

Lecture on Christian Ethics

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Part I Fundamentals

Which ethical/moral questions come up in the following cases?

Cases:

1. Human swimmer enjoys himself in a shark's habitat. Shark eats swimmer's leg. Coastguard kills shark.
2. The ideal Robin Hood robs the rich, takes nothing for himself and gives all his booty the needy.
3. Jesus falls down to the devil and worships him, in order to gain all the power with which Jesus hopes to redeem the world. (Matth. 4, 8).
4. Instead of working for their livelihood Buddhist monks pray and meditate. They feed exclusively and live exclusively at the expense of others. Is this right?
5. A enters an empty bus, spreads his legs, puts his luggage to the neighbouring seats, starts smoking and turns on his the radio. That does not bother anyone. At the next stop, a passenger come in who smokes himself, but is bothered by the radio. The following stop a third passenger gets in. Though he does not mind the radio he feels molested by the smoke. By and by the bus gets full. A mother with a baby enters the bus and cannot find a seat. Analyse step by step: What should A do?
6. P is the president of a powerful state. After a terrorist attack, he decides on a counter-attack against a group which he suspects (but does not know for sure) is behind the attack, in order to protect his country. By this counter-attack also people are killed, who may be innocent Is P right in doing so?

I. Introduction

1. Ethical Study

Ethic is the study of human behaviour and asks, whether a given act or omission to act it is good or bad. Ethic therefore is the study how to live a meaningful human life. Case 1: Today we know that also animals (sometimes? always?) behave in a quasi-ethical way (*moralanaloges Verhalten*; nobelprizewinner Konrad Lorenz). Ethical studies in principal only deal with human behaviour vis-à-vis other humans. But the more we understand the world, our "human habitat", we realize how human acts interrelate with nature as a whole. It is therefore not unreasonable to ask, whether A when disturbing the habitat of the shark behaves unethical. If the shark eats the leg of the A, shark behaves ethical in a shark's perspective and if the Coast Guard kills the shark question is, whether this is ethical.

Ethics is the study of the Good. This leads to the question: What is meant by "good"? Case 2: Of course, the behaviour of Robin Hood is nobler, more ethical than that of a common highwayman who keeps the loot for himself.. But is the behaviour of Robin Hood really ethical? Is it good? If Yes, why? If No: Why?

Sages of all times have tried to find out what is good in view of a full and worthy life. Ultimately it is only this question, what ethics are about. Is there a Good as a kind of divine or quasi-divine entity, an idea? Such was Platon`s concept. For Platon and his followers a worthy and good life was possible only by having possession of or being possessed of by this Good. Case 3: When I was a little boy I asked my father, who was a pastor of the Lutheran Church: Why Jesus did not accept the offer of the devil? He could have done much good with the power and wealth that was promised to him. If we read Matthew Ch. 4 carefully then we realize: the temptations of the devil are becoming more and more attractive. Verse 4: Jesus is asked to exercise witchcraft. Verse 7: Jesus refuses to try God. But in Verse 8 Jesus is confronted with a really serious temptation: You shall wield all the power on earth, and you can do what you want - even the good ! This is also a temptation with which we forgive ourselves us many small and big sins . Accepting or even doing the Bad in order to turn it into Good.

The Christian concept is: GOD is the Good. Ethical behaviour is what serves HIM. And we feel that there is one fundamental truth: Only God is able turn Bad into Good, if we humans try to do the same, we will fail.

2. Individual and Social Life

Philosophers of different schools teach all kinds of concepts for the “good” – from trivial hedonism to exalted degrees of asceticism and contemplation (cf. Case 4) They consequently offer ways and means how to achieve their proclaimed good. In the context of this lecture “ good” means the comprehensive fulfilment of life. Which life? Private or social? There is a big difference if you live like Robinson alone on his island, or if you live a working life in a big city with many neighbours. Robinson has only to worry about his daily food and clothing. Living in a family, community, state we need to be considerate of others. The freedom that every man can do what he wants, is limited by the freedom of the people with whom we meet together to do the same.

