Glossary

Amoral (non-moral): That which does not fall within the moral realm and which, therefore, cannot be judged good or bad, morally speaking. For example, a chemical mixture considered in itself is amoral or non-moral. However, if the chemical mixture is a drug like “crack” and it is being sold in a schoolyard, the moral dimension arises because human choice is involved. No conscious human choices are amoral.

Conscience: The morally conscious self as attuned to moral values and disvalues in the concrete. It is the individual’s actual condition of sensitivity or insensitivity to the worth of persons and their environment.

Consequentialism: Teaches that human actions are good or bad primarily or exclusively in terms of their effects or consequences. It neglects the moral significance of all the other circumstances mentioned in the center or hub of the wheel model of ethics.

Domino Theory: Other images used to convey same idea are the wedge, the camel’s nose under the tent, finger out of the dike, the slippery slope, and the parade of horrors. The idea behind these images is that if you allow one exception, others will inevitably follow and moral control will be lost.

Emotivism: The view that moral judgments are nothing more than emotional reactions to particular issues and not statements that could be true or false.

Ethics: The art/science that seeks to bring sensitivity and method to the discernment of moral values, and that addresses the meaning of humanization. Ethics can also be seen as a dialogue conducted by the moral agent between the moral meaning found in principles and that found in the unique circumstances of the case. Ethics is also described simply as the systematic discussion of morality.

Evaluational Phase: That part of the wheel model of ethical method that helps us to examine and judge what the reality-revealing questions have uncovered. The spokes spell out the multiple ways available to us personally and socially to evaluate moral matters. They include: creative imagination, affectivity, reason and analysis, authority, principles, individual and group experience, comedy and tragedy.
Foundational Moral Experience (FME): The experience of the value of persons and their environment. It is the grounding of all moral knowledge, moral reasoning, and ethics. The experience is at root an affective faith experience and it is processual in the sense that it admits of greater or lesser appreciation. It is a faith experience, not in the usual religious sense, but in the sense that we cannot prove the value of persons and of this earth. We believe it just as we believe in basic human rights but cannot empirically prove them.

Guilt: A term that describes the state of having transgressed moral boundaries. Guilt is understood in three ways: at the taboo level, something is considered wrong regardless of whether there is resultant harm or unreasonableness; egoistic guilt sees wrongfulness in terms of personal disfigurement, not because of the impact on other persons; realistic guilt is conscious and free behavior (active or passive) that does real, unnecessary harm to persons and/or their environment. The term “collective guilt” is also used. This term is properly employed to describe undue apathy regarding the obligations of social and distributive justice. It is improperly used to imply that a whole people are responsible for certain acts that others have performed, thus denying any personal center of responsibility.

Hazards of Moral Discourse: Anything that interferes with moral judgment. The generic hazards are incompleteness and insensitivity. The seven specific hazards are myth, cognitive mood, false analogies, abstractions, selective vision, role, and banalization.

Immoral: The opposite of morally good.

Intuitionism: The view that a moral quality is known by direct insight or intuition. The moral goodness or badness of a situation is appreciated simply and directly just as one knows the color yellow to be yellow. Intuitionism bypasses the complexity of ethical analysis, assuming that moral knowledge is largely self-evident.

Justice: Justice is the virtue that renders to each his or her own. *Sum cuique* is the classical Latin expression for justice. Justice ensures that all persons receive their minimal essential due. To deny persons justice is, in effect, to deny their humanity. Justice is the minimal expression of the foundational moral experience. There are three forms of justice: *individual*, *social*, and *distributive*. Individual justice renders what is due in relationships between two persons or two social entities. Social justice represents the debts of the individual citizen to the social whole or to the common good. Distributive justice directs the fair allocation of goods, burdens, and duties among the citizens.
Moral: As the opposite of amoral (non-moral) it refers to matters that do fall within the realm of moral adjudication, as in the expression: "This is a moral matter." This means that it is open to moral judgment, whether it will be judged favorably (as moral) or unfavorably (as immoral).

Naturalism: Any ethical theory that tries to reduce ethical concepts to physical or scientific laws and principles. It is reductionistic and ignores the complexity of moral reality and takes no account of the affective component of moral knowledge.

Natural Law: An approach to ethics that stresses that an understanding of human nature governs the formulation and applicability of principles and that what is "natural" in a holistic sense tends to determine what should be moral.

Pendulum Effect: The tendency in social thought to swing from one extreme to the other.

Positivism: A theory holding that truth can be known only through scientific and empirical means.

Principle of Proportionality: Can be considered the master principle in ethics; to decide what is the most valuable choice in complex moral issues, ethics always weighs and balances values and disvalues.

Profanation, Sense of: The moral shock and horror that we feel when persons (and/or our terrestrial environment) are abused or offended. It is shock and withdrawal we feel when the value of life is debased.

Reality-revealing Questions: The center or hub of the wheel model used to uncover all the morally relevant circumstances. These questions are what? why? who? how? when? where? foreseeable effects? viable alternatives?

Relativism: The viewpoint that says that what we call "moral good" is merely socially approved custom. Relativism holds that right and wrong depend on the cultural setting, that there is no objective morality to which all peoples could appeal. Ethical relativism does not exist in a pure state, but it does pervade much thinking in formal ethics and in the popular culture.

Sanctity of Life: A broadly used term to denote the supreme value of life. Primarily an expression of valuation of the dignity of persons. The term is used by adaptation to refer to the value of all forms of life.

Situation Ethics: A theory that says that moral obligation is dictated by the situation alone. This theory is suspicious of absolutes or hard and fast rules or principles. The term is sometimes used negatively
as an excessively permissive approach to ethics. Others use it to insist on sensitivity to situational differences. It is also sometimes called “contextualism.”

**Supreme Sacrifice:** Offering one’s life for the welfare of others. It is the most dramatic expression of the foundational moral experience and it is revered in the literature of most cultures.

**Taboo:** Treating certain actions as wrong regardless of the circumstances. The taboo approach declares certain kinds of human behavior to be wrong without discerning all the circumstantial differences.