Ethical Point of View

Virtually everybody shares “core values”

- Life (hierarchy of needs – security, health ?)
- Happiness (privacy, freedom of expression ?)
- Ability to accomplish goals (public education, property ?)

Two ways to view world

- Selfish point of view: consider only own core values
- Ethical point of view: respect other people and their core values

Society: Association of people organized under a system of rules
- Rules – advance the good of members over time

Morality A society’s rules of conduct
- What people ought / ought not to do in various situations

Ethics Rational examination of morality
- Evaluation of people’s behavior
Why Study Ethics?

Not everyone can do what they want

Ethics: A way to decide the best thing to do

New problems accompany new technologies

“Common wisdom” not always adequate

Ethics: rational, systematic analysis

“Doing ethics”: answers need explanations

Explanations: facts, shared values, logic

Ethics: voluntary, moral choices

no choice, no ethics

Workable ethical theory produces explanations that might be persuasive to a skeptical, yet open-minded audience
Arguments

Not mere verbal disagreement

A set of statements: a conclusion supported by the premises.

Statements are either true or false (not true)

Two parts to an argument – its form and content:

   Form: the logical structure of the argument
   Content: what the argument is about

An argument is valid or invalid:

   Valid has good form
   Invalid has bad form

Sound argument is valid and all premises are true

Unsound argument is invalid or at least one premise is false
Valid arguments

Modus ponens: *mode that affirms*

If it is raining, then the streets are wet.
It is raining.
Therefore, the streets are wet.

Disjunctive Syllogism: *mode which, by taking away, affirms*

Either George Bush is the President of the United States or John Kerry is.
John Kerry is not the President of the United States.
Therefore, George Bush is the President of the United States.
Modus Tollens: *mode that denies*

If the world is flat, then it is not possible to circumnavigate the globe.
It is possible to circumnavigate the globe.
Therefore, the world is not flat.

If P, then Q.
Q is false.
Therefore, P is false.
Argument by Cases:

Either God exists or there is a realist morality that is not dependent on God’s existence.
If God exists, then there are moral truths.
If there is a realist morality that is not dependent on God’s existence, then there are moral truths.
Therefore, there are moral truths.
Invalid arguments

Denying the Antecedent:

If Einstein was assassinated, then he is dead.
Einstein was not assassinated.
Therefore, Einstein is not dead.

Affirming the Consequent:

If Abe Lincoln died of natural causes, then he is dead.
Abe Lincoln is dead.
Therefore, Abe Lincoln died of natural causes.
Attack an argument

2 Attacks:

argument is invalid – no logical structure
argument is unsound – usually at least 1 premise is not true

Most discussion is "Are the premises really true?"

So – this class wrt ethics and societal issues is not about your opinion, it is about your argument

Do not make the discussion personal.

It is not "I think", "you think", "I believe", "you believe"
Subjective Relativism

Relativism

No universal norms of right and wrong

One person can say “X is right,” another can say “X is wrong,” and both can be right

Subjective relativism

Each person decides right and wrong for himself or herself

“What’s right for you may not be right for me”
Subjective Relativism: Pro && Con

Case for:
Well-meaning and intelligent people disagree on moral issues
Ethical debates are disagreeable and pointless

Case Against:
Blurs distinction between doing what you think is right and doing what you want to do
Makes no moral distinction between the actions of different people
SR and tolerance are two different things
Decisions may not be based on reason
Not a workable ethical theory
Cultural Relativism

What is “right” and “wrong” depends upon a society’s actual moral guidelines

These guidelines vary from place to place and from time to time

A particular action may be right in one society at one time and wrong in other society or at another time

Case for:

Different social contexts demand different moral guidelines

It is arrogant for one society to judge another

Morality is reflected in actual behavior
Cultural Relativism:  Con

Case Against:

Because two societies *do* have different moral views doesn’t mean they *ought to* have different views

