

Ima
Rossian



Ross's view says
that the basic moral
principles are about
prima facie duties.

Nonconsequentialism: Some kinds of action
(like killing the innocent or breaking your
word) are wrong in themselves, and not just
wrong because of their consequences.

We have a strong, but not exceptionless, prima facie duty to keep our promises. I reject these alternative norms about promise keeping:

“It’s always wrong to break your promises.”



I promised to go hiking with my boyfriend.

“It’s right to break your promises whenever this has better consequences.”



This couple promised to pay me for baby sitting.



Ross's view has
seven basic prima
facie duties.

1. Fidelity: Keep your promises.
2. Reparation: Make up for harm you do to others.
3. Gratitude: Return good for good.
4. Justice: Upset distributions of pleasure or happiness that don't accord with people's merit.
5. Self-improvement: Grow in virtue and knowledge.

6. Beneficence: Do good to others.
7. Nonmaleficence: Don't harm others.

Ima accepts a pluralistic view of value. Virtue, knowledge, pleasure, life, and freedom (and perhaps further things) are good in themselves – and ought to be promoted for their own sake.

Many reject EXCEPTIONLESS DUTIES
(ones that hold always) as inconsistent, inhumane, and having clear Dr.-Evil counterexamples. But:

- (1) Exceptionless *negative* duties needn't conflict (e.g., never kill an innocent person, never take heroine for recreational purposes, never commit adultery, never commit rape).
- (2) Exceptionless duties might *forbid* inhumane treatment (or be *qualified* to exclude such cases).
- (3) Exceptionless duties could be intended to cover only *practical*, realistic cases.

Can you think of imagined cases where it would be clearly right to violate these rules?



“Never burn a child in gasoline just for fun.”

“Judges ought never to knowingly sentence an innocent person to death.”



When should we take moral norms more strictly?

I suggest that we take a norm more strictly if doing so would tend to prevent great evils or foolish choices.

By “great evils,” I have in mind things like killing an innocent person, bringing about a drug addiction, or ruining a happy marriage.

A right is what can be justifiably demanded of others.



GR right to **equal moral consideration**: “Everyone has the right to be treated by others only as these others are willing to have themselves treated in the same circumstances.”

A **negative right** is a right not to be interfered with (e.g., about religion, speech, life, property, voting, fair trials, etc.).

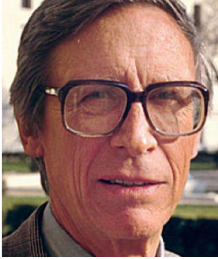
A **positive right** is a right to goods that society should help provide (e.g., education, living standards, health care, etc.).

Libertarians deny positive rights (e.g., universal health care), on the grounds that society can pay for these only by violating the property rights of others; libertarians favor minimal government, free markets, private property, and unregulated capitalism.



Socialists support positive rights, community ownership of organizations that provide goods and services, a more equal distribution of wealth, and a government actively involved in providing for people's needs.

A mixed (or pragmatist) view (which is more common) tries to combine the best elements of capitalism and socialism.



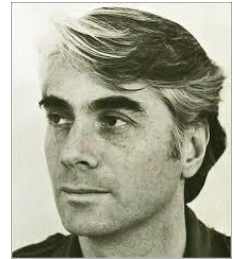
John Rawls: *A Theory of Justice* (liberal)

Original position and veil of ignorance: The rules of justice are the rules we'd pick to regulate society if we were free, clearheaded, and know all relevant facts – but didn't know our place in society.

Equal liberty principle: Society ought to safeguard the greatest liberty for each person compatible with an equal liberty for all others.

Difference principle: Society ought to promote the equal distribution of wealth, except for inequalities that serve as incentives to benefit everyone (including the least advantaged group) and are open to everyone on an equal basis.

Robert Nozick: An entitlement view (libertarian)



Whatever you earn fairly, through hard work and just agreements, is yours. If everyone legitimately earned what they have, then the resulting distribution is just – regardless of how unequal it may be.

Schemes (like a progressive income tax) that force a redistribution of wealth are wrong, because they violate your right to property. They steal from you in order to give to others.

A socialist society that enforced equality would have to forbid capitalist acts between consenting adults.

Distributive justice: How ought wealth to be distributed in a society?



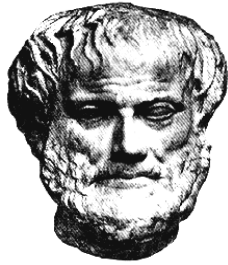
Egalitarianism:
equally.



Rawls: equally,
except for incentives
that benefit everyone.

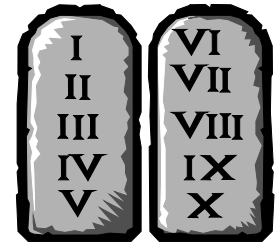


Nozick: you keep
whatever you
justly acquire.



Moral philosophy tries to give a comprehensive but general account of all duties. It speaks of principles of duty, intrinsic goods, rights, virtues, and so forth.

The **ten commandments** try to give the most important specific duties – toward God, family, anyone, and yourself. For example, they condemn stealing, lying, killing, and adultery.



Both fit together nicely and can be based in a general way on the golden rule.