Discover the foundations of ethics and how to apply them to your everyday life

What’s the difference between right and wrong? Do you know John Stuart Mill from Thomas Hobbes? This helpful guide gets you comfortable with the centuries-old study of ethical philosophy quickly and effectively! In plain English, it examines ethical thought, explains the writings and theories of great thinkers, and so much more.

- Get a handle — understand the basic issues and questions of ethics, and why you should care about integrating ethics into your own life
- Dig up the dirt — investigate whether human nature and ethics are related and delve into the connections (and disconnects) between ethics and religion and ethics and science
- Look behind the curtain — get familiar with the key ethical theories you need to know, such as virtue ethics, Kantian ethics, and utilitarianism
- Apply, apply, apply — discover the many ways ethics has been applied to the real world, from biomedical ethics to human rights and everything in between
- Grasp the lingo — learn some basic ethical vocabulary and how ethics relates to culture and opinion

Open the book and find:

- Insight into whether humans are naturally good or evil
- The role of religion and science in ethics
- Challenges facing ethics
- The importance of being a virtuous person
- The ethics of consequences
- Why the Golden Rule is universal
- How to apply ethics to real life
- What the ethics of principle really means
- Ethical disagreements between individuals and cultures
- A feminist approach to care ethics

Go to Dummies.com® for videos, step-by-step examples, how-to articles, or to shop!

Christopher Panza, PhD, is an associate professor of philosophy at Drury University and coauthor of Existentialism For Dummies.
Adam Potthast, PhD, is an assistant professor of philosophy at Missouri University of Science and Technology.
Get More and Do More at Dummies.com®

Start with FREE Cheat Sheets

Cheat Sheets include
• Checklists
• Charts
• Common Instructions
• And Other Good Stuff!

To access the Cheat Sheet created specifically for this book, go to www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/ethics

Get Smart at Dummies.com

Dummies.com makes your life easier with 1,000s of answers on everything from removing wallpaper to using the latest version of Windows.

Check out our
• Videos
• Illustrated Articles
• Step-by-Step Instructions

Plus, each month you can win valuable prizes by entering our Dummies.com sweepstakes.*

Want a weekly dose of Dummies? Sign up for Newsletters on
• Digital Photography
• Microsoft Windows & Office
• Personal Finance & Investing
• Health & Wellness
• Computing, iPods & Cell Phones
• eBay
• Internet
• Food, Home & Garden

Find out “HOW” at Dummies.com

*Sweepstakes not currently available in all countries; visit Dummies.com for official rules.

Mobile Apps

There’s a Dummies App for This and That

With more than 200 million books in print and over 1,600 unique titles, Dummies is a global leader in how-to information. Now you can get the same great Dummies information in an App. With topics such as Wine, Spanish, Digital Photography, Certification, and more, you’ll have instant access to the topics you need to know in a format you can trust.

To get information on all our Dummies apps, visit the following:
www.Dummies.com/go/mobile from your computer.
Ethics
FOR
DUMMIES®
by Christopher Panza, PhD, and Adam Potthast, PhD
Ethics professors at Drury University and Missouri University of Science and Technology
About the Authors

Chris Panza was born and raised in New York. After trying unsuccessfully for many years to figure out how to live the right way, he enrolled at the State University of New York at Purchase, where he figured philosophy and literature degrees would help. It provided hints, but no answers. After college, he spent a few more years working in business and hammering away at the question of value. More hints, but no answers. Finally, he attended the University of Connecticut and earned a master’s degree and doctoral degree (in philosophy) hoping to finally learn how to live a good and ethical life. More degrees and more hints, but no definite answers. What to do? Well, with all these degrees you may not know exactly how to live ethically, but you can at least make a living teaching. So he did that, and he has been an associate professor of philosophy at Drury University in Springfield, Missouri, since 2002.

Chris received the university’s Excellence in Teaching Award in 2004, probably for getting a lot of students to join him on the endless quest to understanding what it means to live a good life. In addition to his teaching interests in ethics, Chris also teaches classes in existentialism (and is the co-author of Existentialism For Dummies), Confucianism, free will, metaphysics, and modern philosophy. Chris is married to his wife Christie, a social psychologist, and has two beautiful little girls: a 4-year-old named Parker and an almost 2-year-old named Paige. Chris is hoping to one day infect his own children with the same desire to investigate life that has long invigorated him and as a result made his life a continuously interesting and mysterious experience.

