

Ethics and Innovation

An SKMF Round Table



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Discussion



- ❧ **Does Ethics hamper or foster innovation?**

- ❧ **How might we resolve the dilemmas between ethics and innovation?**

- ❧ **Might responsible knowledge practices be the answer?**

Introduction – Outline



- ❧ Innovations and innovation management
- ❧ What do we understand by ethical dilemmas?
- ❧ Does ethics hamper or foster innovations?
- ❧ Ethics and morality and what is the real issue?
- ❧ Why does responsibility matter?
- ❧ Responsible innovations and knowledge management practices?

Innovation



- ❧ Innovation arises out of a need or necessity or even a change in the current mode of serving a societal need / purpose.
- ❧ Without innovations, it is not possible to improve our standard of living in many ways (please note there is a difference between quality of living vs standard of living) .
- ❧ However, there are many ethical dilemmas that we encounter on innovations.
- ❧ Innovations can sometimes overcome ethical concerns and some other times introduce ethical concerns and dilemmas

Ethical dilemmas of innovation



- ❧ Embryonic stem cell research
- ❧ Nuclear power plants
- ❧ Condoms for birth control – family planning – and against sexually transmitted diseases vs Catholic norms
- ❧ GM (Genetically modified foods)

Ethical concerns foster innovations – examples



- ❧ Animal testing
 - ❧ Body shop?

- ❧ High mortality rates
 - ❧ New medicines

- ❧ Others?

- ❧ These concerns raise pertinent questions:
 - What is an ethical concern?
 - What do we understand by ethics or morality?

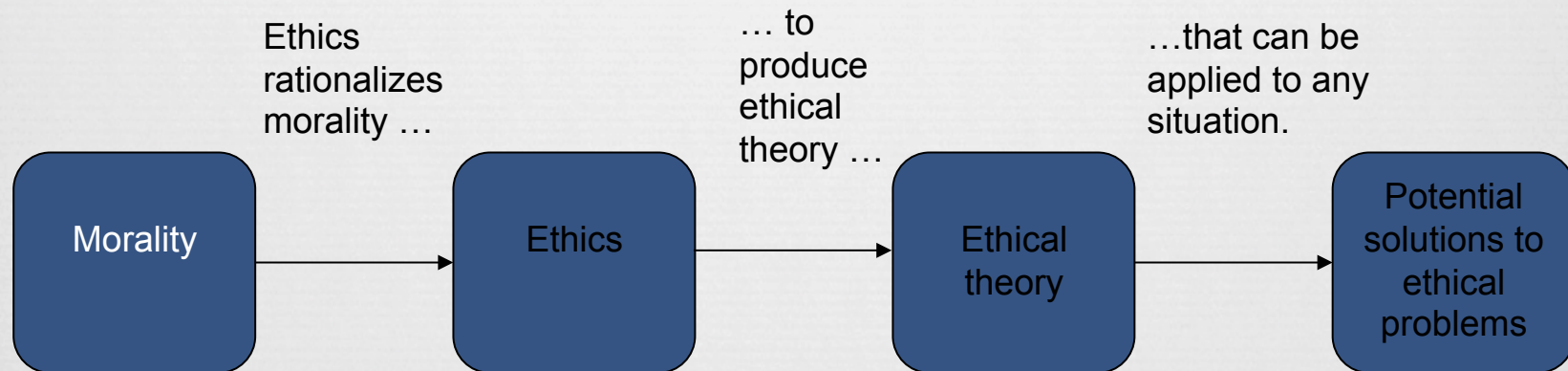
Ethics and Morality



- ✧ In general, what is good is associated with ethics, and what is right is associated with morality.
- ✧ John Rawls (1971/1999), however, asserts the priority of right over good, and his theory of justice is a deontological ethic, whereas theories based on the priority of good over right are teleological (e.g. utilitarianism).

