

The rule he suggested was that that people who had been excluded from these normal distribution methods had to be benefited in some way, however slight, but never, under any circumstances, be harmed. This ethical principle, clearly applicable to all and understandable by all, can then be expressed as "Never take any action that harms the least among us, those with least income, education, wealth, competence, influence, or power."

### The Principle of Contributive Liberty (Nozick, 1938–2002)

Robert Nozick agreed with John Rawls that society was an association of free individuals and that cooperation between those individuals was needed to generate social benefits in the form of marketable goods and services, but he argued that this cooperation came about as the result of the free exchanges of those goods and services to satisfy individual desires and that any exchange that was voluntary had to be just and regarded as proper. The example he proposed of these free exchanges involved Wilt Chamberlain, a famous basketball player of the era. You could, he explained, set up whatever original set of holding of property and money you believed to be just and proper among all members of society, but if those same people were willing to pay to see Wilt Chamberlain play basketball, then, at the end of a given period of time, those holdings would be different and it would be hard to argue that these new holdings were unjust and improper because all of the exchanges had been voluntary. If all voluntary exchanges were regarded as just and proper, then Rawls' rule from distributive justice that inequalities had to work out for the benefit of everyone, and particularly for the benefit of those who were least able to look after their own self-interests due to a lack of education, income, or position, was clearly wrong.

Nozick proposed the dual rules that no one should interfere with the voluntary exchanges of other persons, and further that no one should interfere with the voluntary development efforts of those other persons, so that everyone could arrange their own voluntary exchanges to their own best advantage. Liberty, the right to develop their own was more important than justice, the right to receive benefits, according to Nozick, because self-development led to greater personal abilities and consequently to greater social benefits. The ethical principle he proposed, once more applicable to greater others to develop and improve their skills and abilities because this interference would deny the rights of all of us, not just the least among us, to pursue our own self-interests through our own voluntary exchanges."

### Conclusions on the Principles of Normative Philosophy

There are eight major ethical systems of belief, as summarized in Figure 4.2. They do not outwardly conflict with each other. An action such as lying that is considered wrong in one ethical system will generally be considered wrong in all others, but these ethical systems cannot be reconciled into a single, logically consistent whole.

FIGURE 4.2 Summary of the Principles and Problems in the Major Ethical Systems

Self-Interests	Statement of the Principle	Problem with the Principle
Personal Virtues	Never take any decision or action that is not open, honest, and truthful, and one that you would feel proud to see widely reported on the front pages of national newspapers and in the evening broadcasts of national news programs.	Some people can be open, honest, and truthful and even feel pride in decisions and actions that most of us would view as exploitive, self-centered, and mean.
Religious Injunctions	Never take any decision or action that is not kind and compassionate toward others, and that does not build a sense of community, of everyone working jointly towards common goal.	Kindness, compassion, and a sense of community, with everyone working toward a common goal, would be ideal if everyone shared those traits. Everyone doesn't. We need something stronger to regulate behavior.
Government Requirements	Never take any decision or action that violates the law because the law represents the minimal moral standards of the full society.	The social and political processes that formulate the law tend to be slow to respond to new problems, and often fail to include the views of all groups and organizations.
Utilitarian Benefits	Never take any decision or action that does not generate greater benefits than harms for the society of which you are a part.	It is difficult to measure many of the harms, which often involve issues of life and health, and the distribution of the benefits and harms may be skewed, with the benefits going to one group, and the harms to another.
Universal Duties	Never take any decision or action that you would not be willing to see others, faced with the same or a closely similar situation, be free and even encouraged to take.	The principle, while truly universal, provides no means comparison or relative ranking of alternatives. To make a reasoned choice, we need that ranking.