

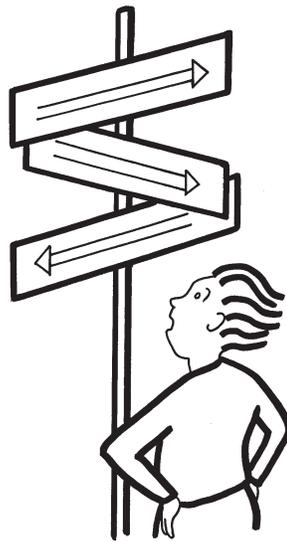
REPRINT: *Ethical Standards of Communication*

From the textbook: "Guidelines for Communication,"

Mark Singer & Pegge Patten, copyright 2006.

Chapter 14

Discovering Your Ethical Core



To order additional reprints or the textbook, please contact:

Punim Publishing

Punim[™]

Toll-free: 877.907.8646

E-mail Punimpub@aol.com

Just Like an Apple Core

The field of ethics is "the branch of philosophy, or type of science, that is concerned with a person's choices of right and wrong." And, ethical standards are "a person's reasons for these choices."

As a part of your personality, ethical standards resemble the core of an apple — invisible from the outside — yet central to everything that you think and do. In other words, ethical standards are the basis for every choice that you make regarding your speeches and your life.



Do you know what comprises your ethical standards — your *ethical core*? This chapter will help you answer this question which will result in a significant improvement in all aspects of your speech communication skills.

Which One Is Best?

Because the field of ethics is so large, for the sake of discussion, it is simplified here using *Occam's Razor*, or the "Principle of Parsimony," which states that the simplest explanation is the best explanation.

The result is the presentation of *three seminal ethical standards* — three fundamental or primary sets of ethical standards — that represent all your possible ethical choices. They are the *Kantian Ethical Standards* based on the philosophy of the eighteenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, the *Machiavellian Ethical Standards* based on the philosophy of Nicollo Machiavelli, the sixteenth century Italian philosopher, and the *Nietzschean Ethical Standards* based on the nineteenth century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

After considering the upcoming information, you can decide with confidence which one of these ethical standards is best. Based upon your choice at the end of the chapter, you will discover your ethical core.

Taking a Closer Look

The terms *means* and *ends* are frequently used in regard to the ethical standards. The graphics below explain the definition of each word. These definitions are followed by a side-by-side comparison of the three standards and quotes related to the subject of business.



Ends are the *goals* of one's ethical choices



Means are the *ways* of attaining one's goals

Guidelines for Communication

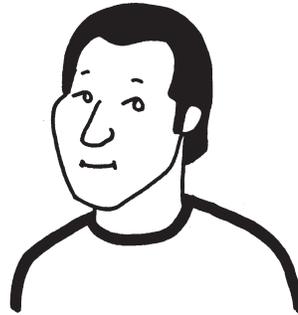
Kantian Ethical Standards	Machiavellian Ethical Standards	Nietzschean Ethical Standards
1. The means and ends are valued the same, or equally.	The ends are valued more than the means. The ends justify (show sufficient reasons for) the means, or the reverse.	The means and ends are not valued in any way.
2. Adhere to the philosophy of "win-win" with all sources and receivers to win.	Adhere to the philosophy of "win-lose" with some sources to win and some receivers to lose, or the reverse.	Adhere to the philosophy of "lose-lose" with all sources and receivers to lose.
3. Sources and receivers choose the same means and same ends.	Sources and receivers choose different means or different ends, or both.	Sources and receivers do not choose any means or any ends.
4. Sources and receivers communicate for their mutual benefit.	Sources and receivers communicate for their own benefit.	Sources and receivers do not communicate with each other.
5. Sources and receivers <i>always</i> consider each other as an end in themselves, <i>never</i> as a means to an end.	Sources and receivers consider each other as a means to a more highly valued end, or the reverse. They may <i>sometimes act</i> according to the Kantian or Nietzschean Ethical Standards as a means to their end, or the reverse.	Sources and receivers <i>never</i> consider each other as a means or ends.
6. Sources and receivers share information that is equally interesting to each other. This is called <i>being influential</i> .	Sources and receivers use rewards and punishments to communicate information. Rewards are more interesting than punishments, or the reverse. This is called <i>using influence</i> .	Sources and receivers <i>neither are influential nor use influence</i> . They have a conscious desire for the total destruction of themselves and others — a <i>will to power</i> .
7. Mass communication is a greatly enlarged process of equally benefiting all sources and receivers.	Mass communication is a greatly enlarged process of benefiting some sources more than some receivers, or the reverse.	Mass communication does not exist; however, mass destruction of all sources and receivers may occur randomly.
8. All sources and receivers agree to follow the same law. This type of law is called <i>Universal Law</i> .	Sources govern receivers, or the reverse, and follow law which is created by a government. More than one government exists. This type of law is called <i>Legalistic Law</i> .	All sources and receivers do not follow any law, and no government exists. This status is called <i>Anarchy</i> .



