

DSC 152 PHILOSOPHY UNIT 3

DSC-152 PHILOSOPHY

UNIT : 3

(DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS)

PREPARED BY NSUI (AFZAL) 🍌 🍷

1. What is Deontological Ethics?

- **Answer:** Deontological ethics is an ethical theory that emphasizes duties, rules, and principles rather than the consequences of actions. It asserts that actions are morally right or wrong based on adherence to moral laws, regardless of the outcomes.

2. Who is the key philosopher associated with Deontological Ethics?

- **Answer:** Immanuel Kant is the key philosopher associated with deontological ethics, particularly for his development of the Categorical Imperative and the concept of Good Will.

3. What does Kant mean by "Good Will"?

- **Answer:** According to Kant, Good Will is the only thing that is intrinsically good. It refers to the intention to act according to moral principles, regardless of the consequences. A person with good will acts out of a sense of duty, not self-interest.

4. How does Kant define moral actions?

- **Answer:** For Kant, moral actions are those that are performed from duty and according to universal moral laws. An action is morally right if it is done with the right intention, guided by duty, and in accordance with rational moral principles.

5. What is the Categorical Imperative in Kantian ethics?

- Answer: The Categorical Imperative is a central concept in Kantian ethics. It is a command that must be followed regardless of desires or goals. Kant formulated it in several ways, with the most famous being: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."

6. What does it mean to act according to a universal law in Kant's Categorical Imperative?

- Answer: To act according to a universal law means that an action should be performed in such a way that it could be universally applicable to everyone. If an action cannot be universally applied without contradiction, it is morally wrong.

7. What is the difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives?

- Answer: Hypothetical imperatives are conditional and depend on a person's desires (e.g., "If you want to pass the exam, study hard"). Categorical imperatives, by contrast, are unconditional and must be followed regardless of desires (e.g., "You must tell the truth").

8. Why does Kant say we should act out of duty for duty's sake?

- Answer: Kant argues that moral actions must be done out of respect for the moral law itself, not for any personal gain or external benefits. Acting from "duty for duty's sake" ensures that actions are guided by rational principles rather than personal inclination or the pursuit of happiness.

9. What is the "Formula of Universal Law" in Kant's ethics?

- Answer: The Formula of Universal Law is a version of the Categorical Imperative, which commands individuals to act only according to maxims that they can consistently will to be a universal law. This means you should only act in ways that you would accept as a universal rule for everyone.

10. What is the "Formula of Humanity" in Kant's ethics?

- Answer: The Formula of Humanity is another formulation of the Categorical Imperative, which states: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." This emphasizes respecting others' autonomy and dignity.

11. How does Kant's concept of duty relate to moral obligations?

- Answer: Kantian duty is an obligation to act in accordance with moral laws or principles. These duties are binding regardless of the consequences. Moral obligations, according to Kant, are not contingent on desires or outcomes but are dictated by reason and the categorical imperative.

12. How does Kant's ethics address the issue of moral dilemmas?

- Answer: Kantian ethics maintains that moral dilemmas arise from a failure to recognize the correct application of the Categorical Imperative. According to Kant, if two duties appear to conflict, one must prioritize the duty that can be universally applied or respect human dignity.

13. What is the role of autonomy in Kantian ethics?

- Answer: Autonomy is central to Kantian ethics. Kant believed that moral agents must be free to act according to rational principles, guided by the moral law. Autonomy allows individuals to legislate moral rules for themselves, under the guidance of reason.

14. What are some criticisms of Kantian Deontological Ethics?

- Answer: Criticisms include:

- Rigidity: Kant's strict adherence to duty can lead to conflicting duties with no clear resolution.

- Disregard for consequences: Critics argue that Kant's ethics may require actions that lead to harmful outcomes because it focuses exclusively on intention and duty, not consequences.

- Impracticality: The strict rules of the Categorical Imperative might be difficult to apply in complex real-world situations.

15. Who is W.D. Ross, and what is Deontological Pluralism?

- Answer: W.D. Ross was a British philosopher known for his theory of deontological pluralism, which asserts that there are multiple moral duties that cannot always be ranked or reduced to a single principle. Unlike Kant, who believed in a single overriding moral law, Ross argued that different duties (e.g., duties of fidelity, reparation, gratitude, justice) may conflict, and we must make moral judgments based on the situation.

