Philosophy and Ethics for Computing and Information Science

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Take home messages for today

- What do we need to reflect systematically on the ethical (and philosphical) aspects of your field(s) of study (continuation of lecture 1)?

- How do we apply this stuff (ethical models) to concrete cases / situations in your field(s) of study (assignment 1)?

- Case study: how to interpret societal reaction(s) (start today, finish next week)

Consequentialism

The rightness/wrongness of an action is determined by its *consequences*

Consequentialism

Example: _utilitarianism_

The right action is the one that promotes the greatest happiness of the greatest number (maximizes social utility)
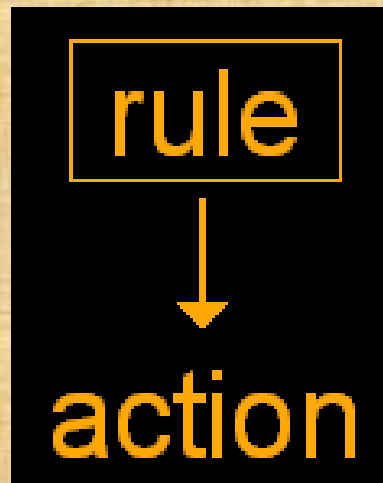
Consequentialism

Another example: *ethical egoism*

The right action is the one that promotes the greatest happiness of the *agent* (maximizes the *agent's* utility)

Deontology

The rightness/wrongness of an action is determined by *inherent* features of the action itself, or by an inherently valid *rule*

Deontology

If an action is of the wrong kind, it is forbidden, *no matter how good its consequences are*

Rejects both Utilitarianism and Ethical Egoism

"The end doesn't justify the means."

Divine Command Ethics

What makes an action right is the fact that *God commands it*.

(As opposed to the view that God commands things because they are right already.)

A form of relativism?

Deontology

Example: _Kantianism_

Right actions must be _universalizable_ and must treat rational agents as _ends, not mere means_ (trade-offs forbidden)

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

Kant's Deontology

Universalizability: must be possible to will the principle of your action for *everybody* without inconsistency.

Lying violates universalizability because lying presupposes and exploits a general practice of telling the truth

Kant's Deontology

Ends, not mere means: don't treat rational agents (others or yourself) as mere objects to be used or exploited.

Personhood is the basis of ethical value and can't be subordinated to other values.

Mustn't sacrifice the few even to benefit the many.

Virtue Ethics

The rightness/wrongness of an action is determined by the *character traits* it expresses
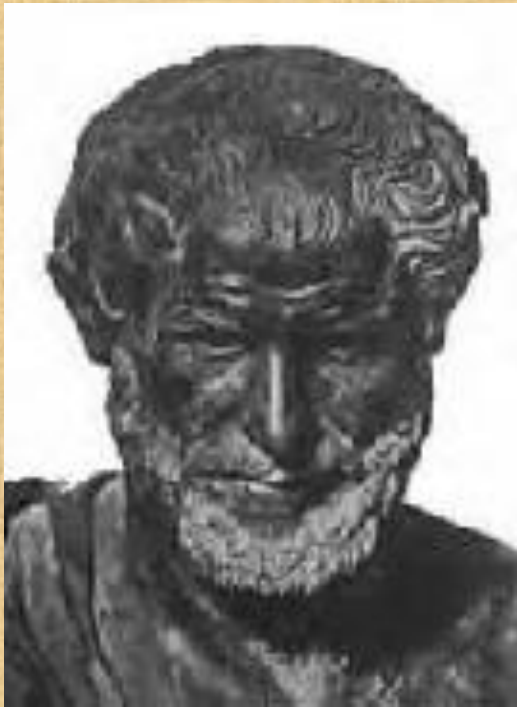
character → **action**

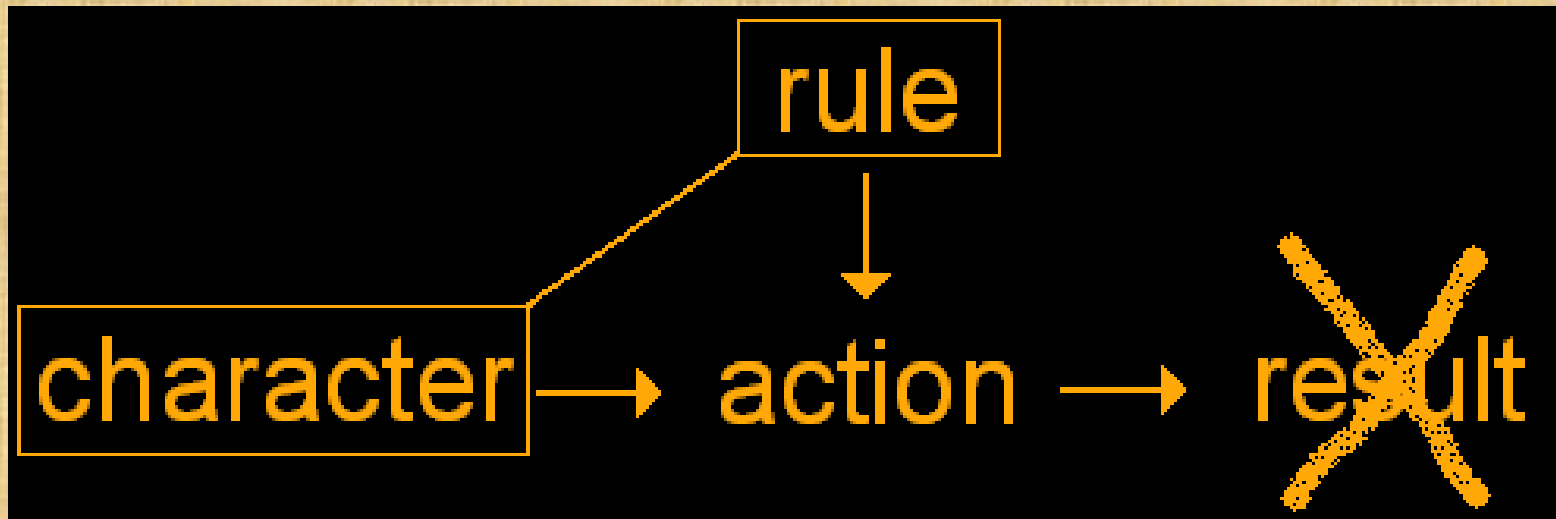Emphasize what kind of *person* you should be

Virtue Ethics

Examples: Aristotelianism, Confucianism

Virtue Ethics

Virtue-ethicists tend to side with deontologists against consequentialists – though not always

Formative assignment 1 (group)

We have been discussing ethics in the course. For the first assignment I ask you to find a current topic within your field that presents interesting (according to you) ethical features and to write a short paper (max 2-3 pages) about it, in which you shortly describe the case, identify the central ethical issue and analyze it by making use of what has been discussed in the course up to now.

Deadline: 28-11-2021