

6

Ruggiero's moral decision-making model is the idea of respect for persons: all human beings are worthy of fair and impartial treatment. From this basic idea of respect for persons stems a handful of other foundational principles that come to define many ethical codes.

General principles of ethics

- The **Principle of Rationality** states that all legitimate, moral acts must be supported by generally accepted reasons.
- The **Principle of Least Harm** states that, if you must choose between evils, choose the one with the potential for least harm.
- The **Principle of Consistency** states that moral reasons, including moral actions, if they are valid, are binding to all people at all times and in all places, given the same relevant circumstances.
- The **Principle of Impartiality** forbids us from treating one person differently from another when there is no good reason to do so.

↙ Start Reading Here ↘

Major Normative Ethical Theories

Kantianism, Utilitarianism, and Social Contract Theory are the three major normative ethical theories that you studied in Ethical Analysis. In order to complete the justification section of your capstone paper, you will need to review these three theories.

You can find a comparison of how Kantian and Utilitarian theories may apply to a specific moral dilemma by logging on at:

- The **Principle of Ends** states that you must act so that you treat humanity never as a mere means to an end, but always as an end in itself.
- The **Principle of Autonomy** states that every rational being is able to regard him or herself as a maker of universal law, and everyone who is ideally rational will legislate exactly the same universal principles (Ursery <http://www.stedwards.edu/ursery/norm.htm#Kantian>).

Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill is the most prominent philosopher of Utilitarianism. The cornerstone of Utilitarian theory is the Greatest Happiness Principle, which affirms happiness, good, and pleasure as the standards of moral judgment. Utilitarian theorists believe that the consequences of an action determine if the action is right or wrong, therefore we refer to it as a consequentialist theory. As the *Undergraduate Capstone Handbook* illustrates:

People can follow the Greatest Happiness Principle for various reasons; however, the higher motivation is internal, which has been termed 'generalized benevolence.' To Utilitarians, people are moral equals. This means that everyone's happiness is equal to everyone else's, and one's own happiness should not be pursued at the expense of another's. (74)

To be sure, there are four general principles that form the basis of most Utilitarian ethical theories. These principles are listed only as guidelines and are not definitive of Utilitarian ethics.

- The **Greatest Happiness Principle** is that principle which approves or

question of why we should be moral. Being moral almost always involves following certain rules, and these rules necessarily curtail many of our freedoms. For instance, if I am to follow the moral rule that it is wrong to lie, there are a number of things I am no longer free to say to others. So why are we willing to do it? The answer, for the social contractarian, lies in the following set of indisputable facts:

- Many, or most, of the endeavors we want to engage in involve a communal setting of some kind. Public facilities and activities such as schools, concerts, hospitals, libraries, soccer games, driving on public roadways, and shopping--all involve many other people besides ourselves.
- Activities taking place in the social or public realm require coordination. In the examples cited above, for instance, it is not enough simply to have many people engaged in each activity; these people must be performing certain tasks and playing particular roles, often intricately coordinated with the expectations of other people also fulfilling particular roles (for instance, the shopkeeper must open the store at a specific time each day in order to meet the business demands of the buying public).
- The coordination of public and social activities requires adherence to many different rules. Given the complexity of most of the activities we are talking about, such as running a busy airport or directing buses in and out of a downtown terminal, participants

problem is through the social contract, in which everyone agrees to follow a set of rules (or be governed by a particular body). In other words, coordination, which is essential for any activity taking place in the social realm, only works if reciprocity is generally in place. I promise (or contract) to give up my freedom to take your things without your permission only if you promise the same to me; such a contract of rules is required of all agents in the moral realm, or civil society.

The principles of the Social Contract Theory can thus be summed up as follows:

- **The Principle of Justifiability:** Moral and legal rules are justified only if they limit freedom in order to make a desirable or necessary social activity possible. This principle provides us with a “test” to determine whether a rule or law is valid or not.

Application

We ask ourselves: “Is this prohibition (or prescription) *necessary* for some social activity or long-term endeavor to take place?” If the answer is yes, as in the case of the general prohibition on lying, the rule is valid. If the answer is no, then it is an unwarranted sacrifice of freedom and, as such, is invalid. For example, a rule that requires parents to teach their children a specific set of religious, political, or aesthetic beliefs would be invalid because we have learned how to get along, and sometimes even thrive, in a

Ruggiero's moral decision-making model is the idea of respect for persons: all human beings are worthy of fair and impartial treatment. From this basic idea of respect for persons stems a handful of other foundational principles that come to define many ethical codes.