Source: Nathan, 2010

Relationship between morality, ethics and ethical theory



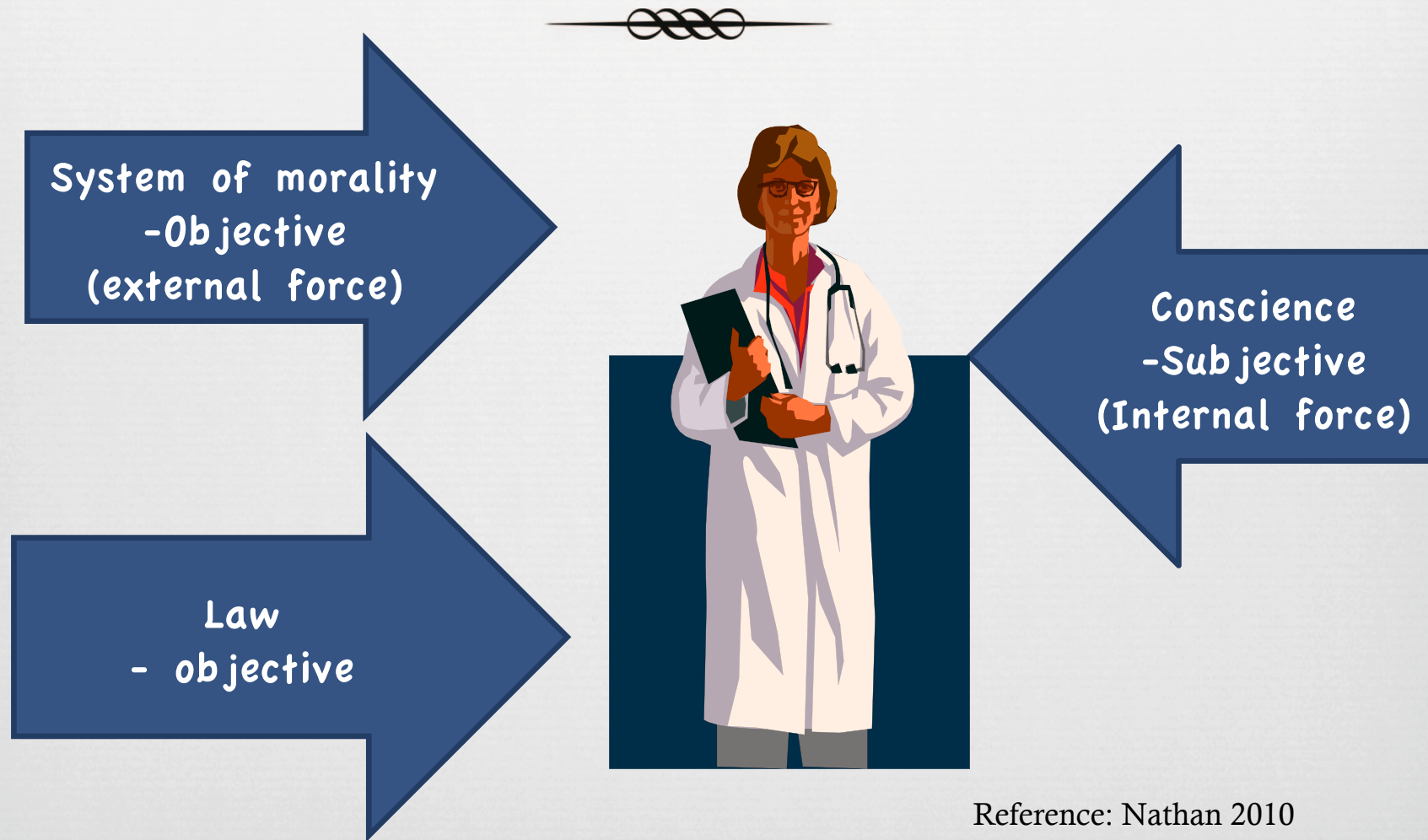
What is the real issue?



- ☞ Whether what is right takes precedence over what is good is not really the issue. The real issue is one of **responsibility!**
- ☞ Ethical leadership or moral leadership should be concerned with responsibilities; we should be concerned **with responsible innovations.**

Source: Nathan, 2010; Cf. Kymlicka, 1989

Double-sided morality



Reference: Nathan 2010

How should we go about responsible innovations?



- ❧ Deliberation for social justice
 - ❧ Engage all stakeholders
 - ❧ It is not about what our values are, it is about how to value; what kind of actions and attitudes are called for
- ❧ (See Nathan 2010; cf. Scanlon)

Value vs how to value



The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise
that what one person values
may be different to the next.

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The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise that
people value the same things
but in different ways.

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Courtesy of the pictures: Dr. D. Baumann, UNIL



Are there ethical concerns?
If so, what are they?



