


ETHICS IN PUBLIC LIFE
Meeting of Washington Fire Chiefs
March 23, 2018

Presented by
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ETHICAL CHALLENGE #1:
Nothing is “really” good or bad.

ETHICAL CHALLENGE #2:
Social norms vary from place to place and time to time.

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PRACTICAL RULES

- If you are driving to Yakima, inflate your tires to 35 pounds.
- To make this French recipe, get some unsalted butter.
- To meet the building code, use two layers of drywall.

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ETHICAL RULES

- You should keep your promises.
- You should not murder anyone.
- You should be generous to those in need.

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PRACTICAL RULES?

- You should use premium gas in that car.
- You should audition for that play.
- Don't pick up that poisonous snake.

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ETHICAL RULES?

- If you make a promise, you should keep it.
- If you join the military, you should follow orders.
- If you are driving in a school zone, watch out for kids.

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GOOD OR BAD ACT?

- Fire fighter Chris rushes into a burning building to save a child.
- Fire fighter Chris rushes into a burning building just to impress his/her superiors.
- Fred spends long hours with the Red Cross, but neglects his family.
- Dana kicks a lost puppy for fun.

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GOOD OR BAD ACT?

- Dana cares for a lost puppy.
- Soldier Pat remains vigilantly on guard throughout the night watch.
- Soldier Pat falls asleep on watch.
- Soldier Pat steals food from the base exchange to give to hungry villagers.

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VIRTUE OR VICE?

- Courage
- Greed
- Sloth
- Generosity
- Loyalty

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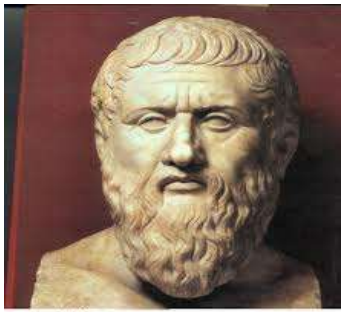
CATEGORIES OF ETHICAL JUDGMENTS

- Good and bad acts
- Virtues and vices
- Duties and rights
- Situations with more or less moral value

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APPROACHES TO ETHICS: PLATO



Bust of Plato

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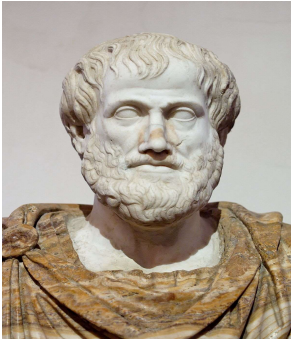
APPROACHES TO ETHICS: PLATO

- Greek, around 427 - 347 B.C.
- Virtue cannot easily be defined
- Virtue, like mathematics, can be seen with the mind's eye
- Students of virtue should rule

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APPROACHES TO ETHICS: ARISTOTLE



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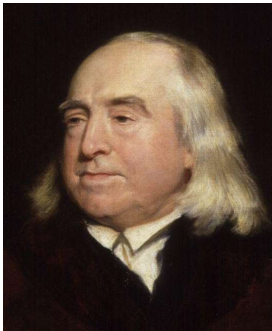
APPROACHES TO ETHICS: ARISTOTLE

- Greek, around 384-322 B.C.
- Virtue is what produces happiness
- Man is by nature happy in society
- Virtues tend to fall between vices
- Practice and habit is important (integrity)

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APPROACHES TO ETHICS: UTILITARIANISM



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APPROACHES TO ETHICS: UTILITARIANISM

- English, 1748-1832
- Seek the greatest good for the greatest number
- Problem: what is "good"?
- Problem: how do we know consequences?
- Problem: what if death of one will produce much good?

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APPROACHES TO ETHICS: UTILITARIANISM



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WFC POSITION PAPER 25

MISSION: The WFC shall be a source of Information, Services, and Education to its members and shall take a lead role in influencing issues affecting the fire service. Towards this endeavor, every member of the WFC shall represent those ethical principles consistent with professional conduct as members of the WFC.

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WFC POSITION PAPER 25

- Recognize that we serve in a position of public trust . . .
- Not use a public position to obtain advantages or favors . . .
- Be mindful of the needs of peers and subordinates . . .
- Place the public's safety and welfare and the safety of firefighters above all other concerns . . .
- Foster creativity and be open to consider innovations . . .

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APPROACHES TO ETHICS: DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



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APPROACHES TO ETHICS: DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

- Rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness
- Government should safeguard these rights
- If government fails, citizens can replace it
- Focus on individual rights

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CONSTITUTION, AMENDMENT 1

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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NIFLA v. BECERRA

- Non-profit pregnancy information centers
- California law requires notice to all clients
- Violation of First Amendment?
- Case argued March 20, 2018

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