**KANT ON
BUSINESS ETHICS**

"No conflict exists objectively, in theory, between ethics [morals] and business [politics]. It only exists subjectively — in the selfish disposition of people. Such a conflict may remain since it serves as a whetstone (sharpening tool) for developing a person's virtue."

"A person who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore, if a person [prince] wants to be successful in business [maintain his rule], that person must learn how not to be virtuous and to use or not use this skill according to her needs."



**MACHIAVELLI ON
BUSINESS ETHICS**



**NIETZSCHE ON
BUSINESS ETHICS**

"Everything (in business) deserves to perish; but one actually puts one's shoulder to the plough; one should choose to destroy (her business and the business of others)."

For more information, read Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations of Morals*, Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and Nietzsche's *Will to Power*. These are the primary sources for the explanation of each philosopher's standards.

The Big Issues

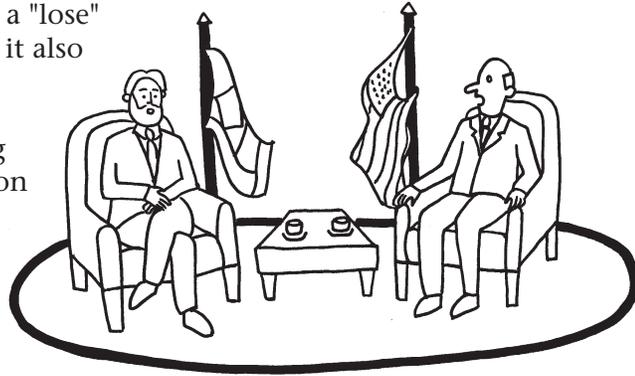
How do the three ethical standards relate to the major contemporary issues of our society? Here is a comparison of each standard to three such big issues; the first issue is *war*.

How do the Kantian Ethical Standards apply to war?

Kantian Standards state that people communicate for their mutual benefit; the killing of one person by another in war results in a loss of benefits, namely life, to the person who was killed. This is the first obvious violation of these standards.

And, since the loss of life in war is a "lose" type of situation and not a "win" type, it also is a violation of the Kantian "win-win" Standard.

Moreover, when one human being willingly kills another in war, the person who was killed was a means to the other person's end. So, this too is a violation of the Kantian Standard of always treating a person as an end in themselves.

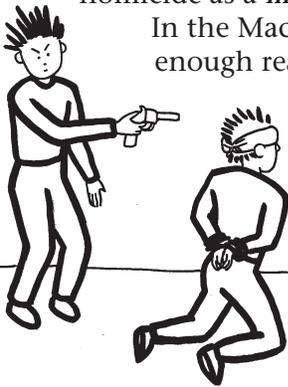


Could there ever be a goal or end valued so highly that the killing involved in war could be justified? The Kantian Standards give a definitive answer to this question, for they specifically say that people *never* treat each other as a means to an end. Therefore, using the Kantian Ethical Standards, war is never morally right.

How do the Machiavellian Ethical Standards deal with the issue of war?

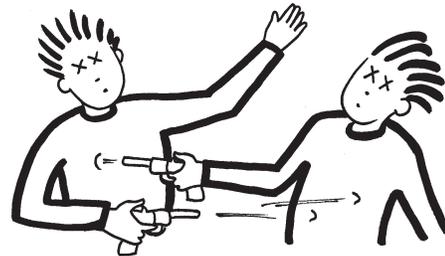
Machiavelli never states that killing a human being is a good thing, and he does not promote homicide as a goal. However, Machiavelli definitely allows the act of homicide as a *means*.

