

Steps in Normative Ethical Analysis

1. The first step is to carefully outline all of the arguments that have been made by each of the stakeholders you identified at the end of Paper 1. At the end of that paper, I mentioned that the last section was the most important, and this is why. The first stage of Paper 4 is to very carefully outline (use bold headings and subheads to make it easy to follow) each of the major stakeholders who have a position on your topic.

After identifying each stakeholder, you will then review everything you have learned about their position on the subject. You will use what you learned from interviews, literature (from Paper 2) and any other source of information you have. You will then carefully tell me what each stakeholder believes about your topic, supported by direct quotes, paraphrasing and other sources that you have gathered to support.

2. Step 2 is to refer to your last readings in the Handbook on identifying values to outline specifically what values each stakeholder is forming and prioritizing. What is it that the stakeholder cares about and how is that visible in their position? This is your personal interpretation of their position.

3. Step 3 is to apply various ethical normative theories to each. For instance, if we were arguing that the city should spend more tax dollars on an expensive new music program for all K-12 students in Austin, I would look at a number of stakeholders. Two stakeholders might be school leaders and tax payers in poor parts of the city.

There are a number of different ethical theories presented in the Handbook. You are free to use any of those or any others that you find on your own. Quite a few theorists over the centuries have crafted their own ethical theories. You can create your own if you wish. Alternatively, most ethical theories fall into three rough categories:

A. The first category are the **utilitarian theories**. These simply say that we must do what is in the best interest of the masses. In my above scenario, school leaders might argue that the expensive music program would produce a mass of well-rounded students and improve society at large. This would be a utilitarian argument (the greatest good for the greatest number).

B. The second category are the **Kantian ethical theories**. These are centered around morality. A Kantian ethicist would base their ethical decisions on what is wrong or right, regardless of consequences. I can't think of how this would apply to my music example above. I've just been practicing cello for the past hour and am stuck with music examples right now. Switching topics a bit, let's focus on homeless.

If a study was done that stated that fixing the homeless problem would cost Austin billions of dollars to fix and would bankrupt the city, a Kantian believer would say that it was still the right thing to do because it is a moral absolute to help those most in need. A utilitarian on other hand would argue the opposite. He would argue that looking after the 2.5 million people in the Austin area by not bankrupting the city would be in the greatest interest of the greatest number. This is

how the utilitarian and Kantian theories compare (and is probably a better example than my music one).

C. The third major group of theories are the **ethical relativity theories**. The readings refer to the Social Contract Theory, which is one. It states that we all have specific roles and obligations in society and we should meet those. Other examples of relativity surround whether or not something is right or wrong depending on their specific culture groups. For instance, a Kantian might say that all killing is wrong. A soldier on the other hand may disagree based upon the context of his work. A Kantian might argue that all stealing is wrong. A utilitarianist would agree that stealing is wrong because it harms all of those that are properly paying for what they consume. A relativist might argue though that if a man is starving, perhaps it is not wrong to steal food for himself or his family.

Bringing that back to my original example, those of us in the arts and music community might argue that any amount of money is worth it to keep the arts alive and thriving. Even if the money might harm the majority and there is no clear moral argument for or against it.

Again, there are an infinite number of ethical theories out there and you are welcome to use whichever you choose. You are also welcome to create your own. I find that almost all fit into one of these three categories, so for the sake of this paper you can just use the categories.

It's important to note though that just like the epistemology section, these don't need to reflect your personal views on the entire world. This is just for the sake of this paper and nothing else.

So getting back to Step 3:

Once you have identified the values, you need to figure out what ethical theories they are represented of.

4. Most importantly, you need to identify how closely each value that you identify matches one of the ethical normative theories out there. I mentioned that this section wasn't difficult in terms of workload. It is quite difficult in terms of intellectual work though. This is the section where I want you to apply your four + years of college learning and a lifetime of critical thinking to your problem.

You need to identify carefully how closely each stakeholder's value are really tied to a specific ethical normative theory. This is possibly the most intellectual difficult and important part of the whole paper. This is what you are going to use to support your assertion as to which position is the ethically correct position to support in your final paper.

5. Once you have completed the above four steps, write up a quick summary (1-3 paragraphs) and tell me what you have found.

For paper 5, all you will be doing is making a persuasive argument for the position that you believe is best. You will need to refer to what you found in Chapter 4 to justify that position. Chapter 4 is typically a reasonably objective presentation of your raw findings. Chapter 5 is where you will be giving your opinion and argument as to what it all means.