

Ethical Decision-Making

MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Outline

- ▶ What is Ethics?
- ▶ Normative Ethics and Applied Ethics
- ▶ Three ethical theories considered
- ▶ The role of moral values, other ethical lenses

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?
- ▶ ...

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Ethics/Morality

- ▶ 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.

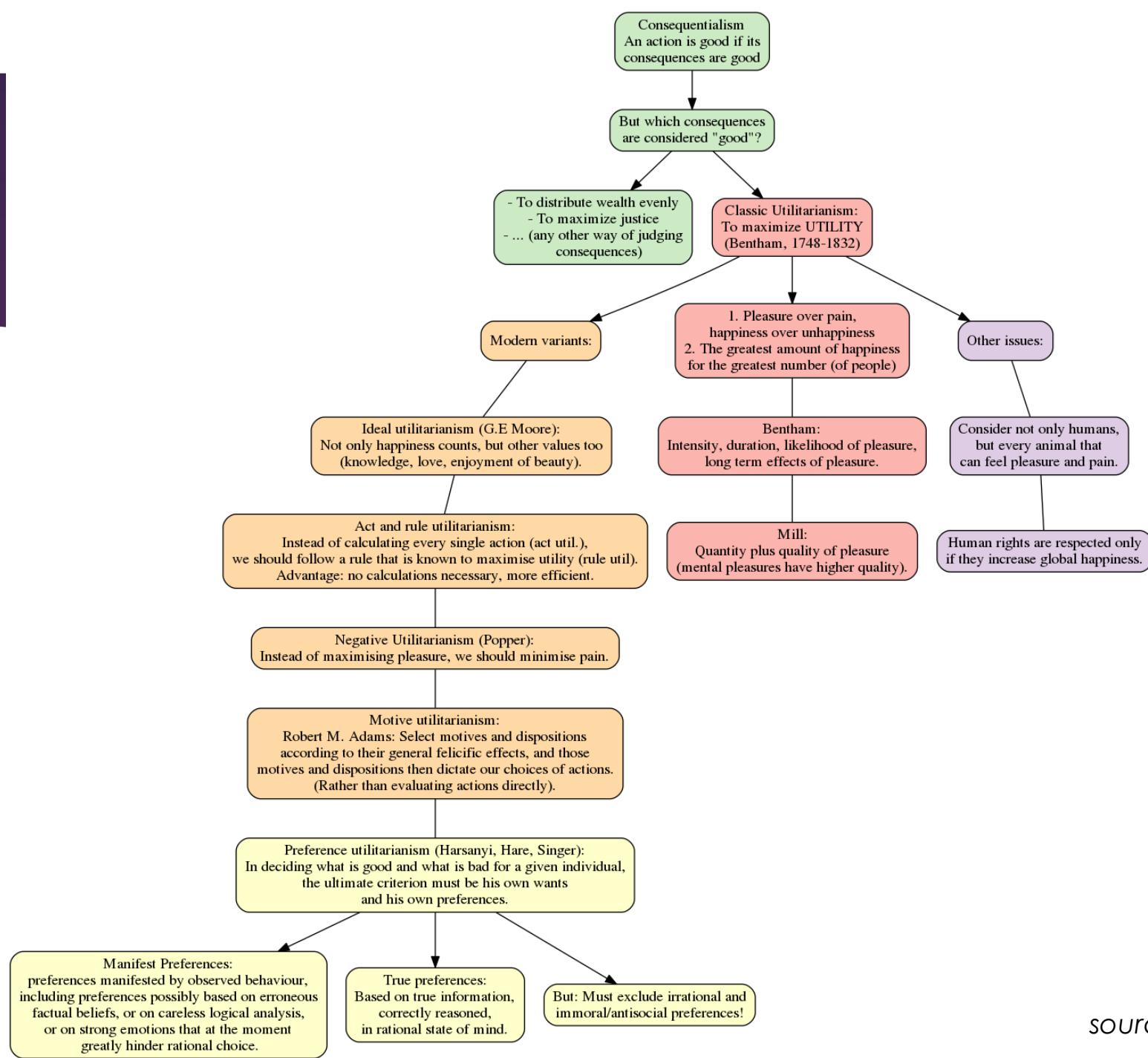
DEFICIENCY of VIRTUE (vice)	VIRTUE	EXCESS of VIRTUE (vice)
Cowardice	Courage	Rash
Insensible	Temperance	Dissipation
Stinginess	Generosity	Wastefulness
Chintzy	Magnificence	Vulgar
Aspersion	Magnanimity	Vainglory
Indolence	Industrious	Overambitious
Indifference	Caring	Controlling
Self-deprecation	Honest	Boastfulness
Boorishness	Charming	Buffoonery
Quarrelsome	Friendliness	Obsequious
Lying	Truthful	Tactless
Impatient	Tolerant	Doormat
Timid	Confident	Domineering
Fickle	Loyal	Gullible
Unsure	Vigilant	Impetuous
Cowardice	Protective	Bully
Fearful	Patient	Impulsive
Rudderless	Flexible	Rigid
Naïve	Practical	Cynical
Wimpy	Assertive	Arrogant
Selfish	Nurturing	Martyr
Paranoid	Confident	Arrogant
Pushover	Careful	Stubborn