Adam Potthast was born and raised in Missouri. After directors stopped casting him in plays, he had no choice but to fall into the seedy underbelly of intellectualism that thrived at Truman State in Kirksville, Missouri. Trying to do the hardest thing he knew he could do well (and not being able to do physics and music very well), he found philosophy. He went on to get his masters and PhD in philosophy at the University of Connecticut where he discovered that far from all being a matter of opinion, ethics was stimulating and a lot of fun.
He’s currently an assistant professor at Missouri University of Science and Technology (Missouri S&T) in Rolla, Missouri, where — when he’s not pestering his engineering colleagues about the value of ethical thinking — he teaches courses in virtually every kind of ethics, political philosophy, and the meaning of life. His research interests are practical and professional ethics, the connections between ethics and personal identity, and the apparently very high tolerance people have for listening to him carry on about the connection between freedom and morality in Kantian ethics. When he’s not working, he enjoys travel, hiking, riding bikes, subjecting friends to culinary experiments, and Canadian independent music. Go places!

Dedication

From Chris: I would like to dedicate this book first and foremost to my wife, Christie, and to my two daughters, Parker and Paige, who are the lights of my life. I also would like to dedicate the book to my mom, Janice, who has been a source of strength and inspiration for me my whole life, and to my dad, Tony, for his quirky sense of humor and great cooking. Lastly, to my sister, Amy, and her husband, Jay, not to mention my young nephew, Aiden.

From Adam: This book is dedicated first to my parents, Ferd and Joan. I’m forever grateful to them for having the good sense to leave behind vows of chastity, take up with one another, and later teach me the power of words, courage, and kindness. Second, to my brother, David, whose creativity and perseverance is always an inspiration. Finally, to my undergraduate advisor, Patricia Burton, and my graduate advisor, Joel Kupperman, who had the patience to put up with me learning to be a philosopher. I couldn’t have asked for better or more virtuous philosophical exemplars.
Authors’ Acknowledgements

From Chris: My primary acknowledgement is to my wife, Christie, and my daughters, Parker and Paige. They all had to endure months of me locked away in an office instead of being with the family. They have been more than understanding. I’d also like to thank Drury University for the sabbatical that partially opened up the time for writing this book. Lastly, and certainly not least, I’d like to thank my co-author, Adam. He’s been a great friend for many years, and he proved to be just as good a co-author. The book was easy and fun to write with him alongside all the way through.

From Adam: I’d like to thank my co-author, Chris, first of all, for being a good friend through the years, bringing me on board this project, and tolerating my idiosyncratic writing style and relationship with deadlines. I’d also like to thank my department chair, Dick Miller, for the philosophical companionship, jokes, and institutional support he’s joyfully given through the years and during the drafting of this book. To my friends, current and former students, and colleagues around the world: You’ve been an unforgettable source of support through the whole project, and I couldn’t have done it without you. Thanks to the DJs at KMNR, KDHX, WMBR, CBC Radio 3, and Erika for keeping me in good music throughout the process. Thanks to the Giddy Goat, Keen Bean, and Meshuggah Café for renting me a place to write for the unreasonably low price of a cup of coffee (and in the case of Jo’s back porch, not even that). And finally, we couldn’t have written such a good book without the helpful suggestions and support of our editors Chad, Jessica, and Michael.
Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments at http://dummies.custhelp.com. For other comments, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

Acquisitions, Editorial, and Media Development

Project Editor: Chad R. Sievers
Acquisitions Editor: Michael Lewis
Copy Editor: Jessica Smith
Assistant Editor: Erin Calligan Mooney
Senior Editorial Assistant: David Lutton
Technical Editor: David Chandler, PhD
Editorial Manager: Michelle Hacker
Editorial Assistant: Jennette ElNaggar
Cover Photos: © Pixmix I Dreamstime.com
Cartoons: Rich Tennant (www.the5thwave.com)

Composition Services

Project Coordinator: Katherine Crocker
Layout and Graphics: Carl Byers
Proofreader: Linda Seifert
Indexer: Sharon Shock
Special Help: Danielle Voirol