Everyone lives his own life, for which he may have set certain goals. Everyone has his own ideas about living a full life. But we all live in a family, community, state. In our Global Village by each day we become aware that every one of us is a part of humanity. Each of us, consciously or unconsciously, actively or passively takes part in the development of our human. By chatting to our neighbour or by presiding a big state, by writing a scientific article or by giving or listening lectures like this – what ever we do has in some way or other influence on the course of the world. We must, therefore, be responsible. Not only in regard to a possible happy and fulfilling own life, but always in relation to the community, and finally the humanity with which we live. (cf. Case 5).

Private life and the life of the community are closely related. But apparently there are for both areas very different assessment options. The ethical question of whether it is allowed to kill people will be answered completely different for a private person than for a state facing a war (cf Case 6). The task of a father and mother to educate children, is very different from the task of a school teacher and even more so from than that of a

Parliament, which must decide on certain laws. The development of science and technology in many areas of modern life pose not only technical, but also ethical issues. For example: The question of whether people may go to sea and operate fisheries for thousands of years was no ethical problem. Today there are confronted with overfishing in many parts of the oceans, which is threatening to exterminate many species of fish, which not only disturbs nature, but puts also the basic food of the people at risk. As long as humanity knew no electricity and also did not know how to split the atom, the question of the peaceful or non-peaceful use of nuclear energy was not there. Today, this question is one of the most important of mankind.

3. Study of Christian Ethic¹

It is therefore obvious that the question of ethical behaviour in today's world is totally different from the time of Aristotle Jesus. It is easily understood that many philosophers who deal with ethical issues, no longer believe that it the morally good can be defined as one all-overarching principle from which can be derived all other ethical rules. Yet it is not pointless to search for the modern world for the principle of good, and to try to define it. But this has become much harder than before.

Christian ethic is the study of ethical behavior under God and Jesus Christ. Christian ethics is the study of ethical conduct on the assumption that God has shown us through Jesus Christ the way of salvation. By salvation we do not mean only our own individual life or soul, but also humanity as a whole in the earthly history and future. Christian ethics, therefore, differs from all other ethical systems in that we, as far as we are Christians, looking for an unalterable, eternally valid law. This search has to start with the word of God as it was taught by Jesus Christ. to in the Bible and New Testament. Therefore, Christians seek first the foundation, the main principle for human action. This is what we may be allowed to call God. From the law of God, which we learn from the Bible, we derive rules for our daily life for our own salvation. From the same law of God Christians derive also political rules to guide humanity and the world. Today, however, it is often doubted that the Bible can give ultimate answers to ethical questions. Modern problems of technical-scientific world cannot be answered directly from the Bible.

This lecture is intended to work out 3 points:

1. Ethical beliefs of all the peoples and cultures of the world are very similar. It is difficult, to describe Christian ethics, which are typically and exclusively Christian.
2. The message of Christianity is the cross. This gives us a sense that this world is not perfect – not yet. Human behaviour must therefore be based on God's objectives with humanity and this world.
3. Christian ethics, and more particularly protestant ethics, means that we must try to find the ways of God and to act accordingly. Christian ethics therefore is not so much a fixed set of rules, but a way of interpretation of what fundamentally is common to all mankind.

¹ Attachment 1

II Historical background

1. Greeks and Romans

The question how to live a good life or of the absolute good lies at the beginning of Western philosophy. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are the most important names here. Their question was about the nature of the Good as the highest good and final end of man. This was seen in *eudaimonia*, which could be achieved mainly in the perfection, in rational human activity, in ability and virtue. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*:

The highest aim of human life and thinking is *eudaimonia* (= roughly: happiness) to be understood as a way of leading a virtuous life. From this Aristotle asks what a virtuous character is. Aristotle teaches that it is not sufficient only to know about virtue, but to put it into practice. In a way he follows a "top-down" approach, from theory to practical life. First we have to find out what virtue is. Only then we can lead a virtuous life. So Aristotle defines four core virtues from which all other virtues valid in private and official life derive.

