

We have established that we can only know ethics as *opinion* rather than as objective law, and that despite this ethics remains inescapable for every individual and as a demanding point of contention in society. There is no true or false when making moral claims, but we can't escape holding ethical beliefs personally, let alone as a group. So what are we to make of ethics in the modern world? The answer is simple in principle, yet constantly overlooked, misunderstood, or outright ignored (due to being dissatisfactory).

(deleted/to be moved) The answer is simple in principle, yet constantly overlooked due to the aforementioned crypto-theology we all take part in, learned from culture, and originally installed and constantly fuelled by predominantly the power and will/agenda of different past and present social institutions (cult, religion, academia, ...).

The correction of this error in our thinking is to place ethics within the domain of the empirical psychological sciences, where it belongs. This uncompromising dissociation of ethics - *meaning itself*, from the realm of metaphysical permanence and to the angst of mere physics-enabled accident is a radical and difficult shift to many, but it's been coming for a long time. It is no new development, but it's a realization which is shifting into vivid clarity as we let historically recent philosophical developments sink in.

Well, what else to do but to study our dear ethics within its appropriate domain - within psychology or similar, as it is, no matter how much we wish, merely opinion - an emergent phenomena of the human heart and intellect? We all differ, therefore all will hold different ethical positions, whether by understanding, culture, or degree of interest. But we can confidently say that ethics arises out of psychology; it arises within the psychological medium of a human organism. And therefore, although ethics *itself* is not objective, there is a common objective correlate for understanding what ethics is.

Although each person holds a unique brain and therefore unique psychology, we all share the same fundamental apparatus (some traits being near-universal - ie. the will-to-live, empathy, others not so, and those in common being in general more fundamental). These common traits should give rise to a common, agreeable ethics. Philosophy/rationalization and language are high-level, situational/environmental, culturally-specific processes and are null (nihilistic) in themselves. Consider the numerous exotic moral codes you find in different cultures, which tend to be barbaric and unintelligible. Most ethical theory is like this, it is merely word salad, it isn't deep, but it comes from nerves being struck at the psychological level, from situations, human experiences, and desires. The task is not the impossible task of interpreting the surface-level word salad of moral philosophy, but of discovering where the noise is coming from and why.

Here are some example takes which analyse diverse moral philosophy, not as what they are for themselves, but as being similar in structure and purpose under the hood:

## **1. "God says murder is wrong!"**

Religion is one example of situational word-salad for the need for an absolute purpose and concrete law to follow in order to avoid extreme suffering. This specific statement about murder is rationalization under a pre-scientific worldview for the perceived negativity human experience of fear, loss, and death.

## **2. "Theft is wrong! There is such a thing as ownership and it's of ethical importance because it is human nature"**

The understanding and thus concern over ownership may have its roots in human society thousands of years ago or perhaps even earlier. In its original form, this concern of ownership may be seen as emerging because a person seeks personal control and sustenance, and an object being taken from them represents a power threat to them, as the owned object is effectively a part or extension of the owner. It may be further distinguished from simple physical competition over control of objects by taking into consideration the group nature of humans; a compromise was necessary, therefore the actual mutually recognized *respect* of primitive "ownership".

The trope of ownership, however, has garnered significant importance and taken on new meanings with the advent of capitalism. In order to install and sustain capitalism, there is a constant institutional, cultural, and media flow of ideas which tend to become beliefs, often sinking to the level of "givens", regarding what capitalism is, what one's place in the world is with capitalism as a given, and at the fringes, justification for beliefs about the system itself (made explicit as merely one of possible systems).

Ownership no longer means social cohesion and survival, it is extended to the notions of private property, which can be an abstract legal entity, space itself (land), even implicitly ownership is now extended to mean of a person: of a person's time and will under the conditions of employment (which has always happened to be a necessary condition for the vast majority of people under capitalism). Further, ownership of a thing is under capitalism is arrived at purely symbolically, not through direct personal engagement.

These developments in the idea of ownership have led to conditions which are often not preferable for the society's bulk. It is evident that things are not preferable for the average person most of the time. The worker, by his understanding of the available "freedom" present around him in capitalist society, is coerced into and endures employment, lest he lose his food, home, social acceptance, perhaps life. What else can he do, but take on some form of employment? Despite the differences in labor positions in the workplace, few are enthusiastic about their job, as the available work is not a material product of human ideal, but of economic forces and factors - supply and demand, human necessity vs. automation, legal and material potential, etc. Workers, most often, are at the least stressed or unfulfilled, and at worst severely dependent on inhuman conditions - such as any job with terrible working hours, repetitive

sweatshop work requiring soul-crushing sustained attention, and factory, construction, farm or mine work that posit chemical and/or bodily harms.

