

Reading Guide and Questions  
Beauchamp – Chapter 1

1. Can an action be legal but morally wrong? Can an action be illegal but morally right? Explain?
2. Explain the difference between morality, and ethical theory or moral philosophy? Why might two societies differ on what is moral behavior? How might a moral theory suggest one type of right action while the conventional morality of a society suggests a different one?
3. What is a normative judgement? What are some normative judgements you make each day?
4. What is the difference between moral behavior and prudent behavior?
5. Morality and the laws of a given society are both examples of rules for behavior. How do they differ?
6. What is common morality? What are some parts of common morality about which you think there is little disagreement? Are there some that seem to be more contentious?
7. The book states, “Mere preferences vary from individual to individual, but sound ethical judgements that derive from the common morality seem to transcend such individual preferences, holding interpersonally despite the fact that it is an individual who makes the judgement.” Explain this in a different way and give an example.
8. What is a moral position? What is the difference between acting based on prejudice or personal taste and acting based on a moral position?
9. Dworkin talks about how to determine if a position is a moral one. He states that we must be able to produce a reason for it. He then argues that some reasons are not acceptable to justify a moral position. Be able to discuss each of the following and provide an example?
  - a. prejudice
  - b. personal emotional reaction
  - c. position based on a proposition of fact that is patently false and also implausible.
  - d. position relies completely on the beliefs of others (what about deities, the scriptures, prophets, sages). Why is this called parroting?
10. The reasons we produce to justify a particular moral position naturally presuppose some general moral principle or theory. What is the problem of asserting a particular reason that follows from a general principle but not agreeing with the general principle? Can you think of a situation where a person asserts a general principle, but only agrees with some applications of it? When might this be justifiable?
11. Is it acceptable to not have a reason for a moral position because it is self evident? Why or why not? When might this be acceptable?
12. Write a sentence explaining the difference between personal feelings or views and a moral position.

13. What does Warnock say is the object or function of morality? Do you agree with his basic premise about nature of human beings? Why or why not?
14. Why do we seek to pass moral rules onto children, why do we teach certain moral principles in schools, but not others? Why do we make reference in morality in discussing the right or wrongness of some types of behavior?
15. What do Warnock's ideas on human needs, wants, and interests have to do the basic postulates of economics?
16. What is limited rationality? Give some examples? Can machines help deal with limited rationality? How does the concept of limited rationality postulated by Warnock differ from that of bounded rationality postulated by Herbert Simon? How are they similar?
17. What are limited sympathies? How does this concept relate to the economic concept of rational choice, economic man, or utility maximization?
18. Why might human beings not trust one another?
19. Discuss how humans can be vulnerable, dependent, and in competition at the same time.
20. Warnock argues that the human predicament would be much different if human beings were less vulnerable, less aggressive, less egotistical, less irrational, more intelligent, more self-sufficient, and more favored by material circumstances. What does this have to do with morality and moral principles?
21. How does morality differ from economics in improving the human condition?
22. Differentiate between and normative and nonnormative approach to ethics.
23. Who normally practices descriptive ethics?
24. What are metaethics? Should we care?
25. Talk about ethical theory, moral philosophy, general normative ethics, and morality?
26. How does one handle situations for which there are no specific moral guidelines? Give some examples where this might have been relevant in the past 50 years.
27. What is utilitarianism?
28. What is deontology?
29. What are practical ethics? Give some examples?