

Ethical Theories

Definition

- Ethical Theory is means by which we justify a particular ethical decision



Ethical Relativism

- Holds that there is **no correct moral code at all times and peoples**, that each group has its own morality relative to its wants and values, and that all moral ideas are relative to particular culture.

Ethical Relativism

- It is the view that there is no absolute morality, what is good is different for each:
 - a. individual
 - b. social group
 - c. historic period
- Goodness is relative to the circumstances of the knowing subject.

Ethical Relativism

- *Example:* Artic Eskimos practice abandoning old folks in the snow and allowing them to die of starvation and exposure is morally legitimate. Likewise, among some Eskimos, lending or allowing one's life to sleep with one's special guest overnight is an expression of hospitality and respect.

Ethical Relativism

- *Example:* olog or trial marriage among some Igorots and live-in practices among Americans, which are done in order to test marital compatibility. But in some cultures, a man has an obligation to marry his brother's widow, whereas in other cultures, the burning of widows is a common practice as an expression of widow's until-death-do-us-part fidelity to her husband. In Africa, killing of twins during birth is morally acceptable.

Ethical Relativism

- All these varying traditional practices attest to the moral claims of ethical relativism.
- Whether an action is regarded right or wrong depends upon the society judging it. Of equal value are different sets of moral principles, and when an individual legitimizes one set over another, it is simply the **outcome of having been raised in a particular culture.** (E.G. Christians and Muslims on marriage)

Hedonism

- It is an ethical doctrine which claims **pleasure as norm of morality.**
 - *pleasurable is good pain is evil*
 - *pain is evil*
- Its is a view that **good** involves happiness and pleasure and **evil** as unhappiness and pain.

