Virtue Ethics Debate

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Affirmative Constructive

Virtue Ethics:

- Definition and Foundations.
- Long-Term Ethical Development.
- Personal flourishing.
- Application to a Wide Range of Ethical Issues.
- Examples.

Definition and Foundations:

- Ethical theory that considers the moral character and virtues of individuals as the fundamental basis for making ethical decisions.
- Aristotle, ancient Greece.
- Intellectual virtues: are those virtues associated with reasoning and truth.
- Moral virtues: are habits or dispositions formed through the repetition of the relevant virtuous actions.

Long-Term Ethical Development:

- Lifelong character formation through self-reflection.
- Cultivating virtues: honesty, integrity, fairness.
- Encouraging self-reflection for personal improvement.
- Guiding ethical decisions with moral conviction

Personal flourishing.

Human flourishing: ultimate goal of ethics.

Personal fulfillment and lasting happiness.

Building meaningful, fulfilling relationships.

Positive contributions to communities and society.

Cultivating practical wisdom for wise choices.

Application to a Wide Range of Ethical Issues:

Ethical Leadership (business, politics):
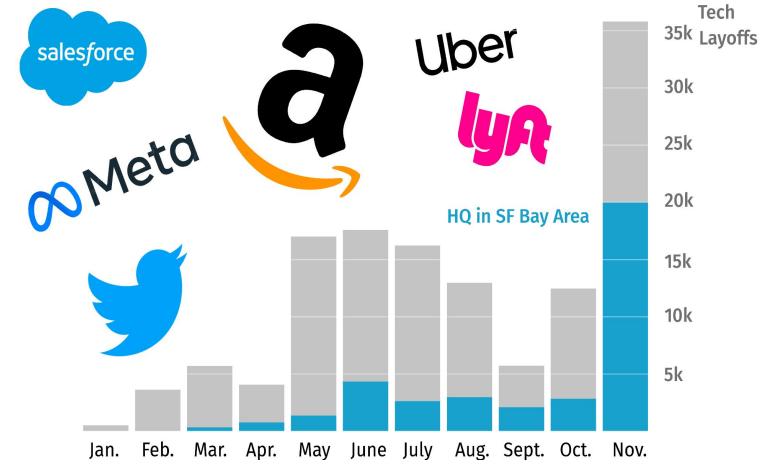Lockdown during covid-19.
Layoffs: Amazon 9,000 , Microsoft 10,000 , Meta 21,000
Medical Ethics:
End-of-life decisions: continue or stop treatment, respecting the patient will.
 Medical research: minimizing risks, monitoring the safety and welfare.
 Patient privacy: protect patient information.

Examples:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: global commitment to virtues such as dignity, equality, and justice.

Wangari Maathai: her policies embodied virtues of environmental stewardship, and perseverance by founding the Green Belt Movement, which focused on environmental conservation, and empowering women.

Examples:

CVS Health: testing sites in underserved communities , partnered with local organizations to address healthcare disparities, provided paid sick leave for employees affected by COVID-19.

Nelson Mandela: his policies embodied virtues such as forgiveness, reconciliation, and inclusivity to unite a divided nation.

Cross Examination by the Negative and Affirmative Rebuttal

Negative Constructive

1. An action is right if a virtuous person would do it

2. A virtuous person is someone who exercises virtues

3. A virtue is something that causes humans to flourish

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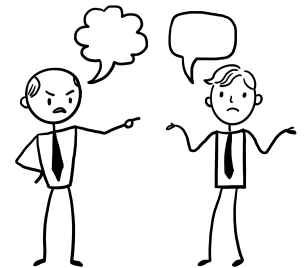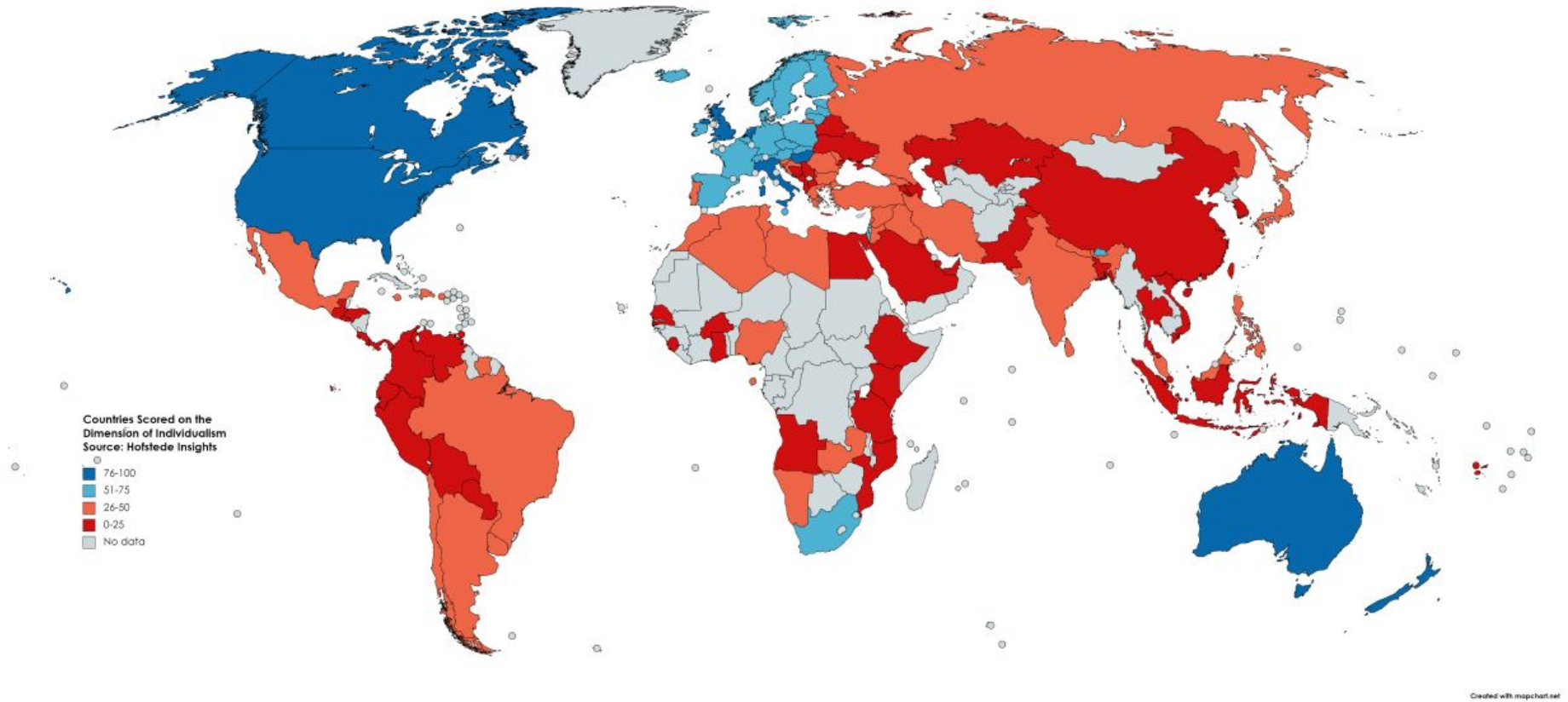
Humans cannot agree on virtuous traits

