

8/20 – Introduction & a bit of Plato

- I. Normative Ethics (first order questions)
 - a. What sorts of acts are right (wrong)?
 - b. What sorts of things are good (good for me)?
 - c. What kind of person should I be?
- II. Metaethics (second order questions, meta questions)
 - a. What do the terms of these questions (right, wrong, good) convey?
 - b. Are there any objective answers to these questions?
 - c. How can we know what the answers are?
 - d. Why should we care? (Why be moral?)
- III. Moral Psychology = What kind of people are we (what psychology do we have) if we are to ask and answer these questions
- IV. Consequentialism = the best action is the one with the best overall consequences (maximize the good)
- V. Deontology = An ethic of duty, the best action is one that is different than the consequences
 - a. Consequentialism is a subset of deontology where the duty is the maximize the good
- VI. Plato, The Ring of Gyges = Is it *rational* to be moral?
 - a. Main question: Why should I act justly? Why should I do the right thing? Why should I be moral?
 - b. This question is independent to what being moral *is*, given that the morality in question implies some kind of self-sacrifice
 - i. Otherwise morality could just be act in your best interest, and then our answer to why should I act morally would not involve morality.
 - c. This is a question about reasons. We are asking for a reason to do X.
 - i. Is it *rational* to be moral?

8/22 – Plato, The Ring Of Gyges

- I. Reputation of being moral *vs.* actually being moral
- II. I should be moral because I want other people to be moral
 - a. But what I do won't have an effect on other people
- III. If I want a reason to be moral, I need a non-moral reason!
- IV. "Why should I act on moral reasons?"
 - a. A) a moral reason to act on a moral reason
 - b. B) a non-moral reason to act on a moral reason
 - c. C) both of these options are useless, no answer! (Why?)

8/24 – Thomas Hobbes, Morality and Self-Interest

- I. Basics of Hobbes' moral philosophy
 - a. In the real world, we don't know if we can always get away with something
 - b. Hobbes still argues in self-interest
- II. Argument: it is better to 'play it safe' and act justly all the time because we might get caught
 - a. Hobbes says we have no reasons to break our promises! In the long-run, it is much safer, and thus much more good-producing, to act justly and hold our promises
- III. Psychological Egoism = the only thing that motivates people is self-interest
- IV. Misbehavior of the immoral sort is irrational *with the establishment of the sovereign*
 - a. Of course, in the State Of Nature, acting immoral is rational
 - b. Thus morality is dependent upon political system
- V. Laws of Nature = requirements of rational self-preservation
 - a. Rules that we ought to follow in order to promote our own well-being as long as we live under a government/sovereign
- VI. Ethical Egoism = Rules Egoism = the right thing to do is the one that serves our own interests
 - a. We do this by using rules rather case by case basis

8/27 – David Gauthier, Morality and Advantage

- I. Recap on Hobbes
 - a. Under the conditions of the Sovereign, we all have *reasons* to abide by a set of rules (The Laws Of Nature).
 - b. Hobbes thus says it is generally a good idea to act morally
 - i. "Justice is not contrary to reason."
- II. But what about the general case for Hobbes? Such as the Ring Of Gyges?
 - a. Assume under a Sovereign and not a State Of Nature
 - b. "And I say it is not against reason." So long as you can't get sniffed out!
 - i. "cannot be received into any society" except by error
 - c. But what are the risks involved with this? Is this really worth the very high risk?
 - i. Hobbes says that this risk is too much, the rational thing to do is to not to take the chance.
 - ii. But it sounds like Hobbes is talking about being in the State of Nature, does this point really hold up in civil society outside of the SoN?
 - iii. We have lots of reasons to believe that we won't be able to hold on to our covenant breaking and immorality forever without ever getting caught once.
 1. Our judgment could be skewed very easily.

- iv. We don't have a good grip on what we can get away with, and we don't have a good grip on what the punishment for our actions will be.
 - d. The argument depends on the uncertainties, and falls apart if they are not present.
 - i. But what about the uncertainties of ourselves?
- III. David Gauthier, Morality and Self-Interest
 - a. There is a connection between morality and self-interests, but a different kind of connection.
 - b. Connections between Morality and Self-Interest
 - i. (1) We all benefit when people act morally towards us
 - ii. (2) You can only realize the gains from my moral action *only if I make sacrifices*
 - iii. (3) I gain from your moral action *only if you make sacrifices*
 - iv. Thus this is a situation where (a) everyone gains but also (b) everyone makes sacrifices.
 - c. Gauthier: the gains from (a) overshadow the losses or sacrifices of (b). [This is a thesis, not something he is absolutely sure of, instead the paper looks at showing this as a *possibility*]
 - d. The question "Should we act morally" is ambiguous according to Gauthier
 - i. If we assume "we" then the answer is yes (collective yes)
 - ii. If we assume "I" then the answer is no, or possibly no.
 - e. Thus we have a distinction between "collective" and "self" reasons to act morally.
 - i. Collective morality and self-morality come apart, distinction from Hobbes.
 - f. The thesis pushed by Gauthier is at most a necessary condition of a moral theory, not a sufficient condition.
 - g. What about the additional conditions of morality?
- IV. Gauthier, Revisited
 - a. We all benefit from universal adherence to morality
 - b. Collectively better for us to follow morality, individually better for us to not follow morality (at least not all the time)
 - c. Important: Gauthier claims that morality *could* be this way, not that it *is* this way.
 - i. Gauthier wants us to know that the content of morality would affect the way that this thesis works
 - d. Baseline question: Gauthier claims that morality is better, but better compared to what?
 - i. Same thing applies to Hobbes' political philosophy
- V. Gauthier's thesis requires fairness: everyone must do better under universal adherence to morality
 - a. But in order to be a genuinely moral person, you have to not only abide by the rules, but you have to have concern for where the benefits of the rules go
- VI. We can't answer the question: "Why be moral?"

8/29 & 8/31 – Korsgaard, The Authority of Norms

- I. Key terms in Korsgaard
 - a. Reflective consciousness = our [forced] ability to step back from desires & impulses, and consider *reasons*
 - i. Animals (who do not have reflective consciousness) cannot step back and think about what *should* they do, whereas humans can't help
 - ii. How do we resolve such questions? They come from our practical identities
 - b. Practical identity =
 - i. Not just social or roles, instead many come from being 'a kind of person', such as I want to be a truthful person, or a moral person, etc.
 - c. First person perspective / Third person perspective
 - i. The source of the value in human beings must be in us!
 - ii. Then if they have value, then we must think we have value.
 - iii. Then we must think we have value.
 - iv. We can't help but think as ourselves as having value, thus we have value.
 1. But what if we are not certain that we are actually important?
 2. Justification for this move comes from 1st/3rd person perspective distinction
 - a. In the 3rd person perspective the answer isn't clear, but in the 1st person perspective the answer is clear (that we have value)
 - d. Moral identity
- II. Korsgaard does not appeal to self-interest, but rather agency
 - a. What's implicit in being the kind of agent each of us is?
- III. Argument: human beings are inherently valuable
 - a. 1. If we have practical identities, we must view ourselves as having value
 - i. If we value the actions that we take, then we have to value ourselves first.
 - ii. Does Korsgaard really justify the necessity of practical identities in human beings?
- IV. Question for next lecture: When people communicate their reasons to us, then they *become* reasons of ours (not that we just have reasons to take other people's reasons seriously).

9/5 – More Korsgaard

- I. Korsgaard: How do we get from "we can't help but see ourselves as valuable" to "we are valuable"
 - a. From first-person perspective, argument doesn't hold. Requires third-person perspective. By using third-person, all the sudden seeing ourselves as valuable is the same as being valuable.