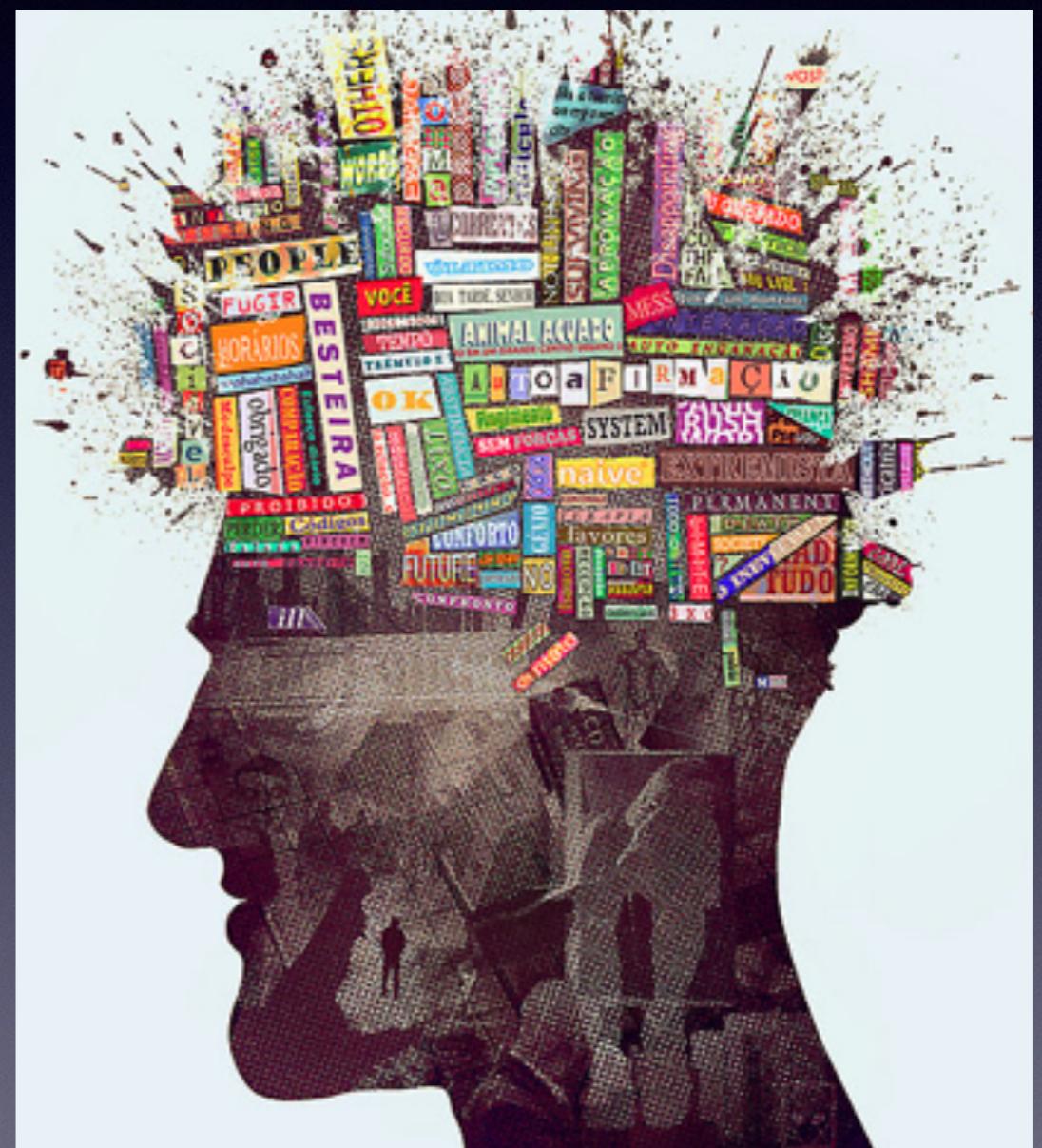
Hedonism

- Pleasure in the context means **satisfaction of desire**; hence the greater the pleasure, the better.



Hedonism

- a. **Intellectual pleasure** - derives from one's discovery of truth,
 - Desire for knowledge



Hedonism

b. **Aesthetic pleasure** - refers to one's disinterested feeling of beholding something beautiful.



Hedonism

c. **Physical pleasure** -
satisfaction of
sensuous or sexual
desire.



Hedonism

- Good in the hedonistic view:
 - To understand hedonism is to understand hedonist philosophy of life.
 - For a hedonist, **happiness is the highest good**, and so it must be made the **ultimate goal of life**.
 - To realize and attain highest good, we have to satisfy our desires.

Hedonism (Theory)

- Suppress of desires = Pain
- Suppress of desires = Suffering
- Suffering = Pain

“Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you’ll die.” - formula of life

Hedonism (Theory)

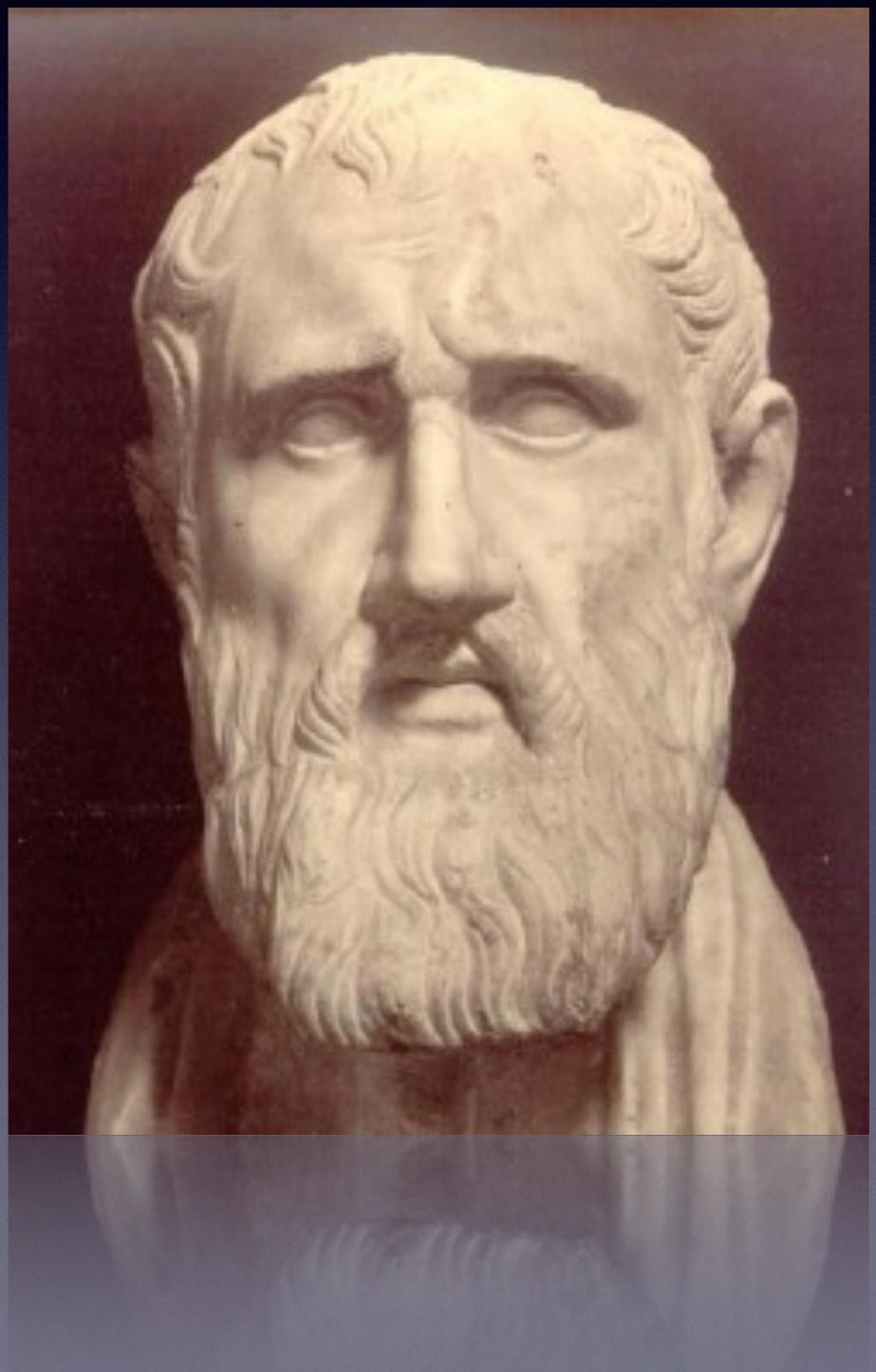
- Happiness for a hedonist can be gained by satisfying one's desires.

