Ethical Decision-Making

MORAL PHILOSOPHY
What is 'Ethics'? 

- "Ethics is concerned with studying and/or building up a coherent set of rules or principles by which people ought to live".

- We all have some 'rules of thumbs' that define our behavior.
  - It is right to ...
  - It is wrong to ...
Let's start with a 'simple' rule

- It is wrong to kill.

- Is it wrong to kill animals?
- Is killing in self-defense wrong?
- Is the termination of pregnancy wrong?
- ...

...
We will use these terms interchangeably.
These terms focus on how humans should act.
We want to achieve what is right, fair and just, does not cause harm.
Applicability to various cases is important since philosophers have the tendency to introduce general answers.
Areas of Ethical Study

- Meta-ethics
  - focuses on the meaning of ethical terms (e.g., what is goodness?, how to differentiate between what is good from what is bad?)

- Normative ethics
  - focuses on ethical human acts (e.g., what is the right thing to do?, how to decide on what the 'correct' moral actions to take are?)

- Applied ethics
  - focuses on how people can achieve moral outcomes in specific situations/contexts (e.g., bioethics, business ethics etc.).
Ethical Frameworks

- Theoretical frameworks help us:
  - to analyze complex problems,
  - to find rational, coherent solutions to those problems.
- Philosophers attempt to find general answers useful for everyone in the society.
Some Ethical Theories

- **Virtue Theories:**
  - *Who* is doing the action?

- **Consequentialist Theories:**
  - Are the *consequences* moral?

- **Deontological Theories:**
  - Is the *action* itself moral?
Virtue Theories

- Virtue Ethics focuses on the qualities of morally excellent persons (e.g., virtues).
- It also focuses on the habits of action of virtuous persons.
  - How would such a person act in a new/unseen situation?
What can Virtue Ethics tell us?

1. Making a consistent and conscious effort to develop our moral character for the better.

2. Telling us where to look for standards of conduct to follow
   - Finding exemplary human beings with virtues to follow in society

3. Directing us toward the lifelong cultivation of practical wisdom or good moral judgment:
   - What are the most important moral obligations?
   - Which actions to take to achieve such obligations?

* An organization's culture is also part of this.
What are **three strengths** of moral character (virtues) that you think are particularly important for data practitioners to practice and cultivate to be excellent models of data practice in their profession?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFICIENCY of VIRTUE (vice)</th>
<th>VIRTUE</th>
<th>EXCESS of VIRTUE (vice)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cowardice</td>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Rash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insensible</td>
<td>Temperance</td>
<td>Dissipation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stinginess</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Wastefulness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chintzy</td>
<td>Magnificence</td>
<td>Vulgar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspersion</td>
<td>Magnanimity</td>
<td>Vainglory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indolence</td>
<td>Industrious</td>
<td>Overambitious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Controlling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-deprecation</td>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Boastfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boorishness</td>
<td>Charming</td>
<td>Buffoonery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarrelsome</td>
<td>Friendliness</td>
<td>Obsequious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying</td>
<td>Truthful</td>
<td>Tactless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>Tolerant</td>
<td>Doormat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timid</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Domineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fickle</td>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Gullible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Vigilant</td>
<td>Impetuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowardice</td>
<td>Protective</td>
<td>Bully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearful</td>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Impulsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rudderless</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Rigid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naïve</td>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Cynical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimpy</td>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>Arrogant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Nurturing</td>
<td>Martyr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranoid</td>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>Arrogant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushover</td>
<td>Careful</td>
<td>Stubborn</td>
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</table>
Consequentialist Theories (i)

- Consequentialist Ethics focuses on the consequences of actions.
- Utilitarianism: It focuses on maximizing pleasure/happiness/welfare/benefit/...; minimizing pain for all.
  - Pleasure includes physical, emotional and intellectual pleasures.
- Goal: The greatest net sum of good.
- "Many utilitarians believe that a society in which individual rights and justice are given the highest importance just is the kind of society most likely to maximize overall happiness in the long run."
Consequentialist Theories (ii)

- Ethical egoism: It evaluates outcomes the good consequences relative to an individual.
  - computationally expensive (act vs rules)
- The modern development of the theory backs to Bentham's work.
- Two types:
  - Jeremy Bentham 1748-1832: Quantity matters.
In what ways do you think data practitioners can promote the ‘greater good’ through their work, that is, increase human happiness?
Deontological Theories

