

Bachelor of Engineering in Information Technology

ITM301 Professional Practices in IT

Unit II: Introduction to Ethics

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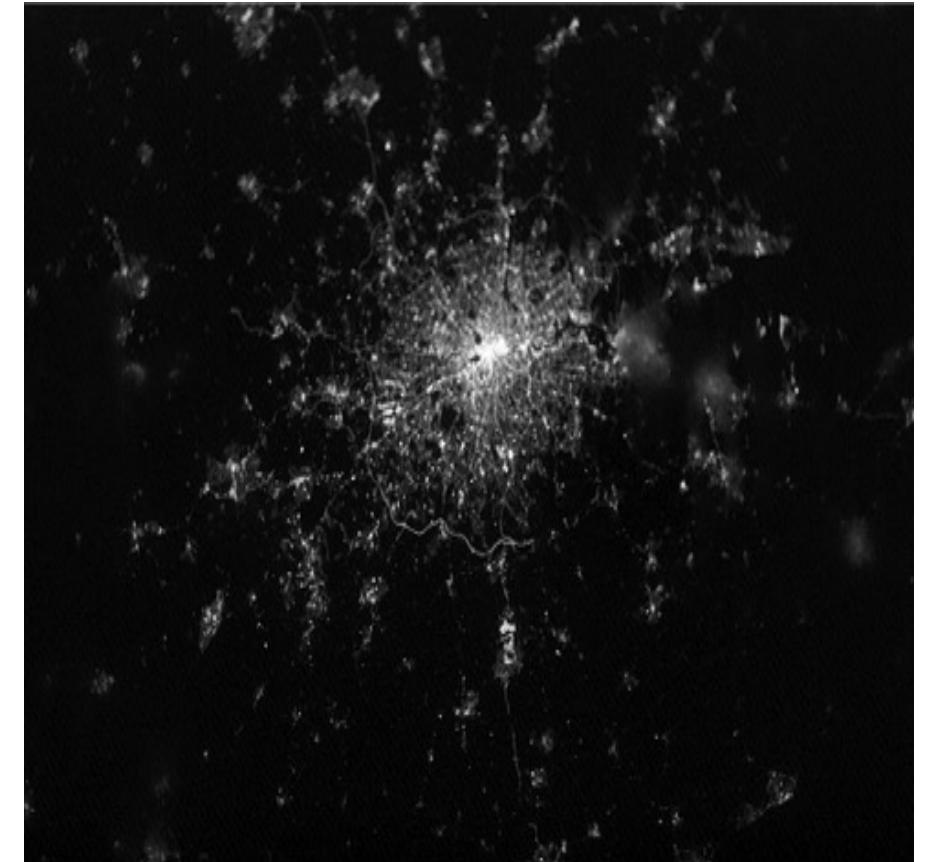
Overview

- Communities
- Ethical Points of Views
- Definition of Key Terms
- Why study Ethics?
- Ethical Theories/Frameworks

Communities

Communities :

- provide many benefits to the people who live in them
 - provide Security from external dangers
 - Facilitate exchange of goods and services
- foster the development of fulfilling the personal relationships
- Prohibits certain actions and make other actions obligatory.
- Responsible community members take the needs and desires of the other people into accounts when they make decisions.



Courtesy of NASA

The Ethical Point of View

- Most/everyone shares “**core values**” of life, **happiness** and the **ability to accomplish goals**.
- **Two ways to view** the world
 - **(1) Selfish point** of view: consider only his own needs & desires and core values
 - **(2) Ethical point** of view: respect other people & their core values
- People who **take the ethical point of views may still disagree** over what is the **course of action** to take in a **particular situation**.

Terminologies

- **Society:** is an **association of people** organized under a **system of rules** designed to **advance the good** of its members over time.
 - ✓ *Cooperation among members helps to promote the common good*
 - ✓ *However, People in a society also compete with each other*

