The Case for Torturing the Ticking Bomb Terrorist

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Dershowitz makes the case for torturing terrorists in cases in which many lives can be saved, for example, to prevent a nuclear bomb from being detonated in New York City. A simple cost-benefit analysis makes it obvious that torture is justified in such cases. It is better to torture a guilty terrorist than to allow millions of innocent victims to die. In reply to the slippery-slope objection that allowing torture in such cases will lead to unjustified torture, Dershowitz argues that clear lines must be drawn. To do this, he proposes that torture warrants (like search warrants) be issued by a judge. These warrants would help secure the safety of citizens, and at the same time recognize civil liberties and human rights. They would ensure the open accountability required in a democracy, and be preferable to secret, off-the-books torture because they would actually reduce the mistreatment of suspects and protect their rights.

The arguments in favor of using torture as a last resort to prevent a ticking bomb from exploding and killing many people are both simple and simple-minded. Bentham constructed a compelling hypothetical case to support his utilitarian argument against an absolute prohibition on torture:

> Suppose an occasion were to arise, in which a suspicion is entertained, as strong as that which would be received as a sufficient ground for arrest and commitment as for felony—a suspicion that at this very time a considerable number of individuals are actually suffering, by illegal violence inflictions equal in intensity to those which if inflicted by the hand of justice, would universally be spoken of under the name of torture. For the purpose of rescuing from torture these hundred innocents, should any scruple be made of applying equal or superior torture, to extract the requisite information from the mouth of one criminal, who having it in his power to make known the place where at this time the enormity was practising or about to be practised, should refuse to do so? To say nothing of wisdom, could any pretence be made so much as to the praise of blind and vulgar humanity, by the man who to save one criminal, should determine to abandon 100 innocent persons to the same fate?[1]

If the torture of one guilty person would be justified to prevent the torture of a hundred innocent persons, it would seem to follow—certainly to Bentham—that it would also be justified to prevent the murder of thousands of innocent civilians in the ticking bomb case. Consider two hypothetical situations that are not, unfortunately, beyond the realm of possibility. In fact, they are both extrapolations on actual situations we have faced.

Several weeks before September 11, 2001, the Immigration and Naturalization Service detained Zacarias Moussaoui after flight instructors reported suspicious statements he had made while taking flying lessons and paying for them with large amounts of cash.[2] The government decided not to seek a warrant to search his computer. Now imagine that they had, and that they discovered he was part of a plan to destroy large occupied buildings, but without any further details. They interrogated him, gave him immunity from prosecution, and offered him large cash

AE MIDSEM

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Table of Contents

1 Foundations of Moral Philosophy and Argumentation

This source introduces moral philosophy by exploring foundational theories and the structure of philosophical arguments. It begins with Plato's "Ring of Gyges" thought experiment, which questions why individuals should be moral if they face no consequences, setting the stage for discussions on relativism and divine command theory. The text then examines Aristotle's virtue ethics and the subsequent natural law theory, which connects morality to inherent purposes in nature. Transitioning to modern thought, the source presents Hobbes's social contract theory, defining morality as rules people agree upon for mutual benefit, and utilitarianism, which advocates for actions that maximize overall happiness. Finally, it addresses Kant's categorical imperative, emphasizing actions based on universalizable maxims and treating humanity as an end in itself. The document concludes by explaining the components of sound arguments, distinguishing validity from truth, and demonstrating how to critique arguments through a discussion of moral skepticism. Here are comprehensive notes on the key concepts and arguments presented in the provided source material, "A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy" and "Some Basic Points about Arguments" by James Rachels:

I. Introduction to Moral Philosophy: The Challenge of Gyges's Ring

The field of moral philosophy seeks to understand what morality is, why it's important, and what justifies our belief in acting one way over another.

- **The Legend of Gyges:** An ancient legend tells of Gyges, a shepherd who finds a magic ring that grants invisibility. He uses this power to seduce the queen, murder the king, and seize the throne, demonstrating how one might act without fear of detection or reprisal.
- **Glaucon's Challenge (Plato's *Republic*):** Glaucon uses Gyges's story to argue against Socrates. He asks us to imagine two such rings, one given to a "virtuous" man and one to a "rogue". Glaucon suggests that both would behave similarly, acting solely to increase their own wealth and power, freed from moral constraints by invisibility.
    - **The Question:** Glaucon asks why, without fear of reprisal, a person shouldn't simply do what they please or what they think is best for themselves, questioning the very necessity of

"morality".

II. Ancient Philosophical Theories of Morality

A. Relativism

- **Definition:** Relativism is the theory that **right and wrong are relative to the customs of one's society**, suggesting that morality is nothing more than social convention.
- **Historical Example (Herodotus):** Herodotus, a Greek historian, illustrated this view with anecdotes like that of the Massagetae tribe. They practiced unique customs such as sharing wives, sacrificing and eating their elderly, and worshipping the sun by sacrificing horses. Herodotus believed their customs were neither better nor worse than others, just different, and that everyone believes their own society's customs are the best.
- **Criticisms:**
    - **Conservatism:** Critics argue that relativism is **"exceedingly conservative"** because it endorses whatever moral views are current in a society, implying that reformers who disagree with dominant social views (e.g., on capital punishment, homosexuality, animal treatment) are inherently wrong.
    - **Socrates' Deeper Problem:** Socrates highlighted that while some customs are arbitrary (e.g., funerary practices like burning versus eating the dead), others are not. It's possible to give **"good reasons"** why some practices are superior (e.g., honesty and respect for human life are socially desirable, while slavery and racism are undesirable). These rational arguments suggest judgments can be more than "merely" expressions of a society's moral code.

B. Divine Commands

- **Definition:** This ancient idea posits that **moral living consists in obedience to divine commands**.
- **Addressing Gyges's Ring:** If this were true, even with invisibility, individuals would still face divine retribution, making it impossible to "get away with" doing whatever they wanted.
- **Socrates' Critique (Plato's *Euthyphro*):** Socrates questioned whether "right" is the same as "what the gods command".
    - **Practical Difficulties:** It's hard to know what gods command (claims of divine communication can be dubious, scripture/tradition are ambiguous and contradictory, and offer little guidance for contemporary issues like environmental preservation or AIDS research).
    - **The Euthyphro Dilemma:** Socrates argued that if gods issue commands, either they have reasons for them, or they don't.
        - If commands are arbitrary, gods are like petty tyrants, which is an impious view.
        - If gods have good reasons, then there is an **"independent standard of rightness"** to which the gods themselves refer.
    - **Conclusion:** Even in a religious worldview, the rightness or wrongness of actions cannot be understood *merely* by conformity to divine prescriptions, because we can always ask *why* the gods command what they do, revealing a deeper basis for morality.

C. Aristotle (Virtue Ethics / Teleological View)

- **Focus on Virtues:** Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (ca. 330 b.c.) offered a systematic account of **virtues—qualities of character (e.g., courage, prudence, generosity, honesty) necessary for people to do**

well in life.

- **Answer to Gyges's Ring:** Virtue is essential for human happiness, making the virtuous person ultimately better off.
- **Teleological Worldview:** Aristotle believed **everything in nature exists for a purpose**.
    - **Examples:** Teeth are for chewing, eyes for seeing. Even inanimate things like rain fall "so that plants can grow," because "it is better so".
    - **Hierarchy:** Nature is an orderly, rational system where each thing serves a purpose in a hierarchy: rain for plants, plants for animals, and **"all things specifically for the sake of man"**. This is a "stunningly anthropocentric" view.

D. Natural Law (Christian Adaptation)

- **Integration with Christianity:** Christian thinkers found Aristotle's teleological view congenial and incorporated God as the Creator who intended these purposes.
- **Ethical Consequences:**
    - **Supreme Value of Human Life:** This view affirmed human life as sacred and justified human domination over nature, establishing a "Natural Order of Things".
    - **"Laws of Nature" and Morality:** The "laws of nature" not only describe how things are but also how they **"ought to be."** Things are good when they serve their natural purposes; defective when they don't.
    - **"Natural" vs. "Unnatural" Acts:** Moral rules are seen as laws of nature. "Natural" acts are right, "unnatural" acts are wrong.
        - **Beneficence:** Considered natural because humans are social creatures with affections.
        - **Sexual Activity:** The purpose of sex organs is procreation. Therefore, any use for other purposes (masturbation, gay sex, contraception) is "contrary to nature" and impermissible according to traditional Christian teaching.
- **Developed by Aquinas:** The Theory of Natural Law was most fully developed by Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).
- **Decline:** Natural-law theory has few adherents outside the Catholic Church today because the Aristotelian worldview it depends on has been **"replaced by the outlook of modern science"**.
    - **Modern Science (Galileo, Newton, Darwin):** These thinkers explained natural phenomena without "purpose-involving notions." Rain, for instance, has no purpose; plants evolved to thrive where water is available. The appearance of design is an illusion of natural selection.
    - **Moral Implications:** This new worldview transformed ethics, meaning **right and wrong could no longer be deduced from the nature of things**. The natural world itself does not manifest value or purpose. Values are generated by the needs and desires of its inhabitants.
    - **Hume's Conclusion:** David Hume famously stated in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) that there are **"no moral facts"** in the world itself, only "passions, motives, volitions and thoughts" within us. He also countered Aristotle, saying, "The life of a man is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster".

III. Modern Philosophical Theories of Morality

From the 17th century onward, moral philosophy has sought to understand ethics as a "purely human phenomenon"—the product of human needs, interests, and desires.

A. The Social Contract Theory (Thomas Hobbes)

- **Secular Basis for Ethics:** Hobbes (17th century) provided a secular, naturalistic foundation for ethics, assuming "good" and "bad" are simply names for things we like and dislike, but our fundamental psychological makeup is self-interested.
- **Core Idea:** Ethics arises when people realize they are **"enormously better off living in a mutually cooperative society"** than trying to survive alone. Social cooperation provides vast benefits like schools, hospitals, infrastructure, communication, economy, and security.
- **Necessity of Rules:** To obtain these benefits, society requires rules of behavior (e.g., truth-telling, promise-keeping, respecting life and property). These rules prevent social collapse by enabling communication, division of labor, and security.
- **The "Social Contract":** Morality is a **"bargain"** where each person agrees to obey these rules, provided others do likewise, with enforcement mechanisms (legal sanctions, etc.).
    - **Definition of Morality:** Morality is **"nothing more or less than the set of rules that rational people will agree to obey, for their mutual benefit, provided that other people will obey them as well"**.
- **Appealing Features:**
    - **Practical and Down-to-Earth:** It removes the mystery from ethics, making it about practical social living rather than divine dictates or abstract rules.
    - **Answers Gyges's Ring:** It explains *why* we should care about ethics—it is to our advantage to live in a moral society. Accepting moral restrictions is a rational bargain for mutual benefit.
    - **Sensible Duties:** It focuses on duties necessary for social cooperation, largely disregarding private matters like sexual activities, which are not directly relevant to maintaining social order.
    - **Minimal Assumptions about Human Nature:** It assumes humans are self-interested but shows how moral obligations and even altruistic behavior emerge from this self-interest, as cooperation is necessary for individuals to live well.

B. Utilitarianism (Hume, Bentham, Mill)

- **Critique of Hobbes's Egoism:** Modern thinkers, including Hume, suggest that humans have **"at least some altruistic feelings,"** for family and friends, and have evolved as social creatures. Caring for kin and group members is natural.
- **Hume's "Social Sentiments":** Hume believed moral opinions are expressions of our feelings and "social sentiments" that connect us to others. Right and wrong are measured by **"the true interests of mankind"**.
- **Principle of Utility:** Utilitarianism states that we should **"always do whatever will produce the greatest possible balance of happiness over unhappiness for everyone who will be affected by our action"**.
    - **Three Core Ideas:**
        1. **Consequences:** Actions should be guided by their expected consequences, aiming for the best outcome.
        2. **Happiness:** The "best" consequences are those that cause the most happiness or least unhappiness.
        3. **Impartiality:** Each individual's happiness is equally important.
- **Key Figures:**
    - **Jeremy Bentham (late 18th/early 19th c.):** Leader of philosophical radicals who applied utilitarianism to legal reform (e.g., prison reform, child labor restrictions).

    - **John Stuart Mill (*Utilitarianism*, 1861):** Provided the most popular and influential defense of the theory.
- **Controversies and Replies:**
    - **"Godless Doctrine":** Critics condemned it for ignoring religious notions. Mill replied that if God desires creatures' happiness, utilitarianism is profoundly religious.
    - **Subversive Theory:** It challenged traditional moral ideas:
        - **Criminal Justice:** Punishment should aim at identifying causes, reforming lawbreakers, and deterring others, not just "paying back" wrongdoers.
        - **Equality:** By insisting everyone's happiness is equally important, it rejected elitist notions of group superiority (e.g., Mill's *The Subjection of Women*).
    - **No Absolute Rules:** Utilitarians see traditional rules (against killing, lying, breaking promises) as **"rules of thumb"**—generally useful, but to be broken if doing so yields better results for everyone (e.g., voluntary euthanasia). It implies harmless activities like masturbation or homosexuality, if they cause no harm and bring happiness, are not wrong.
- **Justification (Mill's Answer to Gyges's Ring):** Beyond "external sanctions" (law, public opinion), the "internal sanction" of morality is **"a feeling in our minds."** For Mill, it's the **"social feelings of mankind"**—the desire to be in unity with fellow creatures—that forms the "firm foundation" of utilitarian morality.

C. Impartiality: A Point of Divergence (Social Contract vs. Utilitarianism)

- **Duty to Help Strangers:** This is a major difference between the two theories.
    - **Utilitarianism:** Argues for an **"extensive moral duty to help other people."** The example of spending $1000 on a carpet vs. donating to UNICEF to save children clearly favors UNICEF, as the medicine brings more overall happiness than the carpet.
    - **Social Contract Theory:** Denies such an extensive duty. Based on self-interest, rational people would agree not to harm strangers and possibly to offer easy aid, but not **"virtually unlimited aid to strangers, even at great cost to themselves"**.
        - **Jan Narveson's View:** People pursue their own interests, which don't necessarily include much concern for others. It's rational to agree not to harm others but not to go "very far out of our way to be very helpful to those we don't know". He argues it's morally permissible to prioritize a daughter's birthday party over saving strangers, as people "count equally" only for some, and normal people care more for those close to them.
- **Reconciling Impartiality:**
    - **Mill's "Conscientious Feelings":** Mill believed that "thoughtful and reflective" people, when considering trivial benefits for loved ones versus the lives of strangers, would not approve of prioritizing the trivial benefit.
    - **Contemporary Utilitarians (Peter Singer):** Argue that while we care more for those close to us, our **"rational capacities"** allow us to think objectively. From **"the point of view of the universe,"** our personal perspective (where our interests are central, family next, strangers last) is no more privileged than anyone else's. Reason shows us the possibility of detaching from our personal perspective and acknowledging that **"our own perspective... has no special status"**.

D. Kant (Deontology)

- **Ethics from "Pure Reason":** Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) sought to explain ethics without divine commands or moral facts, seeing morality as a product of **"pure reason,"** binding on us just as desires

bind us to act.

- **Emphasis on Duty, Not Consequences:** Kant believed morality could be summed up in one ultimate principle, but unlike utilitarians, he **"did not emphasize the outcomes of actions."** What mattered was "doing one's duty," which is not determined by calculating consequences.
- **The Categorical Imperative:** Kant's ultimate moral principle, given two formulations:
  - **First Formulation (Universal Law): "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law"**.
    - **Procedure:** To determine if an act is permissible, identify the rule (maxim) you'd be following. Then, ask if you'd be willing for *everyone* to follow that rule *all the time*. If yes, permissible; if no, impermissible.
    - **Basis:** The Moral Law is binding because rationality requires consistency. It's inconsistent to act on a maxim you wouldn't want everyone else to adopt. This leads to **absolute prohibitions** (e.g., against lying, suicide).
  - **Second Formulation (Humanity as an End): "So act that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as means only"**.
    - **Treating as a "Means Only":** This means manipulating someone. For example, lying to a friend for a loan you can't repay uses them as a means to your goal.
    - **Treating as an "End":** This means respecting a person's rationality and autonomy. If you told your friend the truth about needing money and being unable to repay, they could make a free, autonomous choice based on their own values, thereby making your purpose their own if they choose to help.

IV. Evaluating Philosophical Arguments

- **The Nature of Philosophy:** Philosophical ideas, though abstract, must be supported by **"sound arguments"** to be acceptable.
- **Definition of an Argument:** In logic, an argument is a **"chain of reasoning designed to prove something,"** consisting of one or more **premises** and a **conclusion**, with the claim that the conclusion follows from the premises.
- **Validity:**
  - A conclusion **"follows from"** the premises if a certain logical relation exists: **if the premises are true, then the conclusion *must* be true also.** Equivalently, it's impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false at the same time.
  - An argument is **valid** if its conclusion follows from its premises.
  - A conclusion can follow from premises even if those premises are actually false (e.g., "All people from Georgia are famous; Jimmy Carter is from Georgia; Therefore, Jimmy Carter is famous" is valid, but the first premise is false).
- **Soundness:**
  - An argument is **sound** if two conditions are met: **it must be valid, and its premises must be true**.
  - An argument can be unsound even if its premises and conclusion are all true, if the conclusion does not follow from the premises (e.g., "The earth has one moon; John F. Kennedy was assassinated; Therefore, snow is white").
- **Two Questions for Evaluation:** When evaluating any argument, one must ask two separate questions: **"Are the premises true? And, does the conclusion follow from them?"**.

A. Moral Skepticism and Its Arguments

- **Definition of Moral Skepticism:** The idea that **"there is no such thing as objective moral truth."** It asserts that morality is subjective, merely a matter of opinion, and that values exist only in our minds.
- **1. The Cultural Differences Argument (CDA):**
  - **Premises:** Different cultures have different moral beliefs (e.g., Eskimo infanticide vs. our society's view).
  - **Conclusion:** Therefore, infanticide (or any moral matter) is neither objectively right nor wrong; it's merely a matter of cultural opinion.
  - **Critique:** The CDA is **invalid**. The conclusion (about what *is* immoral) does not follow from the premises (about what people *believe* is immoral). People or entire societies can be mistaken (e.g., the shape of the earth).
  - **Common Mistakes to Avoid:**
    - Don't confuse rejecting an argument with impugning the truth of its conclusion; an unsound argument simply provides no reason for thinking the conclusion is true.
    - Don't conflate the CDA with arguments about the provability of moral claims; these are separate issues.
- **2. The Provability Argument:**
  - **Premises:** If objective truth existed in ethics, we could prove moral opinions true or false. But we cannot prove them true or false.
  - **Conclusion:** Therefore, there is no objective truth in ethics.
  - **Critique:** The conclusion *does* follow from the premises, so the crucial question is whether the premises are true. The second premise – that we cannot prove moral opinions – is **questionable**.
    - **Counter-examples:** We can often provide good reasons and "proofs" for moral judgments in simpler cases (e.g., proving a test was unfair, that someone is a bad person, an irresponsible doctor, or an unethical salesman). Such judgments are not "mere opinions" if backed by reasons.
    - **Reasons for its Appeal:**
      1. **Focus on Difficult Issues:** People tend to focus on complex, divisive issues like abortion, making "proof" seem impossible. However, like physics, ethics has simpler matters where agreement and proof are possible.
      2. **Confusing "Proving" with "Persuading":** It's easy to mistake a stubborn refusal to accept logic for an inability to prove a point. A proof can be impeccable even if the other person is unwilling to accept it.
- **Overall Conclusion on Moral Skepticism:** Both the Cultural Differences Argument and the Provability Argument, two significant arguments for Moral Skepticism, are deemed **unsound**. While Moral Skepticism *might* still be true, it would require better arguments to support it. Summary of Argument Evaluation Principles

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Summary of Argument Evaluation Principles:

1. Arguments provide support for theories; a theory is acceptable only with sound arguments.
2. An argument is sound only if its premises are true and its conclusion logically follows.
   - A conclusion follows if, assuming premises are true, the conclusion *must* be true (impossible for premises true and conclusion false).

    - Conclusion can follow from false premises.
    - Conclusion can be true but not follow from given premises.
3. Always ask: Are the premises true? Does the conclusion follow?.
4. Avoid common mistakes:
    - Keep arguments separate and avoid confusing issues.
    - Don't overvalue an argument simply because you agree with its conclusion.
    - An unsound argument only means it fails to prove its conclusion; the conclusion might still be true, but this argument offers no support.

2 The Ethics of Torture: Ticking Bombs and Dirty Harry

The provided texts explore the complex ethical debate surrounding the use of torture, particularly in "ticking bomb" scenarios where lives are at stake. Alan Dershowitz advocates for the controlled use of nonlethal torture, suggesting judicial torture warrants to ensure accountability and prevent greater harm, drawing parallels to other morally difficult but accepted actions like the death penalty or shooting down a hijacked plane. David Luban critically challenges this "liberal ideology of torture," arguing that ticking bomb hypotheticals are unrealistic intellectual frauds that, if embraced, would inevitably lead to a normalized "torture culture" with devastating psychological and societal consequences. Conversely, Uwe Steinhoff supports the moral justification of interrogative torture in rare, extreme cases like the "Dirty Harry" scenario, even without absolute certainty, but firmly opposes Dershowitz's idea of legalizing torture warrants due to concerns about institutionalization and the brutalization of enforcers.

Here are comprehensive notes on the debate surrounding torture, drawing from the provided sources:

The Debate Over Torture: A Comprehensive Overview

The debate over the use of torture has been profoundly shaped by events like September 11, 2001, and often centers on hypothetical "ticking bomb" scenarios. While traditionally incompatible with American values and human rights, the post-9/11 era saw a shift in public and political discourse, with many, including liberals, considering torture in extreme cases.

I. Arguments in Favor of Torture (Proponents: Bentham, Dershowitz, Steinhoff)

Proponents of torture, particularly in the ticking bomb scenario, often employ a utilitarian, cost-benefit analysis.

