

## Chapter 1 : Ted Lockhart (Author of Moral Uncertainty & Its Consequences)

*Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) is a service we offer sellers that lets them store their products in Amazon's fulfillment centers, and we directly pack, ship, and provide customer service for these products.*

February 1, at 3: Moreover, in the murder case and the other example, part of what makes the overtly wrong acts very wrong indeed is that they are intentionally committed wrongs. If I inadvertently committed similar acts, this would be more like manslaughter or accidental death than murder. And most of us think this would be much less wrong. So will you be booking us into Wembley Stadium? Dave Frame February 1, at But we cannot rule it out formally. Andrew Sepielli February 2, at 8: Will explicitly distinguishes between these two concepts in explaining what maximizing expected value comes to. Even in cases of empirical uncertainty, the present subjective value of an action  $i$ . If so, then this is a worry about the propriety of giving moral advice generally, not giving moral advice specifically in conditions of uncertainty. If so, then let me know; responding to this will require a separate post. Several people are attacking precautionary reasoning through examples. All this establishes is that there are examples where precautionary reasoning is bad. As I see it, Will is arguing that some general decision principle like "maximize expected value" applies to cases of moral uncertainty, and that it follows from this that precautionary reasoning is appropriate in some cases of such uncertainty. Anthony Drinkwater February 2, at Why do I recommend distinguishing risks from consequences? Because otherwise you have muddled thinking. The consequences of running someone over are just the same, whether it is on a blind bend or on a straight. Regarding your second comment, my view is: So far, I have not seen such a proposition, other than intuition. What I am, more modestly, claiming is that if you claim that something is bad, you should at least outline what criteria you use to judge it. I think that there are plenty of possibilities of invoking evidence to support or attack a moral view. But invoking metaphysical possibilities and dressing them up as decision theory will not do. Peter Wicks February 2, at 9: In other words, it smack of moral realism. Still, the examples are illuminating. Virtues and deontological arguments all seem to qualify as "rules" in this context, and seeing them as such has the advantage from my perspective that it is, in the end the likely consequences that determine, in general, whether an action is ethical. ZanderR February 7, at 1: So to maximise the expected morality given various possible moral positions seems to be weighing them all on that same broadly consequentialist position. If, for the sake of simplicity, we do accept that distributing our confidence among the ethical systems philosophers offer us is the right approach, we still have a couple of dilemmas. Firstly, how do we decide how much weight to put in each competing system? Do we give equal weight to each proposed system? Or do we weight according to expert consensus? Expertise in a field usually entails knowing more of the implications of certain near-universally accepted principles than a layman and perhaps of a greater set of further facts that are relevant to them. But what principles are widely enough accepted by moral philosophers to grant them such expert status? The sort of ethic which says that spending money on luxuries is bad normally treats its badness as quantifiable. The sort of ethic which calls abortion murder typically treats its badness as absolute. No matter who it saves, killing is a total wrong, so the negative value is infinite.

**Chapter 2 : Moral Uncertainty and Its Consequences - Ted Lockhart - Google Books**

*We are often uncertain how to behave morally in complex situations. In this controversial study, Ted Lockhart contends that moral philosophy has failed to address how we make such moral decisions.*