16. What is the difference between Kantian ethics and Ross's Deontological Pluralism?

- Answer: While Kant emphasized a single, universal moral law (the Categorical Imperative), Ross's deontological pluralism acknowledges that there are many moral principles that may conflict with one another. Ross believed that our moral duties are more context-sensitive and cannot always be resolved by a universal rule.

17. What are the "prima facie duties" according to W.D. Ross?

- Answer: Prima facie duties are duties that are morally binding in certain circumstances, but they can be overridden by stronger duties in specific situations. For example, the duty of fidelity (keeping promises) might be overridden by the duty of justice in a situation where breaking a promise is necessary to ensure fairness.

18. Can you provide examples of some of Ross's prima facie duties?

- Answer: Some of Ross's prima facie duties include:
 - Fidelity: The duty to keep promises and be truthful.
 - Reparation: The duty to make amends for harm caused by one's previous actions.
 - Gratitude: The duty to repay others for their kindness or help.
 - Justice: The duty to promote fairness and treat others equally.
 - Beneficence: The duty to promote the welfare of others.
 - Self-improvement: The duty to improve oneself in morally relevant ways.
 - Non-maleficence: The duty to avoid causing harm to others.

19. How do Ross's prima facie duties relate to moral conflict?

- Answer: According to Ross, when moral duties conflict, we must use judgment to determine which duty takes precedence in the particular situation. For example, if the duty of fidelity conflicts with the duty of justice, one might need to break a promise to ensure fairness, depending on the context.

20. How does Ross resolve conflicts between prima facie duties?

- Answer: Ross suggested that when two or more prima facie duties conflict, we must use practical judgment to decide which duty is most important in that particular situation. This requires a nuanced understanding of the context and the potential consequences of each action.

21. What is the role of intuition in Ross's Deontological Pluralism?

- Answer: Ross believed that moral intuition plays a key role in determining which duties take priority in a given situation. He suggested that humans have an intuitive understanding of their prima facie duties, and we rely on these intuitions to resolve conflicts between competing duties.

22. How does Ross's theory account for moral flexibility?

- Answer: Ross's deontological pluralism allows for moral flexibility by recognizing that moral duties can vary in importance depending on the situation. Unlike Kant's rigid system, Ross's approach permits a more adaptive, context-sensitive application of moral principles.

23. What is the critique of Ross's Deontological Pluralism?

- Answer: A common criticism of Ross's theory is that it lacks a clear, systematic way to rank conflicting duties. Critics argue that his reliance on moral intuition and judgment might lead to subjectivity and inconsistencies in moral decision-making.

24. How does Ross's approach differ from consequentialist ethics?

- Answer: Ross's deontological pluralism differs from consequentialist ethics by focusing on the moral duties and principles that guide actions, regardless of the outcomes. Consequentialism, such as utilitarianism, judges actions based on the results they produce, whereas Ross emphasizes the importance of fulfilling duties, even when consequences might not align with those duties.

25. Does Ross believe in absolute moral rules?

- Answer: No, Ross does not believe in absolute moral rules. He argues that while there are important moral duties, these duties are not absolute and can conflict with one another. Moral judgment is needed to prioritize them based on the situation.

26. What is the significance of moral reasoning in Ross's theory?

- Answer: In Ross's theory, moral reasoning is crucial because individuals must use their judgment to navigate conflicts between prima facie duties. This reasoning requires sensitivity to the nuances of specific situations and an understanding of the duties involved.

27. How does Ross's pluralism address moral relativism?

- Answer: Ross's pluralism avoids moral relativism by grounding moral duties in objective principles, but it acknowledges that these duties may not always be in harmony. His approach allows for a balance between universal moral principles and situational flexibility.

28. What are the implications of Ross's theory for moral education?

- Answer: Ross's theory suggests that moral education should focus on developing the capacity to recognize and prioritize duties based on experience and intuition. This involves cultivating practical judgment and an understanding of how different moral duties can conflict and require resolution.

