**Ethical Philosophies
(Moral Theories)**

Ethical Theory

An **Ethical Theory** is a **theoretical account** of what ethical thought and practice are.

Ethical Theory

- In the discipline of philosophy, ethics encompasses the study of
  - the **actions** that a **responsible** individual should choose,
  - the **values** that an **honorable** individual should espouse, and
  - the **character** that a **virtuous** individual should have (Loui and Miller, 2008).

Ethical Theory

- AKA philosophical ethics, moral theory or moral philosophy.
- It involves **systematising**, **defending** and **recommending** concepts of right and wrong conduct.
- It often addresses disputes of moral diversity.

Ethical Dilemmas

❑How do we decide what is wrong vs what is right?

❑We have MANY ethical dilemmas ...

Ethical Dilemmas

Video: The Trolley Problem:

⚙What is the trolley problem?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOpf6KcWYyw

Video: The Trolley Problem:

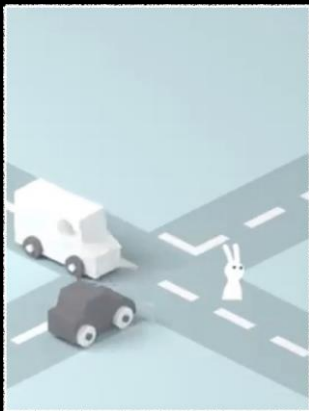⚙Are moral decisions simply about outcomes or the manner in which we achieve them?

Ethical Dilemmas

❑Several other scenarios possible…
❑Child vs adult?
❑Women vs men?

Ethical Dilemmas

❑Today such **ethical analysis** is crucial due to **technological advances**:
  ❑decisions made by driverless cars
  ❑autonomous military drones (high value target vs civilian casualties)

Decisions Decisions: Driverless Cars

Decisions Decisions: Driverless Cars

Ethical Dilemmas

❑ Might seem like an easy-to-solve dilemma.

❑ However.

❑ Not rabbit but child?

Ethical Dilemmas

❑ Might seem like an easily solvable dilemma.

❑ However...

Thought Experiments

❑ Scenarios from *The Good Place*

❑ Organ Harvesting

❑ Jim In The Jungle

Ethical Philosophies/Moral Theories

❑ We often face difficult situations/**dilemmas**.

❑ Many common theories/traditions have emerged over time.

❑ These **ethical theories** serve as the foundation for ethical solutions to our dilemmas.

⊚ We hold ethical values that guide us in **ethical decision making**.

17 Categories of Ethical Philosophies/Moral Theories

Teleological, Deontological and Virtue Approaches

Ethical Philosophies/Moral Theories

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□ **Teleology**

□ A **teleological** approach is one which is based on consequences.

□ Derived from the Greek words *telos* meaning **end** and *logos* meaning "science", "word," "reason," or "plan".

Ethical Philosophies/Moral Theories

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□ **Teleology**

□ In a teleological view, everything has a **purpose**/**end**.

□ You have an **explanation** behind every action you take.

□ This explanation gives the purpose/goal of the action.

□ A teleological explanation is one with **an appeal to ends**.

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□ **Consequentialism**

□ A *teleological* approach.

We determine whether an action is moral or not by

ONLY

weighing **the action's consequences** against a desired outcome.

i.e. **only the action's consequences/outcomes** matter when considering if it is moral or not.

□ The most well known form is **utilitarianism**.

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- **Deontology**
- A **deontological** approach is based on a set of **rules** or **absolutes**.
- Derived from the Greek words *deon* and *logos*.
- *"Deon"* implies duty, obligation, necessity, (*deont* - that which is binding).

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- **Deontology cont…**
- Morality is based on certain **duties/obligations**;
  - certain actions are inherently right or wrong, **regardless of the consequences** following those actions.
- The actions are right or wrong *in themselves*.
- What makes an action right or wrong is its compliance with a **moral norm**.

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- **Deontology cont…**
- Therefore, an agent's duty is to comply with a moral norm **regardless of the effects of not complying** (which may actually be beneficial).
- E.g.:
  - Parents must take care of their kids…
  - … regardless of the fact that NOT doing so might have financial benefits for them (greater savings).
  - *(Moral agent: a being who is capable of acting with reference to right and wrong. Voluntarily.)*

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- **Virtue Ethics**
- Approach to Normative Ethics based on Greek Philosopher Aristotle's work.
- **The ethical action is the action a virtuous person would take.**
- A *virtuous person* is one who has/shows a high moral standard.

Ethical Philosophies/Moral Theories

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❑ Q: List **some** virtues:
- ❑ Justice
- ❑ Courage
- ❑ Patience
- ❑ Teetotalism
- ❑ Wisdom
- ❑ An even temper
- ❑ Generosity
- ❑ Kindness.

Ethical Philosophies/Moral Theories

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▢ Vices include:
- ❑ Greed
- ❑ Selfishness
- ❑ Jealousy
- ❑ ?
- ❑ ?
- ❑ ?

Ethics Give Us Rules

- ◉ Ethics are what make it possible for us to live and interact with each other in a civilised fashion.
- ◉ Thus, we voluntarily accept the rules emanating from ethics.

Ethics Give Us Rules

- ◉ Ethics are a set of shared values providing rules that we agree to follow due to the resulting benefits...

Benefits Resulting From Ethics

◉ **Economic Value**

◉ Society thrives when each individual strives to achieve what is best for themselves.

◉ However, if doing so comes at a cost to society, then it cannot be allowed…

Benefits Resulting From Ethics

◉ Hence the need for shared societal systems.

◉ Rules limit the things you can do

◉ ==> there's a cost associated with you following the rule.

The Tragedy of the Commons

❑ A concept from economics and the social sciences.

❑ Describes a situation in which a common (shared) resource is overused or depleted, because individuals prioritise their immediate self-interest and consume more than their fair share, without considering the long-term consequences (the deterioration or exhaustion of the resource).

The Tragedy of the Commons Example

❑ **Scenario: Bandwidth misuse in a shared network**

❑ We have multiple users in university sharing a common Wi-Fi network.

❑ The total available bandwidth of the network is limited.

❑ Each user engages in bandwidth-intensive activities to maximise their own experience:

  ❑ streaming high-definition videos, downloading large files, etc.

When we don't follow the rules…

- **Self-Interest**
  - Each user seeks to maximise their own internet experience, aiming for faster download speeds and smoother streaming, which requires more bandwidth.
- **Overuse of Resources**
  - As users simultaneously engage in bandwidth-intensive activities, the network becomes congested. The available bandwidth is quickly consumed, and the network starts to slow down for everyone.

When we don't follow the rules…

- **Deterioration of the Resource**: The network's performance deteriorates, causing frustration and decreased productivity for all users. Some may experience interrupted video streams, slow web browsing, or even network outages.
- **Tragedy**: Ultimately, the shared Wi-Fi network becomes less useful for everyone due to overuse.
- The resource (*bandwidth*) is effectively depleted or deteriorated.

When we don't follow the rules…

- The resource (bandwidth) could have been managed more sustainably if users had collectively agreed to limit their bandwidth-intensive activities.
- Selfishness can lead to devastating effects for the society.

Ethics Give Us Rules

- So when do we follow rules?
- If the cost of you following the rule is less than the cost of others NOT following the rule.
  - i.e. the benefit of others following the rule > the cost of you following the rule.