Decision Table for Example 1. And since  $M_x$  and  $M_y$  are each either 0 or 1, the two possible values of  $R_x$  are. If  $y$  is highly likely to be morally right and  $x$  is unlikely to be morally right, then the probability that the true value of  $R_y$  is the larger of its two possible values is much greater than the probability that the true value of  $R_x$  is its larger possible value. This also means that the true value of  $R_y$  is very likely to be greater than. Under these conditions, it might be reasonable to choose  $y$  over both  $x$  and  $z$ . However, if the moral Tightness of both  $x$  and  $y$  is doubtful, then the rational choice may be  $z$ . Perhaps some will object to the preceding analysis on the grounds that it fails to consider other ways in which moral uncertainty could enter into our practical deliberations. For example, for the lexicographical version of the morality-can-be-overridden thesis, one might simply ignore any norm in our hierarchy of norms if she is unsure of its content or of its implications for her decision. This would mean that if one is faced with a decision for which moral Tightness is on the list of relevant norms and she is uncertain of the moral Tightness or wrongness of some of the alternatives, then she would ignore moral considerations altogether and make the decision on the basis of the other criteria. However, this decision strategy would give counterintuitive results for the decision in Example 1. It would make little sense to ignore moral Tightness altogether if I were sure of the moral Tightness of one of my alternatives. To insist on perfect certainty about the moral Tightness or wrongness of all of my alternatives as a necessary condition for taking morality into consideration would be unreasonably stringent. If I can do what I am sure would be morally right and doing what is morally right is very important, then why not take that information into account? How to make decisions under moral uncertainty is an important problem, whether or not we regard moral considerations as always overriding nonmoral ones. In general, if we should weigh moral considerations against nonmoral considerations in deciding what to do, there will be fewer occasions on which our moral uncertainties should affect our action choices than if moral considerations should always govern our decisions. However, if moral considerations usually or often outweigh nonmoral factors, then moral uncertainties should often make a difference in our actions. Taking the problem of rational decision-making under moral uncertainty seriously also means reconsidering the traditional identification of morality with rationality in action. The view, first enunciated by Kant and, until recently, the Decision-making under Moral Uncertainty 15 prevailing view among moral philosophers, regarded the two as equivalent in the sense that all morally right actions turn out to be rational actions, and conversely. Lawrence Becker expresses this Kantian thesis in terms of moral justification: What the demand for a moral justification of an act does is to "detach" the act from its connection with special or restricted assumptions about what sorts of considerations are relevant and ask for a justification of it no holds barred. If that is so, then a valid moral judgment is by definition overriding. Its actionguidance is "inescapable" or "binding" in the sense that there is nothing more to consider—nothing which might be introduced to enlarge the inquiry further and make the prescription subject to withdrawal. His view implies that we should think of moral considerations not merely as outweighing nonmoral considerations but rather as preempting them in our action choices. Henceforth, I shall refer to this claim about the allinclusiveness of moral considerations as the "finality thesis. My uncertainty about the Tightness of  $y$  makes it irrational for me to choose  $y$  over  $z$ , the Tightness of which I am certain. There is something more to consider—namely, the degrees of certainty with which I am able to judge the Tightness of  $y$  and that of its principal competitor,  $z$ . On my view, moral considerations are still "overriding" insofar as my primary aim is to do what is morally right. However, I must take into account how certain or uncertain I am about the moral Tightness of my alternatives. I should, all things considered, choose an action the Tightness of which I am certain over any other action the Tightness of which I am uncertain. The flaw in the finality thesis is that it ignores the need to take our moral uncertainties into account. If the question "What shall I do when I am uncertain what I morally ought to do? How can we account for their lack of interest? There are at least four plausible explanations. One is that philosophers view their assigned task as