- II. Overview of Korsgaard
 - a. What does Korsgaard have to say the immoralist so that he does the right thing?
 - i. The assassin might not mind having an incoherent belief system caused by immorality. Why must he?

9/7 - Foot, Morality as Hypothetical Imperatives [Beginning of Psychological Egoism]

- I. “Why should we be moral” isn’t answered by categorical imperatives
- II. Categorical Imperatives mean many things
 - a. Kant: categorical imperatives are independent of desire
 - i. Whereas hypothetical imperatives are binding because of their alignment with our desire
 - b. Morality does not necessitate our doing moral actions
 - i. We feel as if they do, but this feeling is based on upbringing and not anything real. It is magical.
- III. Psychological Egoism
 - a. Objection: Don’t people often do things that are self-sacrificing?
 - b. We can reconstruct any agent’s actions from reasons that show it *could have been done* for selfish reasons

9/10 – Feinberg, Psychological Egoism

- I. Psychological Egoism described
 - a. Psychological egoism is a psychological theory that we base in empirical evidence
 - b. Moderate versions of psychological egoism: “Very often people act for self-interested reasons”
 - c. Psychological egoism tries to explain away true altruistic action!
- II. Feinberg looks at 4 specific arguments for psychological egoism
 - a. 1. Moral education [batting practice]
 - i. When learning about morality, we originally only do it get pleasure or avoid pain. Thus morality is based off of pleasure/pain because that is our moral origins.
 - ii. Fallacy: The way something arises in us does not explain why they persist with us in the present.
 - b. 2. Self-deception [batting practice]
 - i. We all know that sometimes we do things that we think we are doing in altruism, but we actually did it for our own benefit after looking back on it. Why is it not the case that every time we do something altruistic we are actually just deceiving ourselves?

- ii. Response: OK, this could be true, but the empirical evidence does not support it. The evidence supports that we do not fool ourselves all the time.
- c. 3. We always seek to further our own desires
 - i. Response: the origin of our desires does not have any regard on the object of the desire. That is, of course our desires are selfish in the sense of the word that they come from us, but this doesn't say anything about the selfishness of the action! The argument doesn't follow.
- d. 4. Appeal to happiness (virtue is simply a means to happiness)
 - i. Everything we do is to achieve the satisfaction or happiness that our completing our desires will bring.
 - 1. "Getting what you want doesn't always make you happy" is true but not relevant because it's psychological egoism is about motivations not what actually makes us happy.
 - ii. Fact: something can accompany an action without being a motivation of that action
 - iii. Fact: even if we do things for peace of mind, this implies that we care about the thing that would bother us
 - iv. Amnesia Pill: shows us that we are not always self-interested because we would not take the pill to forget the guilt

9/12 – Mill, Utilitarianism; Requirements of Moral Theories

- I. Our question up until now: "Why should I do what morality tells me to do?"; Now we ask "What is morality anyways?"
- II. We want to depart from or explain our ordinary intuitions about moral judgments
 - a. Most of our moral judgments are 'no brainers'
 - i. But we want a moral system that will help us when our moral judgments are tough!
 - ii. So our system must (1) include our intuitive answers to the easy cases and (2) help us with the hard cases
 - b. My question: why do we need to use what is morally popular as a criterion for our moral system? Nothing is moral in virtue of being popular, so moral popularity is not causally related to the morality of an action
- III. We say that unity is important in a moral theory, but why is unity important?
 - a. Response: considers that a moral system has two principles:
 - i. (1) Keep promises
 - ii. (2) Help those who need help
 - b. Obvious problem: these principles seem to conflict! Thus we do not have a moral theory that will give us guidance in *every* case; we say that the moral system/theory does not tell us what to do!

- c. Response to the response: The very fact that there are conflicts in our moral theory just means our principles need to be explained further. Thus we might say:
 - i. (1) Keep promises *except when...*
 - ii. (2) Help those who need help *except when...*

9/14 – Mill, Utilitarianism; Part 2

- I. Consequentialism [Utilitarianism] has the benefit of having the most unity out of the available moral theories
 - a. Criterion of rightness: the *actions* that bring the most overall utility are RIGHT/GOOD, regardless of what the *intentions*
 - i. But even if person A acts with good intentions and fails, he didn't do the RIGHT action but he *is not blameworthy*
 - b. An action is morally right IFF it brings about the best possible consequences
- II. Non-consequentialists theories: the consequences are not the most important thing in determining the RIGHT/WRONG about moral action
- III. The reason goods are good is that they bring subjective pleasure as an ends
- IV. Two kinds of common denominators used by consequentialists
 - a. 1) pleasure, avoidance of pain
 - b. 2) satisfaction of desire
 - i. Easy to conflate, because getting 2) what you desire seems to bring 1) pleasure, avoidance of pain
 - ii. BUT they are distinct because: there is nothing that could happen that a person cannot want (you can want anything), it follows that the 2) the things that we want can be completely unrelated to 1) pleasure, avoidance of pain.
- V. We define the term happiness to represent both (1) and (2) in discussions about consequentialism in order to stream-line discussion.
- VI. Distinction
 - a. Good: X is a great work of art. It's good, but it may not relate to the benefit of any individuals at all [the world is a better place because of X]
 - b. Good for: X is good for a person's health, etc. [benefit to the individual]

9/17 & 9/19 – Even more Mill, Utilitarianism

- I. Combination of Theory of the Right [consequentialist] and Theory of the Good [utility]
- II. We can judge the *quality* of a pleasure alongside the *quantity*, according to Mill.
 - a. "Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the most desirable pleasure."

- III. [Less standard] Complaint: Consequentialism demands too much information about the consequences/effects of our actions and thus cannot guide us on how to act (but could still be a criterion of rightness).
 - a. Consequentialism has no time limit! Theoretically we might need to predict the effects of our actions out into 100, 1000, 10 million years.
- IV. [Standard] Complaint: Utilitarianism doesn't match up with our intuitive views on moral action. That is, Utilitarianism seems to give us *wrong answers* to moral questions given the stuff that we normally accept about morality.
 - a. I.e. disconnect between common morality and utilitarianism
 - i. [e.g.] Hospital case: A hospital has five patients that desperately need transplants to live. The person is able to die and transplant his organs to save the lives of five people.
 - ii. [e.g.] Trolley cases: A trolley is going to kill either (1) person on track (a) or (5) people on track (b) and we can change the switch.
 - 1. Imagine the case where the train will kill (1) and we can change it. In this case, common morality agrees with utilitarianism [we should kill (1) over (5)].
 - 2. Now think about it: the train will kill (5) and we can change it. In this case, common morality seems conflicted over whether to switch the track to kill the (1).
 - 3. Finally: We can push a person into the trolley and still only kill (1).
 - iii. [e.g.] Consequentialism doesn't tell us to always give people what they deserve. Think about grade: it might be better for the university to give a legacy student a high grade in the class.
 - b. Mill Response: This is like saying that no one can abide by Christianity because they do not always have the time to consult the new and old testaments.
 - i. Common morality are the rules that have been shown throughout history as the best rules for maximizing utility
 - ii. By following the rules of common morality we will be *doing the best we can* to maximize utility
 - iii. Thus we have explained (1) why common morality is the way it is, and (2) how we can use utilitarianism act in real situations
 - c. What needs explaining: if utilitarianism is true, then why do we hold these regular moral beliefs? Mill says that common morality is based on what has been found in the past to maximize utility. Mill does two different things in this passage.
 - d. If we were utilitarian, then it would be plausible to expect that common morality looks as it does. But this only explains common morality if all humans have been utilitarian in the past.