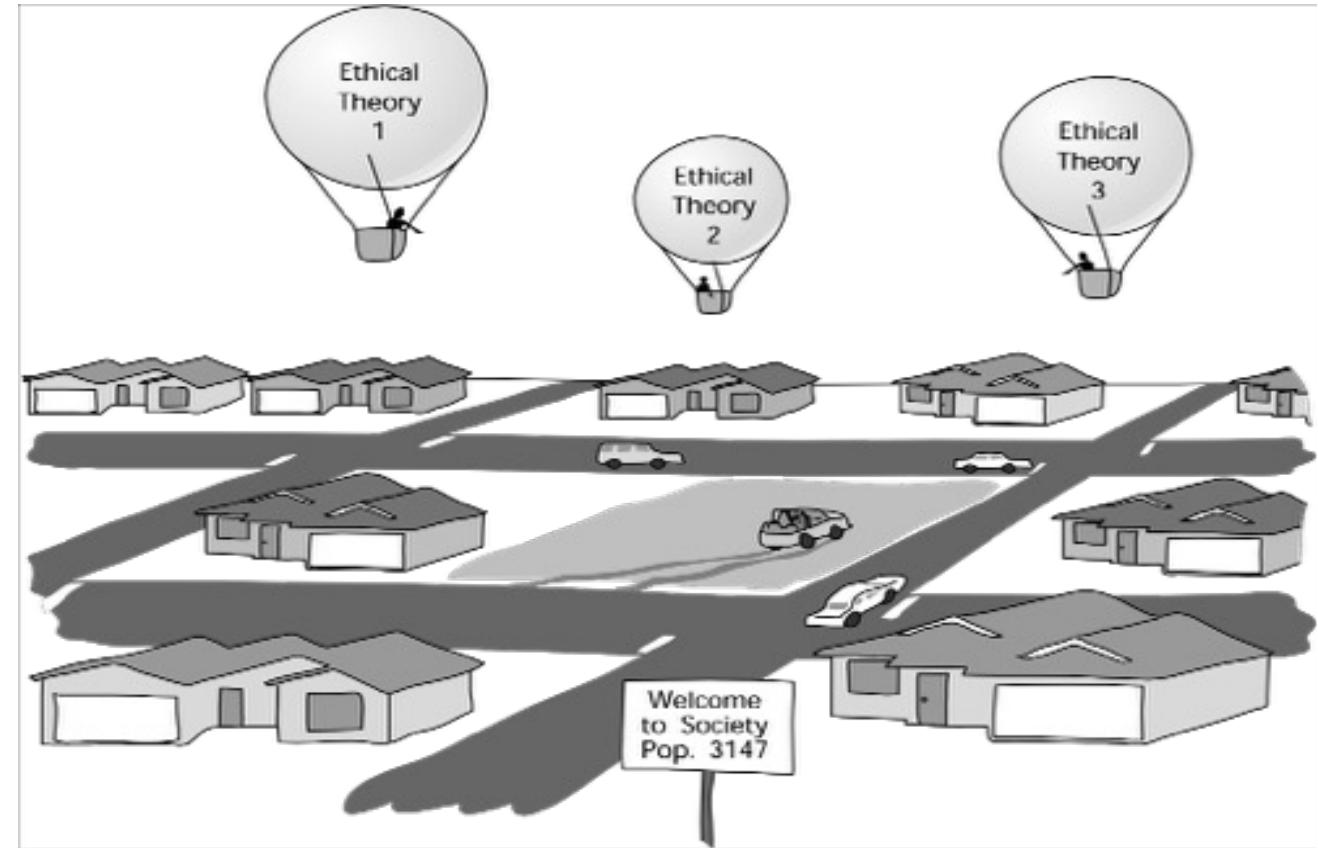
Terminologies Cont...

- **Morality:**
refer to the **rules of conduct** in every society describing✓ what people **ought** and **ought not to do** in various situations.
- **Ethics:**
is the philosophical **study of morality** and a **rational examination** of people's **moral beliefs & behavior**.

Analogy for Morality vs Ethics

Imagine

- Society as a town
- Morality is the road network within the town
- People doing ethics are in the balloons floating above the town



Quality of entire road network (**Moral System**). The observer can also judge whether individual drivers are staying on the road(**acting morally**) OR taking shortcut(**acting immorally**)

Why study Ethics?

- **Ethics:** provide a **way to decide** the **best** thing to do
- Our society is changing rapidly as it incorporates the latest advances of IT
- **e.g:** Smartphones & Social Apps have changed how we spend our time & interact with others
- New technologies brought us **many benefits**
 - ✓ **but exploited by some selfish people** for personal gain
- For some new problems, we need to decide which activities are **morally good/Neutral/bad**
- “**Common wisdom**” **may not exist for novel situations** brought about by new technologies

More on Ethics

- **Ethics:** is a **rational** and **systematic analysis** of **conduct** that can **cause benefit** or **harm** to **other people**.
 - “**Doing ethics**” means
 - **explaining conclusions**
 - Best explanations based on
 - facts,
 - shared values,
 - logic

More on Ethics cont...

- It is **Important** to note that **Ethics**
- focus on people's **voluntary** or **moral choices** people make.
 - ✓ Because they **have decided** they **ought to take** one course of action rather than alternative
- is **not concerned** about
 - ✓ Involuntary choices or
 - ✓ Choices outsides the moral realm.
- **Example:**
 - ❖ If someone ordering a car, he may get to choose a red or white or blue color.
 - ❖ This choice is NOT in the moral realm as it does not involve benefit or harm to other people

Ethical Theories or framework

- Some of Most **commonly reviewed ethical theories** are:
 1. Subjective Relativism
 2. Cultural Relativism
 3. Divine Command Theory
 4. Ethical Egoism
 5. Kantianism
 6. Act Utilitarianism
 7. Rules Utilitarianism
 8. Social Contract Theory
 9. Virtue Ethics

Subjective Relativism

What is Relativism

- **Relativism** is the theory that there are **No universal norms of right** and **wrong**.
 - One person can say “X is right,”
 - another can say “X is wrong,” and
 - both can be right
- **Two Types:**
 - ✓ Subjective Relativism
 - ✓ Cultural Relativism

What is Relativism?

- **Subjective Relativism** is theory that each person decides right and wrong for himself or herself.
 - “What is right for you **may not** be right for me”

Case for Subjective Relativism

- **Two cases:**
 - (1) Well-meaning and intelligent **people** can have **totally opposite opinions** about **moral issues**
 - (2) Ethical **debates** are disagreeable and pointless

The case against

1. With subjective relativism, the **line between doing what you think is right and doing what you want to do is not sharply drawn**
2. By **allowing each to decide** right and wrong for himself, subjective relativism **makes no moral distinction** between the **actions of different people**.
3. Subjective relativism and tolerance are two different things
4. We **should not give legitimacy** to an ethical theory that **allows people to make decisions** based on something other than reason.