Publishing and Editorial for Consumer Dummies

Diane Graves Steele, Vice President and Publisher, Consumer Dummies
Kristin Ferguson-Wagstaffe, Product Development Director, Consumer Dummies
Ensley Eikenburg, Associate Publisher, Travel
Kelly Regan, Editorial Director, Travel

Publishing for Technology Dummies

Andy Cummings, Vice President and Publisher, Dummies Technology/General User

Composition Services

Debbie Stailey, Director of Composition Services
Contents at a Glance

Introduction ................................................................. 1

Part I: Ethics 101: Just the Basics, Please ................. 7
Chapter 1: Approaching Ethics: What Is It and Why Should You Care? ................. 9

Part II: Uncovering the Roots of Ethics .................. 35
Chapter 3: Human Nature and Ethics: Two Big Questions .................................. 37
Chapter 4: Exploring Connections between Ethics, Religion, and Science .......... 55
Chapter 5: Seeing Ethics as Harmful: Three Famous Criticisms .................... 73

Part III: Surveying Key Ethical Theories ................. 93
Chapter 6: Being an Excellent Person: Virtue Ethics ........................................ 95
Chapter 7: Increasing the Good: Utilitarian Ethics ........................................... 121
Chapter 8: Doing Your Duty: The Ethics of Principle ....................................... 143
Chapter 9: Signing on the Dotted Line: Ethics as Contract ................................ 171
Chapter 10: The Golden Rule: Common Sense Ethics ....................................... 187
Chapter 11: Turning Down the Testosterone: Feminist Care Ethics .................. 207

Part IV: Applying Ethics to Real Life ....................... 227
Chapter 12: Dealing with Mad Scientists: Biomedical Ethics ............................ 229
Chapter 13: Protecting the Habitat: Environmental Ethics ............................... 247
Chapter 14: Serving the Public: Professional Ethics ......................................... 269
Chapter 15: Keeping the Peace: Ethics and Human Rights ................................ 281
Chapter 16: Getting It On: The Ethics of Sex ................................................... 299
Chapter 17: Looking Out for the Little Guy: Ethics and Animals ....................... 313

Part V: The Part of Tens ............................................. 329
Chapter 18: Ten Famous Ethicists and Their Theories ................................... 331
Chapter 19: Ten Ethical Dilemmas Likely to Arise in the Future ..................... 337

Index ........................................................................... 343
Table of Contents

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1
   About This Book .............................................................................................. 1
   Conventions Used in This Book ...................................................................... 2
   What You’re Not to Read .................................................................................. 3
   Foolish Assumptions ....................................................................................... 3
   How This Book Is Organized .......................................................................... 3
      Part I: Ethics 101: Just the Basics, Please ........................................... 4
      Part II: Uncovering the Roots of Ethics ............................................... 4
      Part III: Surveying Key Ethical Theories .............................................. 4
      Part IV: Applying Ethics to Real Life .................................................... 4
      Part V: The Part of Tens ........................................................................... 5
   Icons Used in This Book ................................................................................. 5
   Where to Go from Here ................................................................................... 6

Part I: Ethics 101: Just the Basics, Please ............................................. 7

   Knowing the Right Words: Ethical Vocabulary .............................................. 9
      Focusing on should and ought ................................................................... 10
      Avoiding the pitfall of separating ethics and morality ......................... 11
      Putting law in its proper place ................................................................ 11
      Requiring, forbidding, permitting:
         The most useful ethical vocabulary ..................................................... 12
   Identifying Two Arguments for Being Ethical ............................................ 13
      Why be ethical 101: It pays off ............................................................... 13
      Why be ethical 201: You’ll live a life of integrity .................................... 14
   Committing Yourself to the Ethical Life ..................................................... 15
      Taking stock: Know thyself ................................................................. 16
      Building your moral framework ......................................................... 17
      Seeing where you need to go .............................................................. 17