For Aristotle conscience, the inner disposition for the highest good, was not yet a category of ethics. This did arrive with the Stoics. To sum up their teachings one could say, that the Stoics followed a kind of "bottom-up-approach" – from practical life to ethical theory. The stoics rejected the ideal of virtue, which they perceived as being supportive to passions and desires. They did not believe in the concept of an ultimate Good, Justice etc. They substituted "virtue" by "reason." The wise man - the Stoics maintained - will not be carried away by joy or grief, he will always follow his reason and look at things, whether good or bad, indifferently. Reason or wisdom being an innate part of man and the universe was equalled with the notion of "nature". To live by wisdom is to follow nature. Wisdom in human life was only a special of the status of wisdom of the universe. This gave to ethics a religious emotion. Live by wisdom = by nature = universal wisdom = by God.²

2. Middle Ages and Enlightenment

Christianity brought the revealed law of God instead of the natural law. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) developed a philosophical and theological system with the aim to establish comprehensive and consistent rule according to which human beings have to act in order to please God. The basic concepts of Thomas remained to the time of enlightenment and even to this day. But it was increasingly becoming an ethics without God. This resulted in utilitarian ethics, whose protagonists were J. Bentham (1748-32) and John Stuart Mill (1806 - 73):

Bentham's philosophy of utilitarianism took for its "fundamental axiom, *it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong*". This principle forms the cornerstone of Bentham's thought. By "happiness", he understood a predominance of "pleasure" over "pain". Utilitarianism was revised and expanded by

² see, Enciclopedia Britannica (1962) „Ethics- Stoics“

Bentham's student **John Stuart Mill**. In Mill's hands, "Benthamism" became a major element in the liberal conception of state policy objectives. It has been said: "*No moral concept suffers more at Bentham's hand than the concept of justice. There is no sustained, mature analysis of the notion...*" Thus, it would be acceptable to torture one person if this would produce an amount of happiness in other people outweighing the unhappiness of the tortured individual. The principle of utility regards "good" as that which produces the greatest amount of pleasure and the minimum amount of pain and "evil" as that which produces the most pain without the pleasure. Legislators have to see whether punishment creates an even more evil offence. Unnecessary laws and punishments could ultimately lead to new and more dangerous vices than those being punished. Bentham calls upon legislators to measure the pleasures and pains associated with any legislation and to form laws in order to create the greatest good for the greatest number. Note : Cesare Beccaria and the concept of Criminal Law.

3. Immanuel Kant

An epochal turn was brought by Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804). Immanuel Kant, who is also outside of Germany regarded as one of the greatest philosophers since Plato, was by no means an atheist. But believed in reason. God has endowed men with reason and we have to use to its utmost limits. God is not a magic trick, with which difficult questions are solved. God is rather the idea of reason. It is the duty of man to use this "light of heaven" (as German poet Goethe calls it). Kant has therefore attempted to design an ethical system without relying on a divine or transcendent entity. Ethical principal for Kant are solely drawn from the inherent human reason (*a priori*). This resulted in the famous categorical imperative (*Kategorischer Imperativ*, 1785).

According to Kant, human beings simply occupy a special place in creation, and morality can be summed up in one ultimate commandment of reason, or imperative, from which all duties and obligations derive. He defined an imperative as any proposition declaring a certain action (or inaction) to be necessary. A categorical imperative denotes an absolute, unconditional requirement that asserts its authority in all circumstances, both required and justified as an end in itself. It is best known in its first formulation:

Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.

