



UCDAVIS

ECS 88 – Winter 2026
[Week 1]

ETHICS, TRUTH, AND REASON

Mohammad Sadoghi



Mohammad Sadoghi
Exploratory Systems Lab
Department of Computer Science



First Principle

Ethical Principles

Moral Values

Free Will

(doing)

Duty

Freedom

(being)

Relativism

Realism

Subjective
(belief)

Objective
(belief)

Probable

Provable

Why Vote?

Interests

Democratic

Reason

Extrinsic

Intrinsic

Purpose

Truth

He who lets the world, or his own portion of it,
choose his plan of life for him,
has no need of any other faculty than the
ape-like one of imitation.

John Stuart Mill
[Deciding What's Right, page 3]

Alan Turing famously proposed the “*Imitation Game*,” defining a machine as intelligent if it could deceive a human into believing it was human.

Alan Turing

Take any action allow'd to be vicious: **Wilful murder**, for instance. Examine it in all lights, and see if you can find that matter of fact, or real existence, which you call *vice*.

In whichever way you take it, you find only certain passions, motives, volitions, and thoughts. There is no other matter of fact in the case. The *vice* entirely escapes you, as long as you consider the object. You never can find it, till you turn your reflection into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action. Here is a matter of fact; but 'tis the object of feeling, not of reason.

It lies in *yourself*, not in the object.

So that when you pronounce any action or character to be vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature, you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. *Vice and virtue*, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind; and this discovery in morals, like that other of colours, sounds, heat and cold, is of the last consequence.

David Hume

[Theories of Ethics, page 6]

I cannot forbear adding to these reasonings an observation, which may, perhaps, be found of some importance. In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is* and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence.

David Hume
[Theories of Ethics, page 7]

Unable to give an objective, reasoned justification for his own convictions, he may turn from dogmatic certainty to total skepticism. And from total skepticism it is but a short step to an “amoral” life... Thus the person who begins by accepting moral beliefs blindly can end up denying all morality.

Paul W. Taylor
[Deciding What's Right, page 3]