

ANIARA 2.0

BASIC TRAINING

Normative Ethical Theories

CONSEQUENTIALISM

Consequentialism refers to a set of normative ethical theories that states *an action should be judged right or wrong on the basis of its consequences*.

For example, telling a lie is a right action if it can have good consequences like saving someone's life.

Thus, according to consequentialism, **a morally right act is an act that will produce good results.**

Furthermore, the more good results an act produces, the better or more right that act will be. There are different forms of consequentialism; utilitarianism and hedonism are two such main forms. In **utilitarianism**, consequences of an action are determined by a '*greatest good for the greatest number*'.

Utilitarianism exemplified

If a vaccine has been developed to combat a pandemic, it is right to use it even if a percentage of the population gets severe permanent side effects, since it will protect the majority.

An extreme example would be that it is right to kill a person to harvest their organs, if these organs would save the lives of three other people.

DEONTOLOGY

Deontology is a normative ethical theory that focuses on *the rightness or wrongness of actions themselves*, instead of focusing its consequences or any other considerations.

We sometimes describe this theory as duty-, rule-, or obligation-based. In fact, the name 'deontological' originated from the Greek word deon, which refers to duty. Thus, this theory simply requires people to follow rules and do their duty.

In short, deontology is a non-consequential theory since the goodness or badness of an action in this theory does not depend on its consequences.

Deontology is an ethical theory that states it is possible to determine the rightness or wrongness of actions by examining actions themselves.

Deontology exemplified

Human Rights documents exemplify deontological thinking.

After all, *rights and duties are just the mirror images of each other*. When these documents say that person A has a certain right, that means that person B (or state B) has the duty to see that that right is fulfilled. If person A has the right to not be tortured, then person B has the duty to not torture them. Rights and duties are just two sides of the same coin.

The ten commandments are examples of deontologic ethics.

An extreme example would be that it is never right to lie, even if the lie would save a life. Or that it would not be right to assassinate Hitler, since killing is always wrong.

Difference exemplified:

Batman has **deontological** moral values. He believes that killing is always wrong and therefore does not kill The Joker when he has the chance.

If Batman had **utilitarian** moral values, he would kill The Joker at the first possibility, since that act would surely reduce the suffering of the people of Gotham City.

