



Ethics: Philosophical Bases

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Sources of inspiration

- ▶ Coursera MOOC from the University of Geneva (2018): *Le Bien, le Juste, l'Utile. Introduction aux éthiques philosophiques*
- ▶ *Ethical IT Innovation* (2016). S. Spiekermann. CRC Press.
- ▶ *L'éthique aux interfaces entre biologie/santé et sciences de l'information* (2016). H. Chneiweiss. (with his approval)
- ▶ Wikipedia

The Question Behind

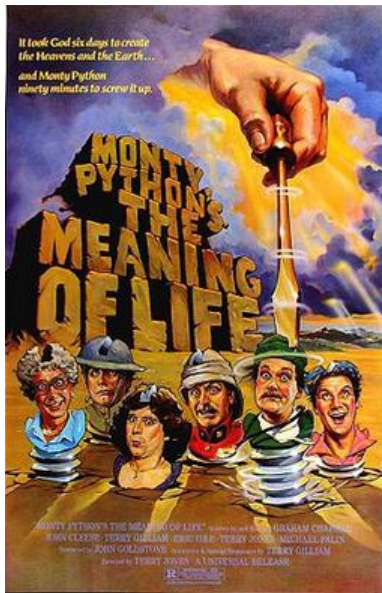
Virtue Ethics

Deontological (duty) Ethics

Utilitarianism

Applying ethics

To finish



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What is a good life?



How humans should best live (to achieve this **good** life)

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Origins

Principles

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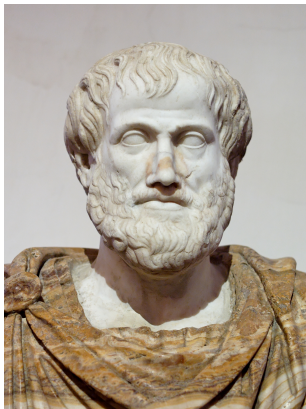
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Aristotle (384–322 BC)



After Lysippos - Jastrow (2006)

Work on ethics

Nicomachean Ethics

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Ethics is about happiness, feeling good

Which "good"?

- ▶ each (intermediary) good (pleasure, money, etc) is linked to another
- ▶ except the **sovereign good**: supreme good, not linked to another

Inspired by nature (proper function of a being):

- ▶ plants: a good life is to grow, to produce fruits
- ▶ dogs: satisfaction of senses
- ▶ specific for human: choose our life and the goal of our life (practical reason)

⇒ thinking in terms of being a "good" person

Ethics is about action (not theory)

Do the best thing, make the best choices: a virtuous man is a virtuoso (perfectionism)

To achieve this:

- ▶ exercise being virtuous
- ▶ be surrounded by virtuous persons

Main virtue = PRUDENCE (not too much, not too little: middle ground)

A bit further

All our activities are about ethics

Importance of:

- ▶ education (role models)
- ▶ (real) friendship (we are social beings)
- ▶ justice
- ▶ politics

A bit further

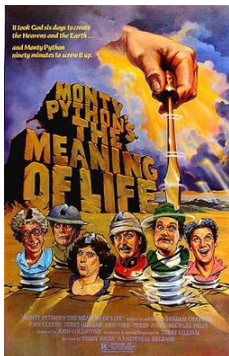
All our activities are about ethics

Importance of:

- ▶ education (role models)
- ▶ (real) friendship (we are social beings)
- ▶ justice
- ▶ politics

Limits/risks:

- ▶ list of virtues contingent to his time
- ▶ prudence is not science



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Is happiness our goal in life?

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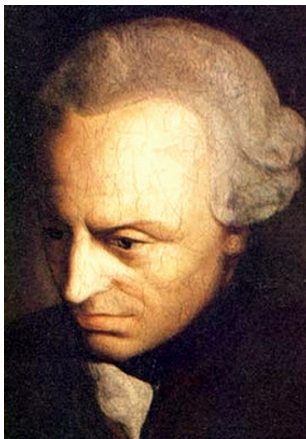
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Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)



Work on ethics

Critique of Pure Reason

Critique of Practical Reason

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The Imperative of the Practical Reason

Inflexible order of nature → to be really **free** I have to reason (practically) and act accordingly, without being the slave of my passions

- ▶ submission to duty (internal law: wanting to do good) elevates us (perfectionism)
- ▶ test: universalization (care for others)

⇒ thinking in terms of the "right" action

Parenthesis on Government

For Kant, 4 kinds of government (Wikipedia)

1. Law and freedom without force
2. Law and force without freedom
3. Force without freedom and law
4. Force with freedom and law

Parenthesis on Government

For Kant, 4 kinds of government (Wikipedia)

1. Law and freedom without force: [anarchy](#)
2. Law and force without freedom
3. Force without freedom and law
4. Force with freedom and law

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For Kant, 4 kinds of government (Wikipedia)

1. Law and freedom without force: [anarchy](#)
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3. Force without freedom and law: [barbarism](#)
4. Force with freedom and law: [republic](#)