:Not a workable ethical theory

Cultural Relativism

Cultural Relativism

- It is the ethical theory that the **meaning of “right” and “wrong” depends** on a society's actual moral guidelines.
- These guidelines vary from place to place and from time to time
- A particular action may be
 - ✓ right in one society at one time and
 - ✓ wrong in other society or at another time

Case for Cultural Relativism

- **Two Cases:**
 1. Different social contexts demand different moral guidelines
 2. It is arrogant for one society to judge another

Case Against Cultural Relativism

- 1) Just because two societies **do** have different moral views doesn't mean they **ought to** have different views
- 2) It doesn't explain how an individual determines the moral guidelines of a particular society
- 3) It doesn't explain how to determine right from wrong when there are no cultural norms.
- 4) It doesn't do a good job of characterizing actions when moral guidelines evolve.

Case Against Cultural Relativism

- 5) It provides no framework for reconciliation between cultures in conflict
 - 6) The existence of many acceptable practices does not imply that all practices are acceptable.
 - 7) Societies do, in fact, share certain core values
 - 8) It is Only indirectly based on reason
- ∴ **Not a workable ethical theory**

Divine Command Theory

Divine Command Theory

- It is the theory **based on the idea that**
 - ✓ **good actions are those aligned with the will of God** and
 - ✓ **Bad actions are those contrary to God's will.**
- Holy books reveal God's will/directions
- We should use holy books as moral decision-making guides
- God says do not lie or steal, so lying and stealing are bad



Case for Divine Command Theory

- 1) We owe obedience to our Creator
- 2) God is all-good and all-knowing
- 3) God is the ultimate authority

Case Against Divine Command Theory

1. There are many holy books, and some of their teachings disagree with each other
2. It is unrealistic to assume a multicultural society will adopt a religion-based morality
3. Some modern moral problems are not addressed directly in scripture
4. It is fallacious to equate “The good” with “God”
5. It is based on obedience, not reason.

: Not a workable ethical theory for our purposes.

Ethical Egoism

Ethical Egoism

- It is the theory that each person should **focus exclusively on his self-interest.**
- The **Morally right action** for a self to take in a particular situation is the **action that provides the self with maximum long-term benefit.**
- It is **sharp contrast** to the divine command theory.

Case For Ethical Egoism

1. It is practical moral philosophy
2. It is better to let other people take care of themselves
3. The community can benefit when individuals put their well-being first
4. Other moral principles are rooted in the principle of self-interest

Case Against Ethical Egoism

1. An easy moral philosophy may not be the best moral philosophy.
2. We do know a lot about what is good for someone else.
3. Self-interest can lead to blatantly immoral behavior.
4. Other moral principles are superior to principle of self-interest.
5. People who take the good of others into account lead happier lives.
 - By definition, does not respect the ethical point of view
 - **Not a workable ethical theory**

Kantianism

Kantianism

- Kantianism: is the name given to ethical theory proposed by the **German Philosopher Immanuel Kant**(1724-1804)
- **Immanuel Kant's Inquiry:**
 - What is **always good without qualification?**
 - ????

Kantianism

- **Immanuel Kant's Inquiry:** What is always good without qualification?
 - ✓ **Good Will** is the **Only thing** in the world **that is good without qualification**
- **Good will:** the **desire** to do the right thing
- **Reason** should cultivate desire to do right thing

Categorical Imperative (1st Formulation)

**Act only from moral rules that you can at
the same time will to be universal moral
laws.**

Illustration of 1st Formulation

- **Question:** Can a person in dire straits make a promise with the intention of breaking it later?
- **Proposed Moral rule:** “one may make promises with the intention of later breaking them.”
 - ✓ The person in trouble wants his promise to be believed so he can get what he needs.
- **Universalize rule:** Everyone may make & break promises
 - ✓ Everyone breaking promises would make promises unbelievable,
 - ✓ contradicting desire to have promise believed
- The **rule** is **flawed**. The answer is “**No.**”

A quick Check

- When evaluating a proposed action, reverse the roles
- What would you think if that person did the same thing to you?
- **Negative reaction** → evidence that
 - ✓ your **will** to do that **action violates** the Categorical Imperative

Categorical Imperative (2nd Formulation)

Act so that you treat both yourself and other people as ends in themselves and never only as a means to an end.

This is usually an easier formulation to work with than the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative.

Categorical Imperative (2nd formulation)



*The 2nd formulation of the Categorical Imperative states that it is **wrong** for one person **to use himself or another person solely as a means to an end.***

Plagiarism Scenario

- Carla is a Single mother with one child(daughter)
 - Works full time
 - Takes two evening courses per semester
- One of European History class
 - Requires more work than normal
 - Carla earning an “A” on all work so far
 - Her graduation is determined by grade of these two courses
 - Carla doesn’t have time to write final report
- Carla purchases report; submits it as her own work

Plagiarism Scenario

Was Carl's action morally justifiable?

What is moral problem in her action?