- I. Indian case: A person will kill 10 Indians unless you kill one of the Indians.
 - a. Common morality is confused on the case, but for the utilitarian it is clear to kill the one.
 - b. Williams brings up the point that utilitarianists are blind to the feature of many moral situations: the agent's own role in bringing about the outcome.
 - i. [i.e.] killing someone versus preventing someone else from killing someone
- II. William has two big complaints with Utilitarianism
 - a. (1) it requires us to sacrifice our own integrity
 - b. (2) it requires us to give up our own projects and desires
 - c. It follows from (1) and (2) that Utilitarianism puts us at the complete will of the state of affairs of the world and the desires of others
 - d. (3) it alienates us from other people (i.e. we can't have true friendships)

9/24 - Peter Railton, Alienation, consequentialism, and the demands of morality

- I. Alienation = distance or detachment from ourselves between another person (not a technical definition)
- II. One Thought Too Many experiment: Two people drowning, person (1) is stranger and person (2) is spouse. Utilitarianism tells us that we can/should save our spouse.
 - a. But Railton believes that having to justify why we want to save our spouse over the stranger makes us have "One Thought too Many"
 - b. In other words, we don't like the fact that we have to think about saving our spouse instead of just "that's my spouse"
- III. Paradox of Hedonism (used as an analogy to the problem of alienation)
 - a. By attempting to maximize happiness, we will necessarily not be able to only seeking happiness. The only way to reach max happiness is to enjoy things as such.
 - i. Subjective Hedonism = adopt the hedonistic point of view in every action
 - 1. Idea of action
 - ii. Objective Hedonism = adopt the hedonistic action that will *actually* bring about the most hedonism, even if that means acting in specific actions un-hedonistically
 - 1. I.e. push the hedonism past actions to lifestyles, such that they might require sacrifice at the time
 - iii. Sophisticated Hedonism = the view that favors objective hedonism at the cost of the subjective hedonism
 - 1. This is pretty hard due to epistemic problems (we don't know what will happen long-term)
 - 2. The answer to how to know these things will be "complex and contextual"

- iv. Issue with sophisticated hedonism = we still cannot reach max happiness with focusing on things in and of themselves
 - 1. [e.g.] friendship: sophisticated hedonistic approach to friendship will not actually bring *true* friendship, and thus not the full extent of happiness.
 - a. The solution for the sophisticated hedonistic is to make friendship an internal goal while still maintaining the external goal of happiness
 - b. Railton doesn't really see this solution as a proof. But he believes that objective hedonism can still exist.
- v. Separation of external / internal goals
 - 1. Internal goal: friendship
 - 2. External goal: happiness

IV. Value Pluralism

- a. The idea that multiple things can be ultimately valuable (as opposed to value monism, which in the case of utilitarianism is utility)
- b. Williams claims that there are many things that are valuable in life: knowledge, friendship, achievement, justice, utility, happiness, pleasure...
 - i. Never states a set list, seems rather open
 - ii. These are the things that cannot be separated, cannot be combined, and valuable in and of themselves
- c. The Experience Machine = a machine that allows us to experience everything the way we want, but not in the real world.
 - i. We don't want this because we somehow see it important to interact with the real world
- d. Value Pluralism allows us to make weighted values among the values!
 - i. $\text{Good} = (x*a) + (y*b) + (z*c) + \dots$
 - ii. This means that just because friendship is good in itself, doesn't mean that it is equally good as justice or utility

V. Problem of Alienation → Distinctions between consequentialism

- a. Subjective Consequentialism
- b. Objective Consequentialism
- c. Sophisticated Consequentialism = not alienated, Williams claims
 - i. But this doesn't really seem true. This is better than romanticism, though.

VI. Theory of Value vs. Theory of Action

- a. Theory of Action = tells us the type of action we should take (e.g. consequentialism)
- b. Theory of Value = tells us the type of things that are valuable (e.g. hedonism)
- c. We need the Theory of Value to fill out our Theory of Action

- i. We need hedonism to tell us what consequences we want to create in action! (Yet consequentialism tells us how to go about establishing these values)

9/26 - Brad Hooker, Rule-Consequentialism

- I. Most-famous proponent of Rule Utilitarianism
- II. Objection: Consequences seems to deeply conflict with common morality
 - a. How big is this problem? A very committed act-consequentialist might say that common morality is just wrong.
 - b. Rule-Utilitarianism addresses this divergence
- III. Definitions of the two types of utilitarianism (Theory of Rightness)
 - a. Rule-Utilitarianism = The right thing to do is (1) determine which rules, if widely accepted, would maximize utility, and (2) then follow the relevant rules
 - i. The justification for the rules come from: the rules that *would maximize utility if they were followed by everyone*
 - b. Act- Utilitarianism = The right thing to do is the action that maximizes utility
- IV. Crucial distinction: there will be situations where utility could be maximized by breaking the rule
 - a. Rule-Utilitarianism = don't break the rules! Follow the rules even if they lead to specific situations with less utility
 - b. Act-Utilitarianism = break the rules to maximize happiness at the current time
- V. If Rule-Utilitarianism allows for exceptions, how do we prevent it from becoming act-utilitarianism?
 - a. Hooker states that any set of rules must have an escape clause to allow for preventing disaster
 - b. The response here is that disaster is a threshold that can be distinguished by the rule-utilitarianism
- VI. Universal Acceptance vs. Universal Compliance in Hooker
 - a. Universal compliance: nobody attacks anybody, then there is utilitarian reasons to not introduce new rules to deal with rule-breakers
 - b. Universal Acceptance: even if everyone accept the rules, then we are allowed to introduce rules to deal with rule-breakers, even in the theoretical setting
- VII. Collapsing objections
 - a. 1. What's the rule that would maximize utility of universally followed? Maximize utility. But then, rule-utilitarianism collapses down into act- utilitarianism.
 - i. But this requires universal compliance with the rules, which is impossible. We can only deal with acceptance.
 - b. 2. We could get more utility from the rules by adding in some exceptions to them. Thus a rule-system with exceptions will bring more utility than a rule without

exceptions, and we can carry this out indefinitely until we collapse to act-utilitarianism.

- i. Once again, the response is that this requires universal compliance! If we substitute in universal acceptance, then what we notice that such a list of exceptions actually brings lower overall utility.
- ii. The best solution, then, is to reach a perfect medium between exceptions in the rules and their ability to actually be learned and followed

VIII. If consequences matter, then why does rule-utilitarianism make such a fuss of not doing what produces the actual best consequences?

- a. Once we abandon act-utilitarianism, why still follow rule-utilitarianism?

