

Ethics and Philosophy

Adeola Akinola

Consultant Psychiatrist , Pennine Care NHS FT

Lecturer in Ethics and Law University of Manchester

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Quiz.....

- Which of the following is part of the ‘four principles’ approach to ethics?
A. Beneficence. B. Maleficence. C. Non-beneficence
D. Respect for authority. E. Paternalism.
- Thomas Szasz described “total institutions” T/F
- In Teleology rules are key and duties determine the action to be taken. T/F
- Declaration of Geneva 1948- A set of ethical principles published by the World Medical Association which relates to experimentation upon humans. T/F

A lay man's approach....

- Psychiatry as a specialty can be simple and complex
 - Symptoms : interpretation of facts rather than facts themselves
 - Diagnosis
 - Treatment and management
- The public's perception
- Health care professionals' perception
- The state's perception and view

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UST26RjBXvo>

What is ethics and philosophy

- Ethics is the enterprise of disciplined reflection on the moral institutions and moral choices that people make (Robert M Veatch, Medical ethics (2nd edition)
- Science and philosophy: Philosophy concerns concepts, the very framework of ideas within which we have to consider facts that are presented to us. In contrast, science, broadly speaking, is about the facts themselves.

Concepts of philosophy

- Epistemology (a branch of philosophy that concerns theory of knowledge, and how we come to 'know' things)
- Jurisprudence (the study, knowledge and science of law)
- Phenomenology (the study of consciousness and conscious subjective experience)- preservation of social order
- Political philosophy (philosophical reflection upon how we should conduct our lives as part of a collective group)
- Metaphysics (a branch of philosophy that considers the nature of reality)

Anti-psychiatry vs philosophy

- Thomas Szasz - mental illness as a myth and saw the role of the psychiatrist as an agent of social control
- Talcott Parsons - described the social role of doctors and the sick role
- David Mechanic - described illness behaviour
- G Wing - described secondary handicap
- Goffman- described total institutions
- R. D. Laing- Existential philosophy

Philosophy and Psychiatry

- Philosophy in Psychiatry is about looking more closely at the concepts that we use every day.
- Language: We rely heavily upon the use and interpretation of language, so looking at what we really mean by terms like ‘mental disorder’ is key.
- Rosenhan experiment- “on being sane in insane places” (Science 179 (4070): 250–258)

Concepts in medical ethics

- Moral truths
- Cultural relativism
- Moral universalism
- Moral relativism.

If we could see inside...

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQtOgE2s2xl>

Imagine you had the power to prolong the lives of only two of these individuals. Which would you chose and why?

- A frozen embryo
- An 85 year old woman with senile dementia
- A 30 year old man in a persistent vegetative state
- A 38 year old banker with severe depression
- A 1 week old infant with downs syndrome
- A 25 year old woman with emotionally unstable personality disorder
- A 19 year old woman with no apparent health problems
- A 23 year old man with alcohol dependence
- A 37 year old man with late stage Aids disease

Fundamental approaches to ethics

- **Duty-based:** This can be seen as a 'top-down' approach to making decisions. Rules are set out, often in codes of practice. Reading the rules tells a clinician what their duties are.
 - One criticism of this approach is that it is inflexible, particularly when it comes to more complex situations.
- **Utilitarian:** This approach is more 'bottom-up'. Cases are assessed on more of an individual basis, and the right action is the one that has the best foreseeable consequences.

Moral philosophical traditions

- **Deontology** (from the Greek deon for duty) has its roots in Ancient Greek and Judeo-Christian philosophy. Here rules are key and duties determine the action to be taken in a given situation, regardless of the consequences
- **Teleology** (from the Greek teleon for purpose) also has Ancient Greek roots and was explored by Plato. The general principle here is that actions are determined by the greatest good for the greatest number. As such, it is the prediction of outcomes that is critical

- **Consequentialism**- The notion that what matters ethically speaking are the consequences of our actions. So the morally right thing to do is the act that has the best consequences. In essence “the ends justifies the means”(Teleology and Utilitarian)
- **Virtue theory** has the individual as its focus, rather than the collective (teleology) or governing rules (deontology). Here, there is identification of the virtues that individuals should aspire to in order to lead a ‘good life’.

The four key principles of bioethics

- **Respect for autonomy** - the patient has the right to refuse or choose their treatment. (*Voluntas aegroti suprema lex.*)
- **Beneficence** - a practitioner should act in the best interest of the patient. (*Salus aegroti suprema lex.*)
- **Non-maleficence** - "first, do no harm" (*primum non nocere*)
- **Justice** - concerns the distribution of scarce health resources, and the decision of who gets what treatment (fairness and equality). (*Iustitia*).

