

The Greater Good

Concept

How do we judge what is right? Is it the action that benefits the greatest number of people? Or are there actions which are innately right or wrong despite the outcome? Different schools of philosophy have arisen around the alternative foundations for ethics. Utilitarianism asks us to weigh alternatives against a public standard. Which of the alternatives gives the greatest good for the greatest number of people? It is made on purely quantitative grounds. A deontological or duty-based ethos argues that the goodness of an action arises from a qualitative analysis, meaning that we often owe family and friends a higher benefit than people who are more distant. Existentialists argued that there is no rational foundation for ethics, instead we generate ethics based on our ability to choose one course of action over another and to deal with the outcome of our choices.

Script

MAN is lounging by a pool behind a well-appointed county home. He is wearing sunglasses and shorts. His pose is lazy, but he attentively watches two small children playing by pool, a TODDLER and a 6 YEAR OLD. A phone rings. He walks around the pool to pick up a cordless. His face turns to shock. We hear him start issuing a medical diagnosis. He hustles the children inside and tells the 6 year old to watch the toddler and make sure she doesn't get near the pool. He goes to the computer. It comes to life, and he opens a file. He starts issuing medical instructions. [Need to find a critical condition that he's treating with an experimental method.] It is obvious the patient's life is in the balance. We learn that the patient is someone of great importance, a leader or scientist. Meanwhile the children have snuck back towards the pool. They frisking around the water. Cut between children happily playing and the heightening anxiety of the physician. The toddler falls into the pool and begins struggling. She cannot swim. The other child looks in shock, then runs inside to get his father. He is in the midst of directing a delicate operation when his son bursts in. He is issuing critical and time-sensitive instructions. His son's screams grab his attention. He looks up from the computer and see his child in the pool.