Kant expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the popular moral philosophy of his day, believing that it could never surpass the level of hypothetical imperatives: a utilitarian says that murder is wrong because it does not maximize good for those involved, but this is irrelevant to people who are concerned only with maximizing the positive outcome for themselves. Consequently, Kant argued, hypothetical moral systems (i.e: systems who rely on certain goals to be achieved) cannot persuade moral action or be regarded as bases for moral judgments against others, because the imperatives on which they are based rely too heavily on subjective considerations. He presented a moral system, based on the demands of the categorical imperative, as an alternative.³

³ Partly extracted from Wikipedia - English

4. Today

Modern thinkers hesitate to design all encompassing theories. They and favour practical, if unsystematic approaches. Even the dominance of reason has come under increasing challenge. Emotion and psychological factors are seen as equally important. Pragmatism is the word of our days to cope with a constantly changing dynamic world. Secularisation has all but excluded religion from ethical studies. Our time has left behind the aspiration for *the* overarching theory of ethics. Ideas. e.g. Marxism, which were reputed to explain all aspects of human experience and knowledge, have utterly been discredited. Writers and philosophers seem to have lost the courage to entertain grand designs or theories. As a result pragmatism is reigning. Decisions and human action are based on the circumstances or situation, rather than by reference to principles.

5. Ethic by Conviction vs. Ethic by Success

Case 7: Is it allowed to sacrifice an innocent person if doing so many human lives can be saved?

Case 8: Should the Catholic Church cover up the sexual abuse cases, so as not to damage the reputation of the Church?

The ethical behaviour can be seen under two aspects:

- By moral conviction without regard to the consequences. But it is necessary also under this doctrine to responsibly consider and foresee the consequences of an act or inaction.
- success ethic, which is primarily based on the consequences of actions. In this doctrine an act/inaction is ethical if its consequences are beneficial, irrespective of the moral disposition of the actor.

Machiavellianism (*Il principe*, 1513) is often associated with the adage *The end justifies the means*! Securing power without regard to good / evil and true / false. The principles of Machiavelli, however, are only beneficial to the prince insofar as the executive ruler possesses the necessary strategic thinking. This is directly related to the favor of the moment. Ethic by conviction can be found already in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, but only in its infancy. A breakthrough comes in the Stoa.

Kant heralds ethics by conviction. He writes :

- Es ist überall nichts in der Welt, ja überhaupt auch außer derselben zu denken möglich, was ohne Einschränkung für gut könnte gehalten werden, als allein ein guter Wille.

There is nothing anywhere in not even beyond the world, what can be thought of without restriction as good, than solely a good will .

- Denn bei dem, was moralisch gut sein soll, ist es nicht genug, daß es dem sittlichen Gesetze gemäß sei, sondern es muß auch um desselben willen geschehen; widrigenfalls ist jene Gemäßheit nur sehr zufällig und mißlich, weil der unsittliche Grund zwar dann und wann gesetzmäßige, mehrmals aber gesetzwidrige Handlungen hervorbringen wird.“

For with what is supposed to be morally good, it is not enough that it was according to the moral law, but it must also be done to the same sake of this moral law, failing which any conformity with law such of is very random and annoying because of the immoral motive , although it may now and then produce beneficial results, in mot cases will bring forth unlawful actions.

In Christianity the ethics of conviction play an important role from the very beginnings until present days.

Part II. The Gospel and Ethics

I. The Bible as Basis

1. Old Testament

The question whether or not there is something what we may call Christian Ethics must start with the Gospel. In this lecture it is, however, not possible to study the entire Bible as to its ethical content. We must concentrate on certain core texts.

The Old Testament contains a very large number of laws and provisions. Jewish counts reveal some 600 commandments, most of them prohibitions. Examples: Exodus 21 ff; Leviticus 24, 19. In addition there are many regulations as to rites and liturgical questions. Many of these commandments have become alien to us today. They are also not typical biblical. Rather, they come from older oriental legislation such as the Codex Hammurabi (ca. 1500 BC). These rules are essentially provisions of what we today would call common law (as was in existence in those times and under those circumstances), provisions, which organize community life. God is not mentioned therein and these laws are not attributed to a revelation of God. Their validity is not based on divine authority. However, in a number of regulations we already recognize what we see today also as Christian or ethical. Among these the admonition to apply the law without regard to the personality, neither the rich nor to prefer the poor (Exodus 23:3). It is also admonished not to exploit foreigners and not to oppress the weak and the poor. So there are certain written laws of humanity, but they are not typical Jewish or Christian, but, as far as we can discern from other cultures, generally describe human behaviour.