- Deontological ethics are rule or principle-based systems.
  - In the West, moral rights are often taken as a basis for law.
  - In many cultures of East Asia, systems focus on duties: fixed obligations to others.
- Well-known theory: Kantian Ethics (Kant 1724-1804)
  - Categorical Imperative: "only act in ways that we would be willing to have all other persons follow, all of the time"
  - Never to treat a human being as a ‘mere means to an end’.
Deontological Theories – Kantian Ethics

- Justice: Recognizes the basic equality and irreplaceable dignity of every human being
- Moral law:
  - hypothetical imperatives: we ought to follow given our desires
  - categorical imperatives bind us no matter what our desires are
- Principle of double effect: intention vs foresight
## Comparison of Main Ethical Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Consequentialism</th>
<th>Deontology</th>
<th>Virtue Ethics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central Concern</strong></td>
<td>An action is right if it promotes the best consequences, i.e. maximises happiness</td>
<td>An action is right if it is in accordance with a moral rule or principle</td>
<td>An action is right if it is what a virtuous person would do in the circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guiding Value</strong></td>
<td>The results matter, not the actions themselves</td>
<td>Persons must be seen as ends and may never be used as means</td>
<td>Emphasise the character of the agent making the actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practical Reasoning</strong></td>
<td>Good (often seen as maximum happiness)</td>
<td>Right (rationality is doing one's moral duty)</td>
<td>Virtue (leading to the attainment of eudaimonia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deliberation Focus</strong></td>
<td>The best for most (means-ends reasoning)</td>
<td>Follow the rule (rational reasoning)</td>
<td>Practice human qualities (social practice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences (What is outcome of action?)</td>
<td>Action (Is action compatible with some imperative?)</td>
<td>Motives (Is action motivated by virtue?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dignum, Virginia. "Responsible artificial intelligence: designing AI for human values" (2017)
Moral Values

- Which **moral values** to consider?
  - health, honesty, beauty, respect, environmental care, self-enhancement etc.

- How to **prioritize** them?
  - Individuals rely on multiple values
  - Contradictory preferences is a problem (as an individual, as a society)

- Schwartz emphasizes that values could be used to **differentiate** between two situations/contexts.

*Schwartz, S. An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture 2, 1 (2012).*
Schwartz's Value Model – Relative Relation between Values

Individual/Society Level – Relative Importance of Values

- People are good at deciding on an ordering among conflicting values.
- Cultures are similar. Schwartz demonstrates that:
  - Moral values are consistent across cultures... **BUT**
  - Cultures prioritize values differently.
- Values can be handy to determine the rules for moral deliberation (e.g., rule utilitarianism).
Ethical Reasoning

- What to do in face of moral dilemmas?
  - Situations where moral requirements conflict, and there is no one correct answer.
  - Different ethical theories will lead to distinct solutions.

https://www.moralmachine.net/
Moral Machine

https://www.moralmachine.net/
Could you think of any other moral dilemmas that AI systems need to confront?
Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University has great Ethics Resources.

You can use 12-step approach by extending the ethical dimension by using the set of ethical questions.

When it comes to evaluating alternative actions, you can ask the following questions:

https://www.scu.edu/media/ethics-center/resources/making.pdf
Making an Ethical Decision

- Which option will produce the most good and do the least harm? (The Utilitarian Approach)**
- Which option best respects the rights of all who have a stake? (The Rights Approach)*
- Which option treats people equally or proportionately? (The Justice and Fairness Approach)*
- Which option best serves the community as a whole, not just some members? (The Common Good Approach)**
- Which option leads me to act as the sort of person I want to be? (The Virtue Approach)
STEP 1: **Identify the right being upheld or violated.**
- Liberty rights, such as the right to property, to free speech, to religion, and so on, are protections against the encroachment of society or other individuals.
- Welfare rights, such as the right to food, clothing, education, health care, and so on, are indications of what we need in order to live a life worth of human beings. Individuals and society may have obligations to help me obtain these if they are available and I have done my part to obtain them.
- An extensive listing of what many take to be essential human rights is contained in the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

STEP 2: **Explain why it deserves the status of a right.**
- Is it essential to the worth of human beings?
- Is it essential to a person’s dignity and self worth?
- What would happen if the individual were denied this right? Would we want that right respected if we were in that person’s position?