This is not to be a critique of capitalism - so why mention these points?

The cause for the propagation of complacent beliefs within capitalism is *power*. If people at large held moral beliefs that were antithetical to society, creating the conflict of “the people” versus “unjust rule”, then that society would face significant difficulties, perhaps be destroyed.

There is a critical necessity for every society to keep its people in belief of its legitimacy, masking its systemic faults as anything other than systemic; a critical necessity for every society to be dishonest, to cover up its own crimes against humanity, to effectively “brainwash” its citizens into complacency. Capitalism, like any other system, thus covers itself up, creates a belief system of half-truths, broken reasoning, false hope, and helpless victimization in order to seduce its citizens into doing its bidding.

This form of moral philosophy, then, can be traced in part to social necessity (as survival and power invariably reign over hopeful ideals) and in part to the tendency or capability of a person to seek power and put themselves first. Realizing these dynamics of morality, we can see that morality is frequently used by dominators as a tool for control. We must look out for where this kind of morality sneaks in, and duly note that morality is often mere lubrication for power, originating not from a human soul with altruistic intention, but out of social or individual self-interest.

### **3. “Everyone has their own opinion! Morality is subjective”**

Until very recently in history, almost everybody was deeply engaged in some form of theism (the belief in the existence of a God). The idea of a material universe lacking a God was vilified and almost nonexistent. Almost everybody thought they had a source of divine wisdom from which they gained knowledge over morality, which was the word of God, and existed beyond what mere men thought - it was universal. Even if there were some atheists, there was very lacking understanding of what a human being was, there was poor understanding of the reason and source of emotions, and poor understanding of what physics and the apparent nihilism of the material means.

This meme is a very recent one, and likely emerged from the death of religion, and the rise of the popular understanding of the materialist worldview, and idea of nihilism as a possibility when thinking of the “meaning of life”. Its basic appeal seems to be that, if you say this, you can avoid thinking, simply decline taking a new perspective or argument into consideration, and continue to act in a particular manner or hold a particular view, since your view is just as good as any. But the issue is that most frequently, the person using this argument is unaware that they are being completely hypocritical: they too, mysteriously, indulge in using reason in order to filter good quality ethics from bad quality ethics. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that the typical person who

deploys this rebuttal would be satisfied with it if it were used to justify some act that in their ethics is horrible.

#### **4. Animal Rights**

The rising concern of the ethical implications of animal suffering is a fruitful present-day case study in understanding the generalized nature of morality. Until recently, most consumers have engaged in meat-eating without second thought, as an unchallenged social norm. There simply was no ethical issue - eating meat was normal, there was nothing alarming or questionable about it. However, when the typical meat-eater is informed about the significance of their consumption, they are not passive, but completely shocked by what they see. It's undeniable that the idea of factory farming strikes a nerve in us all. We can't watch; it's pure horror. But why? If our human morality is purely interested in the wellbeing of humans, then why does the suffering of animals so deeply affect us?

Whether or not eating meat is okay is, unfortunately, largely still controversial today, but the point is that regardless of if a person chooses to refrain from eating meat afterwards, at the moment that they do become informed of the hell-like reality of meat-eating, they are almost always shocked and disappointed, often to the point of tears. Why would this be if not for empathy being intimately connected with morality?

#### **What is the essence of the study of ethics?**

What really is ethics? A common perception of ethics is that it involves distinguishing rights from wrongs, creating systems of deontological *law* with the eventual aim of worldly application serving the need to maintain a just, or at least ordered, society. The field may be seen as *boring*, a background study in the grand scheme of things, composed of only common sense, and yawn-provoking scholarly nuance.

Though much of the business of ethics is adequately characterized in this way, this cultural baggage is far from speaking of the truly deep, personally relevant, life-changing essence and depths that the field is capable of. Understood as broadly as possible, a definition of the field of ethics, including meta-ethics, puts ethics as the central study imbued in all else. Ethics deals with the real motivating concern behind every surface decision, perception, and judgment. Ethics is the *why* which is always-present at the heart of every concern, for the decision to do anything at all, personally or within society, can only be an ethical decision; ie. any action or judgment is one that boils down to differing between right and wrong, or worst or best.