2. Ten Commandments

In the 10 Commandments, one can distinguish two main parts. The first 3 commandments relate to the Israel's special relationship to their God Jahwe. In a strict sense they are binding only for Jews. The Old Covenant between God and his chosen people has - in the Christian perspective - become the new Covenant between God and Christians. Thus the 10 commandments became also the basis of Christian ethics. The first commandment, not to worship other gods, is mandatory also for Christians while we see God as a trinitary union of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, what is slightly different from the Jewish perception of Jahwe. The same is true for the second Commandment not to abuse the name of God. The third (holiness of the sabbat) has evolved from a ritual commandment of the old Judaism to our present days' admonition to find and take rest from our day-to-day business and to turn our minds to God and seek the communion with other Christians in Sunday services.

The other commandments are not typically Jewish or Christian. They are valid in all religions and cultures. Differences exist at most in the relative importance of the commandments. The 4th Commandment (honour your parents) seems to be

particularly important in the Chinese culture, while in Western culture the sanctity of property may be regarded as typical. These commandments are also much too general, as they can lead to direct ethical instructions. The 5th, for example, says: *Thou shalt not kill*. The Old Testament however many cases mandates the death penalty. The 6th Commandment: *Thou shalt not commit adultery* is obviously to be judged according to cultural circumstances. The patriarchs of the Old Testament had multiple, sometimes very many women. The intercourse of a married man with another woman therefore was not necessarily regarded as adultery. So it is difficult to gain from these 10 commandments immediate instructions for today. We must rather interpret them in the light of the Christian understanding. This has been done, for example, by Luther's explanations of the commandments.

II. New Testament

1. St. Mark

Since the Gospel of Mark is generally regarded as the oldest, this will be next to the original words of Jesus. So it makes sense to first ask this for original words of Jesus. Then the other scriptures of the New Testament. Each of the following citations should be discussed and questioned on their ethical content. Theological and dogmatic questions should rather be avoided. That's why the parables and the passion story are excluded. The following overview is in particular intended to encourage students to examine every single word of the New Testament on whether and which ethical content may be hidden in it.

1.6 : John was clothed with camel's hair, ...

John was an ascetic. Which ideal of life is behind it? Is this Christian?

1.9 : Jesus is baptized .

What ethical stance is described here?

1.12 : Jesus goes into the desert .

What is the ethical stance here? Can we agree to this flight into the desert?

1:17 : Jesus says to Simon and Andrew : Follow me .

Was this morally justified? What he could offer them?

1.20: Jesus says the same thing to James and John. Both left behind their father.

Was that acted ethically ? From Jesus? Of the two brothers ? The father is alone now .

1.31 : After the healing, Jesus allows himself to be served by the woman.

Was this right? The woman had just recovered.

2.5 : Jesus says : Your sins are forgiven.

Why did Jesus say that? Does he mean just this one person? Maybe he simply wanted to annoy the Pharisees ? If so, when can you tease/provoke a man ?

2.19 : As long as the bridegroom is there, they can not fast .
Under what conditions fasting is commanded morally ? When to celebrate ? Can you celebrate at all? And if so how?

2,21 / 22: Which moral thought lies in this statement?

2.24 Q: When should you break a law ?

3.5 : He looked at her with anger.

Was Jesus right to be angry? When should /must we be angry? cf. St. 5, 22: What is a (good) cause to be angry with our brother?

3.16 f : Jesus creates a hierarchy among his disciples , see also 10 , 41

Can one may treat and evaluate his friends differently ? If so, under what conditions?

3.29 : He who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit has no forgiveness for ever ..

Does this nit contradict the law of love ? Which moral thought is this threat based on?

3.33 : Jesus said: Who is my mother and my brothers?

Is not that a violation of the 4th commandment?

4.25 : He who has , will be given even more

Is that fair ? What exactly is justice? Are human and divine justice different?