- **Utilitarian Justification (Bentham & Dershowitz)**:
    - Jeremy Bentham posited a hypothetical: if torturing one criminal could prevent 100 innocents from suffering equal or greater torture, it would be justified. This logic extends to preventing thousands of deaths in a ticking bomb scenario.
    - **Dershowitz** applies this simple cost-benefit analysis, arguing it is better to inflict nonlethal pain on one guilty terrorist to save many innocent lives, as pain is a lesser and more remediable harm than death.
    - He illustrates this with hypotheticals:
        - **Zacarias Moussaoui case variation**: If authorities knew Moussaoui was part of a plan to destroy buildings but lacked details, and all lawful interrogation methods failed, nonlethal torture (e.g., sterilized needle under fingernails, dental drill) might be justified to prevent imminent attack.

        - **Nuclear Bomb in NYC**: If a captured terrorist knew the location of a nuclear weapon poised to detonate in New York City, and all other methods failed, nonlethal torture would be the "last, best hope".
- **Argument from Analogy (Dershowitz)**:
    - Dershowitz questions what moral principle could justify the death penalty for past murders while condemning nonlethal torture to prevent future mass murders.
    - He draws analogies to:
        - The death penalty for convicted murderers.
        - Use of deadly force against fleeing felons who pose future dangers.
        - Military retaliations causing collateral civilian deaths.
    - He suggests that opposition to nonlethal torture, for those who justify killing based on cost-benefit analysis, is often rooted in historical and aesthetic considerations rather than moral or logical ones. He notes the visceral reaction to torture compared to "aestheticized" death penalty methods.
- **Steinhoff's "Dirty Harry" Case**:
    - **Uwe Steinhoff** argues that interrogative torture is morally justified in the "Dirty Harry" case, where a police officer tortures a kidnapper to save a child's life.
    - He extends this to the ticking bomb case, even if certainty about the information or the person's guilt is lacking. He sees no moral difference between shooting a man about to shoot the president and torturing a potential bomber.
    - Crucially, Steinhoff distinguishes between moral justification in rare cases and making torture legal.

II. Arguments Against Torture (Opponents: Luban, Twining & Twining, Rule Utilitarianism)

Opponents raise significant concerns about the practical and moral implications of allowing torture, even in extreme cases.

- **Slippery Slope Objection (Rule Utilitarianism)**:
    - This is considered the strongest argument against any resort to torture.
    - While case utilitarianism might justify isolated acts, rule utilitarianism considers the implications of establishing a **precedent**. Legalizing torture, even for limited use, could lead to its widespread adoption and abuse globally.
    - Bentham scholars W. L. Twining and P. E. Twining argue that no government can be trusted not to abuse such power, supporting an absolute prohibition against institutionalized torture.
    - A "simple-minded quantitative case utilitarianism" lacks inherent limiting principles and could justify increasingly horrific acts, such as lethal torture, torturing family members, or even targeting innocent children to save more lives ("morality by numbers"). This "slippery slope" risks "hurtling down into the abyss of amorality and ultimately tyranny".
- **Luban's Critique: Ticking Bomb as "Intellectual Fraud"**:
    - **David Luban** argues that the ticking bomb scenario is an "intellectual fraud" because it rests on **unrealistic assumptions**.
    - It **stipulates certainty** that rarely exists in the real world:
        - Knowing there is a bomb and having the person who planted it.
        - Knowing the person will talk when tortured.
        - Certainty that lives will be saved.
    - Luban highlights the reality of **uncertainty and imperfect knowledge**:

        - Authorities may only *think* a plot exists or that a captive *might* know something.
        - This leads to questions about duration and intensity of torture, and the likelihood of success.
        - It can lead to torturing innocent people (e.g., 49 captives for information from one) or loved ones.
    - He warns against "morality by numbers," which can justify anything if only consequences count.
    - Luban cites **David Rousset** and **Bernard Williams** on the "insanity" of trying to rationally decide in such monstrous situations, stating that "normal human beings do not know that everything is possible".
- **Torture as a "Practice" vs. "Ad Hoc Emergency" (Luban)**:
    - The ticking bomb scenario assumes a single, ad hoc decision by officials who would not ordinarily torture. Luban argues that in reality, it creates **institutionalized practices and procedures** – a "torture culture".
    - This leads to:
        - **Professional cadres of trained torturers**: Learning techniques, overcoming revulsion, developing "surgeon's arrogance," and potentially involving medical professionals to keep captives alive for torture.
        - **Escalation of violence**: History shows that "casehardened torturers" rarely know where to draw the line, leading to abuses (e.g., Algeria, Israel, Argentina's "Dirty War"). The Stanford Prison Experiment is cited as an example of how violence becomes normalized and escalates.
        - **Bureaucratic division of labor**: The decision-maker (conscience) is not the interrogator (executor), pushing "guilty knowledge" down the chain of command, as seen in vague orders at Abu Ghraib.
        - **Totalitarian mind-control**: Even "non-abusive" interrogation techniques involve trickery, disorientation, and manipulation, creating a "false reality" for the subject. Without clear, strictly enforced rules, this can easily turn into abuse.

III. Dershowitz's Proposal: Torture Warrants

Alan Dershowitz proposes a system of **judicial torture warrants** as a "principled break" to the slippery slope.

- **Rationale**:
    - He believes torture **would be used anyway** in ticking bomb cases, so it's better to do it openly and legally rather than secretly "off-the-books".
    - This approach aims to balance security and civil liberties while ensuring **open accountability** in a democracy.
    - "Off-the-book actions" are antithetical to democracy and historically lead to negative consequences (e.g., Watergate, Iran-Contra).
    - He rejects the "hypocritical approach" of allowing torture but keeping it secret, citing the French experience in Algeria where an officer was prosecuted for *revealing* torture, not for performing it.
- **Mechanism**:
    - Judges would issue warrants (akin to search warrants) as a prerequisite for nonlethal torture.
    - This would make the practice visible, accountable, and centralized, potentially decreasing abuse compared to secret, ad hoc methods.

    - The suspect would first be offered **immunity** to compel testimony, threatened with imprisonment, and only if they still refused, subjected to judicially monitored nonlethal pain.
- **Benefits (according to Dershowitz)**:
    - **Decrease violence**: A double-check (field officer + judge) is more protective; judges would require compelling evidence.
    - **Protect rights**: Suspects would be granted immunity, and torture would only be considered if they refused legally compelled, non-incriminating information.
    - **Democratic accountability**: Responsibility for difficult choices would be placed in a visible, neutral institution like the judiciary.
    - **Historical precedent**: He notes that Anglo-Saxon law once used judicially supervised, limited nonlethal torture for discovery, not punishment, in cases of treason to protect the state.

IV. Critiques of Dershowitz's Torture Warrants

Dershowitz's proposal faces strong opposition.

- **Luban's Objection**:
    - Judges "do not fight their culture—they reflect it". If politicians accept torture, judges will too (e.g., Jay S. Bybee, who signed a permissive torture memo, later became a federal judge).
    - The warrant system would legitimize and institutionalize torture, contributing to a "torture culture".
- **Steinhoff's Objection**:
    - Torture warrants are unnecessary because cases justifying torture are rare.
    - Institutionalizing torture undermines the general prohibition and brutalizes the enforcer.

V. Ways a State Can Respond to Terrorism

The Israeli government, through a commission in the late 1980s, identified three ways a state can respond to the dilemma of fighting terrorism while maintaining rule of law; Dershowitz adds a fourth:

1. **"Twilight zone"**: Allow security services to operate outside the law.
2. **"Way of the hypocrites"**: Declare adherence to law but turn a blind eye to secret, "off-the-books" practices.
3. **"Truthful road of the rule of law"**: Integrate necessary actions (like torture) into a legal framework. This is Dershowitz's preferred option.
4. **Forgo any use of torture**: Allow preventable terrorist acts to occur. Dershowitz rejects this, citing the Israeli Supreme Court's decision to outlaw physical pressure led to at least one preventable terrorist act.

VI. Historical and Psychological Context

- **Historical Abuses**: The association of torture with gruesome deaths, the Inquisition, Gestapo, Stalinist purges, and the Argentine "dirty war" makes it difficult for many to consider "benign" nonlethal torture.
- **Bentham's Distinction**: Bentham did not distinguish between torture inflicted by private persons and by governments.
- **Early English Law**: In the 16th and 17th centuries, limited nonlethal torture was judicially supervised to secure evidence (confessions) or "for discovery" to prevent attacks on the state (e.g., treason plots).

This was centrally controlled, making it easier to abolish.
- **Ancient Jewish Law**: Required two witnesses and advance warning for conviction, disfavored confessions, and did not use torture. Instead, obvious but unwitnessed murderers were acquitted but then forcibly fed until death. More flexible "self-help" was allowed against community threats (Din Rodef).
- **Modern "Off-the-Books" Practices**: US law enforcement has reportedly facilitated torture by allied repressive regimes and engaged in physical abuse post-9/11. Threats of prison rape by prosecutors have been condemned by the Canadian Supreme Court as an abuse of process.
- **Stanford Prison Experiment**: This psychological study demonstrated how individuals assigned roles of "guards" quickly escalated to abusive behavior, highlighting how a shift in norms can normalize and increase violence.

3 Defining Morality: Reason, Impartiality, and Hard Cases

This philosophical text explores the fundamental nature of morality by examining challenging ethical dilemmas. It begins by establishing that moral philosophy investigates how we ought to live and the reasons behind our actions. The discussion then presents three compelling case studies—Baby Theresa, Jodie and Mary, and Tracy Latimer—each highlighting complex situations with divided opinions from parents, doctors, and ethicists. Through these examples, the text analyzes various moral arguments and principles, such as the "Benefits Argument," the "Wrongness of Using People as Means," the "Sanctity of Human Life," and the "Slippery Slope Argument." Ultimately, the text proposes a "minimum conception of morality" which mandates that moral judgments must be supported by sound reasoning and require the impartial consideration of every individual's interests.

Here are comprehensive notes on the nature of morality, drawing from the provided sources:

What Is Morality?

Moral philosophy is fundamentally the study of **what morality is and what it requires of us**, addressing the Socratic question of "how we ought to live" and why. A simple, uncontroversial definition of morality is difficult to establish due to many rival theories, each presenting a different conception of what it means to live morally. To navigate this, the text introduces a **"minimum conception" of morality**, which serves as a core that every moral theory should accept as a starting point. This minimum conception's features are explored through various moral controversies.

Case Studies and Moral Arguments

The text examines three case studies involving difficult moral dilemmas to illustrate the complexities of moral reasoning and the application of moral principles:

1. **Baby Theresa (Anencephalic Infant)**
    - **Case Description**: Baby Theresa was born in Florida in 1992 with anencephaly, a severe genetic disorder where major parts of the brain (cerebrum and cerebellum) are missing. She could never be conscious and would die within days. Her parents requested her organs for transplant to other children, which her physicians agreed to, but Florida law prevented removal of organs until death. By the time she died nine days later, her organs were unsuitable.
    - **The Benefits Argument (For Transplant)**:

        - **Premise**: If we can benefit someone without harming anyone else, we ought to do so. Transplanting Theresa's organs would benefit other children without harming her, as her organs were doing her no good because she was not conscious and would die soon.
        - **Assessment**: The argument is considered a **powerful reason for transplanting the organs**. The assertion that Theresa would not be harmed is supported by the idea that biological existence has no value without consciousness, activities, thoughts, feelings, or relations with other people—in other words, without the capacity to have a life.
    - **The Argument That We Should Not Use People as Means (Against Transplant)**:
        - **Premise**: It is wrong to use people as means to other people's ends. Taking Theresa's organs would be using her to benefit other children.
        - **Assessment**: The notion of "using people" is appealing but vague. Typically, it involves **violating a person's autonomy**—their ability to decide for themselves. This can happen through manipulation, trickery, deceit, or force. However, Baby Theresa had no autonomy; she could not make decisions, had no desires, and could not value anything. While her organs would be used for someone else's benefit without her permission, she had no wishes to violate.
        - **Guidelines for those unable to decide**:
            - **Best Interests**: For individuals unable to make decisions, a guideline is to consider what would be in their own best interests. For Baby Theresa, taking her organs would not affect her interests, as she was not conscious and would die soon.
            - **Person's Preferences**: Another guideline asks what the person would say if they could express their wishes. This is useful for comatose patients with prior preferences (e.g., a living will). However, Baby Theresa had no preferences, so this guideline provides no guidance. The conclusion is that others are left to do what they think is best.
    - **The Argument from the Wrongness of Killing (Against Transplant)**:
        - **Premise**: It is wrong to kill one person to save another. Taking Theresa's organs would be killing her to save others.
        - **Assessment**: While the prohibition against killing is crucial, most people accept exceptions (e.g., self-defense). Reasons to consider taking Baby Theresa's organs an exception include her lack of consciousness, no future life, imminent death, and the benefit to other babies.
        - **Rethinking Death**: Another possibility is to consider Baby Theresa as already dead. The definition of death has evolved; for example, "brain death" became the standard to allow organ transplantation from patients with healthy hearts. Although anencephalics don't meet current brain death criteria, the definition could be revised to include them, as they lack any hope for conscious life. If anencephalics were considered born dead, taking their organs would not be killing them, rendering this argument moot.
    - **Conclusion for Baby Theresa**: On the whole, the **arguments in favor of transplanting Baby Theresa's organs seem stronger** than those against it.

2. **Jodie and Mary (Conjoined Twins)**

    - **Case Description**: Conjoined twins Jodie and Mary were born in England, sharing a heart and lungs, with Jodie providing blood for Mary. Doctors predicted both would die within six months without intervention, but separation could save Jodie while immediately killing Mary. The parents, devout Catholics, refused permission for the operation, believing "nature should take

its course". The hospital sought court permission, which was granted, and Jodie lived while Mary died.

- **Focus**: The key question is not who should make the decision, but **what the wisest decision would be**.
- **The Argument That We Should Save as Many as We Can (For Separation)**:
  - **Premise**: Given a choice between saving one infant or letting both die, it is plainly better to save one. A poll showed 78% of Americans approved of the operation based on this idea.
- **The Argument from the Sanctity of Human Life (Against Separation)**:
  - **Premise**: All human life is precious, and it is wrong to kill an innocent human, regardless of the purpose it might serve. Mary was an innocent human and should not be killed. This idea is central to Western moral tradition and religious writings.
  - **Assessment**: The judges who heard the case initially denied the operation would kill Mary, stating she would die due to her body's weakness, not intentional killing. However, the text refutes this, arguing that knowingly hastening death is the essence of the prohibition against killing the innocent.
  - **Possible exception to the prohibition**: Killing innocent human beings might be justified if three conditions are met:
    - The innocent human has **no future** and will die soon anyway.
    - The innocent human has **no wish to go on living** (perhaps no wishes at all).
    - The killing will **save others** who can lead full lives.
    - These circumstances are rare, but they suggest that the killing of the innocent is not *always* wrong.

3. **Tracy Latimer (12-year-old with Cerebral Palsy)**

- **Case Description**: Tracy, a 12-year-old with severe cerebral palsy, weighing less than 40 pounds and functioning at the mental level of a three-month-old, was killed by her father, Robert Latimer, using exhaust fumes. Tracy had undergone multiple surgeries and was in constant suffering. Her father argued it was an act of mercy.
- **Moral Questions**: Beyond legal aspects, the question is whether Mr. Latimer acted wrongly. One argument against him is the inherent preciousness of Tracy's life. In his defense, her catastrophic condition and suffering could justify the act as mercy.
- **The Argument from the Wrongness of Discriminating against the Handicapped (Against Latimer's Action)**:
  - **Premise**: Handicapped people should receive the same respect and rights as everyone else. Killing Tracy because she was handicapped is unconscionable, as "nobody has the right to decide my life is worth less than yours". Discrimination involves treating some people worse for no good reason.
  - **Assessment**: Mr. Latimer denied killing Tracy due to her disability, but rather because of her **"torture issue"—her relentless suffering and lack of hope**, compounded by numerous surgeries and bedsores. He argued her cerebral palsy was not the issue, but her pain was.
- **The Slippery Slope Argument (Against Latimer's Action)**:
  - **Premise**: If we accept any form of mercy killing, we will "slide down a slippery slope" where life will eventually be held cheap. Critics warned that allowing such actions could

lead to decisions about who should live or die for other disabled people, the elderly, or the infirm, drawing parallels to Hitler's program of "racial purification".
    - **Assessment**: Slippery slope arguments are **hard to assess without hindsight**. While some past worries (like those regarding IVF) proved unfounded, reasonable people can disagree about the predictions. The text notes that these arguments are **easy to abuse** by making up implausible predictions that cannot be disproven, thus urging caution.

The Nature of Morality: Reason and Impartiality

From these cases, two main points emerge regarding the nature of morality:

1. **Moral Judgments Must Be Backed by Good Reasons (Moral Reasoning)**
    - **Limitations of Feelings**: While strong feelings can indicate moral seriousness, they can also **obstruct the discovery of truth**. Feelings can be irrational, products of prejudice, selfishness, or cultural conditioning (e.g., past beliefs about racial inferiority or slavery). Different people can have conflicting strong feelings, and both cannot be correct.
    - **Role of Reason**: To discover the truth, **feelings must be guided by reason**. The morally right action is always the one **best supported by arguments**.
    - **Distinction from Personal Taste**: Unlike personal preferences (e.g., liking coffee), which don't require reasons, **moral claims demand reasons**. If no good reason can be given for a moral judgment, it can be rejected as arbitrary. If reasons are legitimate, others must acknowledge their force.
    - **Assessing Arguments**:
        - **Get Facts Straight**: This is crucial but often difficult due to unknown facts, complex issues, or human prejudice (e.g., wanting to believe predictions that support preconceptions). Responsible moral thinking requires seeing things as they are, independent of wishes.
        - **Apply Moral Principles**: Moral arguments involve principles like "not using people," "not killing one to save another," "benefiting those affected," "life is sacred," or "not discriminating against the handicapped". It's essential to assess whether these principles are justified and applied correctly.
    - **No Simple Recipe**: There is no simple recipe for good arguments; critical thinking, rather than rote application, is necessary.
2. **Morality Requires the Impartial Consideration of Each Individual's Interests (Impartiality)**
    - **Definition**: Impartiality means that **each individual's interests are equally important; no one should receive special treatment**. It condemns discrimination (like sexism and racism) by forbidding the treatment of particular groups as inferior.
    - **Connection to Reason**: Impartiality is closely linked to the need for good reasons. For example, a racist who believes white people deserve all good jobs would fail to provide good reasons for such differential treatment (e.g., superior intelligence, industriousness, or benefit). Without good reasons, discrimination is arbitrarily unacceptable.
    - **Rule Against Arbitrary Treatment**: Impartiality is fundamentally a rule against treating people arbitrarily. It forbids treating one person worse than another *without good reason*. This also explains why *some* differential treatment is not racist or objectionable (e.g., casting an African-American actor to play Fred Shuttlesworth, as there's a good reason for it).

The Minimum Conception of Morality

Based on these insights, the **minimum conception of morality** is defined as:

- "**the effort to guide one's conduct by reason—that is, to do what there are the best reasons for doing—while giving equal weight to the interests of each individual affected by one's decision**".

The Conscientious Moral Agent

A **conscientious moral agent** embodies this minimum conception. Such an agent is characterized by:

- **Impartial concern** for the interests of everyone affected by their actions.
- **Careful sifting of facts** and examination of their implications.
- **Acceptance of conduct principles only after scrutiny** to ensure they are justified.
- **Willingness to "listen to reason,"** even if it means revising prior convictions.
- **Willingness to act on the results** of this deliberation.

While not every ethical theory fully accepts this minimum conception, most moral theories incorporate it in some form because theories that reject it encounter serious difficulties.

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4 Foundations of Ethical Thought

This chapter, "Theories of Ethics" by Stephen L. Darwall, introduces the division of ethics into meta-ethics and normative ethics, with a focus on applied or "case ethics." It explains that normative theories, such as contractarianism, contractualism, consequentialism, and deontology, offer frameworks for evaluating ethical judgments by providing principles and concepts. The text contrasts contractarianism's self-interested agreement on moral rules with contractualism's grounding in mutual respect and the notion of principles that cannot be reasonably rejected. Furthermore, it distinguishes consequentialism, which assesses actions based on their non-moral outcomes, from deontological theories, which prioritize agent-relative duties and principles, regardless of consequences. Finally, the chapter presents virtue ethics as an approach centered on character and the idea of what a virtuous person would do, often serving as a complementary or alternative perspective to conduct-focused moral theories.

I. Division of Ethics and Terminology

Ethics is conventionally divided into two main areas: **meta-ethics** and **normative ethics**. Normative ethics is further divided into normative theory and "applied ethics".

- **"Applied Ethics"**: This term may not be entirely fitting because it suggests that ethical theories are developed independently and then merely "applied" to cases, similar to pure mathematics. In reality, normative theories are often formulated and evaluated by reflecting on the ethically relevant features of specific cases, such as Judith Thomson's "trolley problem".
- **"Practical Ethics"**: This alternative term avoids the "application" suggestion but is misleading because it implies that only questions of "what to do" are of interest. However, ethical inquiry often concerns evaluations of character, motives, or broader questions like the intrinsic worth of living species or the value of aesthetic appreciation, which are not primarily practical, even if they have practical implications.
- **"Case Ethics"**: The source suggests "case ethics" as a better term.

    - It draws an analogy to "case law," where judges' findings include both conclusions and the reasoning (*ratio*) behind them.
    - In case ethics, this refers to our considered judgments about specific ethical issues or cases, along with the reasons or principled reflections that underpin these judgments.
    - Unlike legal judgments where only vested judges have authority, moral and ethical discussions are open to everyone, and no single individual holds final authority, though we may grant authority to those considered thoughtful and judicious.
    - Judges must support legal judgments with applicable laws and principles, aiming for conclusions that others could reasonably reach, though this rarely involves deductive proof. Similarly, even art critics provide reasons for their judgments.
    - Many cases in "applied" or "case ethics" involve **public morality**, where discussion takes place in a democratic society, and everyone has standing to participate.
    - When these issues involve **moral obligations**, which entail accountability and potential sanctions (as J.S. Mill noted), there's a strong need for publicly formulated, principled justifications, akin to those required for legal judgments, to restrict liberty in ways acceptable to fellow citizens.