Virtue Ethics: Virtues are character traits human beings need in order to flourish and be truly happy.

★ What are these character traits?
★ What is considered *"flourishing?"*
★ Very few universally agreed upon virtuous traits

Are *these* virtues?
★ Ambition
★ Collectivism
★ Meritocracy
★ Equality
★ Modesty
★ **Tolerance**
★ **Moral Judgement**

Countries Scored on the
Dimension of Individualism
Source: Hofstede Insights

- 76-100
- 51-75
- 26-50
- 0-25
- No data

Created with mapchart.net

Virtue differs culturally. (**Individualism** vs **Collectivism**)

Virtue has its limitations

★ Even universally encouraged traits like honesty… has it limitations
★ Brutal honesty can cause insecurity
★ *Hinder* human flourishing

Other implications of virtue ethics

- ★ Character traits take time to become deep-seated
  - ○ Moral elitism?
- ★ Cannot guide government policy
- ★ Cultural Relativism vs Ethnocentrism

Technical advancements require a stronger ethical framework

General

- ★ Too vague to address specific ethical issues tech professionals might face
    - ○ Privacy concerns
    - ○ Impact on employment

Artificial Intelligence

- ★ Which virtues do we prioritize?
- ★ Lacks complexity and guidance on how to address implicit biases that inevitably occur within AI
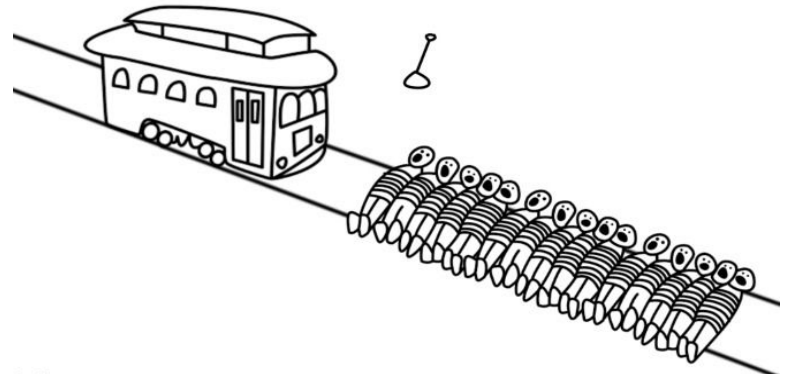
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Thought experiment

Imagine a virtuous person, someone who possesses many virtues such as honesty, empathy, and kindness.

However, another virtue they adhere to, human autonomy… means they refuse to perform an an action that could prevent someone from getting hurt or even killed

Under virtue ethics they are morally justified and "right".

the lever will stop the trolley but the deep-seated virtue of non-interference and human autonomy prevents you from pulling the lever

Clearer ethical frameworks

★ **Consequentialism**
  ○ Actions are right or wrong depending on the outcome
★ **Utilitarianism**
  ○ Actions are right if they bring the "most good" to the majority
★ **Deontology**
  ○ Actions are right or wrong based on a series of rules or principles

Cross Examination by the Affirmative and Negative Rebuttal

Affirmative Rejoinder

Virtue ethics:

- Acknowledge the role of emotions, learning, experience in decision making.
- The importance of self assessment and lifelong learning.
- Recognizes the importance of cultural influences on ethical decision-making so promotes open-mindedness, cross-cultural dialogue, and adopting other culture virtues.
- It encourages individuals to consider the virtues that promote human flourishing by not relying on strict rules or a strict calculation of consequences on ethical decision-making.
- It's has more comprehensive approach than other ethical theory because It takes into account the moral character, intentions, and motivations of individuals, in addition to the consequences of their actions.

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