4.40 Why are ye so fearful?

When is it appropriate to be scary ? Can you be brave simply on faith?

5, 23: Jesus heals the daughter of the chief of a synagogue .

Would it not be better if Jesus cared only for the poor and lower men? May I be rich ?

5.40 : Jesus chases them all .

Jesus seems not to have been very friendly. Do you have to always be kind?

6.8 : Jesus left his disciples commands.

When should you order ? When should we ask ? Would it have been better, if Jesus had had a consultation with his disciples?

6.31 : Jesus orders a kind of holiday .

When may you rest or be idle ? Should a Christian rest at all?

6.32 : Jesus wanders off.

When should you separate from the community? Should you not stay with those who need your assistance? cf. also 6.46

7.2 : The disciples were eating with unwashed hands.

Christians are to be internally and externally cleanly - or? It's disgusting not to wash before eating. Why did not Jesus say: Yes you Pharisees on this point you really are right? Is Jesus opinionated ?

7.21/22 : Here is one of the very few sentences in which Jesus denounces certain sins. Discuss these points with examples.

8.33 : Jesus scoldes St. Peter as Satan.

How should we evaluate the ethically? Is Jesus unbalanced + intemperate ?

8.35 : If anyone wants to be the first he will be the last.

Can Christians not seek senior positions ? Is ambition allowed to a Christian?

9.41 ff: What moral lessons can we draw from the verses 42-50 ?

10.9 : When a man and woman love and marry: can you already say from this that God has joined them together? Reflect: What was love & Marriage in Jesus' times? What is love between spouses ? Is it a part of the divine love for humanity and something else? Is adultery perhaps something similar to the rejection of God's love ? Discuss our present days' stance on this.

10.21 : Should Christians be poor?

10.29 : Here Jesus seems to be saying that we need to leave it all behind .

Are we not allowed to stay with our wife/husband and children What moral commandment is behind these words ?

10.41 : -44 . Among the disciples there is jealousy.

If the answer is Jesus really practical ? What is the moral of these words ?

10.3 : Jesus asks the disciples to bring a donkey.

Is theft allowed about under very specific conditions ? If so, which ones?

11:15 : Jesus was not responsible for cleansing the temple .

Could he do what he did there? When should we incite or condone riots ? When should we rebel against general laws ?

11,25 f : Jesus asks forgiveness .

Must we always forgive? Over and over again ? cf. 11.13 . Jesus curses.

11.33 : The answer given here by Jesus maybe clever, but it is not really an evasion of a very legitimate question?

When should a Christian answer or deny to answer? If one may refuse to answer – is it allowed to lie ?

2. St. Matthew

Jesus is asked (Matth. 22, 36 ss): *Master what is the great command in the law?* And Jesus answers: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and withal thy minde. 38 This is the first and great commandment 39. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* These words are widely regarded as the core of Christian ethics. If anything, we feel that the commandment in Mth. 5, 44 is typical and exclusively Christian: *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good them that hate you..* But are these Christian? Both teachings already occur in the Old Testament. The first teaching is a citation from Leviticus 19, 18. The second second we find, if not verbatim, so in this sense e.g. in Exodus 23.4 f: "When you meet the ox or donkey of your enemy, .. thou shalt bring them back to him. Proverbs 25.21: "When your enemy is hungry, feed him with bread. We find that these moral prescripts are not even exclusive to the Bible. About 400 BC Platon teaches us in the Politeia (335 e): *If someone claims it is fair to inflict damage to the enemies, then he did not say the truth.. Because it has been shown that it could be just no way to inflict any harm to anyone.* And the same can be found, albeit in a different formulation, in the the Stoic philosophy.

It is true, however, that Jesus adopted this commandment and designated it as the central message of his teaching. Thus the double- love- commandment (neighbour and enemy) was and still is of a special significance for Christianity. One may also say that no other religion has emphasized this commandment to love so consistently as Christianity. The many cases in which Christianity and the Christian churches have transgressed this commandment (just think of the witch burnings) should not obscure the fact that this law of love has always been regarded as one of the central Christian commandments.