In the Machiavellian Standards, if there is an end that can provide a good enough reason, then the means, which include the killing of other human beings, can be justified as morally right. In other words, if the goal or end of a war is valued highly enough, perhaps by being an ideal such as freedom, then the means, the killing of other human beings in that war, are morally right. So, using the Machiavellian Ethical Standards, with the right ends, war is a morally correct action.



As for the Nietzschean Ethical Standards, because the means and ends are not valued at all, the presence of a goal or reason for war is never present. However, this does not

mean that Nietzscheans do not *want* war; they do. Indeed, Nietzscheans *always want war*. Why? Because war perfectly satisfies their singular, absolute want — their conscious desire for the total annihilation of themselves and others. Therefore, using the Nietzschean Standards, war is always morally right.



Issue Number Two

Here is another major issue to consider using the three ethical standards: *abortion*.

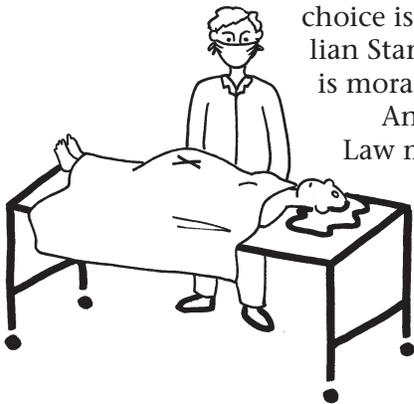
Using the Kantian Ethical Standards, the end, a mother's freedom to choose what happens to her body during pregnancy, is a valued goal. However, are the means, the termination of her pregnancy or abortion, morally right?

Since abortion has been legalized in the United States, much has been learned about what it is. And, the prevailing view is that for most mothers, abortion is a painful, depressing, and traumatic experience. By using the first Kantian Standard, the issue of abortion can be clarified as whether or not these negative personal experiences, the means, are equal in value to the desired end — the freedom to choose or not choose to have an abortion.



Because pain, depression, and trauma are kinds of harms, or things not valued or desired, then when applying this initial Kantian Ethical Standard, the means and ends are not valued equally, and, therefore, abortion is morally wrong. Other Kantian Standards also concur with this perspective, as you will see when the positions of the other two standards are presented.

Now let us use the Machiavellian Ethical Standards to understand abortion. With these standards, if Legalistic Law is created that allows a mother to choose an abortion, then her subsequent choice of an abortion is morally right. However, when Legalistic Law is created that prohibits abortion, then this same choice is morally wrong. In other words, when using Machiavellian Standards, the government may determine whether abortion is morally right or wrong.

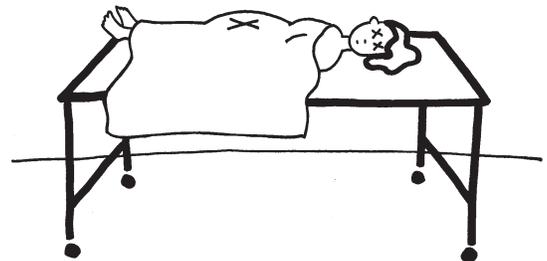


An important point to note is that Machiavellian Legalistic Law may or may not coincide with the Universal Law of the Kantian Standards. In other words, what is *legal* for Machiavellians may not necessarily be *moral* for Kantians. In regard to the abortion issue, the Machiavellian Legalistic Law that allows abortion does not coincide with Kantian Universal Law.

Several other Machiavellian Standards also support the choice of abortion as being morally right. An end such as freedom of choice, when a society values it highly, provides a sufficient reason or justification for the means, the abortion — even if killing is involved (just like in war). The mother also can make choices only for her benefit, and using "win-lose" terminology, she can choose to be the winner and the fetus to be the loser.

As for the Nietzschean Ethical Standards, as a legal issue, abortion simply does not exist.

An anarchy is present when applying these standards, so no laws are created or adhered to that either allow or deny abortion. Nonetheless, this status does not exclude or eliminate a person's actions. A person still has the conscious



Guidelines for Communication

desire to destroy herself and others. So, the morally right action when applying the Nietzschean Standards is to have an abortion.