   Subjectivism: Basing Ethics on Each Person’s Opinion ............................. 20
      Right for me and wrong for you: The subjectivist position ................ 20
      Recognizing that subjectivism can’t handle disagreement .............. 21
      They’re always right: Subjectivists make bad houseguests ............ 23
      Determining what subjectivism gets right ......................................... 24
Cultural Relativism: Grounding Ethics in the Group’s Opinion ......................... 25
  Discovering what it means to be a cultural relativist ......................... 25
  Understanding why cultural relativism is always so popular ............. 26
  Living in many worlds: Some problems with cultural relativism ...... 27
  Looking at cultural relativism’s lack of respect for tolerance ........ 28
  Noting cultural relativism’s successes ............................................. 30
Emotivism: Seeing Ethics as a Tool of Expression ........................................ 30
  Expressing yourself: Booing and cheering in ethics ......................... 31
  Arguing emotionally: A problem for emotivists ......................... 32
  Getting motivation right: A victory for emotivism ......................... 33

Part II: Uncovering the Roots of Ethics ............................................ 35

Chapter 3: Human Nature and Ethics: Two Big Questions .............. 37
  Considering Human Nature and Ethics ........................................... 37
  Examining the idea of human nature ............................................... 38
  Linking human nature and ethics ..................................................... 39
  Connecting Ethics and Freedom ..................................................... 41
  Hard determinists: You’re not free! ............................................. 42
  Finding freedom: Examining two other theories ......................... 44
  Human Nature: Good, Bad, or Neutral? ...................................... 47
  Human nature is disposed to the good ..................................... 47
  Human nature disposes you to be bad ..................................... 49
  Human nature is neither good nor bad ................................... 52

Chapter 4: Exploring Connections between Ethics, Religion, and Science ........................................... 55
  Clarifying the Relationship between God, Religion, and Ethical Codes ... 55
  Knowing the difference between God and religion ......................... 56
  Contemplating the diversity of religious ethical codes ................. 57
  Because God Said So: Understanding Divine Command Theory .............. 59
  God’s authority: Considering why God gets to be in charge .......... 59
  Figuring out what happens when divine commands conflict .......... 61
  Plato’s big challenge: Questioning what makes something ethical ... 62
  The Age of Science: Figuring Out If Ethics Can Exist in a Secular World ... 64
  Staying silent on the spiritual ..................................................... 64
  Defining ethics in a materialistic world ....................................... 65
  Establishing good behavior without heaven or hell ...................... 66
  Evolution and Ethics: Rising Above the Law of the Jungle .......... 68
  Seeing how selfish genes can promote unselfish behavior ......... 68
  Noting the irrelevance of (most) evolutionary theory to ethics ... 70

Chapter 5: Seeing Ethics as Harmful: Three Famous Criticisms ............ 73
  Understanding the Challenges to Ethics .......................................... 73
  Bias-based arguments .............................................................. 74
  Status-based arguments ............................................................ 75
  Integrity-based arguments .......................................................... 76
Part III: Surveying Key Ethical Theories .......................... 93

Chapter 6: Being an Excellent Person: Virtue Ethics .............. 95

The Lowdown on Virtue Ethics: The Importance of Character .... 96
Discovering why character matters ........................................ 96
Connecting character with action .......................................... 97
Seeing character as a way of life .......................................... 97
Understanding What Virtues Are .......................................... 98
Virtues are habits toward goodness ...................................... 98
Breaking down virtues ....................................................... 100
Focusing on the Good .......................................................... 101
Grasping the nature of “the good” ....................................... 101
Virtuous living leads to human flourishing ........................... 102
Aristotle and Confucius: Two Notions of the Good Life ........... 104
Aristotle’s view of the human good ..................................... 104
Confucius’s view of the human good ................................... 106
Virtue: The middle path between extremes .......................... 108
Figuring Out How to Acquire Virtues ................................. 109
Can virtues really be taught? ................................................ 109
Confucius: Virtue starts at home .......................................... 110
Mirroring virtuous people ................................................... 112
Practice, practice, and more practice .................................. 113
Assessing Criticisms of Virtue Ethics ................................. 115
It’s difficult to know which virtues are right ......................... 116
Virtues can’t give exact guidance ......................................... 116
Virtue ethics is really self-centered ..................................... 118
Being virtuous is a lucky crapshoot ..................................... 118

Chapter 7: Increasing the Good: Utilitarian Ethics .............. 121

Paying Close Attention to Results: Consequences Matter ....... 122
Consequences matter to everyone ...................................... 122
Consequences ethically trump principles and character ........ 124