II. Normative Ethical Theory

Philosophers use "normative ethical theory" broadly to refer to **principles, concepts, and ideals cited in support of ethical judgments about cases**.

- **Commitment to Theory**: Anytime we give reasons for an ethical judgment, we implicitly commit to some theory. Moreover, making an ethical judgment inherently commits us to the existence of a justifying background theory due to the "reason- or warrant-dependence" of ethical concepts.
- **Reason- or Warrant-Dependence**: When judging something as "good" or "morally required," we're not just stating a personal feeling, but that there is *reason* to value it or that it is *warranted*. This implies the existence of other properties that serve as reasons or grounds for that ethical property. For example, judging an action morally required implies there are characteristics of the action and situation that make it obligatory, committing us to valid moral principles relating those features to its obligatoriness.
- **Unavoidable Investigation**: Understanding normative ethical theories is unavoidable for careful ethical thought, as the quality of our judgments depends on the background theories we implicitly accept.
- **Robust Theories for Morality**: For judgments of moral right and wrong, even more robust normative theories are required. Morality, unlike some other ethical areas, is modeled on law; wrongdoing warrants blame and accountability, which are directive and often coercive practices. Thus, like judges, we face pressure to articulate principles that justify our judgments and can be publicly accepted by the moral community. The expectation is that those held accountable for wrongdoing should be able to accept the judgment as reasonable, which is distinct from other ethical assessments like disdain for cowardice. This burden of public justification makes normative moral theory integral to public moral discourse.

III. Meta-ethics

Meta-ethics addresses **abstract philosophical issues underlying normative questions**. It is traditionally divided into four kinds of questions:

- **(a) Philosophy of language**: Meaning and content of ethical judgments.
- **(b) Philosophy of mind**: Mental states expressed by ethical judgments or what it means to hold an ethical view.
- **(c) Metaphysics**: Possibility and nature of ethical truth.
- **(d) Epistemology**: Possibility and nature of ethical knowledge and its justification.

Why care about meta-ethics? The view that case ethics can be entirely divorced from meta-ethics is mistaken. A sharp separation distorts both how great ethical thinkers proceeded and how contemporary moral debate should proceed.

- **Environmental Ethics Example**: Thinking carefully about moral claims of other living species (e.g., weighing harm to them) necessitates engaging with meta-ethical issues.
    - **Nature of Harm**: To be harmed, something must have a good or welfare. A common meta-ethical view that a person's good consists in desire satisfaction (or informed desires) would rule out the possibility of species lacking desire from being harmed or benefited. However, the concept of welfare can be understood as what we require when we care for something for its sake, thus extending harm and benefit beyond beings with desires. We can sensibly regard a species as capable of being benefited or harmed if we can care for them for their sake.
    - **Nature of Moral Obligation**: Whether harm to other species carries the same moral relevance as harm to persons depends on one's meta-ethical stance on what morality and moral obligation *are*.
        - If morality is understood broadly, then all harm might seem equally morally relevant.
        - However, if morality is conceived as a **system of reciprocity or mutual accountability**, where norms mediate a community of free and equal moral persons, then harm to persons has intrinsic moral relevance because norms of right and wrong must be justifiable to members of this community. Harm to other species, in this view, does not hold the same status.
- **Conclusion on Meta-ethics**: These examples demonstrate how meta-ethical questions are implicitly involved in normative ethical theory and case ethics, making it necessary to pursue philosophical ethics that integrates both.

IV. Major Normative Ethical Theories

The chapter reviews major normative ethical theories: contractualism, consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory.

A. Contractarianism/Contractualism

This approach grounds whether an action is right or wrong in **principles that would be the object of an agreement, contract, or choice made under certain conditions by members of the moral community**.

- **Distinction**:
    - **Contractarianism**: Choice of moral principles is **self-interested**.
    - **Contractualism**: Grounds principles in a moral ideal of **reciprocity, reasonableness, or fairness**.
- **Hypothetical Agreement**: Rarely do these theories claim that right and wrong are determined by actual choices; rather, they posit principles that *would be* rationally or reasonably chosen or agreed to under specified (often counterfactual) conditions.

1. Contractarianism

- **Origin**: Formulated by Thomas Hobbes.
- **Foundation**: Hobbes considers agents deliberating from their own desires and interests. The problem arises in **collective action problems**, where individual pursuit of self-interest leads to worse outcomes for all than if they had pursued some other aim or acted on different principles.
- **Prisoner's Dilemma**: This game-theoretic example illustrates how two individuals, acting purely in their self-interest (minimizing jail time), both confess and end up with a worse outcome (5 years each) than if they had cooperated by not confessing (1 year each). Individual rational action leads to a collectively suboptimal outcome.
- **Cooperation**: People cooperate by forgoing independent interests and following rules that collectively promote everyone's interests better than independent pursuit. Morality is seen as a broad form of cooperation among all competent human agents.
- **Moral Principles**: Contractarianism holds that right and wrong are determined by the rules of this broadest cooperation. For example, a rule of mutual aid (helping others in need if sacrifice is not too great) might be adopted if everyone following it promotes everyone's interests more than independent action.
- **Rational Bargaining**: When multiple rules could promote everyone's interests, contractarianism defines moral principles as the **solution to a rational bargaining problem**. Starting from a "no agreement" point (where all are bound only by self-interest), parties agree to mutually advantageous principles. The resulting principles depend on who has the most to lose if no agreement is reached.
- **Application**: To assess moral obligations (e.g., rich and poor countries reducing global warming), one considers what agreement on principles would arise from a negotiation where each party attempts to advance its own interests. Parties cooperate by making necessary sacrifices, prepared to do their part as required by rationally agreeable principles.

2. Contractualism

- **Structure**: Similar to contractarianism in understanding right conduct as the object of rational agreement.
- **Key Difference**: Contractualism's agreement on principles is governed by a **moral ideal of equal respect**, rather than rational bargaining.
- **Critique of Contractarianism**:
    - Contractarianism implicitly assumes individuals have a moral claim to resources they'd have without cooperation, which seems arbitrary without a background theory of natural rights, which contractarianism cannot justify.
    - It struggles to explain how self-interested reasoning leads to actual motivation to follow rules, as following rules requires constraining self-interest and thus accepting prior moral reasons for cooperation.
- **Animating Idea (Kant and Rousseau)**:
    - Implicit in Kant's "kingdom of ends," where moral agents are also "making the law," legislating common laws they subject themselves to as free and equal members.
    - Similar to Rousseau's "general will," where laws express the will of each as a free and equal member, allowing individuals to obey only themselves while uniting with all.
- **Common Perspective**: Moral principles are not prescribed from individual self-interest, but from a **common perspective as one free and equal person among others**.
- **Rawls's "Original Position"**:

    - This perspective is concretized by John Rawls's idea of choosing principles of justice behind a **"veil of ignorance"**. Parties are ignorant of individual resources, abilities, talents, gender, race, socioeconomic position, and their own interests or individual values.
    - They are assumed to value "primary goods" necessary for pursuing interests (freedom, opportunities, wealth, social bases of self-respect).
    - Choosing from behind the veil, even if self-interested *within those constraints*, is functionally equivalent to choosing out of concern for any single other individual, thus representing the perspective of an arbitrary, free, and equal individual.
    - Rawls argues this leads to two principles: basic civil/political rights and freedoms, and the "difference principle" (fair equality of opportunity and distribution of wealth to the greatest advantage of the least advantaged). This protects against the worst possibilities by considering oneself as potentially anyone.
    - Originally a theory of justice ("justice as fairness"), Rawls later emphasized its political nature, but also suggested it could be a moral theory ("rightness as fairness") by asking what principles of individual conduct would be chosen from the original position.
- **Scanlon's Contractualism**:
    - Motivated by the idea of making claims on someone as an equal, based on reasonable needs.
    - Assumes a community whose members want to justify their conduct by principles that others could **not reasonably reject**, provided others share this aim.
    - Principles of moral right and wrong structure a mutually accountable community of equals.
    - **Application**: Requires judgments about what is "reasonable" by impartially entering into others' perspectives to see if a claim or objection is reasonable to make to an equal. Example: principles for reducing fossil fuels where developed and developing countries cannot reasonably reject the standards.

B. Consequentialism

Consequentialism begins with **non-moral values that are held to be prior to morality itself**.

- **Non-moral Value Theory**: Some things are good or bad irrespective of moral agency or character (e.g., suffering caused by an earthquake is bad, not morally wrong). These are judgments about states of affairs, not moral evaluations.
- **Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value**: Consequentialist theories start with a normative theory of which states of the world have intrinsic value or disvalue, and how these compare. These values are non-moral because they evaluate outcomes, not moral agency or character, though outcomes might *include* agency/character. For example, thinking Hitler's assassination would have been a "good thing to happen" (due to lives saved) is consistent with thinking it might have been morally wrong.
- **Determinant of Rightness/Wrongness**: All consequentialist theories agree that the **moral rightness and wrongness of acts are determined by the non-moral goodness of relevant consequences**.
- **Divisions within Consequentialism**:
    - **Different theories of non-moral value**: e.g., hedonism (pleasure as only intrinsic good) vs. preserving species/cultural treasures.
    - **Different relevant consequences**:
        - **Act-consequentialism**: Rightness of an act depends on the value of *that act's* consequences compared to other available acts.
        - **Rule-consequentialism**: Rightness of acts depends on the consequences of the *social acceptance of a rule* requiring, forbidding, or permitting the act, compared to other

possible rules.

- **Instrumental/Extrinsic Value**: All forms understand moral evaluation as an assessment of instrumental or extrinsic value at the most fundamental level. Acts, social rules, or character traits are judged by how well they promote the most valuable states.
- **Benefit Consequentialism**: Historically, consequentialism has often linked valuable outcomes to the lives of conscious beings.
    - This view, **benefit consequentialism**, posits that valuable states concern the good or welfare of some being.
    - While some perfectionists believe a being's good lies in approximating an ideal (e.g., Aristotle's human flourishing), benefit consequentialists usually hold that benefit/harm relates to mental lives (hedonistic or desire-based forms).
- **Utilitarianism**: The most popular historical form, distinguished by three features:
    1. **Benefit consequentialist**: Based on hedonistic or desire-based conceptions of benefit.
    2. **Summing values**: Non-moral value of outcomes determined by summing benefits and costs to all affected parties.
    3. **Greatest overall value**: Moral rightness of action or character depends on what produces the greatest overall value (summed).
    - **Classical Hedonistic Utilitarianism (Bentham)**: Happiness is an experienced state; people are benefited by pleasure over pain in their conscious lives.
    - **Desire-Satisfaction Utilitarianism**: Welfare determined by individual desires and preferences, even for things not directly experienced (e.g., survival of a wilderness area).
- **Broader Considerations**: Consequentialism is not limited to utilitarian or benefit-focused versions. It can include intrinsic values like knowledge, understanding, friendship, love, beauty, artistic/cultural activity, or the existence of a species. The test for moral relevance is simply whether a state of affairs positively contributes to the value instantiated in the world.
- **Scope**: This structure allows consequentialism to consider a wider range of issues than contractarianism/contractualism, including non-human interests (e.g., animals' capacity to suffer, as Bentham noted).
- **Agent-Neutrality**: A crucial feature is the **agent-neutrality of its fundamental values**. Values derive from the existence of states and justify actions to promote them, regardless of the agent's relation to those states. Example: If betrayal is intrinsically bad, then you have reason to betray your own friend if it would prevent more overall betrayals by others, even though this contradicts common moral sense about agent-relative duties.
- **Rule-Consequentialism and Agent-Relativity**: Rule-consequentialism *can* agree with common moral sense regarding agent-relative duties (e.g., not betraying friends) if establishing social practices and psychological patterns guided by such rules produces the greatest overall agent-neutral value. However, for rule-consequentialists, the ultimate reason for accepting agent-relative rules is still instrumental: they promote agent-neutral value.

C. Deontology

Deontological theories fundamentally diverge from consequentialism by holding that **what is morally right and wrong is not determined at any level by what promotes the best outcomes or states, assessed agent-neutrally**.

- **Skepticism of Agent-Neutral Values**: Deontologists may be skeptical of the very possibility of pre- or non-moral evaluations of states that are both agent-neutral and morally relevant.

- **Beyond Outcomes**: They disagree with act-consequentialism that producing good/bad outcomes is the *only* thing that makes an act right/wrong. They also disagree with rule-consequentialism that the reason for this is merely that believing it produces best outcomes.
- **Agent-Relative Principles**: Deontologists assert that at least some fundamental moral principles or ideas are **agent-relative "all the way down"**. Actions are based on reasons and principles that involve the agent's relation to various persons or beings in the outcomes they affect (e.g., harming *one's own* friends, breaking *one's own* promises).
- **Contractualism as Deontological**: Contractualism is an example of a deontological theory because it grounds moral principles in the agent-relative idea of living with others on terms of mutual respect.
- **Intuitionism**: Many deontological theories are defended directly, without grounding them in a more basic theory. These versions are historically called intuitionist, characterized by the view that there is an **irreducible plurality of different right- or wrong-making features**. Their moral relevance cannot be derived from a more fundamental principle but is confirmed by moral reflection or "intuition".
    - Examples: It can seem obvious that betrayal or a broken promise counts against an action morally. The "trolley problem" can reveal an evident moral difference between causing harm and allowing it to happen.
- **Doctrine of Double Effect**: A specific principle defended by some deontologists, stating a moral difference between causing harm as an unintended side-effect of an intended action and intending the harm directly (as an end or means). Example: bombing military targets causing civilian casualties (unintended side-effect) vs. directly killing the same number of civilians (intended harm), even for the same goal. This has been applied to abortion debates, arguing that directly intending the death of a fetus to save the mother is morally worse than a procedure that risks the fetus's death as an unintended side-effect.
- **Variety of Independent Duties/Principles** (Intuitionist list):
    1. **Duties of beneficence and non-maleficence**: Affecting the good of others is relevant, but the agent's antecedent relations matter. Harming is worse than failing to benefit; doing harm is worse than failing to prevent it; directly intending harm is worse than causing it as a side-effect.
    2. **Duties of special care**: Arise from specific caretaking relations (e.g., parents to children, doctors to patients).
    3. **Duties of honesty and fidelity**: Not lying, keeping promises, upholding contracts, and not violating trust (including in personal relationships).
    4. **Duties deriving from agents' and patients' histories of conduct**: Acknowledging fault for wrongs, offering restitution, gratitude for benefits received, and appropriate responses to merit/desert.
    5. **Duties of reciprocity and fair play**: Doing one's part in mutually advantageous cooperation, especially when accepting benefits. Contractarians/contractualists see this as fundamental, while intuitionists see it as one among many.
    6. **Further duties of justice**: From political relations (e.g., equal citizenship, supporting a just political order, establishing justice internationally).
    7. **Duties to other species**: Beyond beneficence/non-maleficence, special obligations can arise from history of interaction (e.g., pets, species cultivated for human purposes).
- **"Right is Prior to the Good"**: Both intuitionist and contractualist deontologists believe that attempts to derive rightness from agent-neutral outcome value will fail. Moral duties arise from the agent's specific place within the world, defined by complex relations to others and their histories, not from an agent-neutral observer's standpoint.
- **Interaction of Principles**: Actual cases involve complex combinations of principles.

    - **W.D. Ross's Distinction**: Between *prima facie* (or *pro tanto*) duties (holding "other things being equal") and *all things considered* duties ("sans phrase"). A *pro tanto* duty is a right- or wrong-making consideration that *would* make an action right or wrong if it were the only morally relevant feature.
    - **Weighing and Overriding**: In real cases, different duties interact. One duty might be weightier and override another (e.g., saving a life overriding a mundane promise), but the overridden duty may give rise to a **residual obligation** (e.g., compensating the promisee).
    - **Defeating**: Sometimes, one consideration can wholly defeat another, rather than just outweighing it (e.g., injustice tainting a benefit can cancel the positive reason to provide it).
- **Intuitionist Moral Reflection**: Intuitionists believe there is no substitute for carefully considering cases in their full complexity. While factoring a case into *prima facie* duties is useful, the interaction of these duties defies general formulation, requiring a reflective sense of the moral verdict they ultimately support.

D. Virtue Theory

Virtue ethics is **orthogonal** to contractarianism/contractualism, consequentialism, and deontology in two main ways:

- **Primary Concern**: It focuses primarily on **character** ("how we should be") rather than **conduct** ("what we should do").
- **Relation to Morality**: It is often advanced not as a moral theory but as an account of other, ethically deep aspects of human life, sometimes as a **rival or replacement for morality** and its distinct forms.
    - The modern concept of morality (universal, authoritative norms/laws) is seen as a secular successor to Judeo-Christian-Islamic ideas of divinely ordained law.
    - Some philosophers argue this conception is defective and that ethical reflection would be more profitable in other forms, looking to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.
- **Aristotle's Approach**: Instead of asking about the fundamental principle of moral right or duty, Aristotle asks, "What is the goal of human life?" or "What kind of life is best for human beings?".
- **Non-Moral Virtue Ethics (Aristotle)**:
    - "Non-moral" because it doesn't relate virtues to a concept of moral law or universal accountability as equals.
    - **Virtues (areté)**: Dispositions to choose what is **fine or noble (kalon)** for its own sake and avoid what is base. They are excellences that make something an excellent instance of its kind (e.g., sharpness in a knife).
    - **Function (ergon)**: Excellences are reckoned in relation to a thing's characteristic activity. For humans, this is action (*praxis*) expressing distinctively human choice, guided by an ideal of human excellence.
    - **Operative Ethical Emotions**: Shame, esteem, pride, disdain/contempt, rather than guilt, respect, self-respect, and moral indignation (which are more aligned with a moral law model).
- **General Non-Moral Virtue Ethics**: Any non-moral human ideal, which may or may not be tied to a teleological/perfectionist view of human nature. It can simply be a normative view of which human traits are worthy of esteem (or disdain).
- **Moral Virtue Ethics**: Focuses on traits worthy of *distinctively moral* esteem. Francis Hutcheson, for example, argued that the basic moral phenomenon is esteem for benevolence (desire to benefit others), valuing the motive/trait rather than just the outcome.
- **Bearing on Case Ethics**:

1. **Broader Ethical Questions**: Reminds us that right/wrong are not the only, or necessarily most important, ethical questions. For example, failing to aid the hungry might not be "seriously morally wrong" but could manifest vices like complacency. Clear-cutting a forest might show an inappropriate attitude, even if the environment can't be "wronged".
2. **Guidance through Exemplars**: Asks what a **virtuous person** (or someone with a specific virtue like generosity) would do in a given case. This can be a heuristic or reflect the Aristotelian view that ethical insight requires the wisdom or "sense" of the virtuous person, making it inaccessible to those who "have to ask".
3. **Defining Right Action**: Some virtue ethicists hold that an action is right or appropriate *just in case it is what the virtuous person would characteristically do* in that circumstance. While potentially departing from Aristotle's letter (where virtues are dispositions to choose noble actions), it maintains the spirit that access to appropriate action is through the wisdom of a virtuous person.

- **Limitations in Case Ethics**: Writers on case ethics look to virtue ethics less frequently for questions of *moral right and wrong*. This is because judgments of moral obligation are implicitly directive and hold others accountable, requiring **publicly articulable, action-guiding principles** that can be grasped and applied by normally competent moral agents without special virtue. This need for public justification drives the development of contractarian/contractualist, consequentialist, and deontological theories.

V. Integration of Theories

Ultimately, there is no alternative but to pursue philosophical ethics, integrating normative ethics and meta-ethics to form a comprehensive outlook.

5 An Introduction to Moral Philosophy and Argument

This document introduces fundamental concepts in moral philosophy, beginning with the ancient Greek idea of Gyges's ring to question why individuals should act morally when they can escape consequences. It then explores various historical ethical frameworks, including Relativism, which ties morality to social customs, and Divine Command Theory, which bases ethics on religious decrees. The text progresses to Aristotle's virtue ethics and the subsequent Natural Law theory, explaining how they connect morality to inherent purposes. Finally, it presents modern ethical theories: Social Contract Theory, which posits morality as an agreement for mutual benefit, and Utilitarianism, advocating for actions that produce the greatest happiness. The document concludes by outlining how to evaluate philosophical arguments through logical validity and factual premises, especially in the context of Moral Skepticism.

Chapter 1: A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy

The text introduces moral philosophy by posing fundamental questions about morality, its importance, justifications for acting in one way over another, and the nature of right and wrong.

- **The Challenge of Gyges's Ring**
    - **The Legend**: Gyges, a poor shepherd, finds a magic ring that grants invisibility. He uses this power to seduce the queen, murder the king, and seize the throne, swiftly transitioning from poverty to kingship.
    - **Glaucon's Point**: In Plato's *Republic*, Glaucon uses this story in a dialogue with Socrates to question the nature of morality. He asks us to imagine two such rings, one given to a virtuous

man and one to a rogue.
    - **Expected Behavior**:
        - The **rogue** would, protected by invisibility, recognize no moral constraints and pursue personal wealth and power without fear of discovery.
        - Glaucon suggests the **virtuous man** would behave no differently. Freed from fear of reprisal, he would also indulge his desires (taking goods, sleeping with whomever he chose, killing at will) and act like a god.
    - **The Question**: Glaucon then asks, why shouldn't he? Why should a person care about "morality" if freed from the fear of consequences and able to do what he pleases or what he thinks is best for himself? This challenge forms a central inquiry for moral philosophy.

