

4.3 Decision making in action

Taking three of the moral theories apply each to one example of the above showing the various outcomes that may be determined by each of these theories (they all do not necessarily lead to one conclusion and various are accepted once in line with the process)

1. Deontological Ethics (duty based) Ethics

- Deontological comes from the Greek word 'deon' meaning 'duty'
- Focus with what people's actions and not the consequence of the actions
- Do the right thing because it is the right thing to do
- Don't do wrong things and because it is the wrong thing to do
- An action cannot be justified because the consequences are good. 'Non-Consequentialist'
- The ends do not justify the means

Guiding principle when making moral decisions:

There are things that are right and wrong in the world i.e absolutes. Actions in themselves are wrong or right, regardless of the consequences. Only act in accordance to what is right and avoid doing wrong even if the consequences are good.

Rebellion

- The action of taking a life is wrong in itself. It is wrong to cooperate in taking the life of others. The ends do not justify the means. Regardless of if the consequences are good and the people as a whole will ultimately probably be better off, it does not matter because the action of killing someone is wrong in itself as life is valuable.
- In self-defence it may be justifiable if the regime is oppressive as it is in line with the respect for life.
- Peaceful and passive acts of rebellion are justified as no life is lost.

2. Virtue Ethics (Character Based)

- An act is right if a virtuous person would do the same action.
- Virtue ethics are person rather than action based. It looks at the moral character of a person carrying out an action and not ethical duties or consequences.
- It focuses on the sort of characteristics a good person will seek to possess.
- A good person is someone who lives virtuously and possesses the characteristics of a moral person.

Guiding principle when making moral decisions:

It changes the kind of question we ask about ethics. Deontology and consequentialism focus on the rightness and wrongness of individual action whereas virtue ethics focuses on the type of person you should be and consequently you will get it right all the time by asking what type of person you should be.

Rebellion:

Can the virtuous person engage in violence or support it? They may come to the conclusion that in order for society to be able to create virtuous people and ultimately be a good society, violence must be used to overcome the oppressive regime that isn't creating an environment whereby people can be virtuous.

Others might claim that violence is never the loving thing to do and condone pacifism like Gandhi's stance.

3. Teleological Ethics (result based)

- Teleological Ethics or Consequentialism states whether an act is right or wrong is based only on the results of that act. The more good consequences the act produces the better or more right that act is.
- People should live to maximise good consequences.
- Different forms of consequentialism differ over what the good thing is that should be maximised.
- Utilitarianism: maximise human welfare
- Hedonism: maximise human pleasure

Guideline Principle when making moral decisions

No act is inherently wrong. Murder is not inherently wrong. If by killing X one could save 10 lives a consequentialist would say that killing X is justified because it would result in only 1 person dying.

Rebellion

If the good which they seek and the value of that is freedom and justice for all then they may judge that the use of violence is justified as it is used to achieve an end which is good - the freedom of the people from an unjust regime.

Others may conclude that the presence of a revolution will lead to the death of many people and therefore the consequences are bad.

However those who argue for could state that less lives would be lost that the unjust regime is already taking.