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THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES

Moral Methodology in the Catholic Tradition

Sr. Patricia Talone, RSM, PhD
Vice President, Mission Services

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Objectives

- Understand the context within which Catholic health care addresses ethical issues
- Briefly discuss other contemporary moral methodologies
- Illustrate the way that a Catholic methodology can shape ethical case consultation

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Context

- Claims made by Catholic health care
 - To carry out the mission of Jesus
 - To be part of the ministry of the church
 - To act in the name of the church in the world on behalf of the reign of God

Context

- Claims made by Catholic health care (in the *Ethical and Religious Directives*)
 - Promote and defend human dignity
 - Attend to the whole person
 - Care for poor and vulnerable persons
 - Promote the common good
 - Act on behalf of justice
 - Steward resources
 - Act in communion with the church

What is ethics?

- Ethics is about resolving dilemmas...but not only this
- Ethics is about individual actions...but not only this
- Ethics is about the kinds of persons (both individual and corporate) we are becoming by the kinds of decisions we make

What is ethics?

- Ethics is a systematic and critical reflection on all the components of moral choices. This reflection includes framing the questions, identifying relevant facts to answer the questions, clarifying concepts, exploring the burdens and benefits of all alternatives, giving a reason for action, and deciding on a course of action that holds competing values in balance.

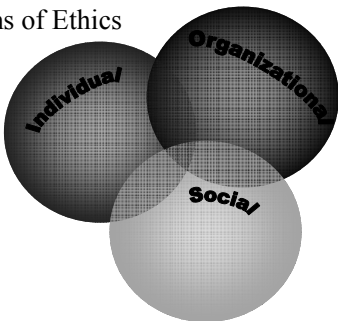
P. Boyle, et. al. *Organizational Ethics in Health Care: Principles, Cases and Practical Solutions*

Three Realms of Ethics

- Particularly pertaining to catholic health care
- Articulated by Jack Glaser, STD of Saint Joseph Health System, Orange, California



Realms of Ethics



Individual Ethics

- Concerned with the good of the individual
 - Relationships
 - Values
 - Needs (physical, emotional, spiritual)
 - How the individual relates to the community

Organizational Ethics

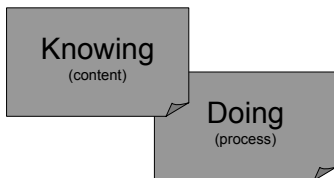
- Deals with the intersection of clinical, business, legal, economic, and social aspects of decision-making in the context of organizational life
- Assists in helping ground these decisions in the values and identity of the organization and the broader ministry of which the organization is a part

Social Ethics

- Seeks to contribute to an understanding of the meaning and content of the “common good” and how this might be actualized in practice
- Scrutinizes social structures as these impact the good of persons in community

Ethical Decision Making

- Requires BOTH



Ways of Making Ethical Decisions

Non-rational

Emotion

- Appeals to feelings
- No normative ethical concepts
- Lacks rational basis and denies objective knowledge of good and evil



Non-rational

Intuition

- Appeals to intuitive experience
- Good cannot be proven or defined
- Knowledge of good and evil is essentially mysterious

Non-rational

Subjectivism

Appeals to personal preference or values without reference to anyone else's values

Rational

Deontology

- Moral evaluation based on rules, duties, and obligations
- Often based on the will of the lawmaker maintaining that something is right because authority says so

Rational

Rational Deontology

- Using reason alone one can arrive at universal rules that admit of no exceptions
- The categorical imperative: "I should never act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim be universal law."

Rational

Theological Deontology

- Duty and obligation are primary, but based on divine command rather than on reason.

Rational

Teleology

- Moral evaluation derived not primarily from duty or rules but from ends or goals being sought

Teleology

Consequentialism

- Focuses on ends being sought without direct attention given to the means chosen to accomplish those ends

Teleology

Utilitarianism

- Seeks the greatest good for the greatest number; may sacrifice various goods or values in this pursuit

Catholic Approach

- Ashley and O'Rourke (in *Health Care Ethics* – each edition) refer to
 - **Prudential Personalism**
 - A Catholic approach that is both
 - Principled *and*
 - Pastoral

Catholic Approach

- Ends *AND* means teleology
 - The ultimate goal or end of human existence is happiness, friendship with God, and integral human fulfillment
 - Freely chosen actions (i.e., means) must be fitting to the ultimate goal as well as to the more proximate goals along the way

Catholic Approach

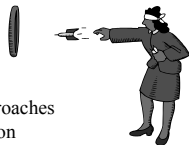
- Three Fonts of Moral Knowledge (St. Alphonsus)
 - What you do: *the moral object*
 - The reason you do it: *the motive*
 - The circumstances: *the context* influencing the decision and subsequent action

Catholic Approach

- Within the context of *community*
 - Mutual respect, collegiality
 - Listens to all the voices
- Reflecting on *principles* from within the tradition
- In a *prayerful* context

Ways of Making Ethical Decisions

- Most decisions are made with little or no reflection
- Many of us use a combination of approaches when making ethical decisions
- Conflict occurs when different approaches are used to address the same question
- When proposing your conclusion about an ethical issue give rationale



Ethical Discernment Process

- Both discipline and ground our decision-making
- Ensures that we consider all relevant factors
- Elicits multiple perspectives
- Allows us to reflect on our moral intuitions and instincts
- Aligns our affects, intuitions, and instincts with our deliberative intellect

Ethical Discernment Process

- Explicitly relates decisions to mission, vision, values, and identity
- Promotes and reinforces preferred culture
- Promotes consistency with existing organizational structures, processes, and positions
- Fosters ability to articulate and communicate rationale for decisions
- Ensures major decisions are grounded in prayer and careful reflection

Ethical Discernment Process

- Discernment engages
 - Spirituality
 - Intellect
 - Imagination
 - Intuition
 - Beliefs
 - Biases
 - Pre-judgments

Ethical Discernment Process - Steps

- Gather information
- Carefully identify the issue
- Review core commitments
- Identify alternatives
- Make a decision
- Evaluate the decision



Gather Information

- What are facts of the situation?
- Who are the relevant stakeholders? Are their views known?
- Are relevant social, political, economic, legal, and other factors known?



Carefully Identify the Issue

- What are the values behind the various positions?
- What is the value conflict? What values are clashing?
- What is the conflict, if any, with organization's core values? Catholic moral teaching? Other moral principles?



Review Core Commitments

- What values does the organization claim to espouse?
- What guidance is provided by church teaching? Its moral principles?



Identify Alternatives

- What are potential alternatives?
- Are there any unacceptable alternatives?
- What are likely consequences of each alternative (long-term, short-term, positive, negative)?
- Which alternative is most consistent with organization's values, church teaching, etc.?



Make a Decision

- Choose one of the alternatives
- Be able to defend your choice
- What is the motivation behind the choice?
- Decide how to communicate the choice
- Establish a time frame for communicating and implementing the choice
- Determine process of evaluation

Evaluate the Decision

- What has been the impact of the decision on the organization's core values, identity, core constituencies?
- If the outcome has not been as positive as hoped for – why? Might another alternative have been better? What would you do differently in another, similar situation?

When to Use This Process

- Not for every decision
- When mission, values, integrity of organization at stake – how to determine?
- Elements of the process should be a part of most decisions
- What do you think?