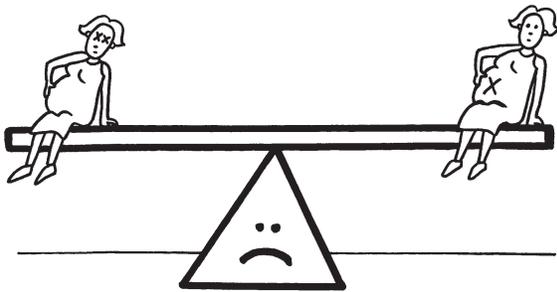
The Ultimate Scenario

What about the ultimate scenario in which there is the choice of saving the life of the mother *or* the life of the fetus?

This choice may be the most difficult one regarding abortion, for it is the question of who should live and who should die — when both cannot survive. In regard to the ethical standards, this may be stated as the question of whether the end, preserving the mother's life, would make the means, the abortion with subsequent loss of the unborn child's life, a morally right choice.

In this situation, when applying the Machiavellian Standards, the choice of an abortion is morally right. And, the primary supporting standard is the same one as previously mentioned: The end justifies, or gives sufficient reasons for, the means — saving the life of the mother (the end) is a sufficient reason to terminate the life of the fetus (the means).

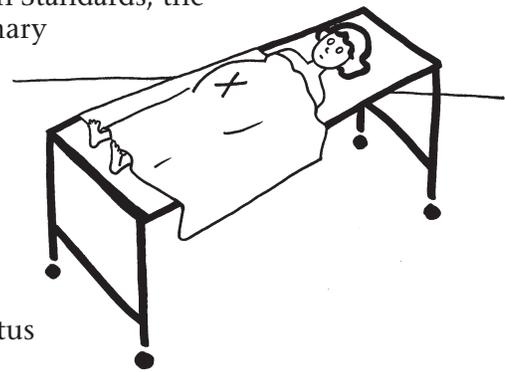
As you might imagine, the Kantian Standards still consider abortion as a morally wrong choice, even if it results in saving the life of the mother. For Kantians, the predicament of killing the mother or fetus is seen as what the ancient Greek philosopher Plato succinctly called the *choice of the lesser of two evils*.



In other words, the goal of saving *either* life (either one becoming the valued end) would not change the Kantian view that *both* of the only two possible means are morally wrong: the choice to kill the mother (when she is the mean) *and* the choice to kill the fetus (when it is the mean). This scenario also vividly illustrates that a "justifiable homicide," or killing of a person which is deemed to be morally

right, does not exist when applying the Kantian Ethical Standards.

As for the Nietzschean Ethical Standards, the morally right action is to not save the life of the mother or the life of the fetus. Indeed, these standards are fulfilled when both die. This also demonstrates the Nietzschean Standard of "lose-lose" because no one benefits — both the mother and fetus lose their lives. As for prosecution of anyone for these losses, because no laws are in place, no one is apprehended or punished.



Justifiable Homicide

Let us return to the concept of justifiable homicide. Although a justifiable homicide is not part of the Kantian Standards, it does exist when applying the other two ethical standards.

Here is an example. A police sharpshooter is faced with the choice of allowing a hostage taker to kill additional hostages or to kill the hostage taker. In this scenario, in order to prevent more innocent people from dying, the police officer kills the hostage taker. Is this a justifiable homicide?

Using the Machiavellian Ethical Standards, it certainly is. Why? Because a legal system may decide that the ends, saving the lives of the hostages, provide good enough reasons for the means, the killing of the hostage taker. In other words, by applying the Machiavellian Standards, the homicide committed by the police officer may be considered morally right when the reasons are great enough according to a society's legal system.