Kant's ethics

- ▶ Perfectionist: the human being should aim at being better
- ▶ Moral principle is a priori and **absolute** ("you shall not kill/steal")

Contemporary Deontological Ethics

Opening towards two dimensions:

- ▶ Jürgen Habermas (1929-): open to other people (intra-generational ethics)
 - ▶ discourse ethics: a respectful, symmetric, authentic discussion with all concerned will generate the best solution
- ▶ Hans Jonas (1903-1993): open to other generations (inter-generational ethics)
 - ▶ ethics of responsibility: preserve what is fragile and vulnerable
 - precautionary principle

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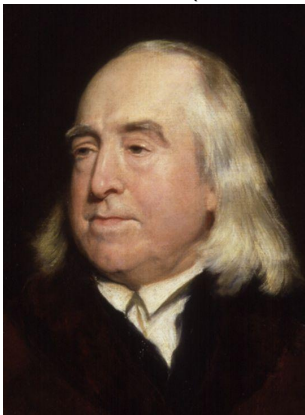
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Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

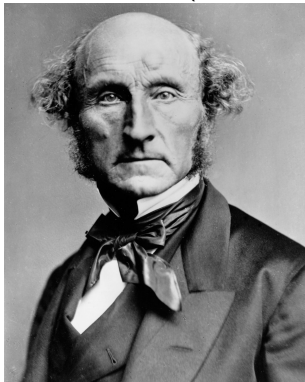


By Henry William Pickersgill

Work on ethics

The Principles of Morals and
Legislation

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)



London Stereoscopic Company - Hulton Archive

Work on ethics

Essay on Bentham

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Bentham's Utilitarianism

Scientific, truly altruistic, method:

- ▶ observation of human behaviours: they want **pleasure**
- ▶ counting positive and negative points (money) for each decision to be made
- ▶ **each person counts for 1** (nobody matters more than the others, even the agent)

⇒ maximize pleasure for a maximum of persons (beings)

⇒ **no** perfectionism

⇒ thinking in terms of the consequences of an action

Mill's Utilitarianism

Maximize **happiness** (not pleasure)

Adds **virtue** as part of happiness (hierarchy in pleasures)

Contemporary Utilitarianism: consequentialism

Only consequences matter

Criteria: satisfaction of preferences, well-being, still not moral

But no more calculus

Which consequences matter?

- ▶ everybody counts for 1: problem (1 person can be killed to save more)
- ▶ average vs addition, negative?
- ▶ of each act, for the agent (if the agent kill 1 person it has really negative effects on the agent)
- ▶ virtues with good consequences (virtue consequentialism)

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A classic dilemma

Results

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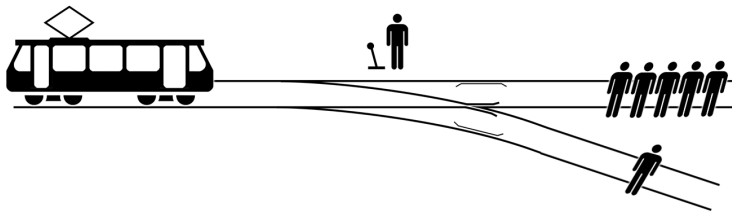
Applying ethics

A classic dilemma

Results

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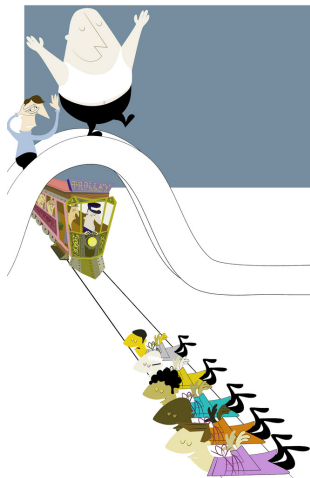
The (classic) trolley problem [P. Foot, 1967]



By McGeddon - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0

The (classic) trolley problem

The fat man variant



By John Holbo, CC BY-NC 2.0

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To finish

An Experiment [J. Greene]

Trolley dilemma votes:

- ▶ 90% of the persons would activate the shift (distant action)

An Experiment [J. Greene]

Trolley dilemma votes:

- ▶ 90% of the persons would activate the shift (distant action)
- ▶ 10% would push the fat man (direct and immediate)

A Neuroscientific Experiment [J. Greene]

Brain imaging:

- ▶ normal case: some zones of the brain activated
- ▶ fat man case: other zones of the brain activated

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WYHTR: What You Have To Remember

A bit of work



- ▶ ethics of virtue
- ▶ deontological ethics
- ▶ consequentialist ethics

A bit of reading

Read, annotate and comment

the Menlo report [Dittrich and Kenneally, 2012]



Dittrich, D. and Kenneally, E. (2012).

The Menlo Report: Ethical Principles Guiding Information and Communication Technology Research.

Technical report, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.