

Professional Issues in IT

Ethical Theories

NUCES, Islamabad Campus
(Lecture Slides Week # 3)

Ethical Theories

- For centuries in different societies, human actions have been judged good or bad, right or wrong, based on theories or systems of justice developed, tested, revised, and debated by philosophers and/or elders in that society
- Such theories are commonly known as *Ethical Theories*
- Codes of ethics have then been drawn-up based on these ethical theories
- The processes of reasoning, explanation, and justification used in ethics are based on these theories
- Many ethical theories
- Most widely discussed and used:
 - Consequentialism
 - Deontology
 - Human Nature
 - Relativism
 - Hedonism
 - Emotivism

Consequentialism Theory:

- Human actions are judged good or bad, right or wrong, depending on the results, outcomes, ends, consequences of such actions
- Harm minimization (actual or potential) is used as standard for deciding right vs. wrong. It leads to less unsatisfactory ethical decisions.
- Greater good may also be considered; It leads to a more satisfactory decisions.

Three Types:

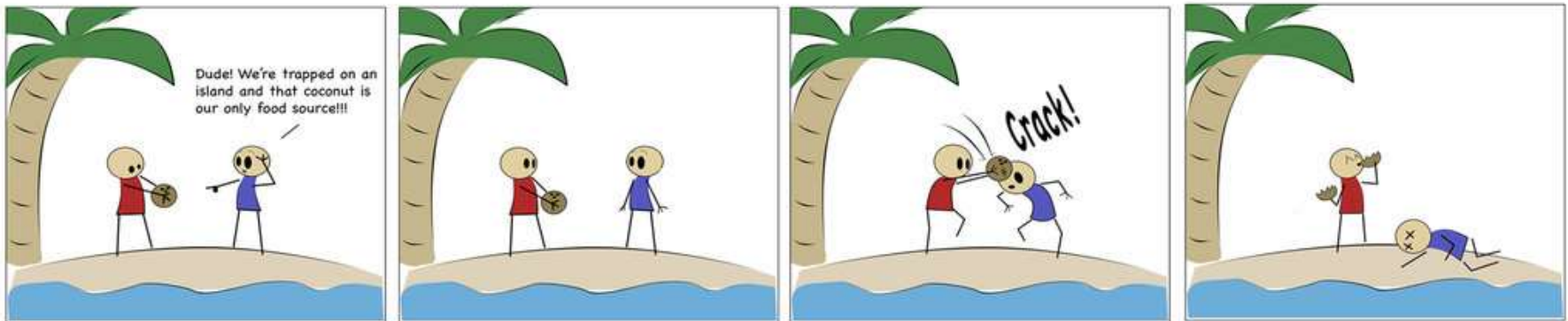
- Egoism,
- Utilitarianism
- Altruism

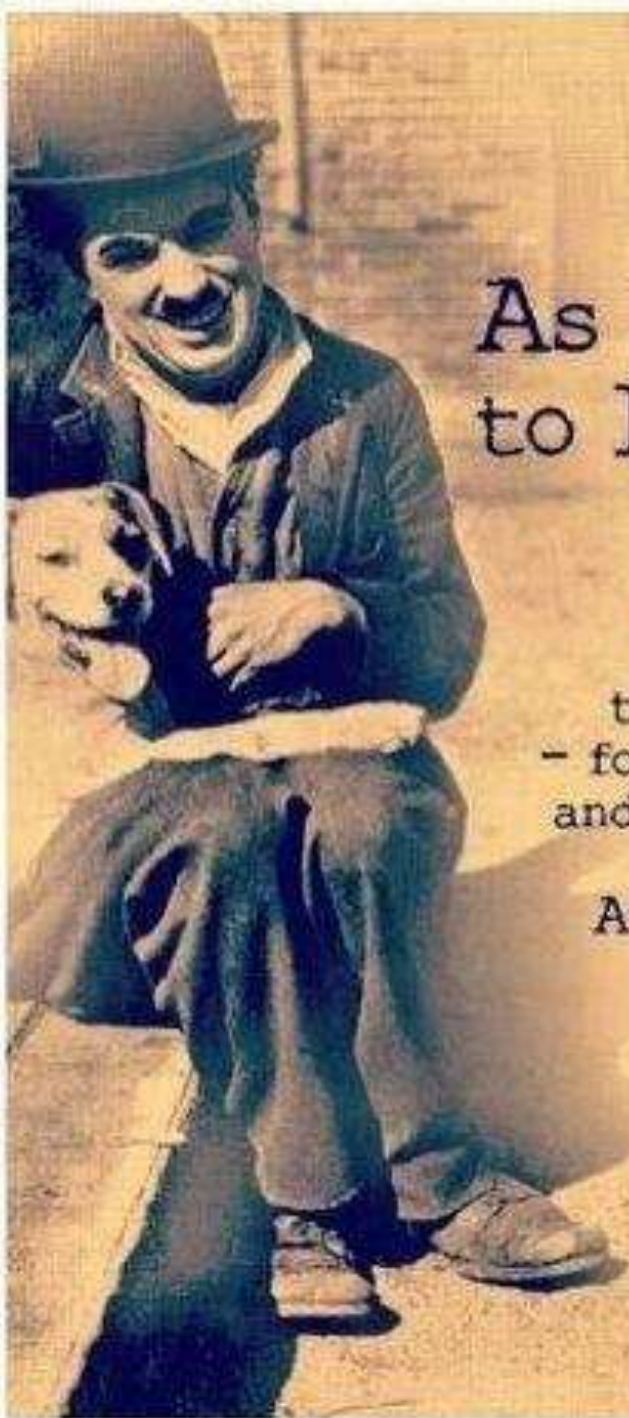
Egoism

- Puts an individual's interests and happiness above everything else
