

## KEYWORDS

Moral – an act that is good or right

Immoral – an act that is wrong or evil

Sin – an act which goes against God or religious rules

Crime – an act which is against the law

Absolutism – approach to ethics that states rules are always right universally

Relativism – moral rules are subjective based on the relative

Ethics – a set of moral principles which guide you

Utilitarianism – an ethical theory, founded by Jeremy Bentham, based on actions being right or wrong based on the number of people made happy

Consequences – the results of an action

Immanuel Kant/Kantianism – a person and ethical theory based on deontological ethics.

Thought Experiment – a hypothetical situation designed to promote logical thought and reasoning

Situation Ethics – a theory that there are no fixed moral rules, each situation needs a loving response

Conscience – a person's sense of right and wrong – seen as a guide

Abortion – the act of deliberately ending a pregnancy

Stewardship – acting as caretakers of the planet

Dominion – the belief that humans are in charge and rule over the planet.

**Utilitarianism** is an ethical theory that determines right from wrong by focusing on outcomes. It is a form of consequentialism.

Utilitarianism holds that the most ethical choice is the one that will produce the greatest good for the greatest number. It is the only moral framework that can be used to justify military force or war. It is also the most common approach to moral reasoning used in business because of the way in which it accounts for costs and benefits.

However, because we cannot predict the future, it's difficult to know with certainty whether the consequences of our actions will be good or bad. This is one of the limitations of utilitarianism.

Utilitarianism also has trouble accounting for values such as justice and individual rights. For example, assume a hospital has four people whose lives depend upon receiving organ transplants: a heart, lungs, a kidney, and a liver. If a healthy person wanders into the hospital, his organs could be harvested to save four lives at the expense of one life. This would arguably produce the greatest good for the greatest number. But few would consider it an acceptable course of action, let alone the most ethical one.

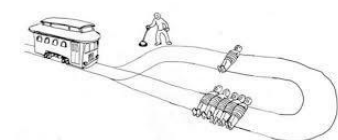
So, although utilitarianism is arguably the most reason-based approach to determining right and wrong, it has obvious limitations.

**Conscience** - Conscience describes two things – what a person believes is right and how a person decides what is right. More than just 'gut instinct', our conscience is a 'moral muscle'.

By informing us of our values and principles, it becomes the standard we use to judge whether or not our actions are ethical.



We can call these two roles ethical awareness and ethical decision making.



## Thought Experiments

The mad axe man – if a mad axe man, who wanted to kill your friend ran into your classroom – would you tell him where your friend was hiding or lie and say you don't know?

The Trolley Problem – A train is careering out of control down the tracks towards 5 people workers who cannot hear it, caught on the track. However, down a side track is a lone worker. Do you switch the tracks – killing one but saving five?

**Kantian ethics** says that the morality of an action depends on a moral law that is universal and absolute and not on the consequences of the action. In other words, Kant argued that actions are morally right if they are made out of a sense of duty and if the guiding principle of the action can be applied universally.

The issues arise with this when the act of following the moral imperative (rule) causes unwelcome consequences, e.g. the death of your friend at the hands of the mad axe man

## Applying the Theories;

Environmental responsibility means that humans should look after the world in such a way that future generations can enjoy it too. It involves not using up the world's natural resources and ensuring that the planet is cared for and preserved.

As stewards of God's creation, Christianity teaches that humans have a responsibility towards the environment. Christians have a duty to do what they can to ensure they are environmentally responsible. Each individual is responsible for their contribution to the environment and therefore must ensure they act to protect it and its inhabitants.

Individuals can care for the and its inhabitants by acting sustainably.

Animals are often seen as less sentient beings. This is why we use and abuse them for our needs; experimentation, entertainment, work etc... As humans do we have a responsibility to care for all animals and not take their lives?