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.
 - ▶ John Stuart Mill 1806-1873: Quantity and Quality matter.



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

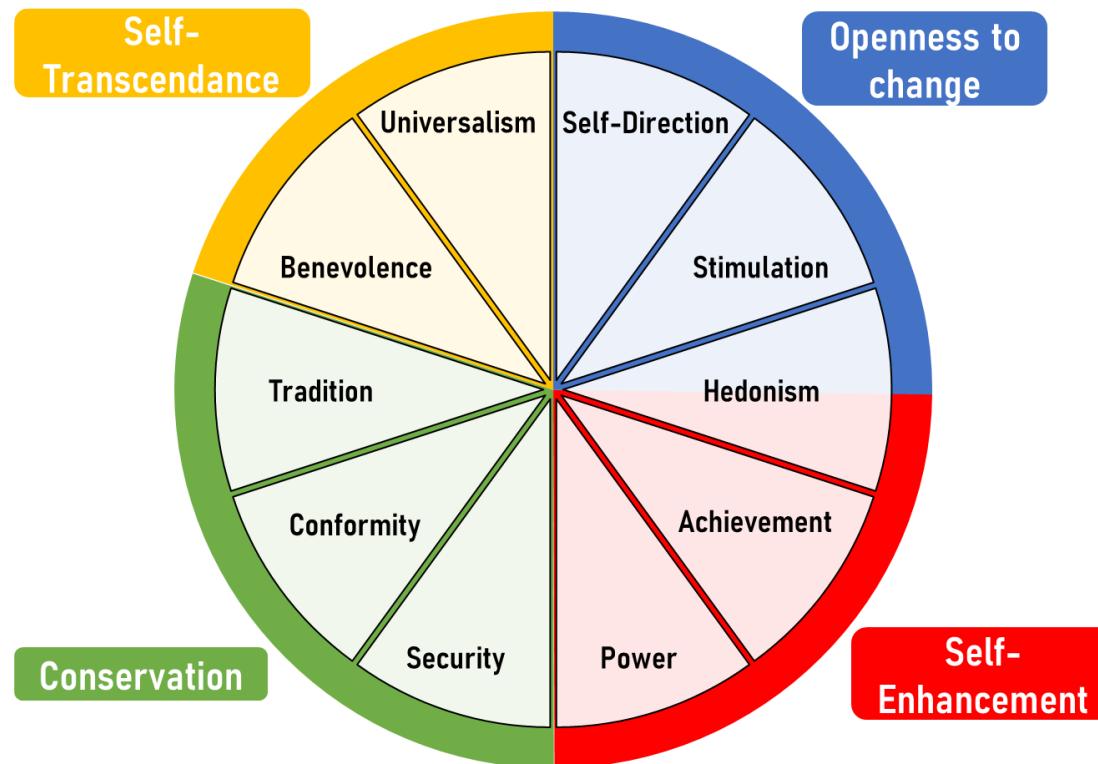
Comparison of Main Ethical Theories

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

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 Value Model – Relative Relation between Values



