

SIX MAJOR ETHICAL APPEALS

Appeal of the consequences of our actions. Simply, the right decision is to the one that brings the greatest good to the most people.

What might happen because of our action? How can we avoid negative consequences and produce positive things?

Appeal of rights. Simply, a good reason to make an action is because I (we) have an obligation to take it and the recipient has a right to receive it.

What am I obligated to do in the situation?

Appeal of respect for persons. Simply, respecting human beings and their qualities means refraining from doing anything that damages those qualities and to do whatever is necessary to promote them.

What impact will my action have on those qualities that make people human beings?

Appeal of the classical virtues. Simply, a person should be motivated by, and act with, integrity, compassion, honesty, courage, and humility.

What would a good, virtuous person do?

Appeal of justice. Simply, people should receive what they deserve, be it positive or negative.

What should be a just and fair outcome for our action?

Appeal of benefit-cost ratios. Simply, benefit should outweigh cost with a “proper” action being one that produces good at an acceptable cost.

In what way can we produce a benefit effectively and efficiently?