

# Moral Objectivism

US275 Scientific Ethics  
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## Moral objectivism

- universal moral principles
  - valid for all people
  - in all social environments



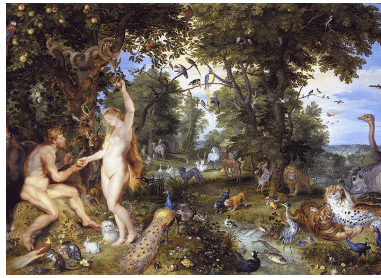
## Moral Absolutism

- moral principles
  - non-overridable
  - must never be violated
  - no exceptions
- opposite of subjective ethical relativism



# Natural Law Theory

- eternal moral law
  - can be discovered through reason
  - based on nature of humanity and society



*The garden of Eden with the fall of man.*  
Peter Paul Rubens, 1615

## Key ideas of natural law

- human beings have an essential rational nature established by God
  - designed to live and flourish in prescribed ways
- Even without knowledge of God
  - can discover the laws through reason



*Aristotle teaching Alexander the Great.*  
Wikimedia Commons

## Key ideas of natural law (cont)

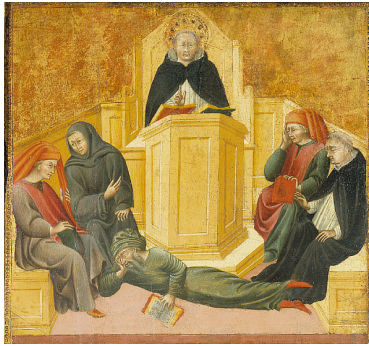
- natural laws are universal and unchangeable
  - natural laws should be used to judge societies and society's laws
  - society's laws should follow natural laws



*Zeno of Citium, ancient Greek Stoic philosopher.*  
Thomas Stanley, *The history of philosophy* (1655)

# Doctrine of Double Effect

- moral conflict/dilemma
  - what happens when you cannot do good,
  - without bringing about evil consequences?
- St. Thomas Aquinas worked to combine Aristotlian philosophy



St. Thomas Aquinas Confounding Averroes  
(1445-1450)  
Wikimedia Commons

## 4 conditions of a morally permissible act

### 1. Nature-of-the-act condition

- action must be morally good or neutral

### 2. Means-end condition

- bad consequence must not be means of achieving good effect



Saint Thomas Aquinas  
Fra Angelico (1395 - 1455)

## 4 conditions of a morally permissible act (cont)

### 3. Right-intention condition

- good outcome is the intention
- bad consequence is unintended.

### 4. Proportionality condition

- Good effect must be at least equivalent in importance to the bad consequence



Triumph of St. Thomas Aquinas over the Heretics  
Filippino Lippi, 1490

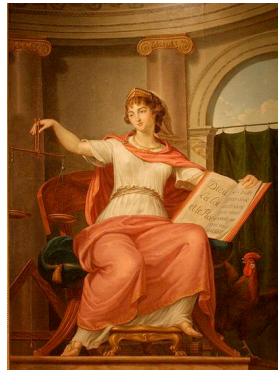
# Moderate Objectivism

- universal and objective moral principles
  - valid for all people
  - valid for all social environments



# Core Morality

- “Golden Rule”
  - do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
- Golden Rule applied
  - Do not kill innocent people
  - Do not lie or deceive

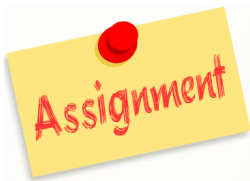


*La justice, Holds scales in one hand and in the other hand a book with "Dieu, la Loi, et le Roi" on one page and the Golden rule on the other page.*  
Bernard d'Agesci (1757-1828)

# Ethical Situationism

- objective moral principles are to be applied differently in different contexts
  - when ethical principles are in conflict with one another,
  - consider the situation to determine what is the most moral action





# Assignment

## **Ethics and the worlds oldest profession.**

Prostitution is the providing sexual services in return for payment. The laws governing prostitution vary from society to society and even different locations within the same country (example: licensed prostitution in Nevada).

### In your discussion group:

*Discuss the arguments for and against prostitution from the different ethical perspectives of:*

*subjective ethical relativism*

*moral absolutism*

*conventional ethical relativism*

*moderate objectivism*

*The first person to post on the thread gets to choose their perspective. They should identify their perspective and argue from their ethical viewpoint. The other members of the group will choose from the remaining viewpoints, identify their perspective and contribute to the discussion.*

*This assignment will be graded based on maintaining your stated viewpoint throughout the discussion.*

## Readings

Chapter 3: Moral Objectivism

Pojman & Fieser,  
Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong



*John is not really dull, WPA poster, ca. 1937  
Works Progress Administration poster  
recommending eye examinations for children  
having difficulty reading.*

## Any Questions?

Email me at:  
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<http://www.vipointbullkennels.com/images/animated-question-mark.gif>