desire → pleasure → happiness

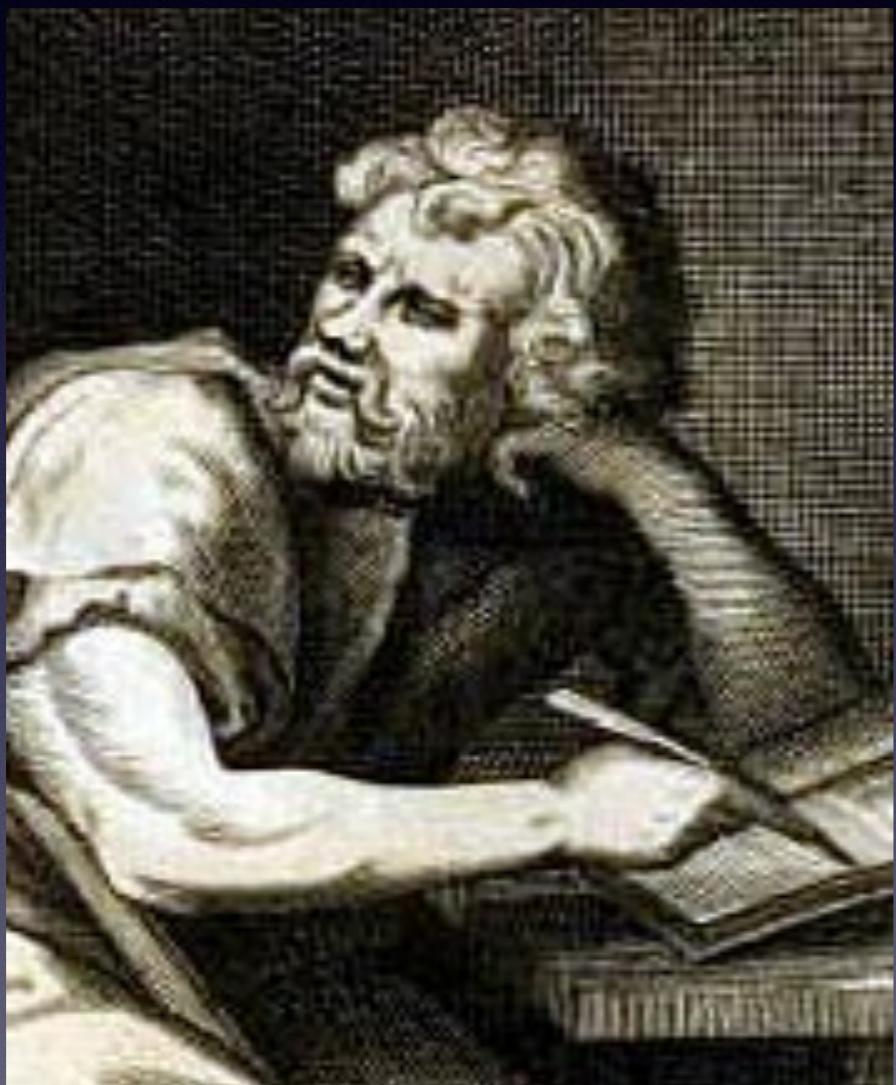
- **Problem:**
 - Desire -> Pleasure -> Satisfaction -> Desire....

