

Why Ethics?

Should I bring my personal beliefs into my organisation?

Should not my employer determine standards of behaviour for all employees?

Should not governments set minimum public expectations of business?

Why Ethics?

- You become a manager because of knowledge and skills, not to manage moral matters. Why is social responsibility your concern?
- Is it not undemocratic for business professionals or other individuals to decide social issues under the cover of ethics?

Ethics is subjective and relative

Everyone disagrees about ethics, so who is to say what is right?

Ethics is relative to your culture, so it is offensive to impose your values on to someone else.

Ethics matters to everybody

- Higher levels of *professional* and *public* responsibility and accountability.
- People accept common values, even if their priorities differ.
- Ethical arguments are still trumps.
- Ethical justifications are standardly demanded.
- ‘No one’ accepts ethical defeat.

Isn't ethics just about following rules?

- Human conduct cannot be reduced to rules
- Rules have their purpose, but they date and they must be tempered by judgment
- Rules cannot cover all contingencies

What is involved in ethical justification?

Be accountable in terms of

- the law
- professional codes
- employer's values statements
- common morality
- informed ethical judgment (conscience)

Informed Ethical Judgment

- Not just self-interested
- Has regard for others
- Could apply to anybody - reversible
- Takes account of context
- Overrides other considerations
- Considered with peers or others
- Can live with it

The Basics of Ethics

- Two main ways of explaining ethics:
 - 1. Acts are intrinsically right or wrong. Ethical requirements are expressed in duties – *deontology* (Kant)
 - 2. Right and wrong means producing a surplus of good over evil consequences - *consequentialism*, eg. ‘utilitarianism’ (Mill)

Deontology

- Classic phrases for deontology are:
 - “respect for persons”;
 - “the ends don’t justify the means”.
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- This theory holds the worth of persons to be infinite - cannot be traded off for other benefits eg. trialling drugs on a minority group because the majority will gain.

Varieties of Consequentialism

- Egoism; Epicureanism; Utilitarianism
- The classic phrase still widely used to sum up utilitarianism is “the greatest happiness for the greatest number”.

Virtue Ethics – ethics as excellence

- Focuses on character or human virtue; stresses the achievement of excellence in human activities.
- A kind of middle way:
 - Holds that virtues are intrinsically good and perfect human nature (ie. has elements of both deontology and consequentialism).

Virtues and Professional Ethics

Professional excellence ranks among the perfecting human virtues.

- All social virtues built on friendship, but professional virtues include:
 - High practice standards
 - Trustworthiness and honesty
 - Integrity
 - Compassion

Why be ethical? Three answers

- “Because it is your rational duty”
- “Because this will increase the sum of good in the world.”
- “Because that is the most fitting way to be a person”.

Connecting personal and professional

Professional ethics draws from all three strands of moral theory:

- It cares about principles and about people as people;
- It cares about results;
- It cares about the virtues of professional practice (excellence).

Instrumental goods and intrinsic goods

- What is the good of a car?
- What is the good of money?
- What is the good of food?
- What is the good of a degree?
- What is the good of friendship?
- What is the good of art?

Instrumental goods

- Cars are good for transport
- Money is good for sustenance
- Food is good for nutrition
- A degree is good for a job
- Friendship is good for sharing life's ups and downs
- Art is good for ... investment

Fundamental goods

- Some things are good in themselves
 - Some foods are like this
 - It is good to have a degree because it improves your education
 - Friendship is just good
 - Art is good for its own sake

In sum ...

- So goods can be useful for getting other goods, or
- Just good in themselves. These are called basic or fundamental goods.

So what is the good of ethics?

- Ethics is about the pursuit of relative & fundamental goods.
- Reflected in deontology in stressing that human dignity cannot be traded for lesser benefits; & Utility by taking consequences seriously.
- But fundamental goods should not be displaced by relative ones.

Deficiencies of these theories

- Rules and absolute prohibitions work at the margins of conduct, eg. Do not torture; do not kill the innocent. Most conduct is not at the extreme.
- Consequences need some ranking principle beside quantity to distinguish what is important and inviolable from what is tradable + a theory of good.

How can we choose an ethical theory?

In an ethical position (whichever theory):

- Look at whether fundamental goods are protected and supported
- Look at human flourishing. Are any goods basic to human well-being deliberately compromised?

Can we name these goods?

- Life
- Friendship
- Freedom
- Knowledge
- Aesthetics
- Play
- Religion

Consider Play

- Valuable for itself. Need serve no other end.
- Play includes many forms of recreation and diversion. Its most familiar form is sport.
- But play informs many parts of our lives.
The spirit of play is valuable just for itself.

Play and sport

- Sport has long embodied play, but can it continue to do so?
- Threats:
 - Organisation and scale
 - Money and commercialism
 - Science and technology
 - Cult of the elite athlete

Ethics and sport

- Sport is a form of the basic good of play.
- Winning and losing are important.
- But so is respect for fair play and the rules
- Confidence and trust in the game is paramount – NRL
- Ethics should protect this where law cannot from commerce, power and ideology

Ethics and business

What goods are fundamental in business?

What values do we need to protect them?

What structures should encourage and protect those values?

What role does an individual have in safeguarding those values in an organisation?

What role does business have in protecting those values in society?