- Any action is good as long as it maximizes an individual's overall happiness
- Good for me / Least harm to me
- It is operating when you wish to maximize benefit to yourself, or minimize harm to yourself, with less consideration given to others

Garrett Pedde

Trapped on an Island!!
Today's Episode - "Egoism!"





As I Began to Love Myself ...

As I began to love myself
I freed myself of anything
that is no good for my health
- food, people, things, situations,
and everything that drew me down
and away from myself.
At first I called this attitude
a healthy egoism.

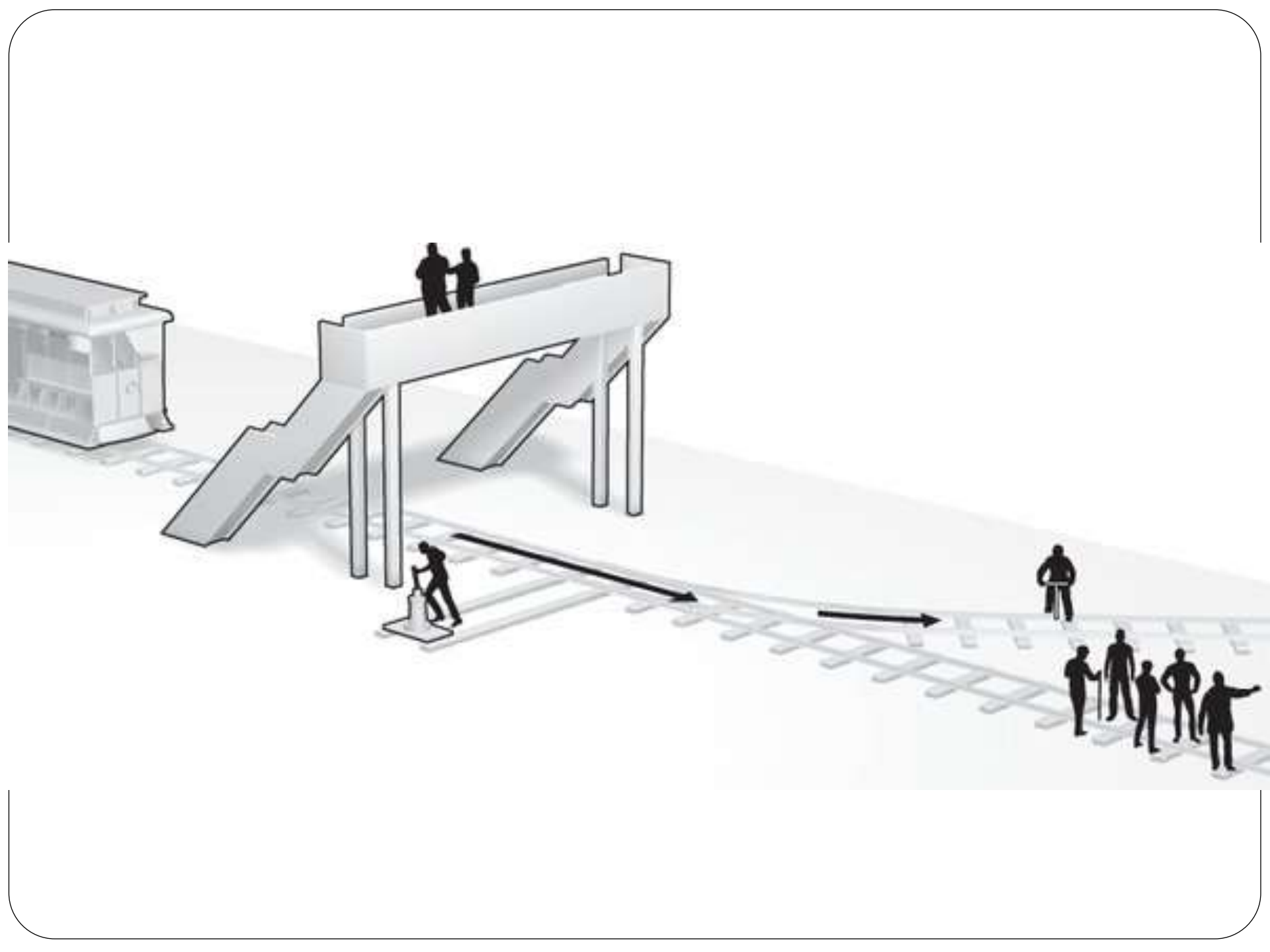
Today I know it is
"LOVE OF ONESELF".

