

Holy People, Holy Lives: Law and Gospel in Bioethics

Study Guide

INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT OF ETHICS

DEFINITIONS:

Ethics: The explicit, philosophical reflection on moral beliefs and practices, or ethos. The difference between ethics and morality is similar to the difference between musicology and music. Ethics is a conscious stepping back and reflecting on morality, just as musicology is a conscious reflection on music.

Ethos: The cumulative ethical and moral position of a particular group or category of people.

Morality: refers to the first-order beliefs and practices about good and evil by means of which we guide our behavior. Contrast with Ethics, which is the second-order, reflective consideration of our moral beliefs and practices. Morality is the ethos which ought to govern a society's mores.

Mores: The ethos which defines actually existing social relationships.

THE THREE BRANCHES OF ETHICS:

According to the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy there are three branches of Ethics:

Metaethics: Investigates where ethical principles come from and what they mean.

Normative Ethics: Arriving at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct.

Applied Ethics: Examining specific issues using normative ethics and metaethics.

INTERPLAY BETWEEN MORALITY AND ETHICS

Can ethics operate or exist independent of morality? What kind of ethos would result? How would it be determined?

Philosophical (anthropocentric) Ethics Study Romans 2:12-16; 3:9-20

What is the metaethical source for the ethos of the natural man?

How does the natural man arrive at a normative ethic?

What determines the applied ethic of the natural man?

What are the primary problems with this approach?

CHRISTIAN (THEO- OR CHRISTO-CENTRIC) ETHICS

Study Proverbs 1-7 (Esp. 1:1-9; 2:20-22; 3:1-18, 33-35; 4:20-22; 5:21-23; 6:20-23; 7:1-2)

From where does the Christian get or find the proper ethos? What is the Christian's metaethical source?

What is the most important factor in establishing Christian ethics?

From where are the normative ethics of a Christian derived?

What factors determine the applied ethic of the Christian?

THE REALM OF BIOETHICS

What challenges face this generation of Christians that have not been faced previously?

How does the Christian approach these ethical questions?

CHAPTER 1

Why is it important to ask the ethical, rather than simply the practical, question when faced with decision making? (1 Peter 3:12)

What are the two determinative factors driving most approaches to medical ethics today. What dangers do these pose for the Christian?

Dr. Eyer states that there is a danger for those who are concerned about moral integrity. What is that danger and how can it be dealt with? (Matthew 23:1-28; Luke 11:37-44, 12:1)

THE PERSONAL ETHIC

Why are emotions unreliable in determining ethical decisions? (Proverbs 28:26, Jeremiah 17:5)

What is wrong with allowing practical concerns to be the primary factor in decision making?

What has caused majority of society to place such an emphasis on practicality and emotional resolution?

THE PUBLIC ETHIC

How does majority of society determine what is ethically acceptable?

How does this approach square with our nation's own approach to biomedical ethics in the recent past?

How does this approach measure up against the Word of God? (Deuteronomy 12:8, 13:18; Proverbs 12:13, 21:2; Psalm 119)

CHAPTER 2

ETHICS BY PLATO

What is at the heart of Platonic ethics?

What is the strength of this system?

What is the weakness of Plato's ethics?

ETHICS BY ARISTOTLE

What is at the main thought of Aristotelian ethics?

What is the strength of this system?

What is the weakness of Aristotle's ethics?

ETHICS BY KANT

What is central to Kantian ethics?

What is the strength of this system?

What is the weakness of Aristotle's ethics?

ETHICS BY HUME

What is at the heart of Hume's ethics?

What is the strength of this system?

What is the weakness of this kind of ethics?

ETHICS BY KIERKEGAARD

What is the main argument of Kierkegaard's system of ethics?

What (if any) is the strength of this system?

What is the weakness of Kierkegaard's ethics?

ETHICS BY NIETZSCHE

What is the basis of Nietzsche's ethics?

What (if any) is the strength of this system?

What is the wrong with Nietzsche's ethics?

ETHICS DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

What happened to ethics between the Classical Period and the Enlightenment?

What was Luther's approach to Ethics?

What has precipitated the subsequent decline of ethical thought following the Renaissance and Reformation periods?

CHAPTER 3

THE STORY

Why is it important in terms of ethics for their to be a "story"?

What happens when there is no "foundational story"?

THE STORY GOD TELLS US

What is different about God's story as compared to other stories?

(II Peter 1:16-21; John 17:17; 6:63)

What is meant by the term "mystery"?

Why do the Scriptures not answer every question we might have? (II Timothy 3:14-17)

What is the central and foundational story of the Scriptures? (John 5:37, 46; Luke 24:44-48)

How does the Church continue to keep this “story”?

Why is liturgical worship important in terms of the “story”?

CHAPTER 4

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

How has our society defined “ethics”?

What is the danger of separating the person from his or her actions?

THE QUESTION

What faulty roots lie at the base of the distinction between act and being? (Matthew 12; 1 John 1)

What do the Scriptures teach about actions in regard to the person doing them?

Do seemingly right actions necessarily indicate a right intent? (Psalm 14:3; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Isaiah 64:6)

A NEW LANGUAGE

What is holiness, and why might it be more helpful to think in terms of “holiness” than in terms of “ethics” for the Christian?

How is our being derived from and discovered from our relationship to God? (Genesis 2; II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 4:24)

How is goodness defined? From where does it receive its meaning and substance?

Do good deeds make a person good as Aristotle suggests? If not from where does our goodness come?

BEING AND DOING

How does sin play into this whole discussion?

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

What has led to society to discount the idea of sin?

What two factors did Eyer discover keep people from making "moral judgements"?

How is post-modernism the natural result of our fears over making judgments?

THE ORIGINS OF SIN

In what way were Adam and Eve post-modern?