9/28 - Alastair Norcross – Scalar Morality

- I. Reject Utilitarianism as a theory of rightness, instead only tells us about the good
 - a. But should we really accept that rightness is binary? Consider two examples:
 - i. 1. Cheating on Taxes
 - ii. 2. Murder
 - iii. Are they really the same wrongness?
- II. The fact that A is better than B is relevant to our actions because the betterness of A gives us a *reason* to perform A.
 - a. Thus we have reasons to perform better actions
 - b. But this is different than we *should* or *must* perform better actions
 - i. Whereas conditional morality makes us perform better actions
 - c. Traditional Utilitarianism = tells us what we ought to do
 - d. Scalar Utilitarianism = tells us what we have reason to do

10/ 1 – Kant, Morality and Rationality

- I. Deontologist, moral theory organized around duty
- II. Consequences are not related to the moral worth of the agent
 - a. But a consequentialist could say the same thing about moral worth being unrelated to the consequences
 - b. For Kant, an act's rightness consists in its conformity to a law that a practically rational agent gives to himself
 - c. An action has moral worth precisely when it is motivated by respect for the law that practical rationality lends to the agent
 - d. Thus the practical rationality is the source of both the (1) moral worth of an agent and (2) the act's rightness
 - e. What is this practical rationality? The categorical imperative.
- III. Categorical imperative
 - a. Treat every rational being as an end in themselves rather than a means to an end
 - b. Act only on maxims that you would will as universal law

- c. Act only as if you were legislating for a Kingdom of Ends
- IV. Moral worth of actions
 - a. To say that an action has moral worth is to say something about the motivation of the action.
 - b. In particular, the action that has moral worth must be motivated by duty rather than inclination.
 - i. Motivation: duty, not inclination
 - 1. Inclination: broad category of motivating factors, including things that we want or things that we like to do. Things that we do for pleasure.
 - 2. Duty: opposed to inclination, not very pleasurable, done in respect to the moral law
 - c. Consider the case where we have both duty and inclination to perform a moral action; does this action have moral worth? (Over-determination)
 - i. In cases like these, Kant claims that the action does not have moral worth, because we cannot assume that the agent did the action from duty.
 - ii. We have a moral duty to protect our lives and an inclination to do so.
 - d. Is Kant's moral system vulnerable to the same type of One-Thought-Too-Many attack?
 - e. The right type of action is the one that is autonomous and not heteronomous.
 - i. Autonomous: we have control over it (freedom)
 - ii. Heteronomous: acting in accordance with desire and inclination rather than reason or moral duty
 - 1. Our urges are uncontrollable, and thus if we live by our urges then we are not in control of our actions
 - f. There is a connection between: [duty and autonomy] and [inclination and heteronomous]
 - i. [inclination and heteronomous] depend on external influences and thus the actions that follow from them are dependent on the external, and thus cannot have moral worth, because moral worth must come entirely from ourselves

10/3 & 10/5 – Kant, Morality and Rationality, Continued

- I. Autonomy = self-law giver (Heteronomy = external-law giver), needed to be the true author of an action
 - a. The only way we can be acting morally right is if we are the true author of our action, thus we must be autonomous to be moral.
- II. Reasoning distinction
 - a. Practical reason = practical in that it is a reason for *action*
 - i. Not a prediction, rather an intention, the reason for the intention

- b. Theoretical reason = theoretical in that it is a reason for *believing* something, a justification for belief
 - i. Says nothing about intentions, empirical
- III. First/Third person perspective
 - a. First person perspective
 - i. Constantly forming beliefs, navigating the world as an agent. It must seem that we can choose actions out of the options, *from the first-person perspective*.
 - 1. There is no avoiding the fact that I have options
 - ii. Thus we cannot avoid the question: which options should I take?
Therefore we must have reasons (perhaps unconscious) for choosing the option or action that we have taken!
 - iii. Third person perspective => our reasons apply to everyone (and are thus third-person)
 - b. All reasons therefore have some kind of objectivity.
 - i. Any reason that we have for doing X, then what we mean is that any other rational agent in our exact situation *would also* have reason to do X.
 - ii. Therefore our reasons are objective, with respect to our situation!
 - iii. Notice: the phrase “in the exact same situation” carries a lot of weight.
 - 1. But the idea is that: “if it’s a reason for me to do it, it’s a reason for anyone else to do it.”
 - c. Putting it all together: we must be practical agents, thus we must have reasons for our actions, thus we must act for reasons that are objective, thus we must act for reasons that *apply to everyone*.
 - i. But this is what the categorical imperative states: act only on actions that can be willed as reasons that *should apply to everyone*.
- IV. Universality
 - a. Now we have connected first person / third person perspectives from the reasons of our actions
 - b. There is more to universality than as we have detailed it
 - i. Categorical imperative sounds similar to the golden rule, but Kant’s CI does not boil down to the golden rule.
 - 1. Golden rule: do unto others as you would want them to do to you
 - 2. CI: act only on maxims that you would will as universal laws
 - ii. Key distinction: there is a difference between (a) how you would like to be treated and (b) how you think people should have rational reasons for treating people
 - 1. Golden rule: depends on what I want (taken directly, cares about what I want)
 - 2. CI: universal, does not care what I want

- c. A maxim can only be willed as a universal law iff ???
 - i. Kant gives 4 examples to help the reader (put them on a grid)
 - 1. Suicide example: life is miserable, no hope of improvement, will always have more pain than pleasure. Hedonist: kill yourself. Kant: you cannot kill yourself.
 - a. Killing yourself cannot be willed as a universal law
 - 2. Promising example: borrowing money with no intention of paying it back. Hedonist/Consequentialist: it might be better to take the money (maximize utility). Kant: who cares, you should not take the money
 - a. Making promises with no intention of keeping them cannot be willed as a universal law
 - 3. Gifts example: a person has a potential to develop great talents, but this person need not develop these talents because his life has everything given to him.
 - a. Neglecting your talents cannot be willed as a universal law
 - 4. Helping others example
 - a. Not helping others when they need help cannot be willed as a universal law.
 - ii. 2 & 4: Negative action (it's bad to *not* take the action)
 - iii. 1 & 3: Positive action (it's bad to take the action)
 - iv. 1 & 2: To the self (it's bad to take/not take the action towards the self)
 - v. 3 & 4: To others (it's bad to take/not take the action towards the other)
- V. Kant, continued
- a. Universality is not something that you *would* want to universalize, it is something that you *can* universalize.
 - i. We cannot will something to be a universal law because either (1) it cannot be conceived as a universal law or (2) it can be conceived, but it is impossible for us to support such laws because they require us to will something contrary to will
 - 1. Neglecting gifts agrees with duty but not to will, for as a rational being he necessarily wills that all of his faculties should be developed for all sorts of possible purposes.
 - b. A maxim can only be willed as a universal law iff it can be conceived as a universal law and does not contradict the will.
 - c. E.g.: you shouldn't tell lies, cannot be conceived (thus perfect duty to not tell lies)
 - d. E.g.: coercion, cannot be willed (thus imperfect duty to use coercion)
 - e. E.g.: grade inflation, cannot be conceived

- f. What level of description are we using/thinking about maxims? If you take someone's toothbrush, are you willing that you should always take their toothbrush or that you should always take their property?

10/8 – More Kant and the Paper

- I. Mill vs. Hooker on Rules of Common Morality
 - a. Mill: Rules of thumb, we settle for them when we cannot deliberate on the complete consequences of our actions
 - i. If it were the case that violating one of the rules of thumb would bring more utility, then break the rule
 - b. Hooker: Approximation of rules we should follow all the time. The criterion on rightness is whether or not we conform to a rule would make the population have the best consequences.
 - i. Escape clause
 - ii. We shouldn't break the rules even if doing so could bring more overall utility
 - c. Guides to conduct: the rules of common morality have very similar function for both (follow them)
 - d. Criterion of rightness: Mill is happiness maximization, whereas Hooker is belonging to the set of rules that maximize happiness, where the rightness of an action is an action that is in accordance with the set of rules
- II. Philosophy Paper [due November 26th]
 - a. Philosophy [ethics] journals: Philosophy review, Journal of Philosophy, Nous
 - b. Other journals: Philosophy & Public Affairs, Ethics, Social Philosophy & Policy, JS Mind Phil, Ethical Theory & Moral Practice, Utilitas, Philosopher's Index
 - c. 10 pages, must have 2 sources
 - d. State assumptions, define terms, critique article, bring up objections to own arguments

10/10 - Korsgaard, The right to lie: Kant on dealing with evil; Langton: Maria von Herbert's challenge to Kant

- I. More Kant's Moral Philosophy
 - a. Formula of Humanity: treat all rational beings always as ends and never merely as means
 - i. How Kant gets there:
 1. In order for ethics to do its job it has to impose categorical imperatives (transcend the specific subjectivities)
 - a. But how is a categorical imperative possible?