Kanianism Evaluation (First Formulation)

- Carla wants credit for plagiarized report
- **Proposed Moral Rule:**
 - “You may claim academic credit for work done by someone else”
- If Rule universalized, reports
 - ✓ would no longer be credible indicator's of student's knowledge, and
 - ✓ would not deserve to get credit points from professors
- Propose moral rule is self-defeating
- It is wrong for Carla to turn in a purchased report

Kanianism Evaluation (Second Formulation)

- Carla submitted another person's work as her own
- She attempted to **deceive** professor
- **She treated professor as a means to an end**
 - End: passing the course
 - Means: manipulate professor
- What Carla did was wrong

Case for Kantianism

1. It treats all persons as moral equals
2. It gives all persons moral worth by considering them as rational, autonomous beings
3. Everyone is held to the same standard
4. It produces universal moral guidelines

Perfect and Imperfect Duties

- **Perfect duty:**
 - duty obliged to fulfill without exception
 - e.g: Telling the truth
- **Imperfect duty:**
 - duty obliged to fulfill in general but not in every instance
 - e.g: Helping others

Case Against Kantianism

1. Sometimes no single rule fully characterizes an action
2. Sometimes there is no way to resolve a conflict between rules.
 - ✓ In a conflict between a perfect duty and an imperfect duty, perfect duty prevails
 - ✓ In a conflict between two perfect duties, no solution
3. It allows no exceptions to perfect duties

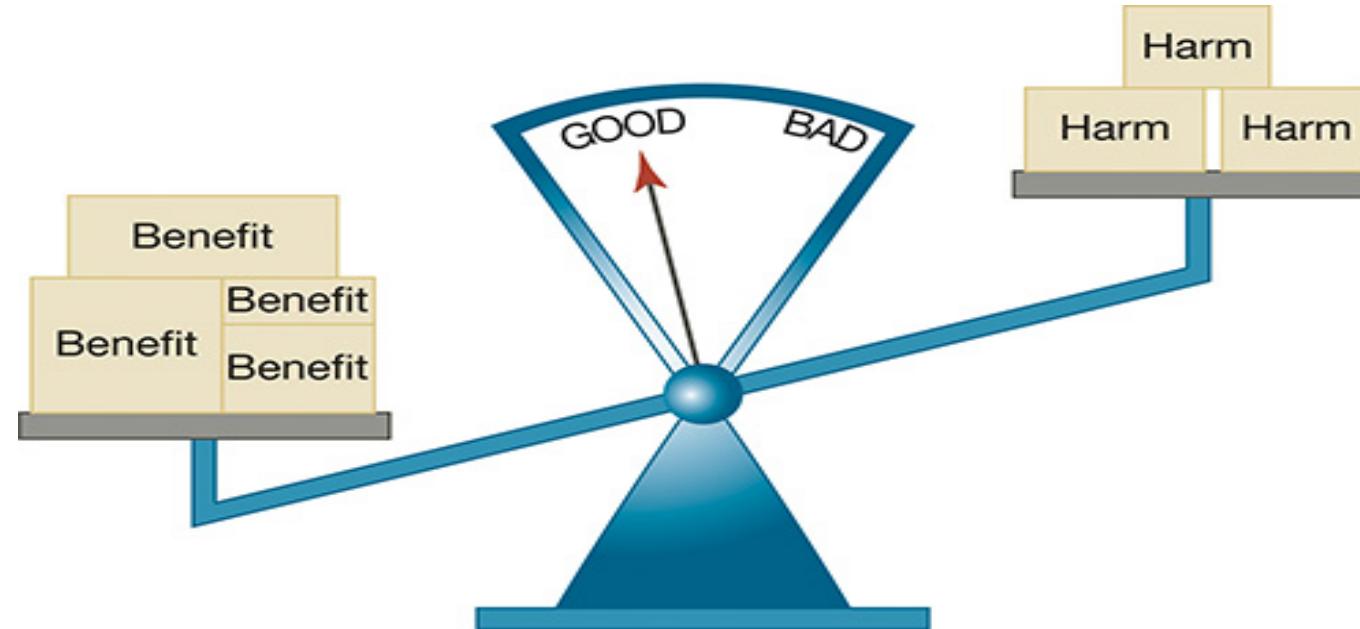
Despite weaknesses, used as a **workable ethical theory**

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism

- Proposed by English Philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill (1748-1832)- in **sharp contrast** to Kantianism
- **Utilitarianism** ethical theory is
 - based on **principle of utility**
 - An **action** is
 - ✓ **good** if its **benefits** exceeds its **harms**, and
 - ✓ **bad** if its **harms** exceed its **benefits**
- **Utility:** is the **tendency of an object to produce happiness or prevent unhappiness** for an individual or a community
 - ✓ **Happiness** = advantage = benefit = good = pleasure
 - ✓ **Unhappiness** = disadvantage = cost = evil = pain

Principle of Utility (Greatest Happiness Principle)



It states that an action is right (or wrong) to the extent that it increases (or decreases) the total happiness of the affected parties.

Act Utilitarianism

- In **Utilitarianism**
 - Morality of an action has nothing to do with intent
 - Is called a **consequentialist theory** as it **focuses** on the consequences of an action.
- **Two types of Utilitarianism**
 - Act Utilitarianism
 - Rule Utilitarianism

Act Utilitarianism

- **Act utilitarianism** is a ethical theory that an **action is good if its net effects**(overall affected beings) **is to produce more happiness than unhappiness.**
 - Add up change in happiness of all affected beings
 - Sum > 0 , action is good
 - Sum < 0 , action is bad
 - **Right action to take:** one that **maximizes** the sum

Act Utilitarianism

- Consider **Highway Routing Scenario** for evaluation by using Act Utilitarianism.
- Government may replace a curvy stretch of highway
- New highway segment has 1 mile shorter
- **150 houses** would have to **be removed**
- Some **wildlife habitat** would be **destroyed**
-
- Is this action wrong?