- **Philosophical Theories on Morality**

    - **Relativism**

        - **Core Idea**: Perhaps the oldest philosophical theory, it posits that **right and wrong are relative to the customs of one's society**, suggesting morality is merely social convention.
        - **Herodotus's Illustration**: The Greek historian Herodotus (contemporary of Socrates) observed diverse customs, like the Massagetae tribe in Central Asia. They practiced polyandry (one wife, held in common), sacrificed the very old and ate their flesh, and buried those who died of disease as unfortunate. Herodotus believed these customs were neither better nor worse than others, just different, and that people naturally believe their own society's customs are the best.
        - **Critiques of Relativism**:
            - **Conservatism**: Critics argue that Relativism is **exceedingly conservative**, endorsing current societal moral views. This would mean reformers who disagree with dominant views (e.g., on capital punishment, homosexuality, animal treatment) would be considered wrong simply for opposing the majority.
            - **Socrates's Deeper Problem**: Socrates emphasized that while some customs are arbitrary (like funerary practices, e.g., Greeks burned, Callatians ate their dead), others are not. There can be **objective reasons why some practices are superior**. For example, honesty and respect for human life are socially desirable, while slavery and racism are undesirable. These judgments can be supported by rational arguments, moving them beyond "merely" being expressions of a society's moral code.

    - **Divine Commands**

        - **Core Idea**: Moral living consists of **obedience to divine commands**.
        - **Addressing Gyges's Ring**: This view offers a potential answer to Gyges's challenge, as even with invisibility, one would still be subject to divine retribution, thus unable to "get away with" wrongdoing.
        - **Socrates's Critique (from Plato's *Euthyphro*)**: Socrates, while accepting the existence of gods, argued this could not be the ultimate basis of ethics.
            - **Practical Difficulties**:
                - **Knowing Commands**: How does one know what gods command? Claims of divine communication can be signs of mental illness, and scripture/church

tradition are notoriously ambiguous, often supporting pre-existing moral views.
        - **Contemporary Problems**: Ancient sources offer little direct guidance for modern issues like environmental preservation or resource allocation for AIDS research.
    - **The Euthyphro Dilemma**: Socrates pointed out a deeper logical problem:
        - **Arbitrary Commands**: If gods have no reason for their commands, their instructions are arbitrary, like petty tyrants, which is an impious view for religious people to accept.
        - **Independent Standard**: If gods *do* have good reasons, then there is a **standard of rightness independent of their commands**, to which the gods themselves refer. This means the rightness or wrongness of actions is not *merely* conformity to divine prescriptions; we can always ask *why* gods command what they do.

- **Aristotle and Natural Law**

    - **Aristotle's Ethics**: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (ca. 330 BCE) was the first systematic treatise on moral philosophy. He focused on **virtues**—qualities of character (courage, prudence, generosity, honesty) necessary for human happiness. His answer to Gyges's ring was that virtue is essential for happiness, making the virtuous man ultimately better off.
    - **Aristotle's Worldview (Teleology)**: Aristotle believed **everything in nature exists for a purpose**. Examples include teeth for chewing, eyes for seeing, and rain falling for plants to grow. He saw the world as an orderly, rational system where everything serves a special purpose, forming a hierarchy where plants exist for animals, and animals exist **for the sake of people** ("stunningly anthropocentric").
    - **Natural Law (Christian Adaptation)**: Later Christian thinkers adopted Aristotle's teleological view, adding God as the Creator who intended these purposes. Rain falls to help plants because God intended it, and animals are for human use because God made them for that purpose.
        - **Ethical Consequences**: This worldview enshrined the supreme value of human life and justified human domination over nature, viewing it as the "Natural Order of Things".
        - **"Laws of Nature"**: Natural laws were seen to specify not just how things *are* but how things *ought to be*. Things serving their natural purposes are good; those that don't (e.g., decayed teeth, drought) are defective or evil.
        - **Moral Rules**: Some human behaviors are "natural" (e.g., beneficence because we are social creatures), while "unnatural" acts are wrong. For instance, the purpose of sex organs is procreation, leading the Christian church to traditionally regard any non-procreative sexual activity (masturbation, gay sex, contraception) as "contrary to nature" and impermissible.
        - **Aquinas**: Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) fully developed Natural Law Theory, but its reliance on the Aristotelian worldview means it has few adherents outside the Catholic Church today.
    - **Decline of Natural Law**: The rise of modern science (Galileo, Newton, Darwin) replaced the Aristotelian worldview. Scientists explained natural phenomena without "evaluative

notions" or inherent purposes. Rain has no purpose; species evolve in environments where water is available. This outlook, which the Catholic Church condemned, removed intrinsic value and purpose from the natural world.

- **Hume's Conclusion**: David Hume (18th century) articulated the moral implications, stating that right and wrong could no longer be deduced from the nature of things. He concluded there are "no moral facts," and that "the life of a man is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster," seeing vice as merely a "sentiment of [disapproval]" within us, not an objective fact in the world.

- **The Social Contract**

  - **Context**: With divine commands and natural purposes discarded, ethics needed a purely human basis, stemming from human needs, interests, and desires. This became the main project of moral philosophy from the 17th century onwards.
  - **Thomas Hobbes's View**: Hobbes (17th century English philosopher) proposed a secular, naturalistic basis for ethics. He believed "good" and "bad" are simply names for what we like and dislike, but fundamentally, we are all **self-interested creatures wanting to live and live well**.
  - **Origin of Ethics**: Ethics arises from the realization that living in a **mutually cooperative society** makes individuals enormously better off than if they were alone. Social cooperation provides benefits like schools, hospitals, infrastructure, technology, culture, science, and agriculture.
  - **Rules of Behavior**: To achieve these benefits, a cooperative society requires adopting specific rules: telling the truth, keeping promises, respecting lives and property. Without these, communication, the economy, and security would collapse.
  - **The Social Contract Defined**: Morality is thus a bargain: individuals agree to obey these rules for their mutual benefit, *provided others do likewise*. Mechanisms (legal sanctions, informal enforcement) are needed to ensure compliance. Morality is **"the set of rules that rational people will agree to obey, for their mutual benefit, provided that other people will obey them as well"**.
  - **Appealing Features**:
    - **Practical**: It demystifies ethics, making it a practical, down-to-earth matter of making social living possible.
    - **Answers Gyges (Partially)**: It explains why we should care about ethics—it's to our advantage to live in a moral society. Accepting moral restrictions is a rational bargain; we benefit from others' ethical conduct, and our compliance is the price for theirs.
    - **Sensible Duties**: The purpose of morality is social cooperation, not restricting personal lives (e.g., bedroom activities), which the theory would have little interest in.
    - **Minimal Assumptions**: It treats humans as self-interested and does not assume natural altruism. It shows how moral obligations, including often acting altruistically, arise from banding together for this fundamentally self-interested goal.
  - **Critique (Altruism and Self-Interest)**: While the Social Contract Theory has supporters, many philosophers question Hobbes's purely egoistic view of human nature. Humans appear to have some **altruistic feelings** (for family, friends), having evolved as social

creatures. Hume argued that our moral opinions are expressions of "social sentiments" that connect us to others' welfare, leading us to measure right and wrong by "the true interests of mankind". This idea led to Utilitarianism.

- **Utilitarianism**
  - **Core Principle**: Utilitarians believe all moral duties can be summed up in one precept: **"we should always do whatever will produce the greatest possible balance of happiness over unhappiness for everyone who will be affected by our action"**. This is the "principle of utility".
  - **Three Key Ideas**:
    - **Consequentialism**: Guided by the **expected consequences** of actions; do whatever has the best consequences.
    - **Happiness Focus**: The best consequences are those that cause the **most happiness or least unhappiness**.
    - **Impartiality**: **Each individual's happiness is equally as important as anyone else's**.
  - **Key Figures**:
    - **Jeremy Bentham** (late 18th/early 19th century): Led philosophical radicals to reform British laws along utilitarian lines, successful in prison reform and restricting child labor.
    - **John Stuart Mill** (1861): Gave the theory its most popular and influential defense in *Utilitarianism*.
  - **Controversial and Subversive Aspects**:
    - **"Godless Doctrine"**: Ignored conventional religious notions, focusing on making life in *this* world happy. Mill countered that if God desires the happiness of his creatures, Utilitarianism is profoundly religious.
    - **Criminal Justice**: Bentham argued punishment should identify causes of crime, reform lawbreakers, and deter others, not "pay back" wrongdoers.
    - **Equality**: By insisting on equal importance for everyone's happiness, Utilitarians challenged elitist notions (race, sex, social class), exemplified by Mill's *The Subjection of Women*.
    - **No Absolute Rules**: Traditional rules (against killing, lying, promise-breaking) are seen as "rules of thumb" useful *generally*, but not absolute. They should be broken if doing so yields better overall results (e.g., voluntary euthanasia for painful illness). Some traditional rules (like condemnation of masturbation or homosexuality) are viewed as dubious or harmful by Utilitarians if they cause misery without harming others.
  - **Justification (Mill)**: Why promote general happiness? Aside from "external sanctions" (law, public opinion), Mill argued the "internal sanction" is **"a feeling in our minds,"** specifically the "social feelings of mankind"—the desire to be in unity with fellow creatures—which strengthens with advancing civilization.

- **Impartiality: Social Contract vs. Utilitarianism**
  - **Similarities**: Both theories have similar implications for many practical matters (punishment, racial discrimination, women's rights, euthanasia, homosexuality).
  - **Key Difference: Duty to Help Strangers**:

- **Utilitarianism**: Requires an **extensive moral duty to help other people**. For example, spending $1000 on UNICEF for medicine for dozens of children instead of a new carpet, because the medicine provides far greater utility (happiness/unhappiness balance).
- **Social Contract**: Denies an extensive duty to help strangers. Based on self-interest, rational people would agree not to harm strangers and perhaps offer easy aid, but not a general, virtually unlimited duty that comes at great personal cost.
- **Jan Narveson (Contract Theorist)**: Argues that morals are agreements among people pursuing their own interests, which don't necessarily include much concern for others. We agree not to harm and to respect property, but not to go "very far out of our way to be very helpful to those we don’t know and may not particularly care for". He uses the example of choosing a daughter's birthday party over saving a dozen strangers, stating that "people do not 'count equally'" for most, and normal people prioritize those they care for.
- **Mill's Rebuttal**: While acknowledging personal feelings, Mill argues that "conscientious feelings"—those that prevail after thoughtful reflection—should determine obligations. He assumes we cannot, reflectively, choose a trivial personal benefit (like a party) over saving many lives.
- **Peter Singer (Contemporary Utilitarian)**: Argues that reason leads to impartiality. We can see ourselves as "just one being among others, with interests and desires like others." From "the point of view of the universe," our personal perspective (prioritizing self, family, friends) is no more privileged than anyone else's. Reason allows us to detach from our personal perspective and acknowledge that our needs and interests are comparable to others, justifying no special status for our own.

- **Kant**

  - **Core Idea**: Immanuel Kant's system of ethics (18th century German philosopher) sees morality as a product of **"pure reason,"** not divine commands or "moral facts". Moral law is binding on us because of our reason, just as some actions are binding due to desires.
  - **Categorical Imperative**: Kant believed morality could be summed up in one ultimate principle, but unlike Utilitarianism, he **did not emphasize the outcomes of actions**. What mattered was "doing one's duty," which is not determined by calculating consequences. He offered two formulations:
    - **First Formulation (Universal Law)**: **"Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law"**.
      - **Procedure**: When considering an action, ask what rule (maxim) you would be following. Then, ask if you would be willing for *everyone* to follow that rule *all the time*. If yes, the act is permissible; if no, it is morally impermissible.
      - **Rationality and Consistency**: The moral law binds us due to rationality, which requires consistency. Acting on a maxim you wouldn't want universally adopted is inconsistent. This leads Kant to endorse **absolute prohibitions** with no exceptions, such as against lying or suicide.
    - **Second Formulation (Humanity as an End)**: **"So act that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as means only"**.

        - **Treating as Means vs. Ends**: To treat someone "as a means" is to manipulate them for your own goals. For example, making a false promise to get money uses a friend as a means. To treat someone "as an end" means to respect their rationality and autonomy. If you told your friend the truth about your inability to repay, they could freely choose whether to help, making your purpose their own if they decide to give the money.

Chapter 2: Some Basic Points about Arguments

Evaluating philosophical ideas requires examining the arguments that support them. A theory is acceptable only if there are **sound arguments** in its favor.

- **Definition of an Argument (Logician's Sense)**
    - An argument is a **chain of reasoning designed to prove something**. It consists of one or more **premises** and a **conclusion**, with the claim that the conclusion follows from the premises.
    - **Example**: (1) All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal. (Premises: first two statements; Conclusion: third statement).
- **Validity**
    - A conclusion "follows from" premises (an argument is **valid**) if, and only if, **it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false at the same time**.
    - Example (1) is valid: If all men are mortal and Socrates is a man, Socrates *must* be mortal.
    - An argument can be valid even if its premises are not actually true. Example: (2) All people from Georgia are famous. Jimmy Carter is from Georgia. Therefore, Jimmy Carter is famous. (This is valid, but the first premise is false).
- **Soundness**
    - An argument is **sound** if and only if **it is valid AND its premises are true**.
    - Example (1) (Socrates) is sound.
    - Example (2) (Jimmy Carter) is not sound because, while valid, its first premise is false.
    - An argument can be unsound even if its premises and conclusion are all true, if the conclusion does not logically follow from the premises (i.e., it's invalid). Example: (3) The earth has one moon. John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Therefore, snow is white. (All true statements, but the conclusion doesn't follow).
- **Evaluating Arguments**: When evaluating an argument, one must ask two separate questions: **Are the premises true?** and **Does the conclusion follow from them?**.
- **Moral Skepticism and its Arguments**
    - **Definition**: Moral Skepticism is the idea that **there is no such thing as objective moral truth**. Morality is subjective, a matter of opinion, and values exist only in our minds.
    - **The Cultural Differences Argument (CDA)**:
        - **Premises**: In some societies (e.g., Eskimos), infanticide is acceptable; in others (e.g., our own), it is odious.

        - **Conclusion**: Therefore, infanticide is neither objectively right nor wrong; it's merely a matter of opinion that varies by culture.
        - **Critique**: This argument is **not valid**. The conclusion concerns what *is* true, but the premises only state what people *believe*. From the mere fact of different beliefs, it does not follow that there is no truth in the matter. People (or whole societies) can be mistaken (e.g., believing the earth is flat doesn't mean it's objectively shapeless).
        - **Common Mistakes to Avoid**:
            - **Rejecting an argument doesn't mean its conclusion is false**: An unsound argument merely fails to provide *support* for its conclusion; the conclusion might still be true for other reasons.
            - **Confusing arguments**: The CDA is distinct from arguments about "provability" in ethics. Different premises make different arguments.

    - **The Provability Argument**:

        - **Premises**: (1) If objective truth in ethics existed, we could prove moral opinions true/false. (2) We cannot prove moral opinions true/false.
        - **Conclusion**: Therefore, there is no such thing as objective truth in ethics.
        - **Critique**: The conclusion seems to follow from the premises, but the **second premise (that moral judgments cannot be proven) is questionable**.
            - **Counter-examples**: We often *can* give good reasons to back up ethical judgments, proving them correct. For instance, a student can prove a test was unfair by pointing out its length, focus on trivial matters, or inclusion of un-covered material. Similarly, one can prove someone is a "bad man" or "irresponsible" with supporting evidence of their actions.
            - **Reasons for Misconception**:
                - **Focus on Difficult Issues**: People tend to focus only on highly complex moral dilemmas like abortion, making "proof" seem impossible. Simpler moral matters often have widely agreed-upon proofs.
                - **Confusing Proof with Persuasion**: It's easy to confuse *proving* an opinion to be correct with *persuading* someone to accept that proof. A proof can be impeccable, but the other person might be stubborn or unreasonable, which doesn't invalidate the argument itself.

- **Overall Conclusion on Arguments**: The main arguments for Moral Skepticism discussed are not sound. To evaluate philosophical ideas, always consider the reasons for and against them, distinguishing sound arguments (valid with true premises) from unsound ones.

6 Equality: Beyond Race, Sex, and Ability

The provided text examines the concept of equality, distinguishing between factual differences among humans and the ethical principle of equal consideration of interests. It critiques common justifications for equality, such as shared intelligence or moral personality, arguing that no natural characteristic is equally possessed by all. Instead, the author posits that ethical judgements necessitate considering the interests of all affected parties impartially, irrespective of traits like race, sex, or ability. This principle, the text explains, serves as a robust defence against racism, sexism, and even hypothetical intelligence-based hierarchies, though it does not mandate identical treatment. Finally, the discussion extends to affirmative action and the treatment of individuals with disabilities, contending that preferential measures can align with equal

consideration of interests, particularly where systemic disadvantages exist, and that a preference for life without disability is not inherently prejudiced.

Here are depth notes, ensuring no information loss and 100% information, drawing comprehensively from the provided sources:

Equality and Its Implications

Since the end of World War II, moral attitudes on issues like abortion, sex outside marriage, same-sex relationships, pornography, euthanasia, and suicide have undergone dramatic shifts, though no new consensus has been reached. In contrast, the change in attitudes towards inequality, particularly **racial inequality**, has been equally sudden and dramatic, but "more complete". Racist assumptions prevalent in early 20th-century Europe are now "totally unacceptable," at least in public life. While racists may still exist, they must disguise their views for any chance of general acceptance. The principle that **all humans are equal** is currently a fundamental part of prevailing political and ethical orthodoxy, but its precise meaning and underlying reasons for acceptance remain contentious.

Weakening Consensus and Controversies

The consensus regarding equality weakens when exploring the basis of the principle that all humans are equal and applying it to specific cases.

- **Intelligence and Race/Sex:** Controversies arose in the 1970s and 1994 over claims by Arthur Jensen, H. J. Eysenck, Richard Herrnstein, and Charles Murray, suggesting that **genetic differences** underpin variations in intelligence among different races. Opponents often assumed these claims, if proven sound, would justify racial discrimination. A similar debate occurred in 2005 when Lawrence Summers, then president of Harvard University, speculated that biological differences between men and women could contribute to the difficulty in appointing more women to math and science chairs, a remark widely seen as a factor in his subsequent resignation.
- **Affirmative Action:** Another issue requiring a re-evaluation of equality is whether **preferential treatment** should be given to members of disadvantaged minorities in employment or university admissions. Some argue that equality necessitates **affirmative action**, while others contend it precludes any discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or sex, whether for or against disadvantaged groups.

To address these questions, clarity is needed on what is justifiably meant by "all humans are equal" and the **ethical foundations** of this principle.

The Search for a Factual Basis of Equality

Opponents of equality, such as racists and sexists, frequently point out that, by any chosen measure, humans are simply not equal. People vary greatly in physical attributes (tall/short), intellectual abilities (mathematical genius/struggling with addition), physical prowess (fast runners/unable to run), moral character (never hurting others/killing for money), and emotional depth (ecstasy/despair vs. even plane). Given this extensive list of differences, the search for a **factual basis** upon which to build the principle of equality appears "hopeless".

Rawls and "Moral Personality"

John Rawls, in his influential book *A Theory of Justice*, proposed that equality could be founded on natural human characteristics if a **"range property"** is selected. He used the analogy of a circle: all points within the circle possess the property of "being within the circle" equally, regardless of their proximity to the center or edge. Similarly, Rawls suggested that **"moral personality"** is a property virtually all humans possess, and all who possess it, possess it equally.

- Rawls defined "moral personality" not as "morally good personality," but using "moral" in contrast to "amoral," specifically requiring a **sense of justice**. More broadly, it means being the kind of person to whom moral appeals can be made with a reasonable expectation of being heeded.
- This view stems from the **social contract tradition**, which conceives of ethics as a mutually beneficial agreement (e.g., "Don't hit me, and I won't hit you"). Consequently, only those capable of understanding and reciprocally adhering to such agreements fall within the ethical sphere.

Problems with "Moral Personality" as a Basis

There are significant problems with using moral personality as the foundation for equality.

- **Degree of Possession:** Moral personality is a **matter of degree**; some individuals are highly sensitive to justice and ethics, while others have only a limited awareness. This raises the unresolved question of where the "minimal line" for moral personality should be drawn for inclusion in the principle of equality. Moreover, if moral personality is so crucial, it is not intuitively obvious why there shouldn't be **grades of moral status**, with corresponding rights and duties.
- **Exclusion of Some Humans:** A more serious objection is that **not all humans are moral persons**, even minimally. This includes **infants, small children, and individuals with profound intellectual disabilities**, who lack the required sense of justice. If the principle of equality were revised to exclude these groups, implying their interests could be disregarded in ways that would be wrong for older or more intelligent individuals, "far stronger arguments" would be needed to accept it.
    - Rawls attempted to address infants and children by including "potential moral persons" within the scope of the principle, but this is acknowledged as an **"ad hoc device"** designed to align his theory with ordinary moral intuitions, rather than being supported by independent arguments.
    - Rawls also admitted that individuals with **irreparable intellectual disabilities** "may present a difficulty" but offered no solution.
- **Conclusion on Natural Characteristics:** The author concludes that possession of "moral personality" is **not a satisfactory basis** for the principle that all humans are equal, and doubts "any natural characteristic, whether a ‘range property’ or not, can fulfil this function," believing there is no morally significant property equally possessed by all humans.

Beyond Group Differences: Individual Variation

Another attempted defence for a factual basis of equality admits that humans differ individually but insists on **no morally significant differences between races and sexes**. Knowing someone's race or sex does not allow conclusions about their intelligence, sense of justice, or emotional depth that would justify treating them as less than equal. Claims of racial or sexist superiority in these capacities are false, as individual differences transcend racial and sexual boundaries.

- While this fact is important and relevant to claims by Jensen, Eysenck, and others, it is neither a satisfactory principle of equality nor an adequate defence against a more sophisticated opponent than a "blatant racist or sexist".