- b. In order for there to be a categorical imperative, there has to be something of absolute and independent importance (cannot be the object of desire)
 - c. Thus it can only be the rational agent that has desires and pursues projects
 - i. Insofar as things have value, it is because we value them
 - ii. But in order for us to assert values, we must value our desires
 - iii. But if we value our desires, then we also value the rational agent creating them (because desires without a valuable source have no value)
- 2. Now we have (1) categorical imperatives and (2) valuable rational agents
 - ii. Consider: checking out groceries, how are we not using the cashier as a means? It seems like we use him as a machine. Thus Kant doesn't mean that we are *using the cashier as a means*. He uses the word "means" in a more abstract sense. [in some sense, *it is morally allowed to treat others as "means", just not in Kant's sense*]
 - 1. Everyone has autonomy! Each person is therefore treating others with autonomy (and respect?) and thus the action is not wrong. I.e. treatment of others as free rational agents.
 - iii. Thus the key phrase is "mere means", indicating that it is treating a person as non-free non-rational agent which is wrong.
 - iv. If we use any coercion or deception, then it is impossible to treat others as a free, rational agent with full knowledge of consequences.
 - 1. Corollary: Thus any use of coercion or deception is necessarily and unconditionally (non-contingently) morally wrong.
 - a. E.g. From this formula, lying to the murderer-at-the-door is always wrong!
 - b. E.g. From this formula, living without developing talents is to not make full use of our rational ability, which is to use our own lives as a means to pleasure rather than the ends of rationality.
- b. Universal Formulation = act only on actions that you will as universal maxims

More Kant! Finally getting to Korsgaard (The right to lie: Kant on dealing with evil)

- I. Famous Kantian contemporaries: Thomas Hill, Korsgaard, Herman, O'Neill,
- II. Standard problems to Kantian Morality [Problems about the Formula of Universality]
 - a. Problem of levels of description

- i. Before we can apply the universality test to a given purposed action, we have to settle the question how broadly or finely we are describing the action.
 - 1. E.g.: making a promise you know you can't keep in order to achieve great good. Is the axiom "Make a promise you can't keep" or "Make a promise you can't keep in order to advance a very worthy cause."
 - ii. Kant response: either (a) claim that the relevant level of generality is the abstracted, or (b) show how that if everyone acted on the finer axiom, things would still be worse off than if we just told the truth, even though lying would bring a great good.
 - b. Problem of conflicting obligations
 - i. What if we are obliged to (a) tell the truth and (b) to help those who need help, but we know that sometimes (b) requires breaking (a), what are we supposed to do?
 - ii. Kantian response: (a) is a perfect duty and (b) is an imperfect duty, and (b) allows for leeway, thus we should always follow (a) over following (b).
 - 1. But this means we must keep trivial promises instead of preventing horrible disasters
 - c. Half-problem of restricted actions
 - i. Kantian moral theory has defects that are the opposite of that of act-consequentialism!
 - 1. Consequentialism is too broad, it doesn't tell us enough of what to do
 - 2. Kantian morality is too specific, it doesn't give us enough leeway for what to do
 - ii. The worry: it's too rigid to say that there are certain actions that *we should never, ever do* regardless of the consequences! [i.e. not telling a trivial lie vs. saving the human race]
 - iii. Thus Kant doesn't give us any way of dealing with evil (this is where Korsgaard's writing comes in)
- III. Korsgaard: Murderer at the door!
 - a. Murderer at the door looking to kill his victim, he asks you where he is, you know, are you allowed to lie?
 - b. Murderer: lies to us, thus he is open to a Kantian response to Evil
 - i. Think about the situation where "lie to murderers" is a universal law. But the murderer will still be deceived because he lied about being murderer.
 - c. Korsgaard has to show us that the reason the murderer is lying must be bad for us to lie, it could have been an unrelated lie and then we can lie to everyone is mistaken?

- d. Equivocation: the presence of evil in the world changes things. Two ideas of evil: telling a lie (doing a bad thing) vs. wanting to kill (bad intentions)
- e. I.e. what if there is no deception, the murderer wants to kill the person and asks you where he is
 - i. Korsgaard has no argument that we can lie when the murderer is telling us the truth
- f. My opinion: we should lie based on the intentions, not based on the lie told to us at the door!

10/17 Korsgaard: on the right to lie

- I. Two level theory. Do we need it at all?
 - a. Without a two-level theory, Korsgaard claims consequentialism and deontology “fail to distinguish the way we should behave in ideal and non-ideal conditions, but which are at opposite extremes.”
 - i. That is, Korsgaard claims that we must use a two-level theory in order to be able to act in both ideal and non-ideal state of affairs
 - b. But it appears that we *can* deal with evil without necessarily having a two-level theory (e.g. Hooker’s rule utilitarianism)

10/19: Thomas Nagel – Moral Luck

- I. Nagel is responding to Kant’s idea on what actions have moral worth
 - a. Kant: the only actions that have moral worth are those that are the solely the result of our will
 - i. i.e. people can only be praised or blamed for actions within their control
 - b. Nagel: there seems to be actions that have moral worth that depend on things outside our control
- II. Moral luck = when a factor of our behavior is out of our control but still contributes to our praise or blame
 - a. “Where a significant aspect of what someone does depends on factors beyond his control, yet we continue to treat him in that respect as an object of moral judgment, it can be called moral luck”
- III. Four different kinds of moral luck
 - a. Consequential = luck in the consequences of our behavior
 - i. We hold agents accountable for consequences that were unforeseeable at the time of action
 - ii. E.g. mother leaves baby in bath for short time, baby dies, but almost every time the baby won’t die
 - iii. E.g. driver who runs red light
 - b. Causal = we have no influence on casual influences
 - c. Constitutive = luck in our disposition to act morally, the “kinds of people we are”

- d. Circumstantial = the circumstances of our lives might lead us to do commit actions we might otherwise not have committed
- IV. Nagel concludes that our idea of agent responsibility is incoherent

10/24: Scanlon – Contractualism and Utilitarianism

- I. Why be a contractualist?
 - a. Because we want to be able to justify actions based on what's good for all agents involved

10/26: Hursthouse – Virtue ethics

- I. What kind of character traits should people have? What kind of people we ought to be? The claim is sole principle finding is not telling the entire story.
 - a. We can't determine the principles without first generating a conception of what the virtuous person would be like.
 - b. One perspective: actions are fleeting and local whereas a person's character lasts over long periods of time.
 - c. Character can also influence the ways we perceive possible actions, such that developing good character can lead us to naturally stray away from poor action.
- II. Issue for action-centered moral theories:
 - a. If we look at moral imperatives, they tell us to do things.
 - b. But an ethic of commands makes sense only if there is someone to create the commands.
 - i. So if we take away justification from the commands by God and by Society, the commands lose all justification
 - ii. But we want our commands to be justified independent of God and Society, thus rules themselves do not constitute a full moral theory.
- III. Another motivation for action-centered moral theories:
 - a. Anything beyond the most simple consequentialist theory *requires exceptions and assumed values*. This is what Hursthouse calls evaluative terms.
- IV. Hursthouse's view
 - a. (1) Determine what the virtuous person looks like
 - b. (2) Then we can determine how we ought to act by considering how the virtuous person would act by emulating them.
 - c. The challenge to Hursthouse: the idea of the virtuous person is empty!
 - i. Hursthouse's response: yes, there is a lot to be filled in. But there is no more to be filled in than any other type of moral theory.
 - 1. E.g.: even if we accept utilitarianism, that we should maximize human wellbeing, we still have no idea of what human wellbeing consists of.