Courtesy: Ghusoon Al Jamali , MIB Student, BSL

Moral Imagination

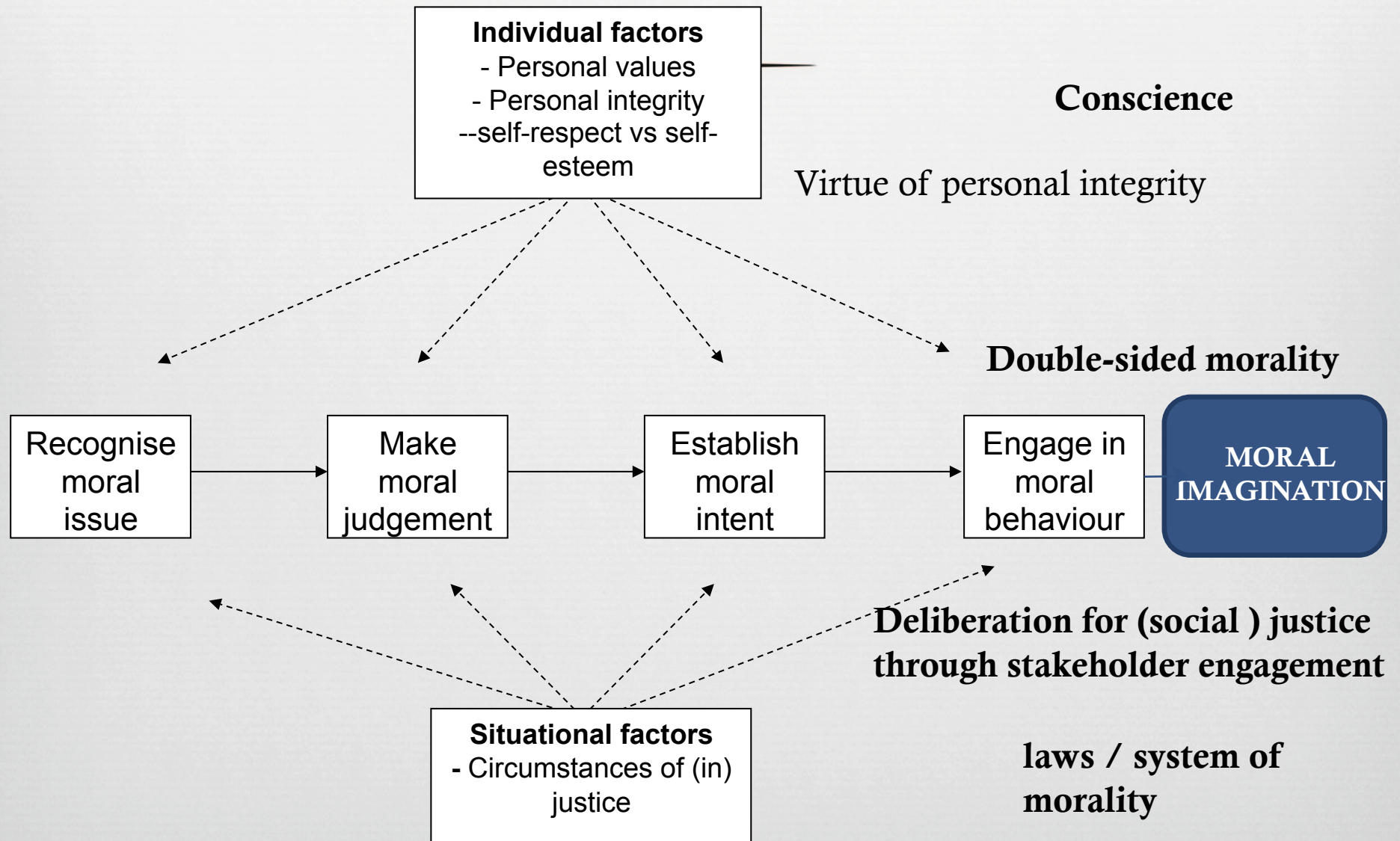


Moral imagination

Concerned with whether one has “a sense of the variety of possibilities and moral consequences of their decisions, the ability to imagine a wide range of possible issues, consequences, and solutions” (Werhane, 1998:76)

(see also Nathan 2010; cf. Maak & Pless 2006)

Framework for understanding (un)ethical decision-making



Questions to be considered – Q1



- ❧ Should we support Internet censorship?
Why? Why not?
- ❧ Internet helps foster innovations, knowledge transfer and exchange; and some countries want to censor for political and ethical concerns (such as pornography and child sex abuse etc.)

Questions to be considered – Q2



- ❧ What is the best way to encourage the innovation that results in social progress?
- ❧ Who should own intellectual property (IP) when the greater public interest is at stake?
- ❧ Should we allow developing economies to copy patents on new drugs for cure? Is that ethical?

Questions to be considered – Q3



- ❧ Should knowledge management practices go beyond legality such as privacy etc., in the cases of new social media?
- ❧ In other words, just because it is legal, is it ethical?
 - ❧ Legal but not ethical?
 - ❧ Illegal but ethical?
 - ❧ Which would you choose?

Final Question: On SKMF



- ☞ Should we manage knowledge for innovations or only manage the flow and exchange of knowledge? What is ethical and why?

References



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