- **The "Hierarchy of Intelligence" Problem:** If society were to classify people into higher or lower status categories based on intelligence test scores (e.g., a slave-owning class for IQ > 125, free citizens for 100-125, and slaves for IQ < 100), such a hierarchical society would be as "abhorrent as one based on race or sex". However, if support for equality rests on the factual claim that differences between individuals cut across racial and sexual boundaries, there are **no grounds to oppose** this intelligence-based hierarchy, as it would be based on "real differences between people".
- **Equality as an Ethical Principle:** Such schemes can only be rejected by clearly stating that the **claim to equality does not rest on intelligence, moral personality, rationality, or similar matters of fact**. There is "no logically compelling reason" to assume that a difference in ability justifies any difference in the consideration given to people's interests. **Equality is fundamentally a "basic ethical principle, not an assertion of fact"**.

The Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests

Drawing on the idea that ethical judgments require moving beyond a personal viewpoint to **consider the interests of all affected**, the author proposes the **principle of equal consideration of interests** as the basic principle of equality.

- This principle dictates that interests are weighed "simply as interests," not as "my interests," or "the interests of people of European descent," or "people with IQs higher than 100".
- **Essence of the Principle:** It requires giving **"equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions"**. For example, if an act would cause X to lose more than Y would gain, it is better not to do it, regardless of whether one cares more about Y. The core idea is: **"an interest is an interest, whoever's interest it may be"**.
- **Example: Relief of Pain:** The ultimate moral reason for relieving pain is the "undesirability of pain as such," not whose pain it is. If X's pain is more intense, then equal consideration would prioritize relieving X's pain. In situations like an earthquake, other factors (e.g., relieving a doctor's pain so she can treat more victims) might lead to prioritisation, but the doctor's pain itself still counts only once, "with no added weighting".
- **Impartiality:** The principle of equal consideration of interests functions like a "pair of scales, weighing interests impartially". These scales favour stronger interests or combinations of interests, but **"take no account of whose interests they are weighing"**.
- **Rejection of Racism:** From this viewpoint, **race is "irrelevant"** to the consideration of interests, as "all that counts are the interests themselves". To give less consideration to a given amount of pain due to a person's race would be an "arbitrary distinction," akin to basing it on birth month or number of vowels in a surname. Thus, the principle directly demonstrates why blatant forms of racism, such as that practised by the Nazis (who disregarded the sufferings of Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs), are wrong.

Strength and Implications of the Principle

Although sometimes perceived as a purely formal and weak principle, equal consideration of interests is robust enough to **exclude both blatant racism and sexism**. It also provides a basis for rejecting the more sophisticated inegalitarianism of an **intelligence-based hierarchical society**.

- It prohibits making the readiness to consider others' interests dependent on their abilities or characteristics, *except for the characteristic of having interests*.
- While knowing people's abilities or characteristics helps determine *what* their interests are (e.g., gifted children need advanced math), the **basic requirement to take into account a person's**

interests applies to everyone, regardless of race, sex, or IQ scores.
- **Slavery based on intelligence** would be incompatible with equal consideration, as intelligence is irrelevant to many fundamental human interests, such as avoiding pain, satisfying basic needs (food, shelter), loving children, enjoying relationships, and freedom to pursue projects. The harm of slavery to these interests is vastly disproportionate to any benefits for slave owners.
- Therefore, the principle rules out intelligence-based slave societies, crude racism/sexism, and **discrimination based on disability** (intellectual or physical), provided the disability is irrelevant to the interests in question (e.g., severe intellectual disability *would* be relevant to the interest in voting).
- This principle of equal consideration of interests is presented as a **defensible form of the principle that all humans are equal**, useful for discussing controversial issues.

A Minimal Principle, Not Necessarily Equal Treatment

Equal consideration of interests is a "minimal principle of equality" because it does not dictate equal treatment.

- **Morphine Example:** In an earthquake scenario, two victims: one with a crushed leg in agony, another with a gashed thigh in slight pain, and only two shots of morphine. Equal treatment (one shot each) would be less effective than giving both shots to the victim with the crushed leg, significantly reducing their severe pain to a level comparable to the other victim's slight pain. This unequal treatment (two shots for one, none for the other) leads to a "more egalitarian result" by reducing the overall disparity in suffering.
- **Declining Marginal Utility:** This outcome aligns with the **principle of declining marginal utility**, which states that the more someone has of something, the less additional gain they receive from an extra quantity. This applies to resources like food (50g of rice means more to someone with 200g/day than to someone with 1kg/day) and money ($100 means more to a low-income earner than a billionaire). When considered, this principle inclines towards an **equal distribution of income** (barring disincentive effects) and is generally endorsed by egalitarians.
- **When Marginal Utility Fails:** However, the principle of declining marginal utility does not always hold or can be overridden. Another earthquake example illustrates this:
    - Victim A (more severely injured): lost a leg, in danger of losing a toe on remaining leg. Victim B (less severely injured): injury threatens leg. Only enough medical supplies for one.
    - Treating A saves a toe; treating B saves a leg.
    - If losing a leg is much worse than losing a toe, the principle of declining marginal utility is insufficient.
    - **Equal consideration of interests would lead to treating B**, as saving a leg is a greater impartial furtherance of interests than saving a toe.
    - This choice **"can, in special cases, widen rather than narrow the gap"** between people's welfare levels, underscoring its nature as a minimal, rather than thorough-going, egalitarian principle. A more thorough-going egalitarianism would be difficult to justify.

Demandingness of the Principle

Even in its minimal form, the principle of equal consideration of interests can appear very demanding (e.g., requiring equal consideration for the welfare of family versus strangers). This tension is to be explored further in Chapter 8 of the book, where the author aims to show that widely held ethical views, rather than the principle itself, should be rejected.

Equality and Genetic Diversity

The text then delves into the implications of claims about genetic differences between groups for the ideal of equality.

The Jensen and Eysenck Controversy

In 1969, **Arthur Jensen** published an article in the *Harvard Educational Review* discussing the probable causes of the undisputed observation that African Americans, on average, score lower than other Americans on standard IQ tests. Jensen's "heavily qualified statement" hypothesised that **"genetic factors are strongly implicated in the average negro-white intelligence difference,"** suggesting this was "less consistent with a strictly environmental hypothesis than with a genetic hypothesis," though not excluding environmental influence or interaction.

- Despite being a scholarly, detailed review, it was widely reported in the popular press as an attempt to defend racism, leading to accusations of racist propaganda, comparisons to Hitler, disrupted lectures, and demands for his dismissal.
- **H. J. Eysenck**, a British psychology professor who supported Jensen's theories, faced similar backlash. Notably, Eysenck suggested that Americans of Japanese and Chinese descent showed evidence of higher average abstract reasoning scores than Americans of European descent, despite lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
- **Broader Opposition to Genetic Explanations:** This opposition to genetic explanations for racial differences in intelligence mirrors a general resistance to genetic explanations in other socially sensitive areas. Examples include 1970s feminist hostility to biological factors in male dominance (though today's feminists are more open to ideas like greater male aggression or female caring behaviour having biological roots). It also links to the strong feelings aroused by evolutionary explanations of human behaviour, fearing that viewing social behaviour as evolved and linked to other social mammals would lead to seeing hierarchy, male dominance, and inequality as unchangeable aspects of our nature. However, evolutionary explanations are now more widely accepted, and human genome mapping continues to raise concerns about potential revelations regarding genetic differences and their uses.

The author states it is inappropriate to assess the scientific merits of these biological explanations. Instead, the focus is on their **implications for the ideal of equality**, assuming, for the sake of argument, that such theories (e.g., genetically-based average IQ differences between ethnic groups or biological differences between sexes) *were* found to be sound. This exploration is crucial to prevent public confusion if unexpected evidence were to emerge.

Racial Differences and Racial Equality

Assuming, hypothetically, that evidence supports genetically-based differences in average IQ between ethnic groups (without presuming Europeans would be superior):

- **Caution on "IQ" vs. "Intelligence":** "IQ" refers to **scores on standard IQ tests**, not necessarily "intelligence" in ordinary contexts. While correlated, the closeness is unclear due to the vagueness of the ordinary concept of intelligence. Defining "intelligence" as "what intelligence tests measure" merely creates confusion by using the same word in a new sense. Thus, discussion should focus on "differences in IQ".

- **Importance of IQ:** IQ is important in society, influencing occupational status, income, and social class. If genetic factors contribute to racial IQ differences, they are likely to contribute to racial differences in these socioeconomic outcomes, making IQ relevant to discussions of equality.

Implications of Genetically-Based Racial IQ Differences

The existence of differences in average IQ scores between racial groups is generally not disputed, even by opponents of Jensen and Eysenck. The debate centers on whether these differences are primarily due to **heredity or environment**. While environmental factors are acknowledged to play a role, the contention is whether they explain *all* or *virtually all* of the differences.

Assuming the genetic hypothesis is correct (for exploration, not belief), the implications are **"less drastic than they are often supposed to be, and they give no comfort to racists"** for three key reasons:

1. **Continued Efforts to Overcome Inequality:** A genetic basis for IQ differences **does not imply reducing efforts to overcome other causes of inequality**, such as disparities in housing and schooling. Even if these efforts don't equalize IQs across racial groups, they improve conditions, and "perhaps we should put extra efforts into helping those who start from a position of disadvantage so that we end with a more egalitarian result".
2. **Individual Assessment:** Average IQ differences between groups **do not justify racial segregation** or treating individuals differently based on their race. There is substantial overlap in IQ scores between groups; an individual from a higher-average IQ group is not guaranteed to have a higher IQ than an individual from a lower-average group. **Members of different racial groups must be treated as individuals**.
3. **Equality Not Based on Non-Moral Characteristics:** Most fundamentally, the **principle of equality is not based on a claim that people are equal in any non-moral characteristic**. The author reiterates that the only defensible basis for equality is the **equal consideration of interests**, and that the most important human interests (e.g., avoiding pain, basic needs, relationships, freedom) are **not affected by differences in intelligence**. Thomas Jefferson, for instance, understood that "whatever be their degree of talent, it is no measure of their rights". **Equal status "does not depend on intelligence"**.

These three reasons demonstrate that claims of a genetic basis for racial IQ differences **do not provide grounds for denying the moral principle that all humans are equal**. The third reason, in particular, has further implications to be explored.

Sexual Differences and Sexual Equality

Debates surrounding psychological differences between females and males focus on **distinct intellectual and non-intellectual abilities**, not general IQ.

- **Intellectual Differences:**
  - **Verbal Ability:** Females tend to have greater verbal ability (understanding complex writing, creative use of words).
  - **Visual-Spatial Ability:** Males tend to perform better on visual-spatial tests (e.g., map reading, mental rotation tests).
  - **Emotional Recognition:** Girls score higher on tests requiring recognition of others' emotional states and predicting behaviour from them.

    - **Mathematics:** Average scores differ little and sometimes favour girls, but boys' scores are more spread out, meaning more boys are at both the top and bottom of math classes.
- **Non-Intellectual Differences: Aggression:** A significant non-intellectual difference is **aggression**. Studies across cultures show boys are more likely than girls to play roughly, attack, and fight back. Males are generally "readier to hurt others," reflected in the fact that almost all violent criminals are male. Aggression is associated with competitiveness, dominance, and the drive for power, while females are more inclined towards caring roles.

These observed differences appear when averages are taken, but there is **"substantial overlap between the sexes"**. The origin of these differences is debated between environmental and biological explanations. While the question of origin is important in some contexts, the author asserts that **discrimination is wrong "whatever the origin of the known psychological differences,"** paralleling the argument made for racial discrimination.

Explanations for Sex Differences (Environmental vs. Biological)

1. **Environmental (Social Conditioning):**
    - Children learn distinct sex roles through various social cues and upbringing. For example, boys receive trucks/guns for birthdays, girls dolls/brush-and-comb sets; boys are praised for strength, girls for appearance. Traditional portrayals in children's books have begun to change due to feminist critiques and increased female workforce participation.
    - Social conditioning is acknowledged, but it is an "incomplete explanation" for *why* nearly every human society shapes children this way. One popular explanation posits that in earlier societies, women's role in breastfeeding kept them closer to home, while men hunted, leading to the evolution of a more social/emotional character in females and tougher/aggressive traits in males. Male dominance then arose from their physical strength and aggression being the ultimate forms of power. These sex roles are seen as an inheritance that became obsolete with technology and women's ability to combine motherhood and career.
2. **Biological Factors:**
    - The alternative view is that biological factors also contribute to psychological differences, alongside social conditioning.
    - A study showed one-day-old baby girls spent more time looking at a live face, while boys looked more at a mechanical mobile.
    - Preferences for dolls (girls) and toy trucks (boys) have even been observed in **vervet monkeys**, suggesting an innate component.
    - **Evidence for a biological basis of aggression** is summarized by Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin in *The Psychology of Sex Differences*:
        - Males are more aggressive than females in all human societies studied.
        - Similar differences exist in humans, apes, and related animals.
        - Differences are found in very young children, before evidence of social conditioning (and boys are often punished more for aggression).
        - Aggression levels vary with sex hormones, and females become more aggressive if given male hormones.
    - **Evidence for a biological basis of visual-spatial ability** suggests influence by a recessive sex-linked gene, leading to an estimated 50% of males having a genetic advantage compared to 25% of females. However, environmental factors can significantly reduce this male advantage.

    - Evidence for biological factors in female verbal ability and high-achieving male mathematical ability is currently too weak for a definitive conclusion.

The author again chooses not to delve into the scientific evidence but rather to **explore the implications of these biological hypotheses**.

Implications of Sex Differences for Equality

- **Limited Explanatory Power:** Differences in intellectual strengths and weaknesses between the sexes can explain only a "small proportion" of the occupational disparities between males and females in society. For instance, if visual-spatial ability explains male dominance in architecture/engineering, why aren't women equally represented in fields where they excel, like those requiring high verbal abilities (e.g., journalism, where female journalists are still outnumbered)?. This suggests women may not have equal opportunities even if biological explanations for ability patterns are accepted.
- **Summers' Remark:** The wider spread of mathematical ability among males (more at both extremes) does lend support to Lawrence Summers' controversial point regarding the scarcity of suitable female candidates for highly selective Harvard science and engineering positions. Since only the exceptionally gifted become professors at elite institutions, males are likely to be overrepresented at the extreme upper end of mathematical giftedness.
- **Aggression and Power:** The idea of a biological basis for greater male aggression might initially be seen by feminists as evidence of female ethical superiority due to a reluctance to hurt. However, this greater male aggression could also manifest as increased **competitiveness, ambition, and drive for power**, which has less welcome implications for feminists. Sociologist Steven Goldberg argued in *The Inevitability of Patriarchy* that the biological basis of male aggression would make a society with equal political power for women impossible, leading to the view that women should accept inferior positions and traditional roles. This argument has fuelled feminist hostility towards biological explanations of male dominance.

Moral Conclusions Not Followed by Biological Theories

As with race and IQ, the moral conclusions often *alleged* to follow from these biological theories **"do not really follow from them at all"**. Similar arguments apply:

1. **Social Conditioning's Influence:** Regardless of the origin of psychological differences, **social conditioning can "emphasize or soften" them**. Biological predispositions are often "a greater natural readiness to learn these skills". For example, women raised to be independent show higher visual-spatial ability than those kept at home. Therefore, feminists are justified in critiquing sex-specific upbringing, even if it only reinforces innate predispositions rather than creating the differences.
2. **Individual Overlap:** Differences exist only as **averages**, and there is **"substantial overlap"** between the sexes. Many females are more aggressive or have better visual-spatial ability than some males (e.g., 25% of females may have a genetic advantage in visual-spatial ability over 50% of males). It is wrong to tell a woman she cannot be an engineer or math professor, or that she lacks political drive, based solely on her sex. Likewise, it's wrong to assume a man cannot be gentle enough to be a stay-at-home parent. **People must be assessed as individuals**, and societal roles must remain flexible to allow individuals to pursue what they are best suited for.
3. **Irrelevance to Core Human Interests:** The most important human interests are **"no more affected by differences in aggression than they are by differences in intelligence"**. Less aggressive people

have the same interests in avoiding pain, developing abilities, food/shelter, relationships, etc., as more aggressive people. There is "no reason why more aggressive people ought to be rewarded for their aggression with higher salaries and the ability to provide better for these interests".

Since aggression is not generally seen as desirable, it's clear that it offers **no ethical justification** for the greater proportion of men in leading roles. However, it could be used to argue that the current situation results from fair competition under equal opportunity, implying the status quo is not unfair. This leads to further considerations of biological differences.

From Equality of Opportunity to Equality of Consideration

In many societies, significant income and social status differences are deemed acceptable if achieved under conditions of **equal opportunity**. This view sees life as a "race" where winners deserve prizes, provided everyone had an "equal start". For example, if Jill earns more as a doctor than Jack as a farm worker, it's considered fair if Jack had the same opportunity to become a doctor (i.e., not discriminated against, and if his exam results were as good, he could have pursued medicine).

Inadequacy of Equal Opportunity

The idea of equal opportunity often takes a "superficial view".

- **Beyond Exam Results:** If Jack's exam results were inferior, the crucial question is *why*. His education might have been inferior (larger classes, less qualified teachers, inadequate resources), meaning he was not competing on truly equal terms with Jill. **Genuine equality of opportunity requires ensuring schools provide "the same advantages to everyone"**.
- **Home Environment:** Even if schools were equal, children's home environments create disparities. A quiet study room, abundant books, and encouraging parents give advantages not available to a child sharing a room with siblings and working part-time to support the family. Equalizing homes or parents would necessitate abandoning the traditional family structure and raising children in communal nurseries.
- **Genetic Endowment:** The "ultimate objection" links back to earlier discussions of equality. Even with communal rearing, children would inherit different abilities and character traits, including varying levels of aggression and IQ. Eliminating environmental differences would not remove **genetic differences**, which are a "significant component" of existing IQ disparities between individuals (even if not between races).
- **Conclusion: Equality of opportunity is "not an attractive ideal"**. It "rewards the lucky" who inherit abilities leading to lucrative careers and "penalizes the unlucky" whose genes make similar success difficult.

Broader Implications for Income and Status

Regardless of the social or genetic basis of racial differences in IQ, simply removing social disadvantages will not lead to an equal or just distribution of income.

- **Not Equal:** Those who inherit abilities associated with high IQ will continue to earn more.
- **Not Just:** Distribution based on inherited abilities "has nothing to do with what people deserve or need".

- This applies also to visual-spatial ability, mathematical ability, and aggression, if these traits lead to higher incomes or status.
- If the basis of equality is the **equal consideration of interests**, and the most important human interests are largely unrelated to IQ or aggression, then a society where income and social status strongly correlate with these inherited factors raises a "moral question".

Society Rewarding Abilities vs. Needs

When society pays high salaries for computer programming and low salaries for office cleaning, it is effectively rewarding specific abilities that are "very probably to a significant degree inherited" and largely determined before individuals are responsible for their actions.

- **Justice and Utility:** From the perspectives of both justice and utility, there is "something wrong here". Both would be better served by a society adopting the Marxist slogan: **"From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"**.
- If such a system could be achieved, differences between races and sexes would lose their social significance, leading to a society truly based on the principle of equal consideration of interests.

Realism and Difficulties

The question arises whether it is realistic to aspire to a society that rewards needs over IQ, aggression, or inherited abilities. Do demanding professions (doctors, lawyers, professors, programmers) require higher pay as an incentive?.

- **Brain Drain:** A major difficulty in implementing a needs-based payment scheme in one country is the risk of a **"brain drain"**. Skilled individuals might emigrate to countries that reward ability more highly, as seen with Canadian doctors moving to the US, or the strict emigration controls in communist states to prevent an "outflow of skilled people". If achieving a just income distribution necessitates making a country "a giant prison," the price may be too high.
- **Scope for Reduction:** However, concluding that nothing can be done to improve income distribution in capitalist countries would be "too pessimistic". Affluent Western nations have "a good deal of scope for reducing pay differentials" before significant emigration occurs, especially in countries with very large differentials like the United States.
- **Motivation Beyond Pay:** The author doubts that high pay is the primary motivator for choosing professions like doctor or professor. He suggests he would not swap positions with groundskeepers even if salaries were identical, nor would his doctor swap with a receptionist. The enjoyment of student years also plays a role.
- **Rewarding Effort:** While not advocating for payment based solely on ability, the prospect of earning more *can* incentivize greater effort, which benefits others (patients, customers, students, public). Therefore, **"it might therefore be worth trying to reward effort, which would mean paying people more if they worked near the upper limits of their abilities"**. This differs from paying for inherent ability, which is beyond individual control. Psychologist Jeffrey Gray argues that differential pay for "upper class" and "lower class" jobs, given genetic influence on IQ, is a "wasteful use of resources in the guise of 'incentives' that either tempt people to do what is beyond their powers or reward them more for what they would do anyway'".
- **Private Enterprise:** While government-controlled salaries (professors, doctors in some systems) could be altered, the business sector is different. Entrepreneurial talent will generate more wealth under

private enterprise. Taxation can redistribute income, but there are limits to progressive taxation before smart people divert energy to tax avoidance.
- **Unrealistic Expectations:** Abolishing private enterprise globally, though perhaps a "nice idea," is "not going to happen". Private enterprise tends to reassert itself (e.g., black markets under communism, China's economic growth). Overcoming this would require a "radical change in human nature" (a decline in acquisitive and self-centered desires), which is not foreseeable. Thus, financial rewards for inherited abilities might have to be accepted.
- **Creating a Climate of Opinion:** This does not mean abandoning the principle of "payment according to needs and effort rather than inherited ability". The public outrage during the 2008-09 financial crisis over excessive executive salaries demonstrated a shared sentiment against undeserved payments. The realistic goal is to **"create a climate of opinion that will lead to a reduction in excessive payments to senior management and an increase in payments to those whose income barely meets their needs,"** moving beyond a "pious wish".

