tilt the favor against drug use.

In sum, Ruggiero's three criteria are relevant in any discussion of the morality of drug use. These criteria provide practical knowledge with regard to the things that one should be looking at, prior to making an ethical decision.

Works Cited

Ruggiero, Vincent Ryan. *Thinking Critically About Ethical Issues*. 6th ed.