answering moral questions—that is, questions about right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust, and so forth—and not as answering questions about rational action in my sense of the term. On this view, their contribution to solving the problem of moral decision-making is to resolve 16 Moral Uncertainty and Its Consequences as much moral uncertainty as possible so that it will not hinder moral agents any more than necessary. Of course, ideally they would like to eliminate moral uncertainty altogether. Since the total elimination of moral uncertainty is an unrealistic goal, at least in the short run moral agents need practical advice about what to do in situations in which they have no alternative the moral rightness of which they are completely sure. If moral philosophy is to meet that need, then it must provide an adequate normative account of moral decision-making—one that does not ignore moral uncertainty. A second possible reason ethicists are unconcerned about the problem of decision-making under moral uncertainty is that some of them regard the continuing resistance of basic moral problems to rational solution as evidence for the inherent subjectivity or relativity of morality. If fundamental moral quandaries and disagreements occur because "moral truth" is a matter of individual or societal determination, then there are no preexisting, objective moral facts about which we can be uncertain. According to this view, it is a mistake to see moral uncertainty and ordinary nonmoral factual uncertainty as two varieties of the same phenomenon. It is a confusion, one might argue, to think of moral uncertainty as uncertainty about some independent truth that is external to or independent of human beings and human communities. We must understand that moral uncertainty is to be resolved by decision rather than by rational inquiry. And posing the problem as one of rational decision-making under moral uncertainty perpetuates the misrepresentation. The arguments against moral subjectivism and moral relativism are well known, and I shall not rehash them here. I find some of them quite convincing, and I believe that they pose insuperable obstacles for subjectivists and relativists. However, the principles for decision-making under moral uncertainty that we shall discuss in the following chapters are not inconsistent with either position, for those principles assume no particular metaethical position on the nature of morality or moral truth. Unless subjectivists and relativists are willing to say that any choice of action by a moral agent is as "good," morally speaking, as any other, their evaluations of alternative actions can be taken into account in applying the principles we shall consider. And it is clear that subjectivists and relativists do recommend some action choices over others. Simplistically stated, subjectivists claim that my belief that a certain action would be right for me to choose makes it morally right for me. Similarly, for me to choose an action that I judge to be wrong would be wrong for me. Since I am the person who must make my decisions, subjectivism provides a moral criterion for my action choices. Furthermore, if I am uncertain whether moral subjectivism is correct, I can register that uncertainty in applying a decision principle to my decisions. In fact, it would be irrational for me to do otherwise. Similar observations may be made about ethical relativism. Therefore, neither subjectivism nor relativism presents any serious difficulties for the decision principles we shall discuss. The empirical fact that moral agents, both individually and collectively, have moral uncertainties raises an interesting question about the tenability of the sub- Decision-making under Moral Uncertainty 17 jectivist and relativist positions. For suppose I am a subjectivist and I must decide whether to do x or y on a particular occasion. My subjectivist principle tells me that whatever I judge about the moral Tightness or wrongness of x and y is, ipso facto, correct. But suppose I am completely ambivalent about the Tightness or wrongness of x and y. What then should I do, all things considered, if I wish to decide on moral grounds? Subjectivists appear not to have an answer. Perhaps some will say that I should simply decide ex nihilo about the moral Tightness of x and y. After all, if it is my judging that an alternative is morally right or wrong that makes it so for me, then it really does not matter what I judge as long as I judge something. But can I really generate moral judgments ex nihilo? Judging involves more than just pronouncing or thinking the words. And can I really believe something about the Tightness or wrongness of x or y simply by choosing to do so? If ethical subjectivism is correct, the only adequate evidence that I could have for a moral judgment is that I already believe it. Thus the flight from complete ambivalence about the moral Tightness or wrongness of x and y to judgment of their Tightness or wrongness would never get off the ground. A subjectivist might claim that it is extremely rare for a moral agent to be completely ambivalent about the moral Tightness of all of her alternatives. It is much more likely that for my decision between x and y in the preceding paragraph I shall be at least a little inclined to