29. How does Ross address the issue of moral uncertainty?

- Answer: Ross acknowledges that moral uncertainty is an inherent part of human life. He suggests that while prima facie duties provide guidance, individuals must often rely on their moral intuition and judgment to navigate situations of uncertainty and conflict.

30. What is the legacy of Ross's Deontological Pluralism in contemporary ethics?

- Answer: Ross's deontological pluralism has influenced contemporary ethical theories that recognize the complexity and plurality of moral duties. It has contributed to ethical frameworks that balance rule-based morality with practical, context-sensitive judgment, providing a flexible alternative to both strict deontology and consequentialism.

1. What is the core principle of Deontological Ethics, and how does Kant's theory fit into it?

- Answer: The core principle of deontological ethics is that actions are morally right or wrong based on adherence to moral rules or duties, regardless of the consequences. Kant's theory is a prime example of deontological ethics because he argues that morality is grounded in rational duty, not in the outcomes of actions. According to Kant, moral actions are determined by one's intention to act in accordance with universal moral laws, and these laws are accessible through reason.

2. What is the concept of Good Will in Kantian ethics, and why is it central to his moral theory?

- Answer: In Kantian ethics, "Good Will" refers to the intention to act in accordance with duty, guided by rational moral laws. For Kant, Good Will is the only thing that is intrinsically good. It is central to his moral theory because it is the foundation of moral worth. An action has moral value only if it is performed from Good Will, meaning it is done for the sake of duty rather than out of self-interest or for the sake of some external reward.

3. How does Kant's Categorical Imperative serve as the foundation of his ethical theory?

- Answer: The Categorical Imperative is the fundamental principle of Kant's moral theory. It commands individuals to act according to maxims (principles or rules) that they can will to be a universal law. This imperative is categorical because it applies universally, without exceptions, and is binding on everyone. The Categorical Imperative is central to Kant's ethics because it provides a clear, rational criterion for determining moral actions, independent of subjective desires or external goals.

4. What are the key formulations of the Categorical Imperative, and how do they help guide moral actions?

- Answer: Kant formulates the Categorical Imperative in several ways, with two key formulations:

- Formula of Universal Law: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." This formulation requires individuals to ask if the action they are considering could be universally applied without contradiction.

- Formula of Humanity: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means." This formulation emphasizes the inherent dignity of

every person, requiring that individuals be treated with respect and not merely used for one's own purposes.

These formulations provide a rigorous, rational framework for evaluating moral actions, ensuring that they respect the moral worth of individuals and can be universally applied.

5. What is the significance of acting out of duty for duty's sake in Kantian ethics, and how does it differentiate Kant from consequentialist theories?

- Answer: In Kantian ethics, the concept of acting out of "duty for duty's sake" means that moral actions are not motivated by personal desires, consequences, or outcomes, but by respect for the moral law itself. This principle distinguishes Kant's deontological approach from consequentialist theories, such as utilitarianism, which determine the rightness of actions based on their outcomes. Kant argues that only actions performed from duty have moral worth; actions motivated by self-interest or the desire for good consequences are not truly moral.

6. How does Kant's concept of autonomy relate to his moral theory?

- Answer: Autonomy in Kantian ethics refers to the capacity of individuals to legislate moral laws for themselves through reason. For Kant, being morally autonomous means acting in accordance with one's rational understanding of duty, rather than being subject to external influences or mere inclinations. Autonomy is essential to Kant's ethics because it underscores the idea that moral agents must be free to choose their actions according to universal principles of morality, guided by reason.

7. What is the role of rationality in Kant's ethical framework, and how does it relate to the Categorical Imperative?

- Answer: Rationality is the cornerstone of Kant's ethical framework. For Kant, moral agents must use reason to determine their duties and to act in accordance with the Categorical Imperative. Rational beings are capable of recognizing universal moral laws through reason, which enables them to act in ways that respect the dignity of others and promote moral principles. The Categorical Imperative, as a rational principle, is meant to guide individuals in making moral decisions that respect the autonomy and worth of all people.

8. What are the key criticisms of Kant's ethics, particularly with regard to its rigid rules and disregard for consequences?