Stoicism

- A school of Hellenistic philosophy founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early 3rd century BC.
- The Stoics considered destructive emotions to be the result of errors in judgment.



Stoicism



Epictetus, a Stoic

Because "virtue is sufficient for happiness," a sage was immune to misfortune.

Stoicism

- It considers **apathy** (lack of feeling) or **indifference to pleasure**.
- Its advocates are called **stoics** (known for their exemplary patience, self-sacrifice, perseverance and long-suffering attitude).
- The greatest virtue for the Stoics is “**peace of mind**”.

Stoicism

- **Apatheia** or state of imperturbability as moral norm.
- Attainable through apathy or indifference to pleasure.
- Disputed hedonistic view because of endless cycles of desires.

Stoicism

- Desires are endless cycles.
- Satisfaction of desire leads us to suffer.
- For the Stoics to attain **lasting happiness**, we have to **control our desires and passions**.

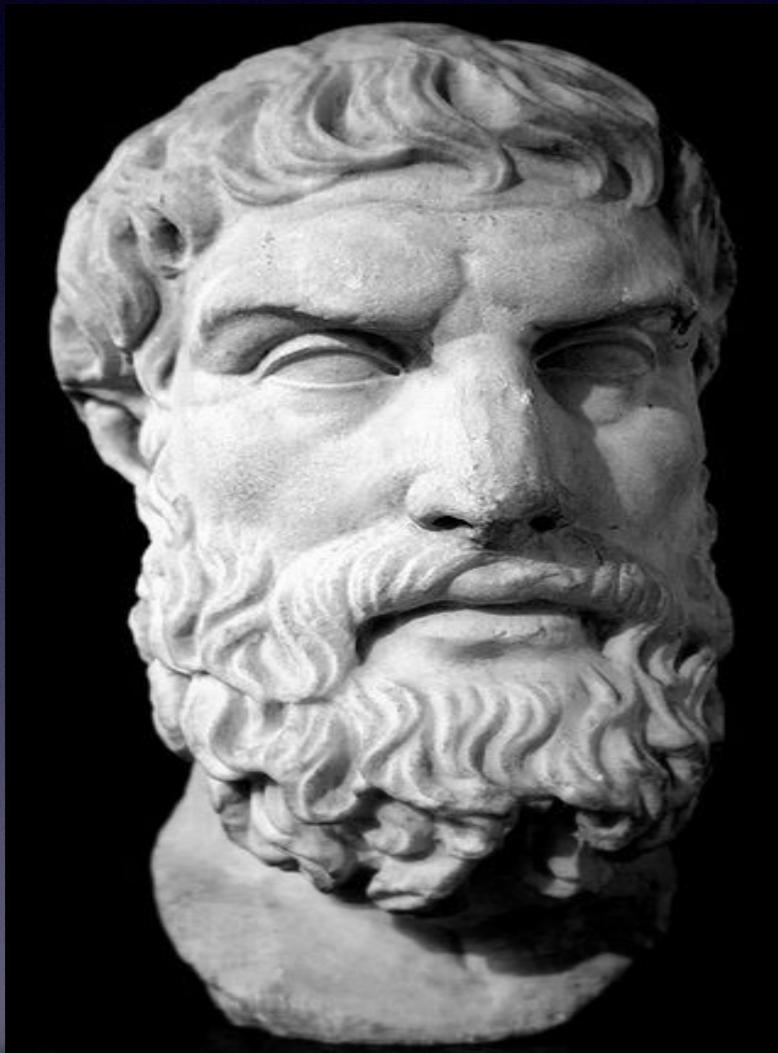
Stoicism (Theory)

- When we **strive to suppress our desires and passions**, we will be able to develop the virtues of *self-discipline, self-control, self-conquest and self-mastery*, which for the Stoics are very significant in moral development.