April, 16th 1959 - Charlie Chaplin
On His 70th Birthday About Self-Love

Consequentialism Theory

- **Utilitarianism:**

- Unlike egoism, this theory puts a group's interest and happiness above those of an individual, for the good of many
- Thus, an action is good if it benefits the maximum number of people
- Good for the group, Least harm for the group
- It allows you to consider primarily the good (or harm) to others affected by your decisions. Your reasoning is not self-centered but group centered, seeking the maximum good for the group. You are usually part of the group.



Consequentialism Theory

- **Altruism:**

- An action is right if the consequences of that action are favorable to all except the actor.
- Good for all, Some harm to me
- It is invoked when you sacrifice something for the benefit of others. You may suffer some harm, but the interests of others are advanced.

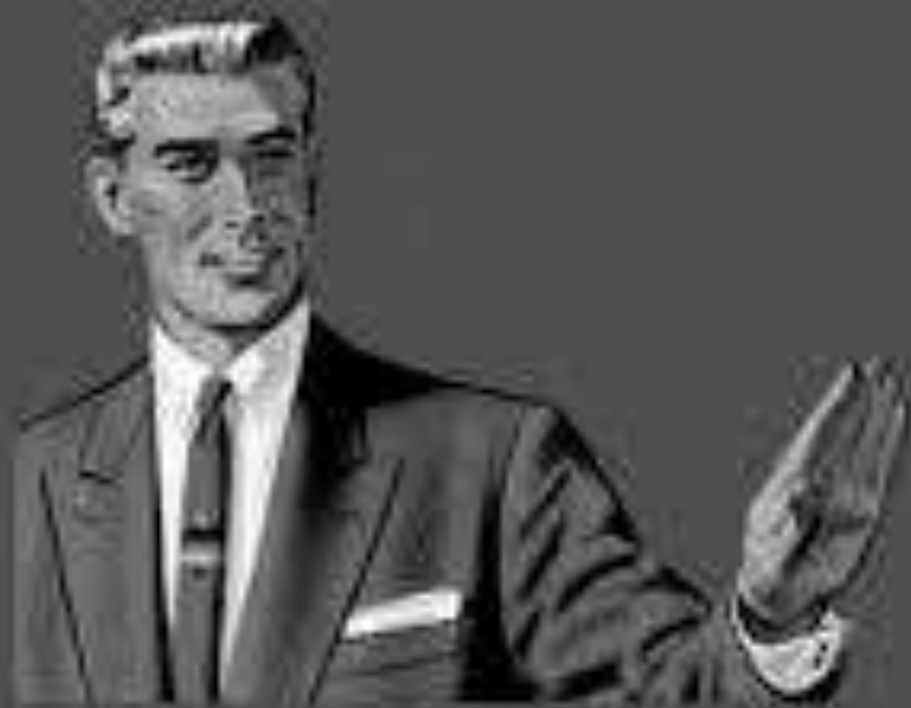
For example,

- giving your lunch away is **altruistic** because it helps someone who is hungry, but at a cost of being hungry yourself.
- Donating your money or time to a charity or to help someone, without trying to get recognition for it.

Altruism vs. Compassion

- Altruism and compassion are related concepts. Compassion is the ability to feel the pain and happiness of others, and truly to care about the well-being of others.
- When we see someone devastated by loss or sadness, we feel some of that pain ourselves; and when that person gets help and starts to smile again, we have an urge to smile ourselves; that's part of compassion—empathy—feeling other's feelings.
- But compassion also includes feeling motivated to help others, just because you want them to feel good. It's one of the most basic concepts in every world religions and widely considered to be a key element in living a meaningful, fulfilling life.
- **Compassion is not the same as altruism**
- Compassion is the feeling that motivates altruism. With altruism, you act generously and helpfully to others without expecting any benefit for yourself. This may seem difficult if you don't have great compassion; not difficult to help people, but difficult—some say impossible—not to want to get something for yourself.

**YOUR ORGANS CAN SAVE 5
PEOPLE**



KILL YOURSELF


memegenerator.net

memegenerator.net

Ethical Decision Making

- **Deontological Theory:**

- Does not concern with the consequences of the action but rather with the will of the action
- An action is good or bad depending on the will inherent in it
- According to deontological theory, an act is considered good if the individual committing it had a good reason to do so
- This theory has a duty attached to it
- In fact, the word “deontology” comes from two Greek words, *deon* meaning duty, and *logos* meaning science
- E.g. We know that killing is bad, but if an armed intruder enters your house and you kill him or her, your action is good, according to deontologists. You did it because you had a duty to protect your family and property.

A cartoon illustration of Barack Obama standing at a podium. He is wearing a blue suit jacket over a white shirt and a red and black headset. He is holding a stack of papers in his left hand and gesturing with his right hand. A speech bubble above him contains the text: "WE'RE INDICTING EDWARD SNOWDEN ON CHARGES OF SPYING AND STEALING THE DATA WE STOLE THROUGH SPYING." The background is a solid light blue.