- Answer: Key criticisms of Kant's ethics include:

- **Rigidity:** Kant's system is often seen as rigid, as it demands adherence to duties regardless of the context or consequences. This can lead to morally problematic situations where following a duty may result in harmful outcomes.

- **Conflict of Duties:** Kant's theory struggles to resolve conflicts between equally binding duties. For example, if telling the truth conflicts with preventing harm, Kant's framework offers little guidance on how to prioritize.

- **Disregard for Consequences:** Critics argue that Kant's ethics ignores the consequences of actions, which can sometimes result in morally questionable outcomes (e.g., telling the truth might cause unnecessary harm).

9. What is W.D. Ross's Deontological Pluralism, and how does it differ from Kant's single-rule approach?

- **Answer:** W.D. Ross's Deontological Pluralism asserts that there are multiple moral duties, each with equal moral weight, that may conflict with one another. Unlike Kant's ethics, which revolves around a single universal law (the Categorical Imperative), Ross's pluralism recognizes that moral decisions often involve weighing different prima facie duties (e.g., fidelity, justice, beneficence) that can come into conflict in specific situations. Ross's theory allows for more flexibility and moral judgment in addressing such conflicts.

10. What are prima facie duties, and how do they function in W.D. Ross's moral theory?

- **Answer:** Prima facie duties are moral obligations that one must generally follow, but they can be overridden in certain circumstances if they conflict with other, more pressing duties. Ross identified several such duties, including fidelity (keeping promises), reparation (making amends for harm done), justice (distributing benefits fairly), and beneficence (promoting the welfare of others). The prima facie nature of these duties means that they are not absolute; their moral weight can change depending on the situation.

11. How does Ross resolve conflicts between prima facie duties?

- **Answer:** Ross suggests that when prima facie duties conflict, moral agents must use practical judgment to determine which duty takes precedence in the specific situation. This decision is made based on the circumstances, context, and the moral weight of the duties involved. For example, the duty of justice might override the duty of beneficence if fairness requires it. Ross does not provide a strict formula for resolving conflicts, instead relying on the agent's judgment.

12. How does Ross's theory differ from Kant's ethics in terms of moral flexibility?

- Answer: W.D. Ross's moral theory, as outlined in his book "The Right and the Good" (1930), differs from Immanuel Kant's ethics in terms of moral flexibility in the following ways:

Key differences

1. **Moral absolutism vs. moral pluralism:** Kant's ethics is based on moral absolutism, which holds that certain actions are inherently right or wrong, regardless of the circumstances. In contrast, Ross's theory is a form of moral pluralism, which recognizes that there are multiple moral principles and that their application can vary depending on the situation.

2. **Rigidity vs. flexibility:** Kant's moral theory is often criticized for being overly rigid, as it emphasizes the importance of adhering to moral rules regardless of the consequences. Ross's theory, on the other hand, allows for more flexibility in moral decision-making, as it recognizes that different moral principles can come into conflict and that context matters.

3. **Consequentialism vs. deontology:** Kant's ethics is a form of deontology, which focuses on the moral rightness or wrongness of actions regardless of their consequences. Ross's theory, while not entirely consequentialist, does take into account the consequences of actions and recognizes that moral decisions often involve weighing competing moral principles and considering the potential outcomes.

4. **Prima facie duties vs. absolute duties:** Ross introduces the concept of "prima facie duties," which are moral obligations that hold unless they conflict with other moral principles. In contrast, Kant's ethics emphasizes the importance of absolute duties, which are moral obligations that hold regardless of the circumstances.

Implications of these differences

The differences between Ross's theory and Kant's ethics have significant implications for moral decision-making:

- Ross's theory allows for more nuanced and context-dependent moral decision-making, whereas Kant's ethics emphasizes the importance of adhering to moral rules regardless of the circumstances.

- Ross's theory recognizes that moral principles can come into conflict, and that moral decisions often involve weighing competing moral principles and considering the potential outcomes. In contrast, Kant's ethics emphasizes the importance of moral absolutism and the idea that certain actions are inherently right or wrong.

- Ross's theory provides a more flexible and adaptable approach to moral decision-making, whereas Kant's ethics provides a more rigid and rule-based approach.