Affirmative Action

While reducing income differences is ethically desirable but difficult, another approach is to prevent members of disadvantaged racial/ethnic groups and women from being disproportionately at the bottom of income, status, and power structures. Such inequalities, especially when coinciding with visible differences like race or sex, are more divisive, creating feelings of superiority and inferiority, and generating a sense of hopelessness in the disadvantaged groups whose sex or race is not a product of their actions.

- Since equality of opportunity is practically unrealizable and might still allow innate differences (aggression, IQ) to unfairly determine social stratification, one way to address these obstacles is to move beyond it and offer **preferential treatment to members of disadvantaged groups**, known as **affirmative action** (or "reverse discrimination"). This may be the best hope for reducing long-standing inequalities, even though it appears to contradict the principle of equality.
- Affirmative action is most commonly applied in **education and employment**, with education being particularly important due to its influence on income, job satisfaction, power, and status. In the US, Supreme Court cases have rejected some university admissions procedures favoring disadvantaged groups. These cases involved European-descent individuals denied admission despite better academic records and test scores than some admitted African-American students, with universities justifying their policies as aiming to help disadvantaged students.

The *Bakke* Case and Justifications

The landmark case was **Regents of the University of California v. Bakke**. Alan Bakke was denied admission to UC Davis medical school, which had reserved 16 out of 100 places for disadvantaged minority students to increase their representation. Bakke, a European American, sued after being rejected despite having scores that would have granted him admission had he been a minority.

Arguments sometimes used to justify affirmative action, and the author's responses:

1. **Redressing Past Discrimination (Proportionate Representation):** It's sometimes argued that a significant disparity in representation (e.g., 20% minority population, but only 2% minority doctors) *proves* discrimination.
    - **Author's Response:** This argument is **"inconclusive"** due to the genetics-vs-environment debate. It is difficult to entirely rule out the possibility that the underrepresented group is, on

average, less gifted for medical study. For instance, a disproportionate number of African-American athletes on the US Olympic team doesn't prove discrimination against European Americans. While other evidence for discrimination might exist, it must be explicitly shown. Therefore, affirmative action **cannot be justified solely on the grounds of "merely redress[ing] the balance of discrimination existing in the community" without positive evidence**.

2. **Adjusted Test Scores for Disadvantage:** Another defence suggests that standard tests do not accurately reflect ability when a student has been severely disadvantaged. Educational and home backgrounds influence test scores. A disadvantaged student scoring 55% might have better prospects than a more privileged student scoring 70%.
    - **Author's Response:** Adjusting test scores on this basis would be admitting **genuinely better-qualified disadvantaged students**, not racial discrimination. However, UC Davis in the *Bakke* case simply reserved 16% of places by quota, without adjusting for individual ability or background. Evidence generally indicates that students admitted through affirmative action programs have, on average, lower grades than the class as a whole.

Affirmative Action and Rights / Equal Consideration of Interests

- **Equal Consideration of Interests:** The principle of equal consideration of interests condemns racial and sexual discrimination that gives less weight to the interests of those discriminated against. Could Bakke claim the medical school gave less weight to his interests?.
    - **University admissions are not normally a result of considering each applicant's interests**. Instead, they match applicants against university standards and policies. If admission were based purely on intelligence, and rejected applicants complained of less consideration, the university would state it didn't consider *any* applicant's interests, but rather aimed to admit students who could pass exams and be useful to the community (e.g., intelligent doctors curing disease).
    - While intelligence is accepted as a criterion, it doesn't grant an "intrinsic right" to admission. Universities admit intelligent students to advance their goals, not to recognise their rights or greater interest in admission.
    - Therefore, if a university changes its policy to use affirmative action to promote new goals (like diversity), applicants who would have been admitted under the old policy **cannot claim a violation of their rights or less than equal consideration**. They were merely "fortunate beneficiaries" of the previous policy.
- **Conclusion on Rights:** Affirmative action **"cannot justifiably be condemned on the grounds that it violates the rights of university applicants or treats them with less than equal consideration"**. There is no inherent right to admission, and normal admission tests do not involve equal consideration of applicants' interests. Objections must stem from concerns about the goals of affirmative action, its effectiveness, or its costs.
- **Condemning Discriminatory Goals:** The principle of equality *would* condemn the goals of a racially discriminatory admissions procedure where minorities are discriminated against, because such discrimination typically stems from "less concern for the interests of the minority" (e.g., historical exclusion of African Americans in the American South). In such cases, rejected applicants *could* justifiably claim unequal consideration.

Goals and Practical Objections to Affirmative Action

Opponents generally do not object to the goals of **social equality and greater minority representation in professions**.

- **Reasons for Supporting Social Equality (aligned with Equal Consideration of Interests):**
  - **Diminishing marginal utility**.
  - Reducing the "feeling of hopeless inferiority" when one group is always worse off.
  - Mitigating "racial tension" resulting from severe inequality.
- **Desirable Goals of Minority Representation in Professions (e.g., law and medicine):**
  - Minority professionals are more likely to serve their own communities, addressing scarcity in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
  - They may better understand the problems faced by disadvantaged people.
  - They serve as role models for other minorities and women, breaking "unconscious mental barriers" to aspiring to such positions.
  - Diverse student groups help majority students learn about minority attitudes, improving their ability to serve the whole community.
- **Opponents' Stronger Objections (Practical Issues):** Opponents are on stronger ground when claiming that affirmative action **"will not promote equality"**.
  - **Reinforcing Stereotypes:** Justice Powell in *Bakke* stated that "Preferential programs may only reinforce common stereotypes holding that certain groups are unable to achieve success without special protection". This suggests that for true equality, minorities must earn their places "on their merits". If admitted more easily, minority law graduates (even those who would have succeeded in open competition) may be viewed as inferior.
  - **Academic Mismatch:** Some argue affirmative action creates an "academic mismatch," placing minority students in classes with more academically gifted peers, leading to lower class standing and reduced graduation rates.

Legal Context and Ethical Conclusion

- **US Legal Rulings:** These practical objections raise complex factual issues not central to American legal battles, as judges avoid ruling on areas outside their expertise. Alan Bakke won his case because a majority of judges found that either the US Constitution or the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits exclusion based on color, race, or national origin from federally funded activities.
  - However, Justice Powell's majority opinion in *Bakke* also stated that a university seeking **diversity** in its student body could include race as **one factor among many** (e.g., athletic/artistic ability, work experience, compassion, overcoming disadvantage, leadership potential), but **without using quotas**.
  - This view was upheld in **Grutter v. Bollinger (2003)**, concerning the University of Michigan Law School, which permitted a "highly individualized, holistic review" considering diversity.
  - Conversely, in **Gratz v. Bollinger**, the court rejected an undergraduate program that automatically awarded extra points to minority applicants without individual assessment.
- **US Distinction:** In the US, managing admissions for **diversity is permissible, but racial or ethnic quotas are not**.
- **Ethical View:** From an ethical standpoint (beyond the law), the distinction between quotas and other methods of preference for disadvantaged groups may be less significant. The author concludes that **affirmative action, by any method, "is not contrary to any sound principle of equality and does not violate any rights of those excluded by it"**. When properly applied, it aligns with the aspirations

of equal consideration of interests. The **"only real doubt is how well it works,"** with evidence still being collected and assessed.

A Concluding Note: Equality and Disability

The irrelevance of IQ or specific abilities to the moral principle of equality is most clearly seen in the context of people with **disabilities** (physical or intellectual).

- **Different Abilities, Equal Consideration:** It is acknowledged that disabled individuals lack some abilities that non-disabled people have, and their disabilities may justify different treatment in specific roles (e.g., a wheelchair user for a firefighter, a blind person for a proofreader). However, a disability ruling out a particular position **does not mean that person's interests should be given less consideration** than anyone else's, nor does it justify discrimination when the disability is irrelevant to the employment or service offered.
- **History of Prejudice:** For centuries, people with disabilities have faced severe prejudice, similar to racial minorities. They have been confined in appalling conditions, exploited as "virtual slaves," and subjected to mass murder by the Nazis under a "euthanasia program" that targeted tens of thousands of intellectually disabled people deemed "useless mouths". Even today, businesses may refuse to hire a wheelchair user for a suitable job or someone with an "abnormal" appearance for sales, echoing past arguments against racial minorities. Familiarity with disabled people in public-facing roles can help overcome these prejudices.
- **Confusion Between Factual and Moral Equality:** Society has been slow to recognise the injustices against people with disabilities, partly due to the confusion between factual and moral equality. Because disabled people are factually different, it has not always been seen as discriminatory to treat them differently, even when their disability is irrelevant to the disadvantageous treatment. Thus, legislation prohibiting discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or gender should also prohibit discrimination based on **disability, "unless the disability can be shown to be relevant to the employment or service offered"**.
- **Affirmative Action for Disabled People:** Many arguments for affirmative action in cases of race or gender apply **"even more strongly" to people with disabilities**. Mere equality of opportunity is insufficient when a disability prevents equal community membership (e.g., a library inaccessible by stairs). Many disabled children could benefit from normal schooling but require additional resources for their special needs.
- **Justifiable Greater Spending:** Because such needs are often "very central to the lives of people with disabilities," the principle of equal consideration of interests gives them "much greater weight" than the minor needs of others. For this reason, it will generally be **"justifiable to spend more on behalf of disabled people than we spend on behalf of others,"** though resource scarcity sets limits. Empathy helps in finding the right balance.

Alleged Contradiction with Arguments for Abortion/Euthanasia

An alleged contradiction arises with arguments presented later in the book that defend abortion and euthanasia for a fetus or infant with a severe disability. These arguments presuppose that life is better without a disability, which some critics might view as a form of prejudice parallel to racial or gender bias.

- **The Error:** The error in this argument is to conflate assisting disabled people to live full lives with choosing whether a child begins life with or without a disability.

- The author argues that if a miracle drug could, without side effects, restore full leg use to wheelchair users, few would refuse it on the grounds that life with a disability is not inferior. The fact that disabled people themselves raise funds for research to prevent and overcome disability demonstrates that the **preference for a life without disability is not "mere prejudice"**.
- While social conditions certainly make life much harder for disabled people than necessary, the claim that "social conditions disable them, not their physical or intellectual condition" twists a simple truth into a "sweeping falsehood". The abilities to walk, see, hear, be free from pain, and communicate effectively are **"genuine benefits" under virtually any social conditions**. Acknowledging this does not deny the richness of lives led by those who triumph over disabilities, nor is it prejudiced to prefer, for oneself or one's children, not to face such immense hurdles.
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7 The Ethics of Wealth: Obligation to the Poor

This academic text, "Rich and Poor" by Peter Singer, explores the profound ethical implications of global wealth disparity, particularly the contrast between absolute poverty and absolute affluence. Singer argues that affluent individuals and nations have a moral obligation to assist those in extreme poverty, positing that if one can prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, one ought to do so. The author systematically addresses common objections to this duty, examining whether inaction is morally equivalent to direct harm, and scrutinises issues such as identifiable victims, responsibility, property rights, and the potential impact of aid on population growth. Ultimately, Singer advocates for a shift in public ethics, suggesting a progressive scale for charitable giving as a realistic and effective means to collectively alleviate extreme poverty, rather than requiring individual "moral heroism."

Here are super depth notes, providing a comprehensive and detailed overview of the provided source material, ensuring no information loss and 100% information retention:

Introduction: Rich and Poor The text delves into the stark contrast between extreme poverty and absolute affluence, exploring the moral obligations that arise from this global disparity.

I. Some Facts About Poverty

- **World Bank Research (late 20th Century)**:
    - A research team interviewed 60,000 individuals in extreme poverty across seventy-three countries.
    - **Recurring Themes/Experiences of Poverty**:
        - **Food Scarcity**: Shortage of food for all or part of the year, often resulting in only one meal daily. Difficult choices between feeding one's child or oneself, or being unable to do either.
        - **Debt Cycle**: Inability to save money, leading to borrowing from local moneylenders for emergencies (illness, crop failure). High interest rates cause perpetual, mounting debt.
        - **Lack of Education**: Inability to afford school for children, or needing to withdraw them during poor harvests.
        - **Substandard Housing**: Living in unstable houses made of mud or thatch, requiring rebuilding every two to three years or after severe weather.

        - **Unsafe Water**: No nearby source of safe drinking water, requiring long journeys to fetch it. The water often makes people ill unless boiled.
    - **Accompanying Impacts**: These material deprivations often lead to a humiliating state of powerlessness, vulnerability, and a deep sense of shame or failure.

- **World Bank Definition of Extreme Poverty**:
    - Not possessing enough income to meet the most basic human needs for adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, sanitation, health care, or education.
    - **Income Threshold (2008)**: The purchasing power equivalent of approximately US$1.25 per day in the United States. This definition accounts for greater purchasing power of rich countries' currencies in poor countries.
    - **Prevalence**: An estimated **1.4 billion people** globally have less income than this threshold.

- **Absolute vs. Relative Poverty**:
    - **Relative Poverty**: Found in industrialized countries, where people are poor compared to others in their society but generally have enough for basic needs and often access to free healthcare.
    - **Absolute Poverty**: Predominantly in developing countries, where people struggle to meet basic needs by an absolute standard.

- **Consequences of Absolute Poverty**:
    - **Mortality**: Absolute poverty is lethal.
        - UNICEF reported **8.8 million children under five years old died from avoidable, poverty-related causes in 2008**. This amounts to **24,000 unnecessary deaths daily**, comparable to a football stadium full of children.
        - This number has been falling since the 1960s but remains "far too high".
        - Millions of adults also die prematurely due to absolute poverty.
        - Life expectancy in rich nations is 78 years, compared to around 50 years in developing countries.
    - **Misery**: When not fatal, absolute poverty causes profound misery.
        - Malnutrition in young children stunts physical and mental development.
        - Millions suffer from deficiency diseases (e.g., goitre, blindness from lack of vitamin A) due to poor diets.
        - Food value is further reduced by parasites like hookworm and ringworm, endemic in conditions of poor sanitation and health education.

- **Scale of the Problem**:
    - This state of absolute poverty is described as the "normal" situation of our world.
    - On September 11, 2001, at least **ten times more people died from preventable, poverty-related diseases** than from the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. While trillions were spent on the 'war on terrorism' and security, these poverty deaths were ignored.
    - Approximately **30,000 people have died from poverty-related causes every day since September 12, 2001, and continue to do so**.
    - Major events like the 2004 Asian tsunami (approx. 230,000 deaths) or the 2010 Haiti earthquake (up to 200,000 deaths) represent only about **one week's toll** of preventable, poverty-related

deaths, occurring 52 weeks a year.

II. Some Facts About Affluence

- **Definition of Absolute Affluence**:
    - Having more income than needed to adequately provide for all basic necessities of life for oneself and one's dependents.
    - **Characteristics**: After covering basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, basic health services, education – directly or through taxes), the absolutely affluent have money for luxuries. This includes choosing food for pleasure, new clothes for aesthetics, moving house for better neighbourhood/space, and spending on home entertainment or exotic holidays.
- **Prevalence of Absolute Affluence**:
    - The majority of citizens in Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and oil-rich Middle Eastern states are absolutely affluent.
    - Hundreds of millions of affluent people also live in countries with extreme poverty like China, India, and Brazil.
    - **Potential for Assistance**: These affluent individuals possess wealth they could transfer to the extremely poor without threatening their own basic welfare.
- **Reality of Assistance**:
    - **Very little wealth is currently being transferred**.
    - **UN Target (1970)**: The UN General Assembly set a modest target for foreign aid at **0.7% of Gross National Income** (70 cents for every $100 earned).
    - **Achievement (40 years later)**: By 2010, only Denmark, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden had met this target.
    - **Major Economies (2008)**: The United States and Japan gave only **0.19%** (19 cents per $100). Australia and Canada gave 0.32%, while France, Germany, and Britain were around the affluent nations' average (0.38-0.43%).
    - The amount given by rich nations is trivial compared to their income.

III. The Moral Equivalent of Murder?

- **The Proposition**: By contributing far less than they could, rich people allow over a billion individuals to persist in deprivation and die prematurely. This applies to both governments and affluent individuals, as each has the opportunity to assist through time or money donated to voluntary organizations providing healthcare, water, education, and agricultural support. If allowing someone to die is not intrinsically different from killing, then affluent individuals could be considered "murderers".
- **Common Rejection**: Many dismiss this verdict as absurd, believing that allowing someone to die is not equivalent to killing. They point to several differences between spending money on luxuries and deliberately killing.
- **Five Proposed Differences and Their Evaluation**:
    1. **Motivation**:

    - **Difference**: Killers often have malice/sadism, desiring victims' deaths. Luxury buyers seek personal enjoyment. Spending on luxuries indicates, at worst, selfishness/indifference, not comparable to malice.
    - **Evaluation**: Lack of malicious intent lessens blame but not as much as current attitudes suggest. A speeding motorist, indifferent to consequences but without intent to kill, still deserves severe blame and punishment.
2. **Difficulty of Duty**:
    - **Difference**: It's easy to abide by a rule against killing. It's very difficult to save all lives one possibly could, as it would mean cutting one's standard of living to "bare essentials". This demands "moral heroism," unlike mere avoidance of killing.
    - **Evaluation**: This is the **most significant difference**. Not killing is a minimum standard, but saving all possible is not realistically required of everyone. Those who give 10% are often praised for generosity, not blamed for not giving more. However, the appropriateness of praise/blame (evaluating the agent) is distinct from the rightness/wrongness of the action. This difference explains conventional attitudes but doesn't diminish the seriousness of the act itself or excuse inaction.
3. **Certainty of Outcome**:
    - **Difference**: Shooting someone is virtually certain to result in death. Money given to aid might fund an unsuccessful project.
    - **Evaluation**: Reduced certainty does lessen the wrongness compared to deliberate killing, but it does not make not giving acceptable conduct. A motorist speeding through pedestrian crossings, knowingly risking lives, is very wrong, even if they never hit anyone.
4. **Identifiable Victims**:
    - **Difference**: Victims of violence are identifiable with grieving families. A luxury buyer cannot know who their money would have saved.
    - **Evaluation**: This difference holds **no moral significance**. Research shows people are more likely to give to an identifiable child (with photo, name, age). This may be an instinctive response from living in small, face-to-face groups, but this instinct should not dictate ethical obligations. Selling contaminated food, even if individual victims cannot be identified, is still reprehensible. This principle applies death, regardless of whether the person would have died anyway. Responsibilities derive from the world as it is.
        - **Non-consequentialist/Libertarian View (Locke, Nozick, Narveson)**: Rights are primarily *against* interference, not *to* assistance. Killing violates rights; omitting to save does not.
        - **Critique of Libertarian View**: The factual basis is "doubtful". Thomas Pogge argues that the global economic order means affluent nations *do* contribute to the impoverishment of others for their own benefit (e.g., buying oil/minerals from dictators who lack moral right to the wealth, thus receiving stolen goods and incentivizing instability, which contributes to poverty). Climate change is another example.
        - **Philosophical Challenge**: It's questionable to base rights on the "unhistorical, abstract, and ultimately inexplicable idea of a human being living independently". Humans are social beings, and rights to life should mean preventing death when one could easily save.

- **Conclusion on Differences**: While differences in certainty and motivation are ethically significant (making not aiding comparable to reckless driving, a serious offense), and the difficulty of saving all

possible impacts blame, the lack of identifiable victims and certain notions of responsibility are not morally significant. How we respond to absolute poverty and affluence remains "one of the great moral issues of our time".

IV. The Obligation to Assist

- **The Argument's Foundation**:
    - **Drowning Child Analogy**: If one passes a shallow pond and sees a child drowning with no other adults present, one ought to wade in and save the child. The Most plausible ethical theories agree on preventing bad and promoting good.
- **Application to Absolute Poverty**:
    - Despite its "uncontroversial appearance," this principle, if taken seriously, would fundamentally change lives and the world.
    - It applies directly to the everyday situation of assisting those in absolute poverty.
    - **Assumptions**:
        1. Absolute poverty (hunger, malnutrition, lack of shelter, illiteracy, disease, high infant mortality, low life expectancy) is "a bad thing". This premise is "unlikely to be challenged" as it causes immense suffering, death, and hopelessness.
        2. The affluent can reduce absolute poverty without sacrificing anything of "comparable moral significance".
    - **Conclusion**: If these assumptions and the principle are correct, the obligation to help those in absolute poverty is as strong as rescuing a drowning child. Not to help would be wrong, and helping is an obligation, not merely a charitable act.
- **Formal Argument**:
    1. **First Premise**: If we can prevent something bad without sacrificing anything of comparable significance, we ought to do it. (The core moral premise).
    2. **Second Premise**: Extreme poverty is bad.
    3. **Third Premise**: There is *some* extreme poverty we can prevent without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance.
    4. **Conclusion**: We ought to prevent some extreme poverty.
- **Defense of the Third Premise (Preventability of Poverty)**:
    - It's cautiously framed, only claiming *some* poverty can be prevented.
    - Addresses the "drops in the ocean" objection: the point is preventing *any* extreme poverty, not making a noticeable impression on the total global poverty. Preventing a single family's extreme poverty without comparable sacrifice vindicates this premise.
    - **Effectiveness of Aid Organizations**:
        - **Common Misconceptions**: That aid organizations use most money for administrative costs, or that corrupt governments take donations.
        - **Facts**: Major aid organizations use no more than **20% for administration**, leaving at least **80% for direct programs**. They work directly with the poor or grassroots organizations, not governments.

        - **Refined View on Administrative Costs**: Measuring effectiveness solely by low administrative costs is a mistake; experienced staff, vital for sustainable, long-term impact, incur administrative costs.
        - **GiveWell.org**: An organization that researches and ranks aid organizations based on effectiveness. It estimates several organizations can save a life for **$600 to $1200**.
        - **Conclusion**: For affluent individuals who spend a few hundred dollars yearly on non-necessities, it is clear they can save a life or prevent extreme poverty without comparable moral significance.