STEP 3: **Ask whether that right conflicts with other rights or with the rights of others.**
- When rights conflict, decide which has precedence by explaining why each right is important and showing the consequences for dignity and self worth (or freedom and well being) if the right is not protected. Ethical people can disagree about which right is more important since no ranking principle is universally accepted.

STEP 4: **Draw a conclusion.**
- Explain briefly how the Rights principle does or does not apply in this case.

https://www.ethicsops.com/rights-test
STEP 1: **What is the distribution?**
- Who is getting the benefits and burdens in the situation?
- Do those who get benefits also share burdens?
- Do those with benefits share some of the burdens?

These are factual questions. Once you know the distribution you can decide if it is fair or not.

STEP 2: **Is the distribution fair?**
- Which criterion for distribution would be most fair in this situation?
- Why would it be most fair in this situation?

You have to defend the distribution and the criterion or reason for the distribution.

STEP 3: If disagreement persists over which outcome is fair or over which criterion for inequality is best in the situation, then select a fair process to decide what is fair, for example, an election, dispassionate judge, pick winners out of a hat, chance decided by a coin, or paper-rock-scissors.

STEP 4: **Draw a conclusion**
- Will this action produce a fair distribution, and why?

https://www.ethicsops.com/justice-test
The Common Good Test (i)

STEP 1: Specify what parts of the common good are involved.

► Which social systems, institutions, environments and ideologies that we depend on for a functioning and healthy society could be advanced or damaged by our actions in this situation? What actions will strengthen them? What actions will weaken them?

► Whereas the utility test focuses on the total benefits and harms produced, the common good test focuses on whether the action or situation contributes to or harms a particular aspect of the common good.

► The common good includes among other things the family, social, educational, and health care systems required for human growth, development, and happiness; the police, courts, military and political system required for public safety, a functioning government, and peace; the businesses, financial, and legal systems necessary for the production of goods and services and economic development; and the ecosystem and technology which make all these activities possible. The common good also includes the sets of ideas we use to understand the different aspects of the common good.

STEP 2: Explain why we have obligation to promote or protect the common good.

► What obligation does my company or I have to maintain these aspects of the common good because we benefit from them?

► If my company benefits from having stable families and educated workers, for example, do we have an obligation to promote these aspects of the common good, or at least not to harm them?
STEP 3: **Does the proposed action conflict with this obligation?**

- Do our employment policies and actions in the community weaken family stability or education or put these aspects of the common good at risk?

- This question might help an investment banker recognize that even though he is due a multimillion dollar bonus, the common good of restoring trust in the financial system may require that he give it up; that the common good of maximizing the good effects of distributing federal stimulus money in a severe recession means that lobbying for a particular interest group needs to be restrained more than in ordinary times; or that the common good of maintaining the courts as an efficient problem resolution mechanism requires that even though a company’s deep pockets enable them to stall a lawsuit indefinitely by filing an endless motions, they should not do so.

STEP 4: **Draw a conclusion.**

- If the action conflicts with my or my organization’s obligation to contribute to the common good, it is the wrong action.

[https://www.ethicsops.com/common-good](https://www.ethicsops.com/common-good)
There are other ethical lenses...

Rangahau Māori: Tona tika, tona pono - The validity and integrity of Māori research

2001

Cram, Fiona

Cram suggests that there is a need for a Māori research ethics. She discusses mātauranga Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and outlines Kaupapa Māori. She then presents seven ‘guidelines’, derived from Linda Smith, that relate to Māori research ethics:

1. A respect for people
2. He kanohi kitea (meet with people face-to-face)
3. Tūirī, whakarongo... kōrero (look and listen to develop a basis for speaking)
4. Manaaki ki te tangata (involve the people)
5. Kia tūpato (be politically astute, culturally safe, and reflective)
6. Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample the mana of the people)
7. Kaua e mahaki (do not flaunt knowledge, and share it for the community’s benefit)
We have a long way to go...

- Consequentialist approaches
  - How to evaluate all possible consequences?
- Deontologic approaches
  - Reasoning about actions is needed and how actions are related to norms (e.g., higher order reasoning)
- Virtues approaches
  - Reasoning about motives, actions, consequences is needed (e.g., Theory of Mind models).

We may use different lenses as well (Rights, Common Good, Justice and Fairness and so on)...
Summary

- What is Ethics?
- Normative Ethics and Applied Ethics
- Three ethical theories considered
- The role of moral values, other ethical lenses
- Next: Machine Ethics!
Reflection time – Apply Ethical Decision Making