Act Utilitarianism

- **Evaluation of Scenario:**
- Costs
 - \$20 million to compensate homeowners
 - \$10 million to construct new highway
 - Lost wildlife habitat worth \$1 million
- Benefits
 - \$39 million savings in automobile driving costs
- **Conclusion**
 - Benefits **exceed** costs
 - **Building highway a good action**

Case for Act Utilitarianism

1. It focuses on happiness
2. It is Practical
3. It is comprehensive

Case Against Act Utilitarianism

1. When performing the utilitarianism calculus, it is not clear where to draw the line, yet we draw the line can change the outcome of our evaluation
 2. It is not practical to put so much energy into every moral decision
 3. It ignores our innate sense of duty
 4. We cannot predict consequences with certainty the consequence of an action.
 5. It is susceptible to the problem of moral luck
- **Overall, a workable ethical theory**

Rule Utilitarianism

Rule Utilitarianism

- **Rule Utilitarianism** is the ethical theory where we **ought to adopt those moral rules** that,
 - ✓ if followed by everyone,
 - ✓ will lead to the **greatest increase in total happiness**
- **Act utilitarianism** applies Principle of Utility to **individual actions**
- **Rule utilitarianism** applies Principle of Utility to **moral rules**

Rule Utilitarianism

- **Anti-worm Scenario**
- August 2003: **Blaster worm** infected thousands of Windows computers
- Soon after, **Nachi worm** appeared
 - Took control of vulnerable computer
 - Located and destroyed copies of Blaster worm
 - Downloaded software patch to fix security problem
 - Used computer as launching pad to try to “infect” other vulnerable PCs

Anti-worm Scenario

Evaluation using Rule Utilitarianism

- What would be the Proposed **rule**:
- Who would **benefit**?
- Who would be **harmed**?
- What is **Conclusion**?

Anti-worm Scenario

Evaluation using Rule Utilitarianism

- Proposed **Rule**: If I can write a **helpful worm** that removes a **harmful worm** from infected computers and **shields them from future attacks**, I should do so.

Anti-worm Scenario

- **Evaluation using Rule Utilitarianism**
- Who would **benefit**
 - People who do not keep their systems updated
- Who would be **harmed**
 - People who use networks
 - People whose computers are **invaded by buggy anti-worms**
 - System administrators
- **Conclusion:** Harm outweighs benefits. **Releasing anti-worm is wrong.**

Case for Rule Utilitarianism

1. Not every moral decision requires performing utilitarian calculus
2. Exceptional situations do not over-throw moral rules
3. It solves the problem of moral luck
4. Reduces the problem of bias
5. It appeals to a wide cross-section of society

Case Against Rule Utilitarianism

1. Utilitarianism **forces** us to **use a single scale/measure** to evaluate completely kinds of consequences.
 2. Utilitarianism ignores the problem of an unjust distribution of good consequences.
-
- Despite weaknesses, both **act utilitarianism** and **rule utilitarianism** are **workable ethical theories**

Social Contract Theory

Basis of Social Contract theory

- Philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) said that **Without rules and a means of enforcing** them, people would
 - not bother to create anything of value
 - consume with taking what they needed and defend themselves against the attack of others.
 - live in fear and danger of violent death, and their lives would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”

Basis of Social Contract theory

- In a **civilized** society, everybody ***implicitly*** accept a **social contract**
 - Establishment of **moral rules** to **govern relations** among citizens
 - Government is capable of enforcing these rules
- Philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau:
 - In **ideal society**, no one above **rules**
 - That prevents society from enacting bad rules

James Rachels's Definition

Social Contract Theory state that:

“Morality consists in the set of rules, governing how people are to treat one another, that rational people will agree to accept for their mutual benefit, on the condition that others follow those rules as well.”

Kinds of Rights

- **Negative Right** (liberties): A right that **another** can guarantee by **leaving you alone**
- **Positive Right** (claim-rights): A right that **obligating others** to do something **on your behalf**
- **Absolute Right**: A right that guaranteed **without exception**
- **Limited Right**: A right that may be **restricted** based on the **circumstances**