Benjamin Pastorelli

Source :

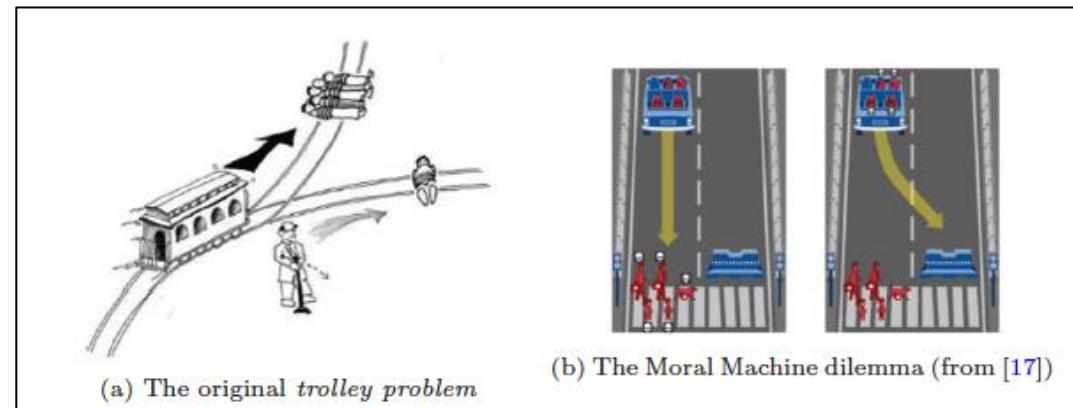
Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25, 1-65.

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).

