

## Ethics in public policy analysis

### ■ Ethics

- How we ought to live (morality issue); How we ought to do (translating morality into action)
- Utilitarian view of world
  - People are self-interested
  - Good life is one in which people are free to pursue their self-interest
  - The best society is one that permits individuals to realize good lives
- Relationship between ethics and economics
  - Judging what is right or wrong is the essence of ethics; it is right if it brings about good consequences and wrong if it does not
  - Maximize utility or bring about the best consequences through efficient use of resources is the essence of economics

## Ethics in public policy analysis

### ■ Ethics (Continued)

- Some philosophers feel that certain rules should never be violated and some duties should never be shirked
  - Rights/duties and means are as important as outcomes/consequences
- Both consequences (impacts) and non-consequence considerations (rights and duties) must be considered in policy formulation/analysis.

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|  | <h2 style="text-align: center;">Ethics in public policy analysis</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consequentialist ethical theories:</li> </ul>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– It is a right thing to maximize the good defined as human happiness/utility</li> <li>– Problems with consequentialism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Natural resource extraction and natural beauty would cause happiness; then we need to deal with trade-offs between these two actions</li> <li>■ May recommend actions that are not morally acceptable and unethical</li> <li>■ May have to weigh gains against losses</li> <li>■ It favors individual sacrifices in the name of achieving societal good or greater good</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

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|  | <h2 style="text-align: center;">Ethics in public policy analysis</h2> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Nonconsequentialist or rights-based ethical theories:</li> </ul>   |
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– One should never do anything known to be wrong even if it results in overall good to the society (examples); these are constraints to further overall happiness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Kant arguments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– People must take universal rules as a guide to their own behavior</li> <li>– People must never treat themselves or others merely as a means to an end but rather as an end in themselves</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Rawls views <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the good as the “satisfaction of rational desire”, similar to utilitarianism</li> <li>– Believes that principles governing the right behavior should have priority over the good, similar to non-consequentialist view</li> <li>– Social contract</li> <li>– Veil of ignorance</li> <li>– Principle of justice</li> <li>– Difference principle</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

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### ■ Nonconsequentialist or rights-based ethical theories:

- Nozick's victim based theory
  - If someone acquired property in a just way it should not be altered by the state
  - Alternation should not be done even if the goal is to address inequality
- Libertarianism (Nozick and Buchanan):
  - Governments must be limited to enforcing negative liberties only (negative liberty--a right to be free of interference; positive liberty--right to pursue one's goal)
  - Argues that state sponsored schemes to reduce inequalities would involve unjust (UN-Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948)
- Problems of nonconsequentialist theories
  - Rights and duties conflict
  - Conflicts within a particular duty or right

## Ethics in public policy analysis

### ■ Virtue theory:

- Ethics is about individual character
- Individuals of good character behave in accordance with justice
- Communitarians
  - Accept restrictions on individual rights in the name of protecting the community

### ■ Consequentialism, non-consequentialism, and virtue theory overlap in many ways

## Ethics in public policy analysis

- Relevance of theories to policy analysis
  - Deficiency payments in agriculture
    - Libertarians and Communitarians
  - Sen's suggestion
    - Marriage of rights and consequences (maximize good consequences, subject to the constraint that the rights and duties)
  - Use rights-based theories to evaluate institutions and consequential theories to evaluate policies
  - Virtuous behavior requires that people accept sacrifices to further general interest or positive consequences