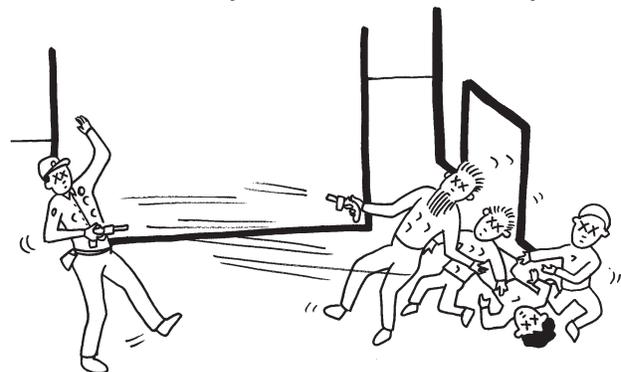
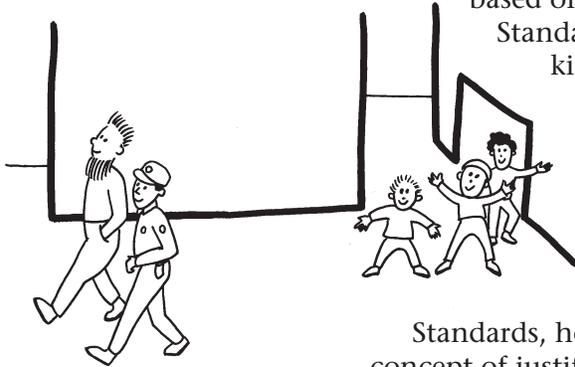
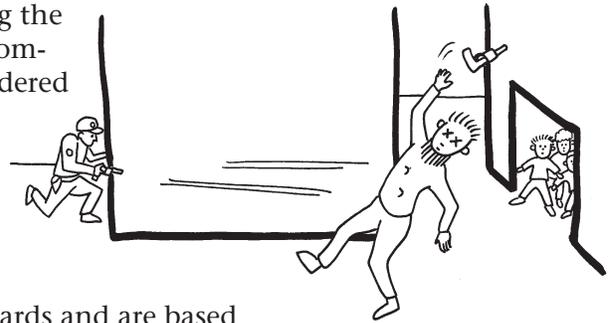
Could this life-and-death situation ever be a reasonable exception to the Kantian Ethical Standards?

Kantian Standards are absolute standards and are based on Universal Law, a kind of law that all people follow under all circumstances, whereas Machiavellian Standards are relative standards that are

based on the legality of a situation. Therefore, Kantian Standards *always*, without exception, consider the killing of the hostage taker as being morally wrong. In other words, when using Kantian Ethical Standards, *homicide* — the killing of one person by another — is always considered the same as *murder* — the unlawful and morally wrong act of killing a human being.

How about the Nietzschean Ethical Standards, how do they relate to this scenario and the concept of justifiable homicide?

No laws exist within the Nietzschean Standards, so any form of homicide may occur. As for the specific justification for homicide, the only motivation is this: the conscious desire to destroy oneself and others. By applying this Nietzschean Standard, the action of a police officer to kill a hostage taker, or anyone for that matter, is morally right — a justifiable homicide. Moreover, when this same Nietzschean Ethical



Guidelines for Communication

Standard is applied *to all other homicides as well as suicides*, they also are considered to be a form of justifiable homicide.

Issue Number Three

The last major contemporary issue that we will be looking at is *capital punishment*.

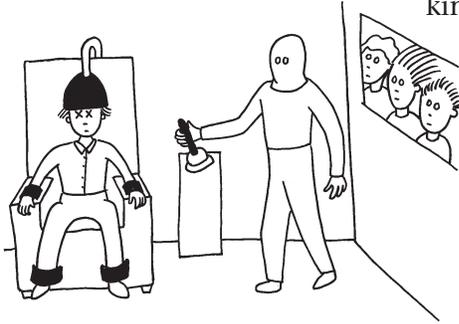
In light of the Kantian Ethical Standards and their perspective on the previous two issues, it should be obvious that a highly desired end, even the serving of justice, does not provide a sufficient reason to change the morally wrong act used as a means of achieving it: the killing of another human being. Therefore, the Kantian Standards always consider capital punishment as being morally wrong.

As for the Machiavellian Standards, the death penalty is an entirely different moral matter. These standards include the choice to use rewards and punishments. When a society chooses to change the criminal behavior of its members, Machiavellian Standards allow any

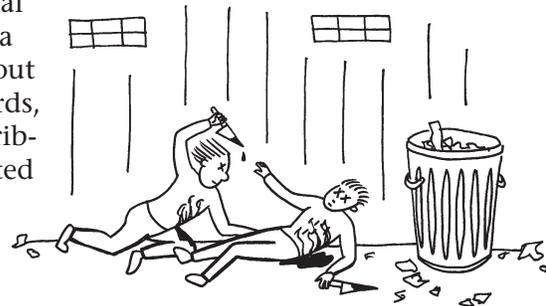


kind of punishment, provided that the end or goal of the punishment provides a sufficient reason for the punishment. In other words, using the Machiavellian Ethical Standards, capital punishment is morally right when the legal system shows that it is a reasonable means of achieving justice.