judge x or y one way or the other. But if this is true, I may encounter decisions similar to my decision in Example 1. That is, I may have to choose among alternatives x, y, and z toward which I have the following attitudes: I am inclined to judge x as morally wrong and y as morally right, but I am totally committed to the moral Tightness of z. For such a decision what should I do, all things considered? From a subjectivist perspective, do I view y and z as equivalent, since I judge both to be morally right? But if it is my judging that one of my alternatives is right or wrong that makes my judgment true for me, then it would seem that the more strongly inclined I am toward a judgment that an alternative is morally right, the more strongly inclined I should be toward performing that action. And if I wish to take the strength of my inclinations toward moral judgments into account, then it appears that I am tacitly appealing to a decision principle that advises me to choose actions that I am most strongly inclined to judge as morally right. Ethical subjectivists would perhaps deny that, properly speaking, decisionmakers can be certain or uncertain of their judgments about the moral Tightness or wrongness of their alternatives, since they would deny the existence of any objective moral facts about which agents can be certain or uncertain. However, clearly decision-makers are ambivalent toward or "committed" to such judgments to varying degrees, and the proper role of degrees of commitment or ambivalence in moral decision-making from a subjectivistic perspective would seem to be analogous to that to be played by moral certainty or uncertainty in the decision principles we shall develop in the following chapters. We can easily imagine a society in which opinion on a particular moral question is evenly divided. We might think of such a society as a whole as having no opinion on that issue. Of course, if ethical relativism is true, then there is no fact other than the views of the members of that society that can determine the correctness of moral judgments about that issue. Individuals whose decisions involve that issue in significant ways are left, it seems, with no way of deciding on moral grounds what to do. And even if we can rule out such a division of moral opinion in the real world, there will still be moral decisions for which, although the society approves each of two alternatives, it approves one of them more strongly. And for such cases, some decision principle that takes strength-of-approval into account would apparently be needed. A critic might argue that at least one metaethical perspective—ethical nihilism—is incompatible with any general approach to decision-making under moral uncertainty. If ethical nihilism is true, then no moral judgments about the moral Tightness or wrongness of actions can ever be true or justified. If so, then probabilities that actions are morally right or wrong are counterfeit currency and decision-makers should not deal in them. However, we need not worry about criticisms based on such an implausible doctrine as ethical nihilism. Surely there are actions that we know with virtual certainty to be morally wrong. We know, for example, that it is wrong for someone to torture to death an innocent child for trifling personal amusement. Perhaps it is debatable which moral theory or account of moral reasoning ultimately grounds such a judgment, but that it is true or, at least, justified is not in doubt. And if we know this with virtual certainty, then we also know with virtual certainty that ethical nihilism is false. Even if a decision-maker wished to entertain some minuscule doubt about the falsity of ethical nihilism, rationality would advise choosing actions according to some decision principle that accommodates that kind of moral uncertainty. A third possible reason why ethicists have failed to address the problem of decision-making under moral uncertainty is that some of them have recently concluded that questions about the moral Tightness of our actions are less important and less central to moral philosophy than questions about the goodness of persons and their lives and the excellence of their characters. MacIntyre and other recent proponents of "virtue ethics" have argued that philosophers should pay more attention to the latter questions and less attention to the former. A Study in Moral Theory is that the social roles and cultural traditions that we inherit are our proper moral touchstones and that we should take as our primary ethical concern the entire "narrative" of our lives, rather than our choices of individual actions. It is virtue, he claims, that sustains us in our individual and collective pursuit of the good.

*the latter sort. Its novelty is but one of its many virtues. Its novelty is but one of its many virtues.*

## Chapter 4 : Moral Uncertainty - Bibliography - PhilPapers

*In this book, I urge reforming our thinking about moral decision-making in three ways. I argue that most ethicists' views about the role our moral beliefs should play in our choices of action are inadequate in several important respects and in need of repair.*

## Chapter 5 : Moral uncertainty and its consequences - University of Manitoba Libraries

*"Moral Uncertainty and Its Consequences will be vital reading for philosophers interested in the questions of whether and how moral theory can serve as a practical guide for action.*

## Chapter 6 : Moral Uncertainty and Its Consequences - Lexile® Find a Book | MetaMetrics Inc.

*Get this from a library! Moral uncertainty and its consequences. [Ted Lockhart] -- We are often uncertain how to behave morally in complex situations. In this controversial study, Ted Lockhart contends that moral philosophy has failed to address how we make such moral decisions.*

## Chapter 7 : Andrew Sepielli, Moral Uncertainty and the Principle of Equity among Moral Theories<sup>1</sup> - PhilPa

*Free Shipping. Buy Moral Uncertainty & Its Consequences at [blog.quintoapp.com](http://blog.quintoapp.com)*

## Chapter 8 : Moral Uncertainty and Its Consequences - Ted Lockhart - Oxford University Press

*Moral uncertainty (or normative uncertainty) is uncertainty about how to act given the diversity of moral [blog.quintoapp.com](http://blog.quintoapp.com) example, suppose that we knew for certain that a new technology would enable more humans to live on another planet with slightly less well-being than on Earth.*

## Chapter 9 : Review: Moral Uncertainty and Its Consequences | Mind | Oxford Academic

*Moral Uncertainty and Its Consequences be true that a moral agent maximizes the probability that her action is morally right by choosing a supererogatory alternative.*