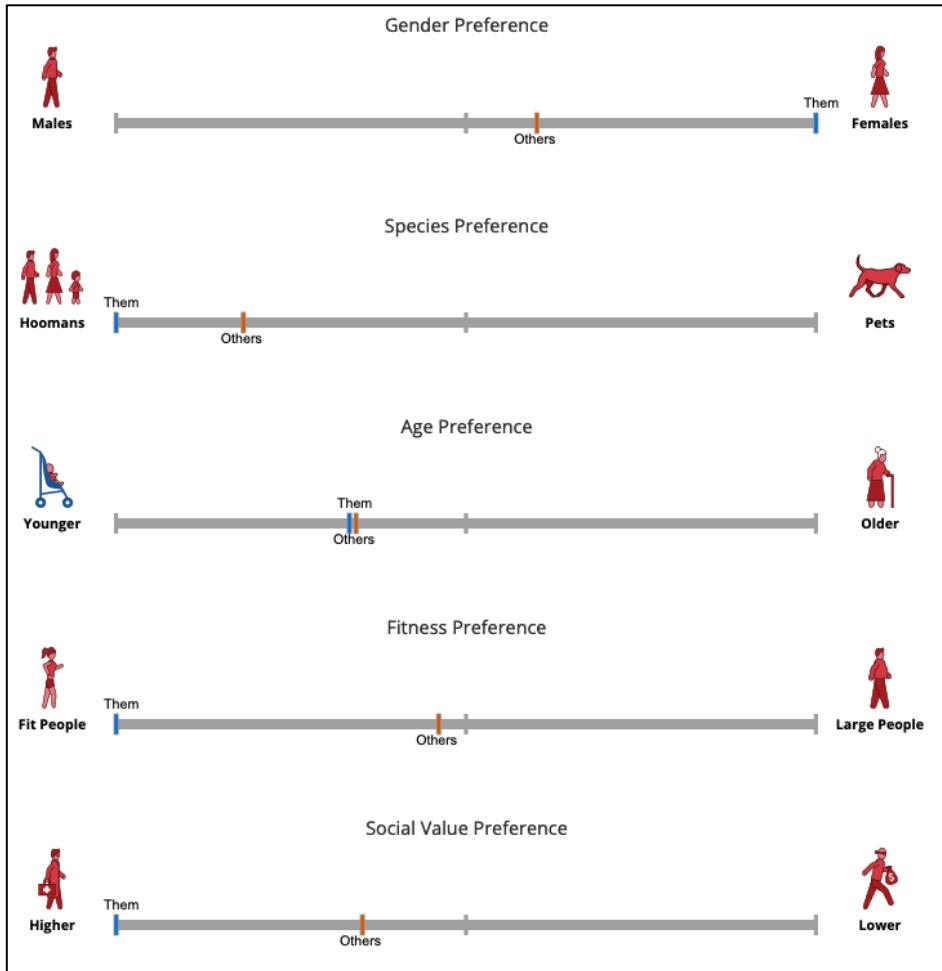
Ethical Reasoning

- ▶ 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.



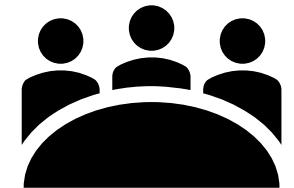
(my) Moral Machine

sorry pets



Reflection Time

- ▶ Could you think of any other **moral dilemmas** that AI systems need to confront?



Making an Ethical Decision

- ▶ 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:



Markkula Center
for Applied Ethics
at Santa Clara University

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)

The Rights Test

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.

Justice and Fairness Approach

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?

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?

The Common Good Test (ii)

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.

There are other ethical lenses...

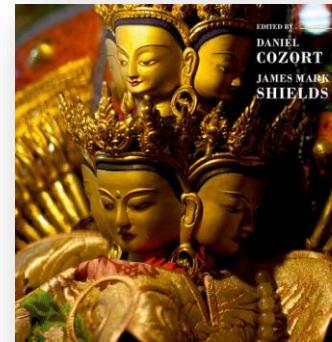
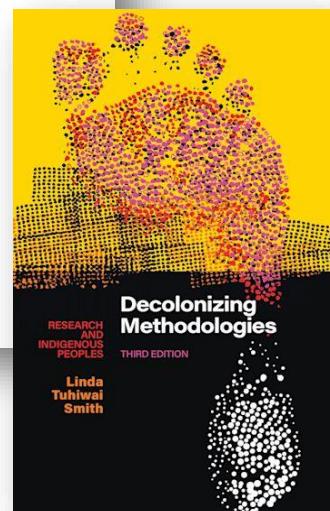
Rangahau Māori: Tona tika, tono pono - The validity and integrity of Māori research

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. Titiro, whakarongo... kōrero (look and listen to develop a basis for speaking)
4. Manaaki ki te tangata (involve the people)
5. Kia tupato (be politically astute, culturally safe, and reflective)
6. Kua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample the mana of the people)
7. Kua e mahaki (do not flaunt knowledge, and share it for the community's benefit)



≡ The Oxford Handbook of
**BUDDHIST
ETHICS**

Chinese Ethical Systems		
Confucianism	Daoism	Legalism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social order, harmony, and good government should be based on family relationships. • Respect for parents and elders is important to a well-ordered society. • Education is important both to the welfare of the individual and to society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The natural order is more important than the social order. • A universal force guides all things. • Human beings should live simply and in harmony with nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A highly efficient and powerful government is the key to social order. • Punishments are useful to maintain social order. • Thinkers and their ideas should be strictly controlled by the government.
SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Charts <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Comparing Which of these three systems stresses the importance of government and a well-ordered society? 2. Synthesizing Which of these systems seems to be most moderate and balanced? Explain. 		

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!