Problem, however, is the question of what actually love of your neighbour really means in a given case. Obviously this cannot be answered once and for all. Even more difficult is the question of what actually love of your enemy means in a given case. Must I help and love my neighbour without regard to the conditions and circumstances? Do I have to put down my weapon when an enemy take upon me? What about war? In the New Testament no word has been handed down, according to which Jesus peremptorily rejects soldiers or the war ministry.

The ethical rules which are given by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matth. 5, 1 - 48 ff) are somewhat more specific. But also these can, if at all, not easily be practised in real life. Best known is probably Matth. 5, 39: *Whosoever will smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.*

3. General & specific exhortations in the Letters of NT

To be discussed:

Bishops & priest: 1Tim. 4:

Authorities: Matth, 22, 21; Röm 13;, 1 u. 5-7;

Matrimony & Family: 1. Petr. 3, 7, Kol. 3, 19; 1. Petr. 3, 1
1. Tim. 2, 1

Ephesians 5,22 - 6,5 und Kolosser 3,18 - 4,1

Part III Ethics and Practical Life

Here the students will be asked to give examples from the real life as to ethical conflicts under the following headings. These will be discussed. The cases should only give an orientation.

I. Personal relationships

Case: A believes that his neighbour is about to commit adultery with a woman. What should he do? Should he remain silent?

II. Life and Death

Case: A is old and sick and want to die. He asks his doctor for active euthanasia. What should the doctor do?

III. Politics & Society

Case: A political party would like the citizens to monitor more to prevent terrorist attacks. A wants to fight against it. What can / should he do?

IV. Our World

Case: The island nation I offers to the nuclear power nation N an uninhabited remote island to conduct nuclear tests. In compensation I will get so much support from N, that all residents of I, who had been living in dire circumstances up to then can now live as is standard in Western countries.

Part IV Christian Future

After the narrative the NT begins with the words of John: Metanoete, the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3, 2). The same, also in Greek identical words, in Matt. 4:17 are placed in the mouth of Jesus. These are also the first words of the Reformation. In the first of his 95 theses Luther says: Dominus et magister noster Jesus Christ dicendo: poenitentiam agite (Matt. 4:17) etc omnem vitam fidelium poenitentiam esse voluit - When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said: Repent .. because he wanted to say that the whole life of believers should be repentance. The word repentance is often understood as a punishment. In modern translations of the Bible it is rendered as a "reversal, returning". Both are wrong. Luther translates „meta-noia“ with „Buße „(= penance). The Greek meta is cognate with German „Mitte = English „ middle“. The word „noia“ means perceive, think. The term also occurs in classical Greek in the meaning of „to reflect, think twice, look back and forth. Penance as a look back and into the future

Repentance means to evaluate his previous life: What was good? What was not good? Why was it that it did not run better? Repentance does not look back on the road. With penance is meant the sharpened eye for by our own flaws and but also for our talents, our successes and failures. This we need to recognize the goal before us. Now we see it, as the Apostle Paul says, only unclear as through a mirror (1 Cor. 13, 12). But because we are live life-long repentance this means that we incessantly try to improve our life, we are called to recognize ever more clearly where God's journey with us and the world leads. We now know only one thing: It does not take back, but forward!

Utopias

Do-gooders design utopias. Repentance, as understood here, is its opposite. All utopian designs from Plato to Marx want to improve the world. But their designs invariably lead into terrorism. Maybe the terrorist of the French Revolution did not really not want the guillotine in to action. But it just emerged Their crimes were happening from the internal logic of the know-it- all-hero. Even Lenin and Stalin, the ideologues with probably the worst blood trail of history, originally wanted to maybe just "a better world". Their crime was that they as all the do-gooders of today believed to be in possession of the ultimate truth and thus to be able to control the future.