 Doesn’t explain how moral guidelines are determined

 Doesn’t explain how guidelines evolve

 Provides no way out for cultures in conflict

 Because many practices are acceptable does not mean any cultural practice is acceptable (many/any fallacy)

 Societies do, in fact, share certain core values

 Only indirectly based on reason

 Not a workable ethical theory
Origin of Virtue Ethics

Aristotle

Happiness results from living a life of virtue

Intellectual virtue: developed through education

Moral virtue: developed by repeating appropriate acts

Deriving pleasure from a virtuous act is a sign that the virtue has been acquired

Example virtues: Benevolence, courage, fairness, generosity, honesty, loyalty, patience, tolerance

A person of strong moral character

possesses many virtues

knows right thing to do in each situation
Analysis of Virtue Ethics

Advantages

Provides a motivation for good behavior
Provides a solution to the problem of impartiality
  Some virtues are partial (e.g., generosity)
  Other virtues must be impartial (e.g., honesty)

Disadvantages

No methodology for answering moral problems
  Given a problem, which virtues apply?
  How to resolve a conflict between more than one virtue?
Divine Command Theory

Good actions are those aligned with God’s will
Bad actions are those contrary to God’s will
Holy books reveal God’s will.
We should use holy books as moral decision-making guides.

Case for:

We owe obedience to our Creator.
God is all-good and all-knowing.
God is the ultimate authority.
Divine Command Theory: Con

Case against:

Different holy books disagree
Society is multicultural, secular (some atheists)
Some moral problems not addressed in scripture
“The good” ≠ “God” (equivalence fallacy)
Based on obedience, not reason, therefore not ethical
Kantianism

Good will: the desire to do the right thing

Immanuel Kant: Only thing in the world good without qualification is good will.

Reason should cultivate desire to do right thing.

Categorical Imperative (1st Formulation) – is rule appropriate?

Act only from moral rules that you can at the same time will to be universal moral laws.

Categorical Imperative (2nd Formulation)

Act so that you treat both yourself and other people as ends in themselves and never only as a means to an end.
Kantianism: Pro & Con

Case for:

Rational

Produces universal moral guidelines

Treats all persons as moral equals

Workable ethical theory

Case against:

Sometimes no rule adequately characterizes an action.

There is no way to resolve a conflict between rules.

Kantianism allows no exceptions to moral laws.
Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill

An action is good if it benefits someone
An action is bad if it harms someone

Utility: tendency of an object to produce happiness or prevent unhappiness for an individual or a community

Happiness = advantage = benefit = good = pleasure
Unhappiness = disadvantage = cost = evil = pain

Principle of Utility (Greatest Happiness Principle)

An action is right (or wrong) to the extent that it increases (or decreases) the total happiness of the affected parties.
Act Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism

Morality of an action has nothing to do with intent
Focuses on the consequences

Act utilitarianism

Add up change in happiness of all affected beings
Sum > 0, action is good
Sum < 0, action is bad

Bentham's attributes (what weights?)

Intensity, duration, certainty, proximity (space and time), reproducibility (ease of), purity (% pleasure / pain), extent (number)
Act Utilitarianism: Pro & Con

Case for:
- Focuses on happiness
- Down-to-earth (practical)
- Comprehensive
- Workable ethical theory

Case against:
- Unclear whom to include in calculations
- Too much work
- Ignores our innate sense of duty
- Susceptible to the problem of moral luck
  unintended consequence increase the consequences benefit.
Rule Utilitarianism

We ought to adopt moral rules which, if followed by everyone, will lead to the greatest increase in total happiness.

Act utilitarianism applies Principle of Utility to individual actions.

Rule utilitarianism applies Principle of Utility to moral rules.
Rule Utilitarianism: Pro

Case for:

Compared to act utilitarianism, it is easier to perform the utilitarian calculus.

Not every moral decision requires performing utilitarian calculus.

Moral rules survive exceptional situations

Avoids the problem of moral luck

Workable ethical theory
Case Against Utilitarianism in General

All consequences must be measured on a single scale.