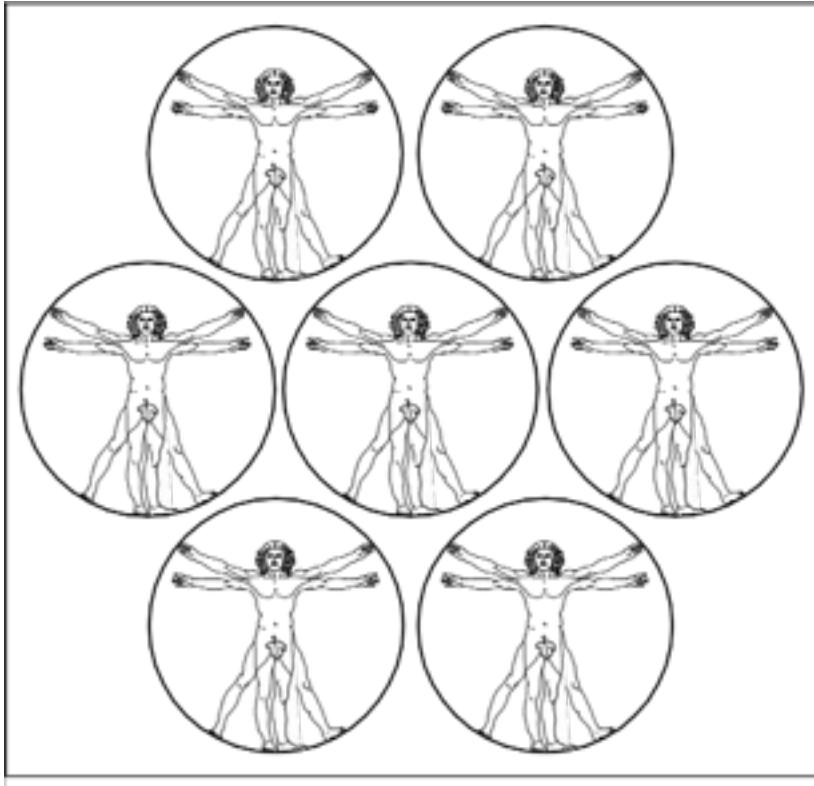
Correlation between types of rights

- Positive rights tend to be more limited
- Negative rights tend to be more absolute

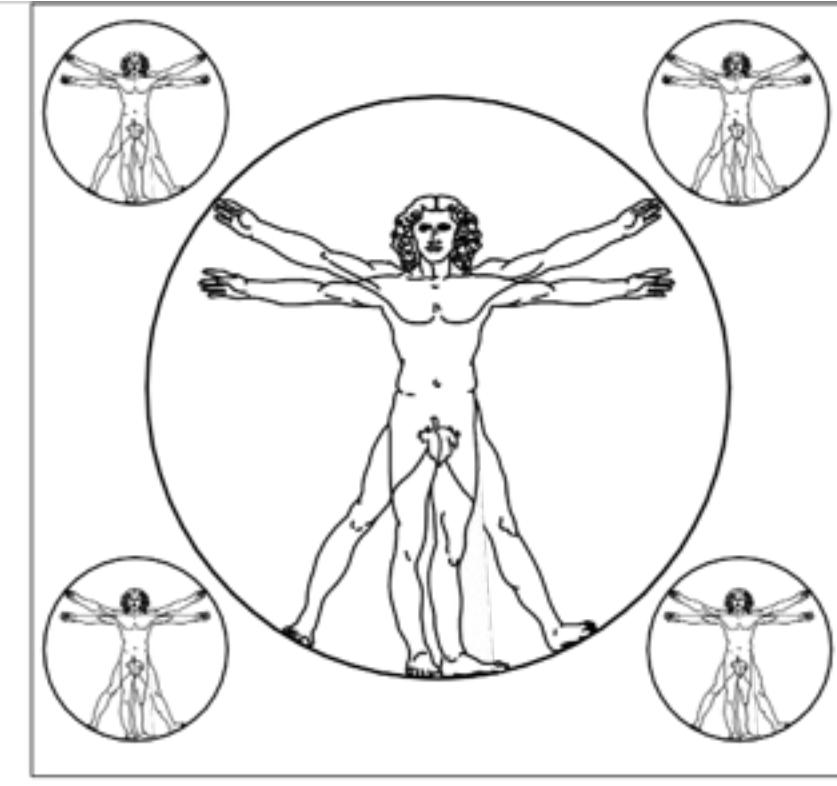
John Rawls's Principles of Justice

1. Each person may claim a “fully adequate” number of basic rights and liberties, so long as these claims are consistent with everyone else having a claim to the same rights and liberties
2. Any social and economic **inequalities** must **satisfy two conditions**:
 - They are associated with positions in society that everyone has a fair and equal opportunity to achieve
 - They are to be to the **greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members** of society (the **Difference Principle**)

Rawls's First Principle of Justice



Just



UnJust

Social Contract Theory

- **DVD Rental Scenario:**
 - Mr Bill owns chain of DVD rental stores
 - Collects information about rentals from customers
 - Creates profiles of customers
 - Sells profiles to direct marketing firms
- Some customers happy to receive more mail order catalogs; others unhappy at increase in “junk mail”

Evaluation

- Consider rights of
 - ✓ Bill
 - ✓ customers, and
 - ✓ mail order companies.
- Does customer have **right to expect** name&address to be **kept confidential**?
- If customer rents DVD from Bill, who owns information about transaction?

Evaluation

- If Bill and customer have equal rights to information, Mail Order Company did nothing wrong to sell information.
- If customers have right to expect name and address or transaction to be confidential without giving permission, ✓ then Bill was wrong to sell information without asking for permission.