- d. What is virtue? Hursthouse takes an Aristotelian line of thought. Having virtue can be justified solely on the grounds that it aids the virtue-holder in creating a more flourishing life

20/25: W.D. Ross – What makes right acts right?

- I. Most moral theories claim that there is a single source of moral obligation. That is, that there is a highest, single, moral principle from which the secondary principles can be derived.
 - a. Ross rejects this. He holds that there are multiple sources of moral obligation. We call his conception pluralism.
- II. Advantages of Pluralism
 - a. Kant: places too much emphasize of means. Consequentialism: too much emphasize of ends. So everyone is tied up in knots trying to push themselves away from their area of emphasis.
 - b. Pluralism allows us to escape this by showing that all of our duties are independent from each other but also receive their own weight in our ethical deliberation.
- III. Ross provides us with a set of duties that could supposedly work for Pluralist.
 - a. Non-maleficence, beneficence, self-improvement, justice, fidelity, gratitude, and reparation.
 - b. All of these are potentially morally relevant features of any given situation.
 - c. Ross claims that each of these duties is non-reducible.
- IV. Prima facie duty
 - a. These are duties that are relevant to what you should do. Not necessarily that we must follow these duties.
 - b. There is a balance of reasons, and the duty proper is the one that is decided upon after this balancing.
- V. Do all of these duties have equal weight?
 - a. Ross says no. They weigh differently in different situations.
 - i. But then how we do determine how much weight to give each duty in each situation?
 - ii. Ross says: it is a judgment that we must make.
 - iii. What a virtue ethicist might say: part of the virtuous person is his practical wisdom to make these judgments. What the virtue ethicists can add is that we should act how we think this virtuous person should.
 - 1. Ross does not provide this because he is not a virtue ethicist.
 - b. Ross's argument and theory:
 - i. It's virtue: it is faithful to our moral experience, it reflects the way we commoner actually thinks about ethics

- ii. It's downside: it is unabashedly anti-theoretical. There is no theory for determining the best way to act. This is why we must use our judgment in these cases.
 - 1. We just don't have concrete reasons for why these duties are more important, and how to weigh them.
- iii. "Ross captures very well our common conception of morality and the way we put it in practice, but it doesn't get very far beyond that."

10/29/ - A. J. Ayer: The Emotive Theory of Ethics

- I. The objectivity of ethics
 - a. In ethical discourse we make statements that sound like objective, ethical assertions
 - b. If we gave up objective morality, what happens?
 - i. Why should we care/argue about the right thing to do? This part of our discourse doesn't make sense without an objective morality.
 - ii. Similarly, we don't like when we see other people do immoral actions. But we shouldn't get indignant if we have no reason to think that these people were acting badly objectively.
 - iii. Therefore our common perception of ethics entails a strong sense of objective morality.
 - 1. But on the other hand, it's hard for us to accept that *our* moral judgment should somehow be *everyone's* moral judgment.
 - c. Even if we want to accept objective morality, how does it fit in to our material world view?
 - i. Where does morality fit in to the world? Are they empirical, temporal, timeless?
 - ii. Hume: "How do we get from facts about how the world *is* to facts about how the world *ought* to be?"
 - 1. What could make it true that we ought to act in certain way? Is it possible to objectively and wholly justify our moral *oughts*?
- II. A.J. Ayer's position on the is/ought problem
 - a. Moral discourse does not assert propositions. Instead, they assert emotions.
 - i. Negative half: non-cognitivism (ethics are empty in meaning)
 - ii. Positive half: emotive theory of ethics (ethics are expressions of emotions) [a.k.a. Expressivism]
- III. A.J. Ayer's position, more general
 - a. Any proposition that cannot be falsifiable by empirical data has no real content
 - i. i.e. In order for a proposition to have real content it has to be verifiable by sense experience [Verifiability principle]
 - b. Propositions with real content then have three possibilities:

- i. True by definition
 - ii. Empirically verifiable
 - iii. Nonsense (no cognitive content)
- c. Then the argument goes:
 - i. (1) ought-statements are not true by definition
 - ii. (2) ought-statements are not empirically verifiable
 - iii. (3) then ought-statements are nonsense

10/31 – A little more Ayer

- I. Recall: Ayer denies ethical propositions have cognitive content
 - a. Ethical propositions can have content if
 - i. 1. They are derived from definitions
 - ii. 2. They are verifiable
 - 1. What observations could we make that could tell us lying is wrong.
 - 2. Sense experience can tell us that lying is bad? Well this just pushes the idea of what is bad/wrong back. We have no way of justifying what it means for something to be bad
 - a. Therefore it's impossible for empirical observations to make this judgment
- II. Why can ethical propositions have no cognitive content?
 - a. We can't define "x is wrong" as "x doesn't maximize utility" because just not approving of an action is not saying that it is wrong.
- III. Context: While no one holds the verifiability principle anymore, but people *do* hold the idea that value-judgments do not have content, or are not coherent, or are not comprehensible.
 - a. What else is cut-out by the verifiability principle?
 - i. Anything in the past tense
 - ii. Anything about minds other than our own

11/2 – Gilbert Harman: Ethics and Observation

- I. Is Harman a non-cognitivist?
 - a. No, but ethics is not science
- II. Positive view:
 - a. Casual-change differences between science & ethics
- III. Issues regarding ethical observations:
 - a. It's one thing to see events happening in front of us. It's another to really perceive them in a sense that we are capable of making moral judgments.
 - i. i.e. judgments require us to have understandings of what's going on that are deeply complex (and perhaps also human?)
- IV. Observations in general

- a. Proposition 1: All observations are informed by our pre-existing beliefs
 - i. i.e. Football as viewed by coach, vs. Football as viewed by inexperienced women
- b. Proposition 2: Ethics are big players in our pre-existing beliefs, which come from sense-perception themselves
- c. Proposition 3: Ethics are just as observable as chairs & tables because they can be verified in observations
- d. Therefore verifiability cannot be the issue
- V. What about ethics?
 - a. We don't need moral facts to explain the judgments we make about morality
 - b. We see the kids setting the cat on fire:
 - i. The belief that we think they are doing something bad is because they are putting a living-creature on fire
 - ii. This is caused by our perception of them & background beliefs
 - c. Ethics is a false theory because it is not the best theory as an explanatory explanation for actions
- VI. Take-away: Moral facts do not explain our moral beliefs

11/5 – More Harman; Sturgeon: Moral explanations

- I. Moral facts are not needed to explain our moral beliefs, but physical facts are needed to explain our physical beliefs, therefore ethics is not science
- II. Sturgeon's position relative to Harman
 - a. Sturgeon accepts that moral beliefs have cognitive content, and can be right or wrong
 - b. Sturgeon also accepts that moral beliefs are the fairly direct result of perception, that they are theory-laden
 - c. What Sturgeon denies: moral facts are important, explanatory features of the theory that explains our moral beliefs
- III. Sturgeon claims that we can use the same reasoning used by Harman to reduce the moral example into meaninglessness to the physical example:
 - a. The step that takes us from observation of physical fact A to physical theory B that explains physical fact A is the same step we make in ethics
 - b. That is, the same background beliefs argument that is supposed to dismiss ethics applies analogously to physics.
 - i. The position comes to: well yeah, there is this skeptical argument works against all facts in the world. But Harman clearly isn't going to accept this skepticism, thus reductio on the argument.
 - ii. i.e. this problem isn't special for ethics, it applies to all bodies of science/theory. It's a general skeptical argument

- IV. Sturgeon creates a method for testing the hypothesis that ethical observations are not like scientific observations
 - a. Examples of moral facts that play an important explanatory role
 - i. Hitler example: we can't explain Hitler's behavior without being able to say that Hitler was a bad person.
 - ii. Harman's response: we can explain Hitler's behavior by describing Hitler's character without any moral language or conception
 - b. But then Sturgeon claims: there is a necessary connection between character and morality, given our moral framework as assumption
 - i. Cowardly not_by_def<= cowardly character & behavior. Thus there is no way to describe someone as cowardly character & behavior without also making the moral judgment of cowardly
- V. One observation of focus: Sturgeon tries to explain moral actions, Harman explains moral judgments.
- VI. Conclusion: If we help ourselves to assuming, for the purposes of argument, that our best theories of morality are true, then we find that moral facts do play an explanatory role.