What problem does Eyer consider to be at the root of sin?

How do the Scriptures address the difference between Sin and sins that Eyer makes? (I John 3:8; Psalm 51:5; Matthew 15:19; James 1:15)

Knowing what we do about action and being, what direction must be taken when dealing with Sin and sins?

CHAPTER 6

THE MEANING OF SUFFERING

What, according to Eyer, is the cause of most suffering in the ill and dying?

What is at the root of our fear of suffering?

How is suffering tied up with the Fall into Sin? (Genesis 3)

SUFFERING AND THE CROSS

To what use does the Law put suffering? Is this useful for the Christian?

How does the Gospel give hope for the suffering? (Romans 8:17-18)

What is the difference between the “theology of the cross” and the “theology of glory”?

In the story of Mr. Witte, in what way is his daughter’s faith a “theology of glory”?

In what way can our medical practice and medicine play into a “theology of glory” and why is this contrary to faith in God?

GOSPEL ETHICS AND SUFFERING

What limits does God place upon our compassion? (Deuteronomy 32:39)

In what way can suffering be God’s tool in the life of the Christian? (Psalm 119; II Corinthians 12)

How can we be sure that good will come to us through suffering? (Romans 8:28)

In what way can it be said that suffering perfected Christ as Hebrews states?

What is the ultimate healing for our suffering? (Psalm 25:18; Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4)

CHAPTER 7

SOOTHING AND AVOIDING OUR FRUSTRATIONS

What emotional/pragmatic appeal do End of Life Directives make toward people?

Is seeking to obtain ultimate control over own destiny contrary to the Christian Faith?

How is the issue of control symptomatic of a larger problem?

What does God specifically say about control with regard to life and death?

What are the implications of the 5th commandment with regard to end of life decision making?

What about the 1st commandment?

WITHHOLDING AND WITHDRAWING TREATMENT

When, according to Eyer and Meilander, is withholding treatment proper and ethical?

What ethical distinction is made between withholding and withdrawing?

What trouble comes about in deciding what is burdensome for another person?

DEATH

How does Christ deal with the curse of death for us?

DEATH A FRIEND?

What falsehoods are perpetuated concerning death? What is wrong with these views?

What lie is at the root of the psychological model for dealing with death? How does this lie make suffering more frightening than death itself?

Is death still an enemy of the Christian? Should Christians seek death?

THE APPEAL OF SUICIDE AND EUTHANASIA

What is the difference between these two terms?

Why are both sinful responses to suffering?

AIMING TO KILL

How can one's aims be distinguished from the results of one's actions?

How is aim distinguished from motive?

Why are both aims and motives important?

THE MALADY AND THE GOSPEL

In what way can our lack of control be good for us?

What is a faithful response in times of suffering?

CHAPTER 8

What is wrong with the concept of redefining marriage to accommodate society?

THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

In what way can marriage be called sacramental? How is this different from the Roman definition of marriage as a sacrament?

What Christological reality is portrayed in a godly marriage?

GENDER AND AUTONOMY

How does the quest for autonomy often express itself with regard to gender in the post-modern society?

What is wrong with viewing gender as irrelevant?

Why is gender important in terms of Christology?

ONE FLESH

How does the reality of the two becoming one properly find expression in marriage?

In what ways is reproductive technology used to circumvent God's design?

What does reproductive technology say about God and our relationship to him?

ABORTION

How is abortion an outgrowth of the quest for autonomy (or a quest for power)?

CREATED BY GOD

In what way does the birth of a child portray the Gospel to the Christian?

What does abortion say about God?

REASONS FOR ABORTION

Why is rape not a good justification for abortion?

What is the only situation where abortion may be permitted and why?

ABORTION AS A SPIRITUAL ISSUE

Why is abortion spiritually damaging? And what is the solution for those who have had an abortion?

INFANTICIDE

In what way does infanticide, like abortion, portray lack of faith?

What is the answer to reproductive problems (either for creating life or ending it)?

CHAPTER 9

REPRODUCTION VS. PROCREATION

What is significant about the difference of these two terms? What underlying concepts do they express and promote?

How do the Scriptures speak about the conception and birth of children? What terms are used? What kind of language is used to describe the relationship between parents, child, and God? (Psalm 22:9-10, 127, 128; Joshua 24:3-4; Genesis 5:1-5ff, 28:3; Exodus 13:1-15, 34:19; Deuteronomy 7:13, 28:11; Jeremiah 1:5)

In what way does the birth of a child portray and parallel the gift of salvation? (Isaiah 9:6-7; John 3, I Peter 1:3, Galatians 4)

What are the first commandment implications of “reproduction”?

METHODS OF “ARTIFICIAL/ASSISTED REPRODUCTION”

What ethical problems are encountered in artificial insemination?

What problems are encountered with In Vitro Fertilization?

What problems are inherent in Surrogacy?

How did people in the Bible deal with childlessness or infertility, both righteously and sinfully? (Genesis 16:1-12; 29:31-30:24, I Samuel 1-2)

In what way does the gift of children fit within marriage as a Christological metaphor?

Where does adoption fit into this picture ethically for the Christian?

What about children born through the use of reproductive technology? Where do they fit in relation to God? What particular issues will they have to face in life?

CHAPTER 10

GENETIC ENGINEERING

What accomplishments have been achieved recently in the realm of Genetics? Why are these important?

What is "Eugenics" and what does it seek to accomplish? What good could be accomplished through Eugenics, and are there any dangers inherent in it?

How would altering one's genetic make-up fit in with our place as creatures under God's creative authority?

What, according to Eyer, is the moral problem with "Enhancement"?

What does it mean to be made in "the image of God"? And how should the image of God play into our approach to genetics?

What, in the end, is genetics grasping at? And where can this really be found?