WE'RE INDICTING
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BORS

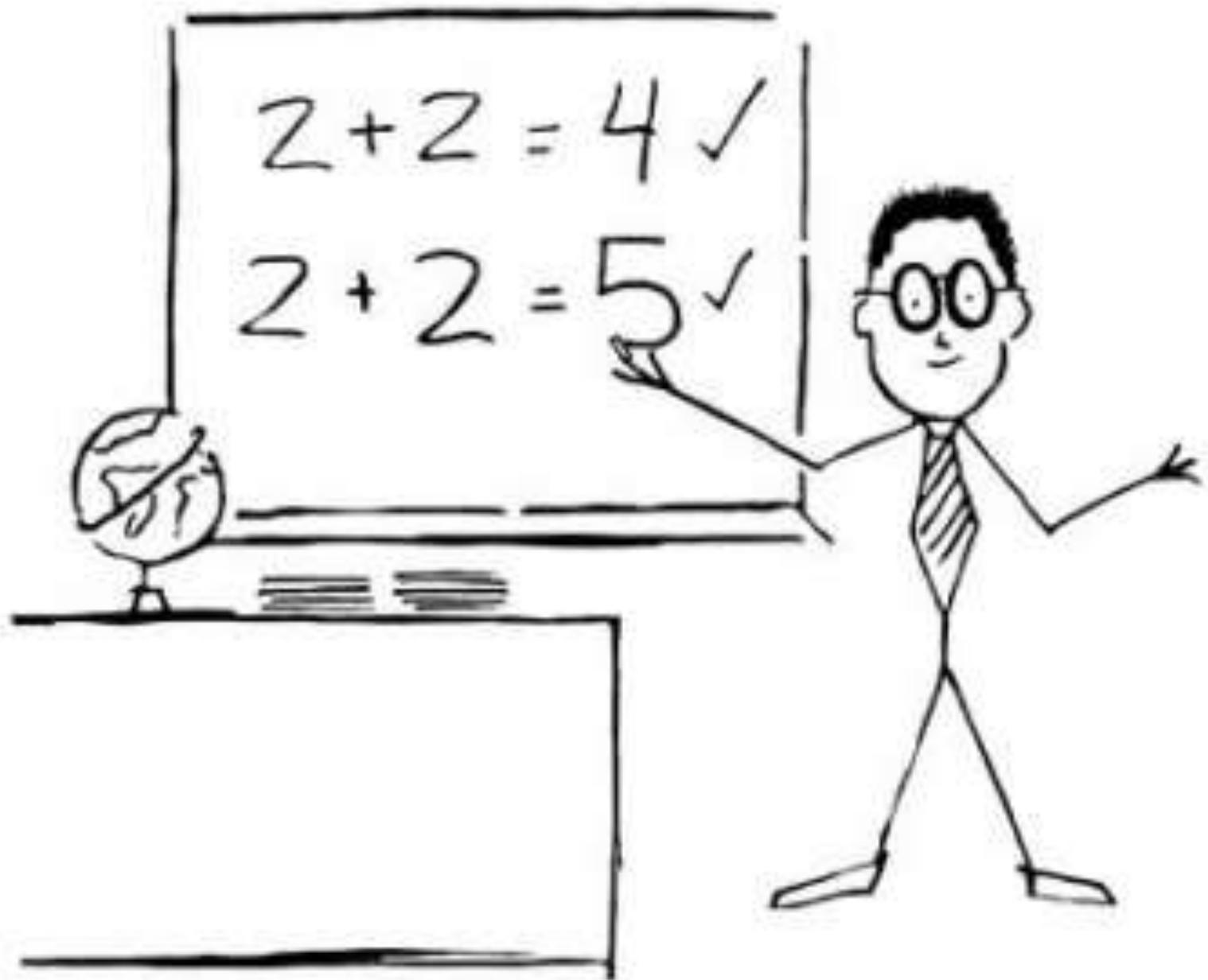
Ethical Decision Making

- **Human Nature Theory:**

- Considers human beings as endowed with all faculties and capabilities to live in happiness.
- We are supposed to discover and then develop those capabilities.
- In turn, those capabilities become a benchmark for our actions, and our actions are then gauged and judged on how much they measure up to those capabilities.
- According to the famous Greek philosopher Aristotle, an individual committing an evil action is lacking in some capabilities.

- **Relativism Theory:**

- Negatively formulated, denying the existence of universal moral norms.
- It takes right and wrong to be relative to society, culture, or the individual.
- Relativism also states that moral norms are not fixed in time.



EUROPE
NO LONGER
RELIGIOUS.

—NEWS ITEM

1.
THERE
IS NO
RIGHT
OR
WRONG

HALLELUJAH!



Stuffedaker www.cartoonists.com

Ethical Decision Making

- **Hedonism Theory:**

- One of the oldest ethical theories.
- It claims that pleasure / happiness is the only good thing in human life, the end of life as the highest good.
- A hedonist acts only for maximum pleasure and whatever he or she does, it is done to maximize pleasure or minimize pain.

WE'RE AVAILABLE FOR THE
PARTY IN CASE SOME OF YOUR
GUESTS DON'T SHOW UP!!!



hedonism

(hē'dŏn-iz'm) *NOUN*
THE DOCTRINE OF CERTAIN
ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHERS
THAT PLEASURE IS THE ONLY
CHIEF GOOD IN LIFE; LIVING
FOR PLEASURE.

- **Emotivism Theory:**

- This theory maintains that ethical statements are neither true nor false and cannot be proven; they are really only statements about how someone understand / feel