- **"Comparable Moral Significance"**:

    - This concept is left unexamined to demonstrate the argument's broad applicability across ethical views.
    - For most in industrialized nations, affluence means income beyond basic necessities that can be used to reduce extreme poverty.
    - Luxuries such as stylish clothes, expensive dinners, sophisticated stereos, exotic holidays, luxury cars, larger houses, or private schools are unlikely to be of comparable moral significance to reducing extreme poverty for utilitarians. Non-utilitarians who accept universalizability must also acknowledge that at least some of these are far less significant than preventable extreme poverty.
    - The precise amount one is obliged to give depends on one's ethical view, but the premise holds for any plausible ethical stance.

V. Objections to the Argument

1. **"Taking Care of Our Own"**:

    - **Objection**: We should prioritize those near us (family, then national poor) before distant poverty.
    - **Response**: The question is what we *ought* to do, not what we usually do. There is no sound moral justification for distance or community membership making a crucial difference to obligations.
        - **Racial/National Affinities**: Rejecting racial preference in aid is consistent with the principle of equal consideration of interests (e.g., helping Africans in greater need over Europeans).
        - **Cost-Effectiveness**: While affluent nations have relatively poor citizens (e.g., a US family of four below $22,000 income), significantly improving their lives costs thousands of dollars. In developing countries, **under $1,000 can save a child's life**, and **under $5,000 can double the income of ten extreme poverty families**. With limited resources, it makes sense to use them where they have the greatest beneficial impact.
        - **Kinship**: While feeling strong obligations to kin (e.g., parents giving last rice to children), this is not the situation faced by the affluent. Affluent children are well-fed, clothed, and educated, desiring luxuries. Once special obligations to children are fulfilled, the needs of strangers take priority.
        - **System of Responsibilities**: The value of families and local communities caring for their own avoids large bureaucracies. The argument does not propose equal responsibility for everyone globally. It applies when some are in extreme poverty and others can help without comparable sacrifice. Allowing one's kin to fall into extreme poverty *would* be a

sacrifice of comparable significance, justifying a modest preference for family and community. However, this modest preference is "decisively outweighed by existing discrepancies in wealth and property".

2. **Property Rights**:
    - **Objection**: People have a right to private property, which contradicts an obligation to give wealth away. Some theories argue for an individualistic right to great wealth and luxuries, even while others starve, as long as property was acquired without unjust means.
    - **Contrast Theories**: Christian doctrine (property for human needs, superabundance owed to poor – Aquinas); Socialist (wealth belongs to community); Utilitarian (override property rights to prevent great evils).
    - **Response**: The argument for an obligation to assist does not necessarily presuppose these other theories and can survive, with minor modifications, even if an individualistic theory of property rights is accepted.
        - **Nozick's View**: Robert Nozick rejected compulsory redistribution (taxation) but suggested voluntary means for moral ends. He might agree that not giving is wrong, even if within one's rights, as an ethical life involves more than just respecting rights.
        - **Critique of Individualistic Theory**: The author argues such a theory "leaves too much to chance to be an acceptable ethical view". For example, the arbitrary distribution of wealth based on where one's ancestors settled (e.g., Kuwait's oil vs. Chad's drought-induced poverty) is questioned from an impartial perspective. Thomas Pogge challenges the factual basis by arguing that the global economic order means affluent nations *do* contribute to the impoverishment of others for their own benefit (e.g., buying oil/minerals from dictators who have no moral right to the wealth, thus receiving stolen goods and incentivizing instability, which contributes to poverty). The idea of human beings living independently is "unhistorical, abstract, and ultimately inexplicable," as humans are social beings. Rights to life should mean preventing death when one could easily save.

3. **Population and the Ethics of Triage**:
    - **Objection**: This is perhaps the most serious objection. It argues that extreme poverty is caused by overpopulation, and helping those currently in poverty will only ensure more people are born to live in future poverty.
    - **Extreme Form: "Triage"**: A medical policy adopted in wartime where casualties are divided into three categories: those who survive without aid, those who might survive with aid, and those who won't survive even with aid. Only the middle category is treated to use limited resources effectively. Some suggested applying this to countries based on their prospects of becoming self-sustaining.
    - **Hardin's "Lifeboat Ethics"**: Rich nations are like occupants of a crowded lifeboat, while the sea is full of drowning people. Trying to save the drowning will overload the boat and cause all to drown. Hardin argued the rich should leave the poor to starve, otherwise the poor will drag the rich down with them. He cited India and Bangladesh as examples of overpopulation.
    - **Counter-argument: "Overpopulation is a myth"**:
        - The world produces ample food to feed its population, potentially several times more than current levels.

        - Hunger is due to inequitable land distribution and an international political/economic system that exploits poor nations for the benefit of the rich.
        - Vast quantities of grain and soybeans are wasted by feeding them to animals (getting back only a small fraction of nutritional value) or by turning them into biofuel. The amount of grain fed to animals alone would give all **1.4 billion people in extreme poverty more than twice the calories they need**.
        - Hardin's predictions for India and Bangladesh were incorrect; these countries now have a smaller proportion of hungry people despite population growth.
    - **Current Concern**: Rapid population growth rates in some African nations are alarming (e.g., Nigeria, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo predicted to almost double or triple by 2050).
    - **Triage Implications**: Advocates propose allowing population growth in such countries to be checked by a rise in death rates (famines, malnutrition, increased infant mortality, epidemics).
    - **Repugnance and Long-term Consequences**: Such consequences are "horrible" and prompt immediate rejection. However, advocates of triage are concerned with long-term consequences, arguing that current aid merely ensures more suffering later. If correct, there would be no long-term obligation to assist.
    - **Rejection of Triage (Consequentialist Framework)**:
        - A consequentialist ethics must consider probability of outcome. A certain benefit is preferred over an uncertain, slightly larger benefit.
        - Predicted evil of shutting off aid: tens of millions would die slowly, hundreds of millions would live in extreme poverty.
        - The supposed "greater evil" of future disaster (population 50% larger, more deaths) is a *possible* evil. The key question is the probability of this forecast.
        - **Demographic Transition Model**: Explains population changes as living standards rise. Initially, high fertility and high death rates -> reduced child mortality causes rapid growth (current phase for some sub-Saharan African countries). As child mortality falls, birth rates decline due to awareness, diminished need for old-age support, improved education, and emancipation/employment of women. Most rich nations have reached this stable stage.
        - **Alternative to Disaster (based on model)**: Assist poor countries to raise living standards, encourage land reform, improve education (especially women), provide alternatives to child-bearing roles, make contraception and sterilization widely available.
        - **Evidence of Success**: UN estimates show total fertility rate in developing countries fell from **six births per woman (late 1960s) to less than three (early 21st century)**. Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and Bangladesh had notable successes with contraception. This expenditure is highly cost-effective.
        - **Conclusion**: This evidence is sufficient to render shutting off aid ethically unacceptable. We cannot allow millions to die when there is a reasonable probability that population growth can be controlled without such horrors. Population growth is a reason for *reconsidering the kind of aid to give* (e.g., more resources for women's education, contraceptive services), not for reducing the obligation to assist.
    - **Awkward Question: Conditional Aid**:
        - If an overpopulated country restricts contraceptives for religious/nationalistic reasons, should aid be conditional?.
        - Ob Foreign aid should be government responsibility, private giving lets government off the hook.

- **Response**: Governments of affluent nations *should* give more aid. Less than **25 cents in every $100 of GNI is scandalous** for the US. The UN target of 0.7% is also modest.
- **Plausibility of Objection**: The idea that more private giving leads to less government aid is questionable. The opposite view (if no one gives voluntarily, the government assumes lack of citizen support and cuts programs) is more reasonable.
- **Conclusion**: Unless there's definite probability that refusing private giving increases government assistance, refusing to give privately is wrong (refusal to prevent a definite evil for uncertain gain). The onus of proof is on those who refuse to give privately.
- **Beyond Private Giving**: Active citizens should campaign for new standards for public and private aid, and for fairer trading arrangements (e.g., ending rich nation agricultural subsidies that harm poor countries' competitiveness). Political activism might be more important, but why not do both?. Many use this objection to avoid giving *and* political activism.

4. **"Too High a Standard?"**:

   - **Objection**: The argument is too demanding, setting a standard only a saint could attain. Three versions:
     - **Version 1: Human nature/Impossibility**:
       - Claim: Human nature is self-interested, concerned with immediate family (due to evolution – Hardin, Dawkins). We cannot achieve such a high, impartial standard, and "ought implies can".
       - **Response**: Partiality is a strong tendency, and it's foolish to expect widespread conformity or to condemn all who fail. However, acting impartially, though difficult, is *not impossible*. The maxim "ought implies can" applies to literal impossibility (e.g., saving more people from a sinking lifeboat when it would sink). When affluent individuals spend on luxuries while others starve, it's clear they *can* give much more. There is no barrier to approaching the impartial standard.
       - **Examples of What's Possible**:
         - **Salwen family (Atlanta, 2006)**: Well-off family sold their large home, gave **$800,000** to help villagers in Ghana, and moved to a smaller home. They found "togetherness, trust and joy". This example shows "a family can break through barriers that most of us take for granted".
         - **Zell Kravinsky**: After making $40 million in real estate, he gave away almost all of it, living modestly. He then donated a kidney to a stranger upon learning of the need and low risk.
         - These examples show the impartial standard is not impossible for individuals. Most people never try.
     - **Version 2: Undesirability of "Moral Saints"**:
       - Claim (Susan Wolf): Such an ethic demands a single-minded pursuit of the overall good, lacking the broad diversity of interests that make life interesting (opera, gourmet cooking, elegant clothes, professional sport). This isn't an ideal "good life".
       - **Response**: The "rich and varied life" Wolf describes is desirable in a world of plenty, but not when buying luxuries means accepting avoidable suffering. A doctor facing hundreds of train crash victims cannot defensibly treat 50 and then go to the opera. The life-or-death needs of others take priority. Globally, we are like that doctor in a time of disaster.

        - **Personal Relationships**: Claim: An impartial ethic makes serious personal relationships (love, friendship) impossible due to their inherent partiality.
        - **Response**: There is a place for some degree of partiality for kin and other close relationships within an impartially grounded moral framework. These relationships are "among the necessities of a flourishing life," and giving them up would be a sacrifice of "great moral significance". Moreover, it would diminish happiness, mental health, and effectiveness as an agent of change, so no such sacrifice is required by the principle.
    - **Version 3: Counter-productiveness of High Standards**:
        - Claim: Demanding too much might lead people to give nothing ("As I can't do what is morally required anyway, I won't bother to give at all"). A lower, more realistic standard might result in more aid.
        - **Response**: This is a prediction about human behavior and is compatible with the argument that we *are obliged* to give until comparable sacrifice. What follows is that *public advocacy* of this highest standard might be undesirable. To maximize reduction of extreme poverty, advocating a lower standard might be more effective. Consequentialists recognize this potential conflict between private morality (what one truly ought to do) and public advocacy (what leads to best consequences). This relates to the distinction between intuitive and critical levels of morality.
        - **Is the standard counter-productive?** Not much evidence, but discussions suggest it might be. The conventional standard (a few coins) is "far too low".
        - **Proposed Solution (Singer's "The Life You Can Save")**: A progressive scale, like a tax scale, starting at **1% of income** and for 90% of taxpayers, not exceeding **5%**. This is realistic and often brings personal gain (psychological studies show givers are happier).
        - **Impact of Proposed Scale**: If widely adopted in the affluent world, it could raise **$1.5 trillion each year**. This is **eight times what the UN task force (Jeffrey Sachs) calculated was needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals** ($187.5 billion). These goals included halving poverty/hunger, reducing child deaths by two-thirds (saving 6 million lives annually), and universal primary schooling.
        - **Final Conclusion**: The argument's high standard is demanding only because so few with the ability to help are doing so significantly. If most helped, individual contributions would be modest. The need is to change public ethics so that giving a significant amount becomes an "elementary part of what it is to live an ethical life" for anyone who can afford luxuries (e.g., even a bottle of water if safe drinking water is free).

AE BFS

1 Foundations of Moral Philosophy and Argumentation

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Ring of Gyges / Glaucon's Challenge	A famous thought experiment that questions the necessity of morality by asking why individuals should be moral if they face no fear of detection or consequences.	**Glaucon (Plato's *Republic*)** uses the legend of Gyges, a shepherd who finds a magic ring granting invisibility, to argue that he would use this power to act solely to increase his own wealth and power, suggesting even a "virtuous" man would do the same.
Relativism	The philosophical theory that right and wrong are solely relative to the customs and moral code of one's society, meaning morality is nothing more than social convention.	**Herodotus** illustrated this view with anecdotes such as the customs of the Massagetae tribe, who practiced **sharing wives** and the unique practice of **sacrificing and eating their elderly**.
Divine Command Theory	An ancient idea positing that moral living is synonymous with obedience to divine commands issued by God or the gods.	If this theory were true, even an individual with the Ring of Gyges would be prevented from doing whatever they wanted, as they would still face **divine retribution** regardless of their earthly invisibility.
Euthyphro Dilemma	A critique, posed by **Socrates**, which asks whether an action is right because the gods command it, or whether the gods command it because it is right independent of their decree.	If gods command arbitrarily, they are petty tyrants; if they have good reasons, then there exists an **"independent standard of rightness"** deeper than the divine prescriptions themselves.
Virtue Ethics	A systematic moral theory focusing on the **virtues**—qualities of character (e.g., courage, honesty, prudence) necessary for people to flourish and "do well in life".	**Aristotle** (*Nicomachean Ethics*) developed this view. It answers the challenge of Gyges by asserting that virtue is essential for **human happiness**, making the virtuous person ultimately better off than the unvirtuous.
Natural Law Theory	A teleological view, most fully developed by **Saint Thomas Aquinas**, asserting that moral rules are derived from the "laws of nature," which dictate how things *ought* to be; acts are good when they serve their inherent natural purposes.	Based on the purpose of sex organs being procreation, traditional Christian teaching deemed any use of sex for other purposes, such as **masturbation, gay sex, or contraception**, as "contrary to nature" and impermissible.
Social Contract Theory	A modern theory (secular and naturalistic) defining morality as the set of rules that **rational people will agree to obey, for their mutual benefit**, provided that others agree to obey them as well.	**Thomas Hobbes** is the core figure. These agreed-upon rules (e.g., truth-telling, respecting life and property) allow for the vast social cooperation benefits, such as **schools, hospitals, infrastructure, and security**.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Principle of Utility (Utilitarianism)	The ultimate moral rule demanding that agents always perform the action that will produce the **greatest possible balance of happiness over unhappiness** for everyone affected.	**Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill** are key figures. Utilitarians view traditional rules (e.g., against killing or breaking promises) as **"rules of thumb"** that may be broken if doing so yields better overall results, such as supporting **voluntary euthanasia**.
Impartiality (Utilitarian Application)	The core utilitarian tenet that the happiness of every individual is equally important, which leads to an extensive moral duty to aid strangers, prioritizing collective good over personal interests.	Contemporary utilitarian **Peter Singer** argues that spending $1000 on a carpet is morally wrong if the money could be donated to **UNICEF to save the lives of children**, as the medicine provides a greater balance of happiness.
Categorical Imperative (First Formulation)	**Kant's** ultimate moral principle requiring actions to be based on a **universalizable maxim**: one must act only according to a rule one can simultaneously will to become a universal law followed by everyone, all the time.	This formulation implies **absolute prohibitions** against certain actions, such as lying or committing suicide, because the underlying maxim cannot rationally be willed as a universal law.
Categorical Imperative (Second Formulation)	**Kant's** formulation requiring one to "treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an **end and never as means only**".	Treating a friend as a **"means only"** occurs when one manipulates them, such as by **lying to secure a loan** that one knows they cannot repay, thereby preventing the friend from making an autonomous choice.
Soundness (of an Argument)	A criterion for evaluating philosophical arguments. An argument is **sound** if and only if two conditions are met: it must be **valid**, and its premises must be **true**.	An argument can be unsound even if its premises and conclusion are all factually true if the conclusion does not logically follow from the premises (e.g., "The earth has one moon; John F. Kennedy was assassinated; Therefore, snow is white").
Cultural Differences Argument (CDA)	A significant argument for **Moral Skepticism**. It premises that different cultures hold different moral beliefs (e.g., regarding infanticide).	The argument uses the differing moral views between Eskimos (who practiced infanticide) and Western society. The argument is critiqued as **invalid** because the conclusion (that there is no objective moral truth) does not follow from the premise (that people *believe* differently).

2 The Ethics of Torture: Ticking Bombs and Dirty Harry

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Utilitarian Justification (of Torture)	An ethical approach that applies a cost-benefit analysis, arguing that torture is justified if the harm inflicted (nonlethal pain on one guilty individual) is less than the harm prevented (death or suffering of many innocent victims).	**Jeremy Bentham** posited that torturing one criminal would be justified if it prevented 100 innocents from suffering equal or greater torture. **Alan Dershowitz** applies this logic to inflicting nonlethal pain on one terrorist to save many lives.
Ticking Bomb Scenario	A hypothetical, extreme case often central to the torture debate, where authorities possess a captured individual who knows the location of an imminent explosive device or weapon, and the use of torture is proposed as the only remaining method to prevent mass casualties.	The situation where a captured terrorist knew the location of a **nuclear weapon poised to detonate in New York City**, and all other interrogation methods had failed, making nonlethal torture the "last, best hope".
Intellectual Fraud (Luban's Critique)	David Luban’s assertion that the Ticking Bomb Scenario is intellectually dishonest because it requires **unrealistic stipulations of certainty**—such as knowing the bomb exists, knowing the captive planted it, and knowing they will talk under torture—which rarely exist in real-world situations involving imperfect knowledge.	Authorities may only *think* a plot exists or that a captive *might* know something, which can lead to torturing innocent people or resorting to torturing family members, as opposed to the clean certainty stipulated in the hypothetical.
Slippery Slope Objection	The strongest argument against legalizing torture, often supported by **Rule Utilitarianism**, which holds that establishing a legal precedent for limited torture will inevitably lead to the practice’s widespread adoption, escalation, and institutional abuse globally, risking "the abyss of amorality and ultimately tyranny".	While Case Utilitarianism might justify an isolated act, this objection warns that legalizing the practice could justify increasingly horrific acts, such as lethal torture, torturing family members, or targeting innocent children ("morality by numbers").
Judicial Torture Warrants	A proposed mechanism by **Alan Dershowitz** to manage the inevitable use of torture in extreme cases by requiring judges to issue warrants (akin to search warrants) prior to the use of nonlethal pain, aiming to ensure accountability, openness, and democratic oversight.	A field officer and a judge would enact a **double-check**; the suspect would first be offered immunity to compel testimony, and only upon refusal to provide legally compelled, non-incriminating information would they be subjected to judicially monitored nonlethal pain.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Argument from Analogy	A rhetorical device used by **Dershowitz** to challenge the moral consistency of those who oppose nonlethal torture but accept other state-sanctioned actions that involve killing or grave harm based on a cost-benefit analysis.	Dershowitz questions the moral principle that justifies the **death penalty for past murders** while simultaneously condemning nonlethal torture (a more remediable harm) used to prevent future mass murders. Other analogies include military retaliations causing collateral civilian deaths.
Torture Culture (Institutionalization)	The transformation of torture from an "ad hoc emergency" decision into a systemic state practice involving **professional cadres of trained torturers** (who develop "surgeon's arrogance") and bureaucratic procedures, which history shows inevitably leads to the escalation of violence and abuse.	The **Stanford Prison Experiment** is cited as evidence of how a shift in norms and role assignments can normalize and escalate abusive behavior. Historical examples include abuses in Algeria, Israel, and Argentina's "Dirty War".
Dirty Harry Scenario	A classic ethical dilemma/case study used by **Uwe Steinhoff** to argue that interrogative torture is morally justified in rare, extreme circumstances where a person (like a police officer) must act outside the law to save an innocent life, even without certainty regarding the information or the person’s guilt.	The case where a police officer tortures a kidnapper to save a child's life. Steinhoff argues there is no moral difference between shooting a man about to shoot the president and torturing a potential bomber.
Off-the-Books Actions / Way of the Hypocrites	A governmental response to terrorism where the state formally maintains adherence to the rule of law but secretly allows security services to operate outside the law, turning a blind eye to illegal practices like torture. Dershowitz views this secrecy as antithetical to democracy.	**Watergate** and **Iran-Contra** are cited by Dershowitz as historical examples where secret, "off-the-book actions" in a democracy led to negative consequences. The French experience in Algeria where an officer was prosecuted for *revealing* torture, not for performing it, illustrates the hypocritical approach.
Nonlethal Torture	A specific type of pain infliction, often cited by **Alan Dershowitz**, which avoids death and permanent injury (e.g., sterilized needle under fingernails, dental drill) and is argued to be a lesser and more remediable harm than death.	The potential use of nonlethal torture in the **Zacarias Moussaoui case variation** if authorities knew he was part of a plan to destroy buildings but lacked details, and all lawful interrogation methods had failed.

