

## SEVEN ETHICAL FRAMES

No single theoretical approach to a complex ethical scenario seems to suffice. When tackling analytical writing in the ethical realm, it is worth unpacking the situation utilizing several of the following, *sometimes overlapping*, approaches:

**1. DEONTOLOGICAL:** Based on obeying rules. Involves obligation and duty.

*Golden Rule*

*Hippocratic Oath*

*Obey the Rule of Law*

*Don't lie*

*Pay Parking tickets*

*Don't marry your brother or sister*

*Eat kosher*

*Kant's Categorical Imperative: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, Will that it should become a Universal Law"* This is very strict. A Categorical Imperative is an absolute, inescapable, rational, unconditional requirement that must be obeyed in all circumstances and all times.

**2. UTILITARIAN:** Based on the cold **Consequences** and discerning resulting benefits or harm. The "*greatest good (or happiness) for the greatest number*" appears seductive; but it can sometimes entail dire consequences for individual victims. Happiness, especially in an entire population, is not exactly easy to measure!

**3. INTENTIONALITY:** In apportioning blame or responsibility, intention comes into play. But there is a difference between unlucky, unforeseen consequences and negative outcomes that the result of irresponsible choices that entail a high chance of perfectly foreseeable bad consequences. And it also works the other way... If it is your general inclination or personality disposition to do the right thing; without dilemma or moral struggle, can you take any credit for an ethical decision?

**4. VIRTUE ETHICS:** Based on positive character traits such as honesty, compassion and generosity. Aristotle had a compelling take on this with his "Golden Mean." For example: the virtue of Courage lies between vices of fear and recklessness.

**5. INTUITION:** Based on a powerful personal feeling that can instantly appear in the moment and may defy formal explanation

**6. RELATIVISM:** The same action may be right in one cultural setting and very wrong in another.

**7. VEIL OF IGNORANCE:** A thought experiment that can serve justice. **Imagine that you have set for yourself the task of developing a totally new social contract for today's society. How could you do so fairly?** Although you could never actually eliminate all of your personal biases and prejudices, you would need to take steps at least to minimize them. Rawls suggests that you imagine yourself in an original position behind a veil of ignorance.

**Behind this veil, you know nothing of yourself and your natural abilities, or your position in society. You know nothing of your sex, race, nationality, or individual tastes.**