Case For Social Contract Theory

1. Framed in language of rights
2. Explains why people act in self-interest in absence of common agreement
3. Provides clear analysis of certain citizen/ government problems
 - Why okay for government to deprive criminals of certain rights
 - Why civil obedience can be morally right action

Case Against Social Contract Theory

1. No one signed social contract
 2. Some actions have multiple characterizations Conflicting rights problem
 3. May unjustly treat people incapable of upholding contract
- Despite weaknesses, **a workable theory**

Virtue Ethics

Critique of Enlightenment Theories

- Kantianism, Utilitarianism, Social contract theory
ignore important moral considerations
 - moral education
 - moral wisdom
 - **family and social relationships** (very minimal in developed countries)
 - role of emotions

Virtue Ethics

- proposed by philosopher Aristotle and other ancient Greek (4th Century BC) to understand and live a life of moral character.
- emphasize the role of character and virtue in moral philosophy rather than either doing one's duty or acting in order to bring about good consequences.
- includes concepts like
 - *Arete*(virtue or excellence): reaching highest potential
 - *phronesis* (practical or moral wisdom), and
 - *eudaimonia* (flourishing)
- *In simple, Virtue is a quality of morally good.(e.g., Hero in movie: full of virtue)*

Virtue Ethics

- **Two types of virtue**
 - **Intellectual virtues**: virtues associated with reasoning and truth
 - **Moral virtues**: virtues of character (e.g., honesty)
- **Moral virtues**
 - developed by habitually performing right action
 - deep-seated character traits
 - disposition to act in a certain way *and* feel in a certain way
- **What is moral virtues in Bhutanese Society?**

Tha Damtsig

- literally means “the highest promise” or “ultimate vow”
- “Faith and respect”
- “repaying kindness”

- “an embodied practice demanding
 - full awareness of one’s social status, and
 - the actions of body, speech and mind thereby linking it with good manners”

Sixteen virtuous acts (**Michoe Tsangma Chudrug**)

Not to:

1. kill, commit theft or robbery
2. have wrong faith
3. go against the wishes of parents
4. be disrespectful to elders, learned men and leaders
5. foster evil thoughts towards family and friends
6. refrain from helping your neighbours
7. be dishonest
8. follow bad examples
9. be greedy and selfish
10. foster evil thoughts in others
11. be late in refunding(repaying) your debts
12. cheat
13. segregate human beings into rich and poor, high and low
14. listen to wrong (evil) advice
15. be deceitful: and
16. lose patience or be short-tempered.

The Ten Pious Acts (Gewa Chu)

1. to love and be gentle to all living creatures;
2. to take things only with the permission of the owner;
3. refrain from committing adultery;
4. not to tell lies;
5. not to create problems among friends;
6. not to be rude or hurt the feelings of others;
7. not to be jealous or talk wantonly;
8. not to be greedy, or want the belongings of others;
9. not to wish ill luck on others;
10. to have faith in religion.

Aristotle: Happiness derives from living a life of virtue.



Summary of Virtue Ethics

- A right action is an action that a virtuous person, acting in character, would do in the same circumstances.
- A virtuous person is a person who possesses and lives out the virtues.
- The virtues are those character traits human beings needs in order to flourish and be truly happy.

Vices

- Vices are opposite of virtues
- Vice: a character trait that prevents a human being from flourishing or being truly happy
- Often, a virtue situated between two vices
 - Courage between cowardliness and rashness
 - Generosity between stinginess and prodigality

Case for Virtue Ethics

1. It often makes more sense to focus on virtues than obligations, rights, or consequences
2. Personal relationships can be morally relevant to decision making
3. Our moral decision-making skills develop over time
4. With this theory there are no irresolvable moral dilemmas
5. Emotions play an important role in living a moral life

Case Against Virtue Ethics

1. Reasonable people may disagree on character traits needed for human flourishing
2. Cannot use virtue ethics to guide government policy
3. Virtue ethics undermines attempts to hold people responsible for their bad actions