Taken to an extreme, and this is largely in the ideal, ethics is the motor and seer of all change and structure within reality as considered by a conscious subject. This is because subjects are concerned with the way things are, and the mechanics of that concern are formed, consciously or unconsciously, on the whim in one moment or life-long after serious thought, as though they

were ethical propositions; to work as a doctor because it is a virtuous position in society, or to pretend to find a joke funny because it would be cruel to a friend to suffer humiliation.

The nuance, the thing to remember, is that there is a mismatch between our ideal and how ethics actually functions in the world. In actuality, serious, explicit ethics is but a weak concern for most people. It is important to remember that all judgment and decision only matters because it is a matter of ethics, which is on the matter of mattering, but scarcely in the world are matters self-aware of this; at large things in the world are purely process dictated by cause, and individuals take one path over the other due to pure, evolutionarily instantiated, self-interest and instinct.

### **Are utilitarian ethics universal?**

Perhaps there is potential for a radical perspective - that in fact, ethics is not mere opinion, but specifically utilitarian ethics are universal. Why? Because we can state utilitarianism in a way which is universally going to be taken to be true, without exception.

### **What kind of utilitarianism?**

How ought we to judge whether negative or classical utilitarianism makes more sense?

Is it possible the absence of pleasure be preferred? How could this be so?

“A negative utilitarian believes that once intelligent agents have phased out the biology of suffering, all our ethical duties have been discharged. But the classical utilitarian seems ethically committed to converting *all* accessible matter and energy – not least human and nonhuman animals – into relatively homogeneous matter optimised for maximum bliss: “utilitronium”.”

*David Pearce*

As David Pearce explains, the negative utilitarian potentially has better prospects - because whereas the classical utilitarian is never finished, always striving (despite not suffering for it), always imperfect, the negative utilitarian can achieve *perfection* - the absence of suffering.

The difference here is that, ethics considered as a game, the negative utilitarian rises above the game completely, quits, abolishes it. The classical utilitarian makes the leap from old deontological, human-oriented ethics, in which the human is a player who is almost completely subject to the game, to the possibility of fixing (cheating) the game so that all subjects are consistently winning. We could consider, then, that the negative utilitarian makes an even more radical and enlightened leap, discarding the illusory nature of a value to pleasure, and completely transcending the game of ethics, being content with its inexistence, quitting it rather than continuing to play, just with different odds.

It is not clear whether the abolition of ethics or merely the abolition of ethical negative is preferred. Although the abolition of ethics entirely may seem less absurd, the argument is weak: surely, the classical utilitarian will be having a blast, while it does not make sense at all to evaluate the ethical status of the lack of ethics.

But it is a point of thought - theoretically, how could we evaluate where lies nonexistence on our scales of ethical judgment?

it's still unclear whether ethics is valid

The point of contention for me is that, although it is completely fabricated, we all share this fabrication, and the fabrication presents itself to us as if it were not only real, but the animating and colouring force at the heart of everything else, which in truth emanates from it (not moral thought, but the concern/subject of morality; the experience of pain/aversion and pleasure) We create our own truth, we have created ethics to be something true, in that you will never in any form take hold of a consciousness that is interested in anything but ethics So it may not be an objective quality ascribed to the universe, but it's a genuinely existent force

Utilitarianism also follows when you realize this

Essay outline:

Key points:

- There is no such thing as objective morality. Ethics is purely invented. But this doesn't imply nihilism, and it doesn't mean ethics is a useless field
- Ethics should be studied as a sibling or child field to psychology, as it is not random or carelessly invented but relates intricately to psychology which is similar for everyone
- Dogmatic ethical theory is word-salad when considered as it is to us, but understood in context its structure gives away hints and patterns as to what ethics really is and where it comes from
  - Ex1: religion as a defunct justification for human experience; reason applied in order to make subjective emotion objective law
  - Ex2: governments/capitalism as a self-justifying moral authority due to power
    - Ex3: subjectivity fallacy as an illustration of self-biased justification
  - Ex4: animal rights ethics, which shows again that self-interest triumphs over altruism, but empathy is an influence of morality.
- Utilitarianism and hedonistic bio-engineering. The issue is that we are studying ethics as a human psychological issue, but it can never be solved in this way; real ethical progress can only be made through changing its material basis