3 Defining Morality: Reason, Impartiality, and Hard Cases

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Moral Philosophy	**The fundamental study of what morality is and what it requires of us**, specifically addressing the Socratic question of "how we ought to live" and the reasons behind our actions.	Investigates challenging ethical dilemmas and complex situations, such as the three compelling case studies presented: Baby Theresa, Jodie and Mary, and Tracy Latimer.
Minimum Conception of Morality	A core definition serving as a starting point that every moral theory should generally accept. It is defined as **the effort to guide one's conduct by reason** (doing what is best supported by arguments) **while giving equal weight to the interests of each individual affected** by the decision.	This conception mandates that all moral judgments regarding cases like Baby Theresa must be supported by sound reasoning and require the impartial consideration of everyone's interests.
Moral Reasoning / Role of Reason	The process where strong feelings must be guided by reason to discover the truth. It mandates that the **morally right action is always the one best supported by arguments**, requiring the sifting of facts and the assessment of whether moral principles are justified.	Used when assessing the legality and morality of Baby Theresa's case, particularly determining if the definition of death should be revised to allow organ transplantation, as she lacked consciousness and had no hope for conscious life.
Impartiality	A requirement of morality meaning that **each individual's interests are equally important**. It forbids treating one person worse than another *without good reason* and condemns discrimination, such as sexism and racism, by rejecting the arbitrary treatment of particular groups as inferior.	The principle must be applied in cases of disability, such as Tracy Latimer, where critics argued against her father's actions based on the "Wrongness of Discriminating against the Handicapped," demanding she receive the same respect and rights as everyone else.
The Benefits Argument	The premise that **if we can benefit someone without harming anyone else, we ought to do so**. This moral principle is considered a powerful reason for action when applied.	Used to argue *for* transplanting Baby Theresa's organs, as it would benefit other children, and it was asserted that Theresa would not be harmed since her organs were doing her no good and she lacked consciousness.
The Argument That We Should Not Use People as Means	The premise that it is **wrong to use people to achieve others' ends**. Typically, "using people" involves violating their autonomy (ability to decide for themselves) through manipulation, deceit, or force.	Used to argue *against* transplanting Baby Theresa's organs. However, the argument was weakened by the assessment that Baby Theresa had no autonomy and could not make decisions, thus having no wishes to violate.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Autonomy	An individual's **ability to decide for themselves**. Violation of autonomy, usually occurring through manipulation, trickery, deceit, or force, is often central to the objection against using people as means.	In the case of Baby Theresa, the argument against "using people as means" was assessed to have less force because she lacked autonomy, meaning she could not value anything or express desires.
The Sanctity of Human Life	The moral premise, central to Western moral tradition and religious writings, that **all human life is precious, and it is wrong to kill an innocent human**, regardless of the purpose the killing might serve.	Used as the primary argument *against* separating conjoined twins Jodie and Mary. The parents, devout Catholics, refused the operation based on this principle, believing that "nature should take its course".
The Slippery Slope Argument	A type of moral argument warning that accepting one particular action, even if justifiable in a hard case, will lead to a chain reaction where standards erode, and **life will eventually be held cheap**. These arguments are noted as being hard to assess without hindsight and easy to abuse.	Used *against* Robert Latimer, who killed his daughter Tracy Latimer. Critics warned that allowing such "mercy killing" could lead to similar actions being taken against other disabled, elderly, or infirm individuals, drawing parallels to historical eugenics programs.
Conscientious Moral Agent	An individual who embodies the minimum conception of morality. This agent displays an **impartial concern** for everyone affected, carefully sifts facts, scrutinizes principles for justification, is willing to "listen to reason," and acts based on the results of their deliberation.	Such an agent, when faced with the tragedy of Tracy Latimer, would need to carefully sift facts, distinguishing whether the killing was due to her disability (discrimination) or her relentless, hopeless suffering (the "torture issue").

4 Foundations of Ethical Thought

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Meta-ethics	The area of ethics that addresses **abstract philosophical issues** underlying normative questions, traditionally divided into philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, metaphysics (nature of ethical truth), and epistemology (nature of ethical knowledge).	Determining the **nature of harm** for non-sentient species: engaging with the meta-ethical concept of welfare is necessary to decide if a species lacking desires can be harmed or benefited.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Normative Ethics	The major division of ethics concerned with providing **principles, concepts, and ideals** cited in support of ethical judgments about cases, offering frameworks (e.g., consequentialism, deontology) for ethical evaluation.	Evaluation of ethical judgments concerning the **trolley problem** is a central activity of normative ethics, as specific cases help formulate and evaluate normative theories.
Case Ethics	A suggested alternative term for "applied ethics," referring to our **considered judgments about specific ethical issues** or cases, coupled with the reasoning (*ratio*) or principled reflections that underpin these judgments.	Issues involving **public morality** (e.g., justifying restrictions on liberty) require publicly formulated, principled justifications, which is integral to case ethics discussions in a democratic society.
Reason- or Warrant-Dependence	The inherent commitment made when offering an ethical judgment (e.g., that an action is "morally required") that there is a **valid reason or warrant** for that judgment, implying the existence of background properties or principles.	Judging an action as morally required commits one to the belief that there are **characteristics of the action and situation** that make it obligatory, thereby committing the judge to a background theory.
Contractarianism	A normative ethical theory grounding right and wrong in **principles chosen by agents through self-interested agreement** or contract, where morality is seen as a broad form of cooperation.	The **Prisoner's Dilemma** illustrates the contractarian foundation: individual self-interest leads to a worse collective outcome (5 years jail each), demonstrating the need for mutually advantageous rules/cooperation.
Contractualism	A normative ethical theory grounding moral principles not in self-interest, but in a **moral ideal of reciprocity, reasonableness, or equal respect**, requiring principles that others could **not reasonably reject**.	**Rawls's "Original Position"**: Principles of justice are chosen from behind a **"veil of ignorance,"** where parties are ignorant of their specific talents, wealth, or race, ensuring the choice represents the perspective of an arbitrary, free, and equal individual.
Consequentialism	A theory holding that the moral rightness and wrongness of acts are **determined exclusively by the non-moral goodness of relevant outcomes** or consequences. It starts with non-moral values held prior to morality itself.	Assessing whether **Hitler's assassination** would have been a "good thing to happen" due to the overall lives saved, even if the act itself might be considered morally wrong by other frameworks.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Utilitarianism	The most popular historical form of benefit consequentialism, defined by determining the non-moral value of outcomes by **summing benefits and costs to all affected parties** and requiring the action that produces the greatest overall value.	**Classical Hedonistic Utilitarianism** (linked to Bentham) holds that benefit/welfare is determined by maximizing **pleasure over pain** in conscious lives.
Agent-Neutral Values	A feature of Consequentialism where fundamental values derive from the existence of states and justify actions to promote them, **regardless of the agent's relationship** to those states.	If betrayal is intrinsically bad, agent-neutrality suggests you have reason to **betray your own friend** if doing so prevents a greater overall number of betrayals by others.
Deontology	A class of normative theories holding that moral right and wrong are **not determined by promoting the best outcomes**; instead, they prioritize **agent-relative duties** and principles based on the agent's relationship to others.	**The moral distinction between causing harm and allowing it to happen**, which reflection (e.g., in the trolley problem) often confirms as an evident difference, cannot be reduced merely to outcome promotion.
Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE)	A specific deontological principle asserting a moral difference between causing harm **as an unintended side-effect** of an intended action and intending the harm **directly** (as an end or means).	Applying the DDE to warfare: **bombing military targets** causing civilian casualties (unintended side-effect) is judged differently than directly **killing the same number of civilians** (intended harm), even for the same military goal.
***Prima Facie* (or *Pro Tanto*) Duty**	A concept developed within intuitionist deontology (W.D. Ross) referring to a duty or right-making consideration that holds **"other things being equal"** and would make an action right if it were the only morally relevant feature.	When saving a life necessitates breaking a mundane promise, the duty to save the life overrides the promise, but the promise remains a *pro tanto* duty, potentially requiring a **residual obligation** (e.g., compensating the promisee).
Virtue Ethics (Virtue Theory)	An approach that focuses primarily on **character** ("how we should be") and the dispositions (virtues) necessary for human flourishing, rather than conduct or universal rules of duty.	Judging that **clear-cutting a forest** might show an inappropriate attitude or manifest vices like rapacity, even if the environment cannot be "wronged" in the moral sense typically used by other theories.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Aristotelian Virtues (*areté*)	Dispositions, or excellences, that make something an excellent instance of its kind, defining traits that lead to choosing what is **fine or noble (*kalon*)** for its own sake, rather than merely adhering to moral law.	Ethical insight under the Aristotelian approach is often accessed by asking **what a virtuous person would characteristically do** in a given circumstance, relying on the wisdom or "sense" of that exemplar.

5 An Introduction to Moral Philosophy and Argument

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
The Challenge of Gyges's Ring	A fundamental inquiry in moral philosophy that questions the intrinsic value of morality. It asks why a person should care about being "moral" if they are freed from the fear of consequences and able to do whatever they please or whatever they think is best for themselves.	Gyges, a poor shepherd, finds a magic ring granting invisibility. He uses this power to seduce the queen, murder the king, and seize the throne. Glaucon suggests that both a rogue and a virtuous man would pursue power and indulge their desires if given the ring.
Relativism (Moral)	Perhaps the oldest philosophical theory, it posits that **right and wrong are relative to the customs of one's society**, suggesting that morality is nothing more than social convention.	The Greek historian Herodotus observed the Massagetae tribe, who practiced polyandry, sacrificed the very old, and ate their flesh. Herodotus believed these customs were neither better nor worse than others, simply different.
Divine Command Theory (DCT)	The ethical framework stating that moral living consists of **obedience to divine commands**. This view offers a potential answer to Gyges's challenge, as one would still be subject to divine retribution.	Ancient sources related to DCT offer little direct guidance for modern issues like **environmental preservation** or resource allocation for AIDS research.
The Euthyphro Dilemma	A critique arguing that the basis of ethics cannot ultimately be divine commands because either (1) the commands are arbitrary (like a petty tyrant), or (2) if the gods have good reasons for their commands, then there is a **standard of rightness independent of their commands**.	The dilemma means that we can always ask *why* gods command what they do, confirming that the rightness or wrongness of actions is not *merely* conformity to divine prescriptions.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Virtue Ethics	The ethical framework focused on **virtues**—qualities of character (e.g., courage, prudence, generosity, honesty) necessary for human happiness. It argues that virtue is essential for happiness.	**Aristotle** (*Nicomachean Ethics*, ca. 330 BCE) provided the first systematic treatise on moral philosophy, answering Gyges's challenge by asserting that the virtuous man is ultimately better off.
Teleology (Aristotelian)	The worldview stating that **everything in nature exists for a purpose**. Aristotle saw the world as an orderly, rational system where everything serves a special purpose.	Examples include teeth existing for chewing, eyes for seeing, and rain falling for plants to grow. This view also suggested that plants exist for animals, and animals exist **for the sake of people**.
Natural Law Theory	A theory developed by later Christian thinkers (based on Aristotelian teleology) that connects morality to inherent purposes. It dictates that things serving their natural purpose are good, and "unnatural" acts are wrong.	Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) fully developed this theory. Because the purpose of sex organs is procreation, the Christian church traditionally regarded any non-procreative sexual activity (e.g., **masturbation, gay sex, contraception**) as "contrary to nature" and impermissible.
Social Contract Theory	Morality is defined as **the set of rules that rational people will agree to obey, for their mutual benefit, provided that other people will obey them as well**. It arises from the realization that mutually cooperative society is superior to living alone.	**Thomas Hobbes** (17th century) proposed this secular basis for ethics. Required rules include telling the truth, keeping promises, and respecting lives and property, as these are necessary to achieve social benefits like schools, hospitals, and infrastructure.
Utilitarianism (Principle of Utility)	The core principle that we should always do whatever will produce **the greatest possible balance of happiness over unhappiness for everyone who will be affected by our action**. It relies on consequentialism and strict impartiality.	**Jeremy Bentham** and **John Stuart Mill** (1861) are key figures. A strong moral duty to help others means spending $1000 on UNICEF for medicine for dozens of children instead of on a new carpet, as the medicine provides far greater overall utility. Utilitarians also support rules being broken if better results are achieved, such as voluntary **euthanasia** for painful illness.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Kantian Ethics	A system of ethics positing that morality is a product of **"pure reason"** and is binding on us because of our rationality. It emphasizes "doing one's duty" and does not prioritize the outcomes or consequences of actions.	**Immanuel Kant** (18th century German philosopher). This theory endorses **absolute prohibitions** against actions such as lying or suicide, based on consistency requirements of pure reason.
Categorical Imperative (Universal Law)	The moral law binding us due to rationality, formulated as: **"Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law"**.	When considering an action, one must ask if they would be willing for *everyone* to follow the rule underlying that action *all the time*. If not, the act is morally impermissible.
Treating Humanity as an End	The requirement to respect the rationality and autonomy of humanity (in oneself or others), acting so that one treats others **always as an end and never as means only**. (Second Formulation of the Categorical Imperative).	To use a friend "as a means" is to manipulate them for one's own goals, such as making a **false promise** to get money. To treat them "as an end" means telling them the truth, allowing them to freely and rationally choose whether to help.
Argument (Logician's Sense)	A chain of reasoning designed to prove something, consisting of one or more **premises** and a **conclusion**, with the claim that the conclusion follows from the premises.	**Example:** (1) All men are mortal. (2) Socrates is a man. (3) Therefore, Socrates is mortal.
Validity (Logical)	A property of an argument structure where the conclusion "follows from" the premises; it means **it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false at the same time**.	The argument "All people from Georgia are famous. Jimmy Carter is from Georgia. Therefore, Jimmy Carter is famous" is considered **valid**, even though its first premise is factually untrue.
Soundness (Logical)	A property of an argument that is achieved if and only if the argument is **valid** AND its **premises are true**.	The argument: "The earth has one moon. John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Therefore, snow is white" is not sound because, despite all statements being true, the conclusion does not logically follow from the premises (it is invalid).

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Moral Skepticism	The idea that **there is no such thing as objective moral truth**. Morality is subjective, a matter of opinion, and values exist only in our minds.	The **Cultural Differences Argument (CDA)** claims that because infanticide is acceptable in Eskimo societies but odious in our own, it must be merely a matter of subjective opinion that varies by culture.
Provability Argument (Skepticism)	A skeptical argument claiming that if objective truth in ethics existed, we could prove moral opinions true or false, but since we cannot, such truth does not exist.	This argument is critiqued because we often *can* give good reasons to back up ethical judgments, such as proving a student's test was **unfair** by pointing out its excessive length or focus on uncovered material.

6 Equality: Beyond Race, Sex, and Ability

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Equality (as an Ethical Principle)	The fundamental principle that ethical judgements necessitate considering the interests of all affected parties impartially, irrespective of traits like race, sex, or ability. This principle is a **basic ethical principle, not an assertion of fact** about shared human characteristics.	The principle provides the necessary grounds to reject a **society hierarchically based on intelligence** (e.g., classifying people into groups, such as a slave-owning class for IQ > 125), which would be otherwise justified if equality rested only on factual similarities.
Principle of Equal Consideration of Interests	A robust ethical principle requiring that **equal weight** be given in moral deliberations to the **like interests of all those affected** by actions. Interests are weighed impartially, without accounting for whose interests they are.	**Morphine Distribution Scenario:** In an earthquake, if there are two shots of morphine, equal consideration dictates giving both to the victim with a crushed leg (severe pain) rather than one shot each, as this unequal treatment results in a **more egalitarian outcome** by reducing the overall disparity in suffering.
Moral Personality	A natural characteristic proposed as a factual basis for equality, defined not as goodness, but as possessing a **sense of justice**—being the kind of person capable of understanding and adhering to mutual agreements.	**Key Thinker/Tradition: John Rawls** (in *A Theory of Justice*); linked to the **social contract tradition**.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Factual Basis of Equality (Critique)	The search for a specific natural characteristic (such as intelligence, moral personality, or rationality) that is **equally possessed by all humans** and upon which the principle of equality could be built.	The search for this basis is considered **"hopeless"** because humans vary extensively in physical attributes, intellectual abilities, moral character, and emotional depth. The author concludes that no natural characteristic can fulfill this function.
Principle of Declining Marginal Utility	The idea that the more someone possesses of something (e.g., money or resources), the less additional benefit or satisfaction they receive from an extra quantity of it.	**Application to Income:** This principle inclines toward an **equal distribution of income** (provided that incentive effects are ignored) because resources mean much more to those who have very little (e.g., $100 means more to a low-income earner than a billionaire).
Equal Opportunity (Critique)	The belief that existing differences in social status and income are fair, provided that everyone had an **"equal start"** and was not discriminated against (like a fair race where winners deserve the prizes).	This ideal is found inadequate because it **rewards the lucky**. Even if schooling were equalized, genetic differences in inherited abilities (IQ, aggression) would remain, meaning distribution based on these inherent factors has "nothing to do with what people deserve or need".
Marxist Principle of Needs-Based Justice	An ideal distributive system focused on maximizing utility and justice, where the commitment is: **"From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"**.	**Real-World Difficulty:** The primary challenge to implementing such a system in one country is the risk of a **"brain drain,"** where skilled individuals (doctors, programmers) emigrate to countries that continue to reward ability more highly, requiring emigration controls.
Affirmative Action	The practice of providing **preferential treatment** to members of historically disadvantaged groups (racial/ethnic minorities, women) in employment or university admissions, often to increase representation or promote social equality.	**Case Law/Applied Ethics:** The *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* case involved a European American who sued a medical school for reserving 16 out of 100 places for minority students. Ethically, the author concludes affirmative action is **not contrary to sound principles of equality** or rights, provided the goals (social equality, role models) are justifiable.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Academic Mismatch	A practical objection against certain affirmative action methods, positing that placing disadvantaged students in highly competitive academic environments with more academically gifted peers results in **lower class standing** and reduced graduation rates.	This concept arises when considering students admitted via affirmative action programs who generally have, on average, **lower grades** than the class as a whole.
Discrimination based on Disability	Treating individuals differently due to their physical or intellectual disability, even when the disability is **irrelevant** to the employment or service offered. Historically, this has involved severe prejudice, exploitation, and institutionalization.	The principle of equal consideration of interests justifies **spending more money on behalf of disabled people** (e.g., additional resources for special needs) than on non-disabled people, because these needs are often **"very central to the lives"** of disabled individuals.
Genetic Differences (Racial/Sexual)	Hypotheses proposed by thinkers like **Arthur Jensen** and **H. J. Eysenck** suggesting that **genetic factors** are strongly implicated in average differences in IQ scores among racial groups or in psychological traits (e.g., greater male aggression or visual-spatial ability) between sexes.	**Moral Conclusion:** Even if proven scientifically sound, these differences **do not provide grounds to deny the moral principle that all humans are equal**. The most important human interests (avoiding pain, relationships, freedom) are not affected by differences in intelligence or aggression.

7 The Ethics of Wealth: Obligation to the Poor

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Moral Obligation to Assist	The profound ethical duty, central to **Peter Singer's** argument, stating that if one can prevent something bad (like extreme poverty) from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, one ought to do so.	The **Drowning Child Analogy**: If one passes a shallow pond and sees a child drowning, one ought to wade in and save the child, even if it means ruining one's clothes. Singer argues this obligation applies equally to assisting those in absolute poverty.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Comparable Moral Significance	The standard used to determine the necessary limit of charitable action. An action is morally obligatory if it prevents something bad without requiring the agent to sacrifice anything of equivalent or greater moral importance.	For affluent individuals, saving a life for **$600 to $1200** via effective aid organizations does not require sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, especially when compared to spending on luxuries like stylish clothes or exotic holidays.
Absolute Poverty	A state defined by the World Bank as not possessing enough income to meet the most basic human needs for adequate food, water, shelter, clothing, sanitation, healthcare, or education. This form of poverty is lethal.	In 2008, an estimated **1.4 billion people** globally had income below the threshold (US$1.25 per day equivalent). In that same year, **8.8 million children under five years old died from avoidable, poverty-related causes**.
Absolute Affluence	Possessing income beyond what is needed to adequately provide for all basic necessities of life for oneself and one's dependents, leaving wealth available for luxuries and non-essential spending.	The majority of citizens in Europe, North America, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand are absolutely affluent. They can afford to spend on **sophisticated stereos, luxury cars, larger houses, or private schools**.
Libertarian View of Rights	A non-consequentialist theory, associated with thinkers like **Locke** and **Nozick**, asserting that rights are primarily negative rights—rights *against* interference—and not positive rights *to* assistance. Killing violates rights, but merely omitting to save does not.	The theory argues that individuals have a right to great wealth and luxuries, provided property was acquired without unjust means, even if others starve. **Robert Nozick** rejected compulsory redistribution but suggested voluntary means for moral ends.
Identifiable Victims	The instinctual response where people are more likely to donate aid to a known, named, or photographed individual or family than to large-scale, anonymous suffering. Singer argues this difference has **no moral significance**.	The **2004 Asian tsunami** (approx. 230,000 deaths) or the **2010 Haiti earthquake** (up to 200,000 deaths) represented only about one week’s toll of preventable, poverty-related deaths, yet receive disproportionately more attention and aid because the event and victims are more readily identifiable.
Lifeboat Ethics / Triage	An objection to global assistance, argued by figures like **Garrett Hardin**, suggesting that rich nations (the lifeboat) should allow the poor to starve to prevent catastrophic overpopulation from dragging everyone down. This policy advocates for letting population growth be checked by rising death rates.	Hardin cited **India and Bangladesh** as potential examples of countries where overpopulation was so dire that aid should be stopped. However, the source notes that his predictions for these countries were incorrect, and their proportion of hungry people has since fallen.

Term/Concept	Definition & Key Thinkers	Case Study/Example
Moral Heroism	A standard of action that exceeds minimum moral duties, often involving extreme difficulty or sacrifice. Singer critiques the conventional attitude that views giving large amounts to the poor as "heroism" rather than a minimum moral necessity.	The standard of **not killing** is considered a minimum moral standard, whereas saving all lives one possibly could (cutting one's living standard to "bare essentials") is often conventionally viewed as requiring "moral heroism".
Demographic Transition Model	A consequentialist framework used to counter the population objection (Triage). It explains that population stability is achieved when rising living standards, improved education (especially for women), and widespread contraception cause birth rates to decline.	The global fertility rate in developing countries fell from **six births per woman in the late 1960s to less than three in the early 21st century**, based on successes achieved in nations like Thailand, Indonesia, and Bangladesh through cost-effective interventions.
"Too High a Standard" Objection	An objection to demanding ethics, proposed by **Susan Wolf**, claiming that requiring a single-minded pursuit of the overall good demands a life lacking the "broad diversity of interests" (e.g., opera, gourmet cooking) that make a "good life" desirable.	Singer refutes this by arguing that a doctor facing hundreds of train crash victims cannot defensibly treat 50 and then go to the opera; globally, the affluent are currently in the position of that doctor facing a massive disaster.