Despite weaknesses, virtue ethics a workable theory

Comparing Workable Ethical Theories

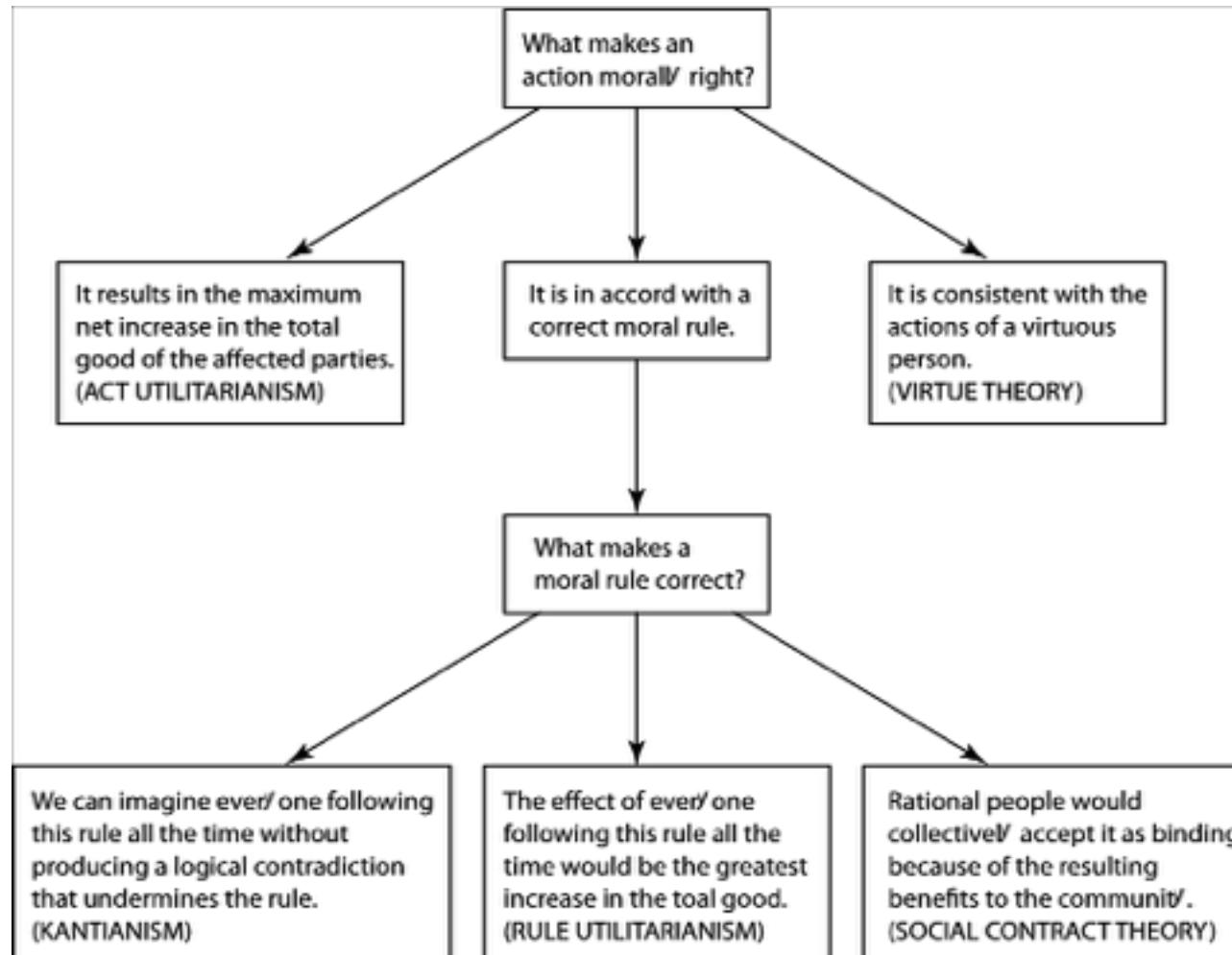
Objectivism vs Relativism

- **Objectivism:** Morality has an existence outside the human mind
- **Relativism:** Morality is a human invention
- **Divine command theory**, ethical egoism, Kantianism, utilitarianism, social contract theory, and virtue ethics examples of objectivism

Workable Ethical Theories

- We seek theories with these characteristics:
 - Based on the ethical point of view
 - Objective moral principles developed using logical reasoning based on facts and commonly held values
- Workable ethical theories
 - Kantianism
 - Act and rule utilitarianism
 - Social contract theory
 - Virtue ethics

Workable Ethical Theories



Morality of Breaking the Law

Social Contract Theory Perspective

- Everyone in society bears certain burdens in order to receive certain benefits
- Legal system supposed to guarantee people's rights are protected
- Everything else being equal, we should be law-abiding
- Should only break law if compelled to follow a higher-order moral obligation

Social Contract: A Prima Facie Obligation to Obey the Law



Kantian Perspective

- Everyone wants to be treated justly
- Imagine rule: “I may break a law I believe to be unjust”
- If everyone acted according to this rule, then laws would be subverted
- Contradiction: Cannot both wish to be treated justly and allow laws to be subverted

Rule Utilitarian Perspective

- What would be consequences of people ignoring laws they felt to be unjust?
- Beneficial consequence: Happiness of people who are doing what they please
- Harmful consequences: Harm to people directly affected by lawless actions, general loss of respect for laws, increased burden on criminal justice system
- Harms greater than benefits

Act Utilitarian Perspective

- Possible to conceive of situations where benefits of breaking law exceed harms
 - Suppose give penniless, bedridden friend copy of CD
 - Friend benefits by \$15 (value of CD)
 - I benefit by \$10 (satisfaction of helping friend)
 - Harms of \$0 (no lost sale, no police involvement)
 - With \$25 of benefit and \$0 of harm, action is determined to be good

Summary

Insights Offered by Various Theories

- **Kantianism:** Every person is equally valuable, and when you interact with other people you should always respect them as rational beings.
- **Utilitarianism:** You should consider the consequences of an action before deciding whether it's right or wrong.
- **Social contract theory:** We should collectively promote human rights, such as the rights to life, liberty, and property.
- **Virtue ethics:** You can count on a good person to do the right thing at the right time in the right way.

It's Up to you

- You can consider duties and rights and consequences and virtues when making moral decisions
- Ultimately, you have to decide:
 - What kind of person do I want to be?
 - What kind of world do I want to live in?

Discussion Questions

- What are some examples of contemporary technology issues for which our society's moral guidelines seem to be non-existent or unclear?
- (*Ethical vs Legal*) Can you give examples where an action may be legal but unethical, or vice versa?
- Do (or should) organizations have ethics? If so, who make them? And who are affected: employees? customers? the society?

Discussion Questions

- Which of the following rights should be considered legitimate positive rights by our society?
 - The right to a minimum standard of living
 - The right to housing
 - The right to health care
 - The right to education (K-12 or higher edu?)
 - The right to a paying job
 - The right to two months of vacation each year

Discussion Questions

- Give some examples of conflicts between positive rights of one person and negative rights of another person.

Thank you