Paternalism....state patrol

- Up to the 20th century, paternalism was the key principle in medicine
- Public Mad houses
- Cells
- Private Asylums
- Locked wards
- Mental Health Act – CTO's
- Mental Capacity Act

Research ethics

- Declaration of Helsinki 1964: A set of ethical principles published by the World Medical Association which relates to experimentation upon humans.
- Tuskegee syphilis experiment- 1932-1972
- Nuremberg Code 1947: A code of ethics relating to human experimentation which was produced as an outcome of the post-World War II 'Nuremberg Trials'. These trials looked at the actions of doctors experimenting on people detained in concentration camps under the Nazi regime. -Research ethics- informed consent
- Declaration of Geneva 1948: A reaffirmed declaration of the humanitarian aims of medicine published by the World Medical Association, as a way of bringing the Hippocratic Oath up to date.

Research ethics contd.

- Miller (2000), in a paper entitled 'Placebo-controlled trials in psychiatric research: an ethical perspective', outlined a number of other important ethical considerations. It should be clear to the potential participant that:
- the research is not being conducted for their specific individual benefit
- they are under no obligation to participate. they must be free of coercion or inducement
- they may withdraw at any time, for any reason and without penalty
- whilst the investigator will be monitoring progress, another suitable individual (e.g. family member) should monitor the participant's health, and report any concerns to the investigator
- they may receive a placebo, their mental health may not improve, and indeed it may deteriorate.

European Convention on Human Rights

- Article 2- life
- Article 3- torture
- Article 4- Servitude
- Article 5- Liberty and security
- Article 6- Fair trial
- Article 8- privacy and family life
- Article 9- Conscience and religion
- Article 10- Expression

Other ethical concepts

- Capacity
- Informed consent- Bolam, Bolitho, Montgomery
- Advanced decisions
- Advanced Statements
- Lasting power of Attorney
- Tarasoff Case- Duty to protect

Quiz

- Which of the following figures was most vocal in the criticism of psychiatry as an agent of social control?
A. Goffman. B. Mechanic. C. Parsons. D. Wing. E. Szasz.
- A psychiatrist is asked to see a 60-year-old man with terminal cancer who is suspected of being depressed. The patient has had severe pain and is being treated with high-dose morphine. She is concerned to note that there appears to be respiratory depression. She communicates her concern that this respiratory depression may hasten the patient's death to the oncologist: he agrees this may well happen but believes the treatment is justified. Which of the following ethical terms is the oncologist most likely to use to justify his treatment?
A. Deontology. B. Double effect. C. Moral absolutism. D. Paternalism. E. Utilitarianism.

Quiz 2

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Quiz 3

- Each of the following is one of the commonly accepted 'four principles' of bioethical practice, except:
A. Beneficence. B. Confidentiality. C. Justice. D. Non-maleficence. E. Respect for autonomy.
- Which of the following is not relevant in relation to providing informed consent?
A. Competency. B. Decision. C. Disclosure of information. D. Tarasoff doctrine. E. Voluntariness.

- “The end of argument or discussion should be, not victory, but enlightenment”.
-Joseph Joubert
- “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again”
- Ecclesiastes 3: 19-20

Sources

- Philosophical bioethics handbook – LLM, Manchester University
- Royal college of Psychiatrist Curriculum
- Oxford hand book of Psychiatry: OUP Oxford; 3rd edition (Feb 2013)
- Psychiatry Trainees online CPD module on ethics and philosophy in psychiatry (Mike Akroyd)
- YouTube (videos)
- The value of life: An introduction to Medical Ethics. John Harris.
- MRCPsych paper 1 Best Item Questions. © 2009 David Browne, Brenda Wright, Guy Molyneux, Mohamed Ahmed, Ijaz Hussain, Bangaru Raju and Michael Reilly

Further suggested reading

- Medicine, Patients and the Law. Margaret Brazier & Emma Cave. (5th edition)
- Gelder M, Harrison P, Cowen P (2006) Shorter Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry (5th edn), pp. 69–79. Oxford University Press.
- Royal College of Psychiatrists (2014) Good Psychiatric Practice: Code of Ethics (CR186). Royal College of Psychiatrists
- The value of life: An introduction to Medical Ethics. John Harris.