



ETHICS and the FOUR-WAY TEST

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The Four-Way Test

- Is it the **TRUTH**?
- Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
- Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
- Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?



Origin of the Four-Way Test

- Created in 1932 by Rotarian Herbert J. Taylor (Rotary International President 1954-55), when asked to take charge of an aluminum cookware company facing bankruptcy.
- Adopted by Rotary in 1943.
- Translated into over 100 languages and published in thousands of ways as a "simple measuring stick of ethics."

Question

How does ethics relate to the Four-Way Test?

To find the answer we need to understand how ethics has developed, and has been and is used.

Some Definitions

- **Moral** - ability to choose between a right or wrong conduct. (Socrates: "what we ought to do")
- **Moral principle** (standard) - a rule to guide right or wrong conduct.
- **Ethics** (moral philosophy)
 - Evaluation of conduct in light of moral principles.
 - A set of moral principles that apply to an individual or group.

More Questions

With no ethics, what would our world be like?

What moral principle do you believe is most important to human survival?

Development of Ethics

- **Along religious lines**
 - Babylonian
 - Egyptian
 - Hebrew
 - Christian
 - Islamic
 - The Golden Rule
- **Along secular lines**
 - Three rival theories of ethics developed from seeking a single moral principle or set of moral principles.

Babylonian: Code of Hammurabi

c. 1780 BCE

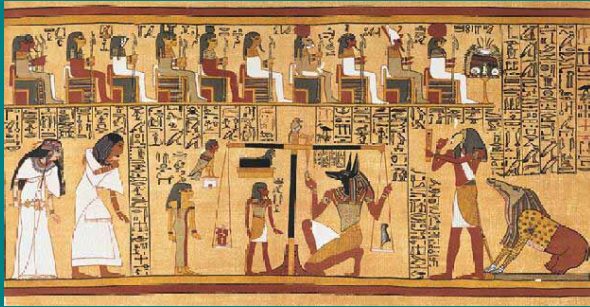
282 laws, with scaled punishments, adjusting "an eye for an eye" (Law of Retribution) based on social status.



Egyptian: Book of the Dead

c. 1275 BCE

42 declarations of innocence



Hebrew: Torah (Mosaic Laws)

c. 1200 BCE

- 613 commandments (mitzvot): 365 negative and 248 positive. Some applied the Law of Retribution.
- 77 negative and 194 positive commandments can be observed today.



Christian: New Testament

- “ ‘Love the Lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40)
- Christian ethics in general has tended to stress the need for grace, mercy and forgiveness because of human weakness.

Islamic Law: Qur'an and Sunna

- Sharia: sacred law of Islam, is derived from the Qur'an and the Sunna.
- Sharia is a reflection of God's will for humankind, and so in its purest sense is perfect and unchanging.
- The three categories of crime are: Hadd (fixed punishment), Tazir (discretionary punishment) and Qesas (retaliatory punishment, or Law of Retribution).

The Golden Rule (Law of Reciprocity)

- **Judaism:** Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18)
- **Christianity:** So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)
Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:31)

The Golden Rule (cont'd)

- **Islam:** No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. (Sunnab)
- **Hinduism:** This is the sum of duty: Do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you. (Mahabharata 5:1517)
- **Buddhism:** Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. (Udana-Varga 5:18)
- **Confucianism:** Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you. (Analects 15:23)

The Three Rival Theories of Ethics

- Duty (rule-based, obligatory, deontological)
- Utilitarian (consequentialist, "end-result," teleological)
- Virtue

Duty Theory

- We have natural rights, which are life, liberty, possessions (Locke).
- Any act we take should be universally applicable ("categorical imperative") We should never treat people as a means to an end (Kant).

Utilitarian Theory

Always chose an action or social policy that will have the best consequences for all concerned (Hume, Bentham, John Stuart Mill).

- Actions must be judged solely on their consequences,
- Consequences must be judged solely on the amount of happiness they create.
- Each person's happiness is counted as equally important.

Virtue Theory

- Virtue is a “trait of character* manifested in habitual action.” (Aristotle)
- “that is good for anyone to have.” (Rachels and Rachels)

* For example, courage, generosity, honesty and loyalty.

Ethics and the Four-Way Test

- Ethics, whether religious or secular, is presently incapable of providing us a set of universally acceptable moral principles.
- Alternatively, each of us can live as we ought to live, drawing upon our moral reasoning and virtues to achieve a satisfying personal life and promote the general welfare.
- Whether we chose to live according to a set of moral principles or as we ought to live, we have the Four-Way Test to assess the ethics of our actions.

Application of the Four-Way Test

- The Four-Way Test does not tell us how to act ethically, but provides us questions we can use to assess whether our actions are ethical.
- The themes of these questions, in order, are: truth, justice, friendliness, and helpfulness.
- The questions apply to the “Things we think, say or do” in our businesses and communities, and even our personal lives.

THE END