11/7 – J. L. Mackie: The Subjectivity of Values

- I. Mackie doubts the objectivity of values
 - a. What would it be like for our moral judgments to true or objective? What would a moral fact have to be like, what attributes would it have, for it to be objective (argument from queerness)?
 - b. Mackie is not a non-cognitivist. He believes that moral claims assert things are false (i.e. error theory).
- II. Why are values not objective?
 - a. Argument from relativity
 - i. Ethical claims are different then scientific claims, ethics falls apart at objective points
 - b. Argument from queerness
 - i. Metaphysical
 - 1. "If there were objective values, then they would be entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe"
 - 2. "If we were aware of them, it would have to be by some special faculty of moral perception" it would require "a special sort of intuition"
 - 3. What features make moral facts weird?
 - a. Moral facts are weird because they would have to be out in the world, yet still have properties of "to-be-doneness"

- i. E.g. needless cruelty: setting a cat on fire is needless cruelty, but the moral fact is that this action is wrong. Which is to say, we shouldn't set the cat on fire (wrong = has normative content). Also, we would somehow have to answer to the class.
 - ii. Compare this to the table situation: facts about the table don't engage our will. They seem to just sit there without any interaction to our will from the features of the table. The features of the table are inert qua our will.
 - iii. But moral facts are *not inert* qua our will. They move *must move us to not set cats on fire*. They have to provide us with motivation (internalism, controversial).
 - iv. Externalism: the idea that we can recognize something as wrong and still choose not to do it because of other desires.
 - b. Are normative facts the
 - ii. Epistemological
- III. Diagnostic part (why are we making false moral claims)
 - a. It's important to show us why we could possibly be making our moral mistakes.
 - b. That is, why exactly do we consistently make this mistake of asserting objective values?
 - c. Patterns of objectification
 - i. Projection of our mind, desires, wants, demands, etc. onto the world.
 - ii. Moral commands come from a commander. Something is giving us commands out in the world. This source is objective values.

11/9 – Sher: But I Could Be Wrong

- I. Two facts that raise the question: “well, if (1) people who are as smart as me disagree, and I could (2) have had completely different moral beliefs, then what reasons do I have to accept my moral claims over others? On the other hand, how could we not act upon our own moral upbringing?
 - a. People disagree with us on pretty much all components of morality, that is, our moral judgments are controversial. And these are smart people (we can't say they are stupid and I'm not) [point: controversy]
 - b. We might even concede that if we were brought up in a radically different environment then we hold a moral view that is contradictory to the one's we currently hold. [point: moral position is an output of our moral upbringing]

- II. This is different than Mackie. Sher is not claiming that there are no objective values, or that objective values don't exist in the world, simply only how do we know that our conception of these objective values is correct?
- III. Political example: Controversial political positions A and ~A can be defended, and we can see why. And we can also see how if we had environmental background and circumstance E1 we would hold A, but if he had environmental background and circumstance E2 we would hold ~A.
 - a. So how do we justify holding A or ~A? How do we do this in a *rational, justifiable* way?
- IV. Contingency and Controversy: both of these issues in ethics combine to make the issue much harder
 - a. If it was just the case that Controversy was the issue: then we would say that even though all these people disagree with me, I see that their arguments are not very good, they are inconsistent.
 - i. Contingency tells us, though, that our reasons would look like these inconsistent reasons if we were in the right environmental circumstances.
 - b. If it was just the case of Contingency: if we just had our moral beliefs by happenstance, if everyone else who had different backgrounds also held the same moral beliefs, then the moral beliefs would seem to be independent of my instantiation of moral upbringing.
 - i. But Controversy tells us, though, that our moral beliefs are not widely held and thus because moral beliefs are an output of environment, we have no reason to conclude that my moral beliefs are right, given that they are dependent on some non-reality based morality
- V. Sher's solution: We require practical reason. This is a quest for reasons that includes our own internal judgment, which is to say judgments of my own; this follows from the definition of practical reason.
 - a. We cannot just set aside practical judgments; this is a requirement for practical reason, which is in turn a requirement for action, which is in turn a requirement for human life.
 - i. Complete skepticism: Why care about human life? This is a jump we have to acknowledge without argument. We cannot defend human life on objective grounds. Even on subjective grounds, human life does not seem to be necessarily bad or good.
 - b. It's not irrational to act on our own reasons *even if we know that these reasons might not be correct*. This is because they are my judgments, which are required for my own enterprise and practical judgments.

11/14 – Bentham: Pleasure as the good & Nozick: The Experience Machine

- I. Theories of Value vs. Theories of Right/Wrong Action
 - a. Theories of Value = tell us about what is good
 - b. Theories of Right/Wrong Action = tell us in what ways we should act in relation to the good
 - c. E.g.: Consequentialism is a theory of the right: Maximize the good.
 - i. This is filled out with a theory of value that tells us what the good is.
- II. Bentham, Pleasure as the Good
 - a. Descriptive claim: Bentham argues that the pleasure is what guides our action
 - b. Prescriptive claim: Then Bentham jumps to the conclusion that pleasure is what *should* guide our action
 - c. What determines the value of a pleasure?
 - i. 1. Intensity
 - ii. 2. Duration
 - iii. 3. Certainty or uncertainty
 - iv. 4. Propinquity or remoteness
 - d. Many philosophers remove certainty and propinquity from the theory of value and put it in the theory of action.
 - e. Is/Ought problem for value theories
 - i. We all like pleasure, so it makes sense that pleasure would be the *is*-response for value theories.
 - ii. But we can also work backwards: Why does Kant's value theory hold up as the *is*-response?
- III. Moving on to Nozick
 - a. Prolific writer; wrote famous thought experiment (that you probably already have heard) called the experience machine
- IV. The Experience Machine
 - a. We could imagine that all of our experiences could be perfectly simulated by a machine.
 - b. Case 1: Plug in for life
 - i. If pleasure was all that matters, why not plug in for life?
 - c. Case 2: Plug in every 2 years as checkups.
 - d. Case 3: Plug in for just an afternoon
- V. Why do people not want to go into the experience machine?
 - a. We want to *do* things (agency)
 - b. We want to *be* a certain way
 - c. We want a deeper connection to reality (i.e. actually interact with the given world around us)
- VI. Application to philosophical debate on psychoactive drugs

- a. The people that think psychoactive drugs are good believe that they tell us something deeper about reality
- b. The people that think psychoactive drugs are bad believe that the drugs are just like the experience machine, and that most of us would not plug in.

Peter Railton – Facts and Values

I. Value Predicated on Persons

- a. Nothing can be valuable without people, i.e. a world only filled with stones cannot have any value; there is nothing valuable for stones.
- b. We need people for value, but we cannot expect that all people value just like us.