General principles of ethics

- The **Principle of Rationality** states that all legitimate, moral acts must be supported by generally accepted reasons.
- The **Principle of Least Harm** states that, if you must choose between evils, choose the one with the potential for least harm.
- The **Principle of Consistency** states that moral reasons, including moral actions, if they are valid, are binding to all people at all times and in all places, given the same relevant circumstances.
- The **Principle of Impartiality** forbids us from treating one person differently from another when there is no good reason to do so.

↙ Start Reading Here ↘

Major Normative Ethical Theories

Kantianism, Utilitarianism, and Social Contract Theory are the three major normative ethical theories that you studied in Ethical Analysis. In order to complete the justification section of your capstone paper, you will need to review these three theories.

You can find a comparison of how Kantian and Utilitarian theories may apply to a specific moral dilemma by logging on at:

- The **Principle of Ends** states that you must act so that you treat humanity never as a mere means to an end, but always as an end in itself.
- The **Principle of Autonomy** states that every rational being is able to regard him or herself as a maker of universal law, and everyone who is ideally rational will legislate exactly the same universal principles (Ursery <http://www.stedwards.edu/ursery/norm.htm#Kantian>).

Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill is the most prominent philosopher of Utilitarianism. The cornerstone of Utilitarian theory is the Greatest Happiness Principle, which affirms happiness, good, and pleasure as the standards of moral judgment. Utilitarian theorists believe that the consequences of an action determine if the action is right or wrong, therefore we refer to it as a consequentialist theory. As the *Undergraduate Capstone Handbook* illustrates:

People can follow the Greatest Happiness Principle for various reasons; however, the higher motivation is internal, which has been termed 'generalized benevolence.' To Utilitarians, people are moral equals. This means that everyone's happiness is equal to everyone else's, and one's own happiness should not be pursued at the expense of another's. (74)

To be sure, there are four general principles that form the basis of most Utilitarian ethical theories. These principles are listed only as guidelines and are not definitive of Utilitarian ethics.

- The **Greatest Happiness Principle** is that principle which approves or

question of why we should be moral. Being moral almost always involves following certain rules, and these rules necessarily curtail many of our freedoms. For instance, if I am to follow the moral rule that it is wrong to lie, there are a number of things I am no longer free to say to others. So why are we willing to do it? The answer, for the social contractarian, lies in the following set of indisputable facts:

- Many, or most, of the endeavors we want to engage in involve a communal setting of some kind. Public facilities and activities such as schools, concerts, hospitals, libraries, soccer games, driving on public roadways, and shopping--all involve many other people besides ourselves.
- Activities taking place in the social or public realm require coordination. In the examples cited above, for instance, it is not enough simply to have many people engaged in each activity; these people must be performing certain tasks and playing particular roles, often intricately coordinated with the expectations of other people also fulfilling particular roles (for instance, the shopkeeper must open the store at a specific time each day in order to meet the business demands of the buying public).
- The coordination of public and social activities requires adherence to many different rules. Given the complexity of most of the activities we are talking about, such as running a busy airport or directing buses in and out of a downtown terminal, participants

problem is through the social contract, in which everyone agrees to follow a set of rules (or be governed by a particular body). In other words, coordination, which is essential for any activity taking place in the social realm, only works if reciprocity is generally in place. I promise (or contract) to give up my freedom to take your things without your permission only if you promise the same to me; such a contract of rules is required of all agents in the moral realm, or civil society.

The principles of the Social Contract Theory can thus be summed up as follows:

- **The Principle of Justifiability:** Moral and legal rules are justified only if they limit freedom in order to make a desirable or necessary social activity possible. This principle provides us with a “test” to determine whether a rule or law is valid or not.

Application

We ask ourselves: “Is this prohibition (or prescription) *necessary* for some social activity or long-term endeavor to take place?” If the answer is yes, as in the case of the general prohibition on lying, the rule is valid. If the answer is no, then it is an unwarranted sacrifice of freedom and, as such, is invalid. For example, a rule that requires parents to teach their children a specific set of religious, political, or aesthetic beliefs would be invalid because we have learned how to get along, and sometimes even thrive, in a