Epicureanism

- Advocates moderate pleasure.
- The Epicureans agree with the hedonists that pain must be avoided, so that even the pleasure which leads to pain must be evaded.

Epicureanism



Epicurus (Founder)
341 BCE – Athens, 270 BCE

Pleasure and pain are the measures of what is good and bad.

Epicureanism

- There are **three causes of pains** that should be avoided according to the Epicureans:
- A. excessive use; B.) abuse; C.) nonuse
- Too much sex or overuse cause pain and nonuse also leads to pain while abuse of the body to whatever way e.g. smoking, intoxication and the like also leads to pain.

Epicureanism

- Considers **prudence** as the highest virtue which enables an individual to govern himself by the use of reason.
- **Intelligent choice and practical wisdom** are needed to measure: a.) pleasure against pain, b.) accepting pains that lead to greater pleasures and c.) rejecting pleasures that lead to greater pains.”

Natural Laws of Ethics

- Teaches that there exists a **natural moral law** which is manifested by **natural light of human reason**,
- It demands the preservation of natural order and forbidding its violation.
- In this theory, **moral law is apprehended by reason**, which directs us towards good as goal of our action.

Natural Laws of Ethics

- In the operation of the reason, it recognizes the principle: do good and avoid evil, which is known as **voice of reason or conscience**.
- I know I am doing the right thing if and when I follow the voice of conscience; I feel a sense of guilt or remorse otherwise.
- This theory says that we cannot run away from our conscience, as Judas Iscariot allegedly tried but failed when he betrayed Jesus.

Natural Laws of Ethics

- **Natural Law** - natural order of things.
 - The law derived from the nature of man.
 - States the first and essential precepts which govern the moral life.
 - Expresses the original moral sense which enables man to discern by reason the good and evil.

Consequentialism

- Maintains that morality of an action is determined solely by its **consequences**.
- Basically, it looks on the **outcomes, situation** and from that one decides what is ethical.
- Thus, from a consequentialist standpoint, a **morally right action is one that produces a good outcome, or consequence**.

Deontologism-Duty Ethics

- Greek: **deontos**: that which is binding, right, proper; **deon**-duty
- Emphasis on universal imperatives such moral laws duties, obligations, prohibitions.
- It is sometimes also called **imperativism**.

Deontologism-Duty Ethics

- It looks on one's duties and obligations in determining what is ethical.
- It is also known as **Duty Ethics**.
- An **ethical act** is the one that meets **obligations, responsibilities and duties**.

Utilitarianism

- (Latin *utilis*, “useful”), - Greatest Happiness Principle
- The **greatest happiness of the greatest number** is the test of right and wrong
- Action is good if it produces as much or more good than the alternative behavior.

Utilitarianism

- what is **useful is good**, and consequently,
- the ethical value of conduct is determined by the utility of its **results**.
- Opposed to doctrine which claims, inner sense or faculty, often called the **conscience**, is made the absolute arbiter of right and wrong.

Utilitarianism

- No action is intrinsically right, moral or good.
- Choose the action that produces the most benefits and least cost of pain and unhappiness.

Pragmatism

- Pragmatism is more of a theory of knowledge than moral principle.
- As an epistemological view, pragmatism holds that the true and valid form of knowledge is one which is
 - practical
 - workable
 - beneficial

Pragmatism

- **practical** - it is the one which can be practiced and produces practical results;
- **workable** - one that can be put to work and works;
- **beneficial** - it benefits people.

Egoism

- Ethical doctrine that puts the **self as priority**.
- Sometimes referred as **mightism or power ethics**.
- One must seek to cultivate his skills, empower himself and grab opportunities that serve him.

Egoism

- Attacks **altruism**-selflessness.
- Ayn Rand has her own egoism she called **objectivism**.
- She calls altruism as **fake morality**.
- SELFISHNESS IS A VIRTUE!!!!!!!
 - E.g. A man helping a beggar....

Situation Ethics

- Joseph Fletcher- American Protestant medical doctor.
- According to him, there are:
 1. **legalistic approach** - prescribes certain moral prescriptions and norms
 2. **antinomianism** - frees Christian from moral laws.
- too liberal and unconventional, which may lead to anarchy and more chaos.

Situation Ethics

- The ethical theory states that moral norms depends upon a given situation, but whatever the situation may be, one must always act in the name of Christian love.
- A situation in this context refers to human condition or any state of moral affairs and issues that demands judgment or action.

End of Lecture