As for the Nietzschean Ethical Standards, because capital punishment is a way of destroying a person, it is wholeheartedly desired. However, since a state of anarchy or lawlessness exists



when applying the Nietzschean Standards, capital punishment does not exist as a punishment for a crime. One person can simply kill another without the approval of any legal authority. In other words, in regard to capital punishment, a person subscribing to the Nietzschean Standards is only interested in a person being killed; she does not care what legal processes have preceded it.



Do Not Be Fooled

Here is another key point: *A person subscribing to one of the three ethical standards as her ethical core may exhibit one or more personality traits of the other standards when making choices regarding these and other social issues.*

For example, a Machiavellian donates a large sum of money to charity. This appears to be a Kantian behavior, but is it? The answer is no. In this case, as a Machiavellian, she is treating the charity as if it were a valued end — a personality trait of a person who has a Kantian ethical core. For this Machiavellian, the donation

was actually a *means to her more highly valued end*, such as having her name published in the newspaper, getting a special award, receiving public recognition, or getting a tax benefit.



Here is another example. A person with a Nietzschean core practices a religion that believes in heaven, a goal or end for which to live one's life — a personality trait of a person subscribing to the Machiavellian or Kantian Standards. Is this person really a Nietzschean? As long as her ethical core is composed of the Nietzschean Ethical Standards, then the answer is yes, even though practicing a religion is an ethical choice that belongs to one of the other ethical standards.

Here is a final example regarding a person with a Kantian ethical core. A saleswoman does not like the product that she sells but needs the money from the job to support her family. In this case, although she possesses a Kantian ethical core, her job is a means to an end — she is behaving like a Machiavellian. So just like the previous examples, a personality trait of one ethical standard is being demonstrated while the same person contains a different ethical core.

Personal Issues

How do the three ethical standards relate to your personal, day-to-day issues? Here are five real-life scenarios to help you find out.

Answer each of the following questions *as if* you are a Kantian, then *as if* you are a Machiavellian, and finally *as if* you are a Nietzschean. Include the numbers of the standards that you used to make your choices.



- Q. You are planning on selling your art as part of an upcoming speech assignment. Your room and board are paid by your parents; however, you could sell more art if you state that you need money for this month's rent. *Will you say this?*
- Q. You want to miss a day of work to drive home to celebrate a close relative's birthday. You know that your supervisor will not approve your request since this is the busiest time of the year. *Will you give a more serious reason?*
- Q. You are writing your resume for a particular job opening. The position requires two years' work experience, but you have only sixteen months' experience. *Will you leave out the exact months so that it appears that you have the required two years' experience?*
- Q. You are close to graduating from college. You owe more than \$50,000 in student

Guidelines for Communication

loans and have more than \$20,000 in credit-card debt. To rid yourself of financial stress, you could declare personal bankruptcy. *Will you?*

- Q. A large tobacco company is about to hire you at a starting salary of \$75,000 with a generous benefit package. You recently lost a close family member to lung cancer caused by smoking. *Will you accept the position?*

The Happiness Factor

And finally, an excellent way to learn about the ethical standards is by comparing them to a significant experience which they all have in common. One such experience is *happiness*.

"Which ethical standard is the *best* way to achieve happiness — the Kantian, Machiavellian, or Nietzschean?"

This is the key question to ask yourself as you read the following quotes from highly credible sources about happiness.



*Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life,
the whole aim and end of human existence.*

Aristotle

Be in general virtuous and you will be happy.

Ben Franklin

A person who achieves wealth and power by excluding justice and virtue will lose the health of her body. Life, in this case, is no longer endurable, although pampered with all kinds of meats and drinks. Is such a life worth living? The question itself is ridiculous.

Plato

*The supreme happiness in life is the conviction
that we are loved.*

Victor Hugo

*The person is happiest, whether rich or poor,
who finds peace in their home.*

Johann von Goethe

*Most people are about as happy as they make up
their minds to be.*

Abraham Lincoln

*Seek to do good and you will find that happiness
will run after you.*

James Freeman Clarke

*The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the
first and only legitimate object of good government.*

Thomas Jefferson

A joy that is shared is a joy made double.

English Proverb

So What Is Your Choice?

It is now time to discover your ethical core.

You can make this discovery by choosing one of the three ethical standards presented in this chapter. And, because your happiness depends on this decision, you need to choose carefully.

So, which set of standards do you think is best?

Kantian Ethical Standards

Machiavellian Ethical Standards

Nietzschean Ethical Standards