Utilitarianism ignores the problem of an unjust distribution of good consequences.

Utilitarianism does not mean “the greatest good of the greatest number”

That requires a principle of justice

What happens when a conflict arises between the principle of utility and a principle of justice?
Social Contract Theory

**Thomas Hobbes** “State of nature” – no society
- We implicitly accept a social contract
  - Establishment of moral rules to govern relations among citizens
  - Government capable of enforcing these rules

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau**
- In ideal society, no one above rules
  - That prevents society from enacting bad rules

**James Rachels**
- “Morality consists in the set of rules, governing how people are to treat one another, that rational people will agree to accept, for their mutual benefit, on the condition that others follow those rules as well.”
Kinds of Rights

Negative right: A right that another can guarantee by leaving you alone

Positive right: A right obligating others to do something on your behalf

Absolute right: A right guaranteed without exception

Limited right: A right that may be restricted based on the circumstances
John Rawls’s Principles of Justice

Each person may claim a “fully adequate” number of basic rights and liberties, so long as these claims are consistent with everyone else having a claim to the same rights and liberties.

Any social and economic inequalities must

Be associated with positions that everyone has a fair and equal opportunity to achieve

Be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle)
Social Contract Theory: Pro && Con

Case for:

Framed in language of rights

Explains why people act in self-interest without common agreement

Provides clear analysis of certain citizen/government problems

Workable ethical theory

Case against:

No one signed contract

Some actions have multiple characterizations

Conflicting rights problem

May unjustly treat people who cannot uphold contract
## Comparing Workable Ethical Theories

<table>
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<th>Motivation</th>
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<td>Rights</td>
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Objectivism: Morality has an existence outside the human mind
Kantianism, utilitarianism, and social contract theory

Relativism: Morality is a human invention
Virtue Ethics Complements Other Theories

Virtue ethics may not work as a stand-alone theory

It may be a good complement to utilitarianism

Allows rationale for action to be considered

Solves problem of moral luck that plagued act utilitarianism
meta ethics
understanding, belief

normative ethics
principles, motivations

applied ethics
decision making
**Meta ethics**

Internet encyclopedia of Philosophy: (reviewed Vs. wiki)
http://www.iep.utm.edu/e/ethics.htm

**Meta ethics**

What the meaning of is is – good, happiness, utility

Ethics does not exist independently of humans

subjective relativism is "negative" meta ethics
meaning is unknowable

cultural (moral) relativism answers by cultural norms

Ethics does exist independently of humans

divine command resolves meta ethics definitions
"God is source"
## Normative ethics

Moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct.

A search for an ideal litmus test of proper behavior.

Golden Rule is a classic example of a normative principle:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Agent – why</th>
<th>Action – why</th>
<th>Effect – what</th>
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<td>&quot;duty&quot;, deontological</td>
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<td>good habits of character</td>
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<td>avoid vices</td>
<td>categorical imperative</td>
<td>result more good than bad</td>
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<td>rights as duties</td>
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<td>Plato, Aristotle</td>
<td>Kant, Locke</td>
<td>Bentham</td>
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</table>
Applied ethics

Analysis of specific, controversial moral (universal) issues
Not – social, political, economics
for CS: privacy, security, property rights, …

Ethical issues have been subdivided into convenient groups
medical, business, environmental, sexual, professional

Common principles of applied ethics on next slide
Personal benefit: action produces benefit to individual.

Social benefit: action produces beneficial for society.

Benevolence: help those in need.

Paternalism: assist others in their best interests when they cannot.

Harm: do not harm others.

Honesty: do not deceive others.

Lawfulness: do not violate the law.

Autonomy: acknowledge a person's freedom over his/her actions or physical body.

Justice: acknowledge a person's right to due process, fair. compensation for harm done, and fair distribution of benefits.

Rights: acknowledge rights to life, information, privacy, free expression, and safety.