Christian repentance is an admission that we do not know the truth, that we are still seeking the way to salvation. No one knows whether the phase-out of nuclear power, is right or wrong. So Christian is progressing cautiously. He looks back and forward knowing that we humans do not yet understand much and that we have to rely on God's guidance. In this sense, repentance is just another word for the slogan of "lifelong learning". This penitent not only wants to reach the goal for himself, but for all, for the whole world. But he is not a Weltverbesser, heedlessly running

towards self-invented utopias.

Result

The Christian asks: Where did I come from? Where am I? And: Where do I go? What luggage should I bring, what to leave behind me in order to achieve the goal? In practical life and politics, these questions lead to conservatism. Christians look back carefully and courageously advance. When difficulties arise they will stop, metanoein, they will see where they came from and look where they should go.

Attachment

(German sources, condensed)

I. Term

The theological ethics is part of the systematic theology as dogmatic theology, philosophy of religion. The theological ethic concerns the moral good from the standpoint of the individual (the so-called individual ethics) as well as the criteria of a just society (the so-called social ethics). The term "theological ethics" was introduced by Protestant theologians. In Catholic theology we speak of moral theology. Today the subject is mostly broken down to specialist areas, resulting in a "field of ethics" (theological) bioethics, medical ethics, business ethics, cultural ethics, sports ethics, media ethics, education ethics, sexual ethics, political ethics, institutional ethics, etc.

Die theologische Ethik gehört zur Systematischen Theologie wie Dogmatik, Religionsphilosophie . Die theologische betrifft das sittlich Gut vom Standpunkt des Individuums - die sog. Individualethik - wie auch die Kriterien einer gerechten Gesellschaft - die sog. Sozialethik. Der Ausdruck „Theologische Ethik“ wurde von evangelischen Theologen eingeführt; in der katholischen Theologie spricht man von Moraltheologie. Das Fach wird nach heute meistens nach Sachbereichen gegliedert, was zu als „Bereichsethiken“ führt: (theologische) Bioethik, Medizinethik, Wirtschaftsethik, Kulturethik, Sportethik, Medienethik, Bildungsethik, Sexualethik, politische Ethik, Institutionenethik usw.

2. Method

A distinction is made between ethics based on faith and autonomous ethics to on the grounds of morality. The former assumes that only Christian understand the knowledge of good. The autonomous view says that the good can be seen without Christian preconception, but (in a second step) that this finding has to be fitted, into Christian ideas.

Religious ethicists are found mostly in the Catholic area, eg Pope a.D. Ratzinger. These often stand in the tradition of the Church, which take on a man's inherent morality in the sense of natural law.

Man unterscheidet man glaubensethische und autonome Ansätze der Begründung des Sittlichen. Erstere gehen davon aus, dass nur christliches Verständnisses die Erkenntnis des Guten erschließe. Die autonome Sicht meint, dass das Gute ohne christliches Vorverständnis erkannt werden könne, dass diese Erkenntnis aber, gleichsam in einem zweiten Schritt, in christliche Vorstellungen eingepasst werden muss.

Glaubensethiker finden sich zumeist im katholischen Bereich, zB Papst a.D. Ratzinger. Diese stehen oft in der Tradition der Kirche, welche im Sinne des Naturrechts eine dem Menschen innewohnende Sittlichkeit annehmen.

3. History of Christian Ethics

Antiquity

Many ancient Christian theologians base their ethical opinions on a theory of virtue , which integrates ancient philosophical ideas. The four cardinal virtues of prudence,

justice , fortitude , balance needs to be taken , which date back to Plato; also . see Wisdom of Solomon 8, 7 ff

Middle Ages

The Middle Ages processed essentially the ancient authors with Christian preconceptions . Only in the 13th century , the Aristotelian ethics accessible in the Latin West and were then commented. Thomas Aquinas also accepts Aristotelian ideas. He keeps the four cardinal virtues, but presents them in addition to the theological virtues (faith , hope, love , cf 1 Thess . 1, 3)

Modern Times

Since the mid-20th Century the spectrum of methodological research programs has, as indicated above , strongly pluralized, i.e. has lost its touch to religious verities.