II. Relational Value, Intrinsic/Instrumental

- a. No absolute value! Nothing is absolutely good.
- b. But there is such a thing as *intrinsic* good: it is the intrinsic relational good
 - i. Nourishment comparison: calcium is *intrinsically* nourishing, although it can be delivered through many mediums
- c. Schema: Goods
 - i. Relational
 - 1. Intrinsic (nourishing in themselves)
 - 2. Instrumental (medium for the intrinsic nourishments)
- d. Relationalism is not relativism
 - i. Take the example of heaviness.
 - ii. Heavy is a relational, two-place predicate between x and y.
 - iii. So is good. There is objectively determinable relational predicate Good between x and y.
 - 1. We can know if x is part of y's good, but we cannot know that x is good for all.
 - 2. I.e., for any x, we can pick a y such that x is not good for y

III. Internalist conflicts

- a. Internalism = our moral convictions are internally sourced and intrinsically motivating (i.e. believing x is good is also motivation and reason to desire and try to get x)
- b. Case 1: Shelia
 - i. Genuine conflict: not an issue of lack of information, but a case when we fully know but we still cannot decide.
 - ii. But it's hard to imagine conflicts if internalism holds (if everything is so immediate, why do we have this deep conflict).
 - iii. Shelia: works in small town as reporter, given opportunity to work at big newspaper, but she knows that moving to the big city will probably make her less happy. But she is still drawn to the job, as if her desires did not

align to her happiness. But this conflicts with the easy answer provided by internalism.

- c. Case 2: Beth
 - i. Beth is an accountant who wants to be a writer, who is good at being an accountant but hates it who is not sure she is going to be a good writer. Beth tries to become a writer, she fails and sticks with it, becomes very unsatisfied. Beth decides it wasn't worth it, and becoming a writer was not a move in her good. Internalism, though, seems to say that, at the time of her decision, Beth desired to be a writer when it seems like it was bad for her.
 - ii. Super You:
 - 1. Now imagine later Beth with her knowledge that she is not suited for being a writer telling earlier Beth before she has given up her accountant life that earlier Beth should not become a writer.
 - 2. Super Beth can reflect on her desires throughout her life.
 - d. These case studies force us to consider: we must explain our desires to others for the things that we do, and thus we must think that they are good reasons. "The price we pay for using our values this way is a commitment to their defensibility"
- IV. Explaining our choices
- a. How bad is it?
 - b. Fundamental commitments & a-rationalism
 - c. Responding
 - i. Railton: traditionally, we have appealed to God, or other higher-level ideals (i.e., some kind of faith)
 - ii. What we can do: look for facts outside of ourselves that support our desires and positions
- V. Peter Railton's solutions
- a. Super You
 - i. An individual's good is what he would want at his current circumstance as seen by what we would want ourselves to want if we were contemplating the fact from a position of full information and no cognitive defects (Super You)
 - b. Problem
 - c. Satisfying internalists
 - d. Would you listen to super-you?
 - e. Intrinsic (Relational) Good Defined

Hurka – Perfectionism

- I. Perfectionism in General
 - a. Examples

II. Concept of Human Nature

- a. What should we perfect? Obviously not everything should be perfected that is part of human nature.
- b. Test 1: Whatever properties we pick out to make perfect, must have intuitive moral appeal. (Intuitive moral significance)
- c. Test 2: Looking at the consequences of perfecting a certain aspect of human nature, we can leave stuff out and then add it later no problem, but we have to make sure we're not including anything that we don't see as valuable.

III. How to arrive at the concept of human nature

- a. Distinctiveness = the properties that we should make perfect are the properties only found in human beings (i.e., not in other animals)
- b. Hurka thinks this won't work for three reasons
 - i. Objection 1: At what level of description do we look for these distinctions? I.e.: Our digestive system in general is not distinctive from other mammals, but on the other hand our digestive system in specifics *is* distinctive from other mammals.
 - ii. Objection 2: Humans have some attractive distinctive properties, but also some unattractive distinctive properties. It doesn't seem like distinctiveness implies moral rightness. (i.e. distinctively human to destroy environment, does this mean we should perfecting environmental destruction?)
 - iii. Objection 3: Human nature must be defined constructively from facts about Humans, rather than distinctions (relational facts) about other species. I.e., we should be able to define a conception of human nature that is independent of other animals, as if we were on a desert island world with no other animals.
- c. Essence
 - i. Essential properties: the properties that are required of a being for that being to be a human. These are properties that every human in every possible world must have.
 - ii. This is different than distinctiveness because there are essential properties that are not distinctive, and distinctive properties that are not essential.
 - iii. Wrong Properties
 - 1. There are a lot of things that are essential to human beings that do not seem to be worth developing to perfection.
 - 2. i.e. Should we really try to perfect the essential fact of human beings of 'taking up space'?

IV. Essence-and-Life (Hurka's positive view)

- a. Six classes of essential properties of a human

- i. We can't objectify a value-theory from our essence in virtue of being objects, being individuals, etc.
 - b. The positive rationale
 - i. The talk of the good life implies some kind animation, or life.
- V. Human (Aristotelian) Essence
 - a. Physical
 - i. How Precise?
 - ii. Is it true?
 - iii. An intrinsic good?
- VI. Rationality = Play an strong explanatory role in describing human behavior
 - a. Theoretical
 - b. Practical
- VII. Human good for Hurka = the full development of those properties essential for human beings
 - a. As seen, Hurka goes through a lot of steps for determining which properties are the essential ones
- VIII. Essential Properties of Humans
 - a. 1. Physical = Health, our physical bodies. Also, excellent physical functioning (perfecting physical ability) is also a human good
 - b. 2. Theoretical Rationality
 - c. 3. Practical Rationality
- IX. Is Hurka's theory determining moral worth or just determining good? What's the interplay?
 - a. The perfectionist ideal is a moral ideal
 - b. The perfectionist ideal is also formal, in that it is a moral ideal that does not touch upon the actual moral worth of actions

Parfit

- X. 3 Traditional responses to what the human good is
 - a. Pleasure as human good [Subjectivist]
 - b. Desire as the satisfaction of desire [Subjectivist]
 - c. Some things are just good for human beings (good for us) [Objectivist]
 - i. Knowledge is just a good
 - ii. Certain relationships with other people is just a good
 - iii. Are these absolute goods? Goods without relations?
- II. He is interested in theories of well-being.
- III. We need a conception of coherence to really judge someone's life
 - a. That is, we can imagine someone's life that satisfies Parfit's list of objective goods but is not coherent and thus not really such a good life after all.

Aristotle – The Nature of Moral Virtue [Nicomachean Ethics, Book II]

- I. Two kinds of Virtue
 - a. Intellectual virtue
 - i. Requires teaching, and thus time and experience
 - b. Moral virtue
 - i. “Child of habit”
- II. Moral virtues are unnatural: “none of the moral virtues is implanted in us by nature, since nothing that creates can be taught by habit to change the direction of its development”
 - a. Thus “The moral virtues, then, are produced in us neither by Nature nor against Nature”
- III. Virtue is achieved in action: “we become just by performing just actions”
 - a. We acquire moral virtues by first exercising them
 - b. Aristotle’s psychological axiom: “Like activities produce like dispositions”
 - c. “the virtues are produced and fostered as a result, and by the agency, of actions of the same quality as effect their destruction”
 - d. “it is also true that after the virtues have been formed they find expression in actions of that kind” [e.g. strength, bodily health, courage, temperance]
 - i. “It is by refraining from pleasures that we become temperate, and it is when we have become temperate that we are most able to abstain from pleasures.”
 - ii. Virtuous action → Virtue → we become better at Virtuous action
- IV. Assumption for the discussion of ethics (we should act according to the right principle, but this principle could be self-pleasure, etc.)
 - a. “Now that when we act we should do so according to the right principle, is common ground and I propose to take it as a basis, of discussion”