UNIV 200-07 Digital Trancendence
Introduction to Morality and Ethics

What is society?

What is morality?

Working on your own, now, go back to your Moodle document and take 2 minutes to draft a list of bullets enumerating what you believe are

UNIVERSAL MORAL VALUES

Universal Moral Values

Bernard Gert suggests a common core of values that all people share:

1. Not killing others
2. Not causing pain
3. Not disabling
4. Not depriving freedom
5. Not depriving pleasure
6. Being truthful
7. Keeping promises
8. Being honest
9. Obeying the law
10. Doing your duty

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948

"Now, Therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction."

Moral Dilemma

What is the right thing to do when you are in a situation where, regardless of your choice of action, some more rule will be violated?

Example:
"The Spy Dilemma"

Dilemma

- You choose to leave the scientist alone and he sells technology that may cause the death of millions. You fail to do your duty.

- You do your duty. You "eliminate" the scientist, that is, you kill a human being.

Dilemma

Moral Rule A

A HARD PLACE

Moral Rule B

Morals are ground rules that allow us to get along.

Ethics are the means to resolve moral dilemmas.

Why ethics?

We are in a period of fast technological advances. The use of the products we create may produce **harm** and **benefit** to societies, at the same time.

We need to be able to **REASON** out the right thing to do.

Example: http://www.businessinsider.com/the-ethical-questions-facing-self-driving-cars-2015-10

Self-Driving Cars

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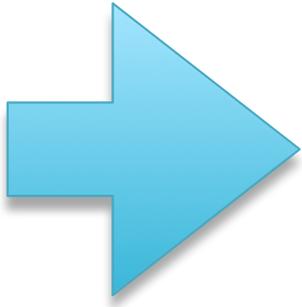
Self-Driving Cars

Self-Driving Cars

http://moralmachine.mit.edu/

Image: http://www.businessinsider.com/the-ethical-questions-facing-self-driving-cars-2015-10
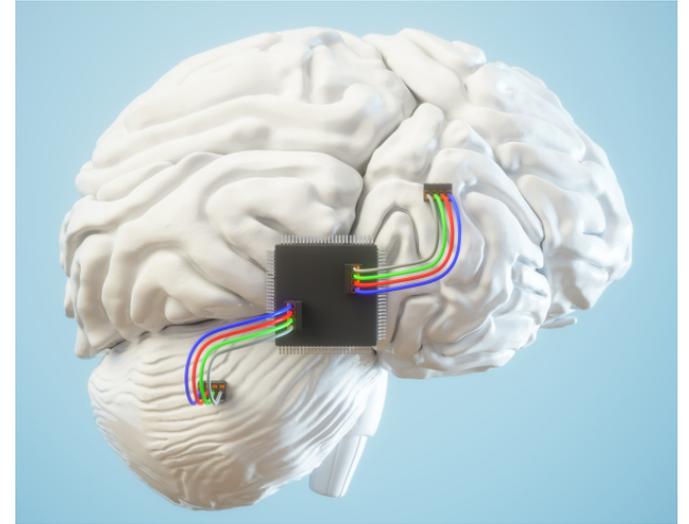
The Scope of Ethics

Voluntary, *moral choices* that people can make to solve a dilemma.

Choices outside the moral realm or involuntary are out of scope.

Scenario

Your college roommate Ilan Munch invites you to join his startup to develop neural implants to interface the brain with digital devices.

There have been massive investments in the company and profits could be astronomical. So far, all current prototypes have caused debilitating migraines and seizures on test subjects. If you can make it work, tetraplegic patients will be able to control wheelchairs.

Analyze the Scenario

1. Is Munch's company doing anything wrong?

2. Who benefits from the technology?

3. Who stands to gain to to suffer with this new technology?

4. Are there alternative options to this technology?

5. Would you agree to join the company?

6. Is there any information you need to make your decision?

What is The Right Thing to Do?

Normative Ethics

- **Consequence-based ethics**
  - Hedonism or Egoism: do what maximizes the benefits to yourself.
  - Utilitarianism: do what maximizes the benefits to everyone involved.

- **Duty-based ethics**
  - Kant: do what is supported by a rule that can be applied in all similar situations (universalizability).

- **Virtue-based ethics**
  - Aristotle: one should live a virtuous life; virtue will drive one to always do the right thing.

Subjective Relativism

"What is right for you may not be right for me."

FOR

"Good" people may have opposite views about moral issues.

If morality is relative, both sides are right.

AGAINST

The light between right and wrong is blurry.

No moral distinctions between actions of different people.

A legitimate ethical theory should be based on **reason**.

Cultural Relativism

A society's moral guidelines vary according to place and time.

FOR	AGAINST
Different social contexts demand different moral guidelines.	Because societies' mores don't agree, it doesn't mean that they should disagree.
One society should not have the right to judge another.	How can we discern right from wrong if there are no cultural norms?
	Societies do share some core values.
	This is only indirectly based on reason.

Cultural Relativism

Question: Are "morals" a set of values or traditions that vary from one culture to another?

Question: Are the "morals" of any culture as good as the "morals" of other cultures?

Question: If we accept this idea, can we ever find fault in others for doing what we find immoral?

Question: Can there be any moral progress if we accept this idea?

Divine Command Theory

Good actions follow the will of God and bad actions are contrary to the will of God.

FOR	AGAINST
We owe obedient to our Creator.	Whose holy book is right?
God is all-good and all-knowing.	Multicultural societies can't adopt religion-based morality.
God is the ultimate authority.	Scripture doesn't address all moral problems.
	Is this about obedience or reason?

Ethical Egoism

Each person should focus only on his or her self-interest.

FOR

It's a practical moral philosophy.

Empowers people to take care of themselves.

Society benefits when individuals protect their self-interests.

AGAINST

Easy doesn't mean good…

Society does know what is good for individuals.

Self-interest can lead to immoral actions.

There are moral principles superior to self-interest.

Kantianism

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

Act so that you always treat both yourself and others as ends in themselves never only as means to an end.

FOR	AGAINST
"What if everybody acted that way?"	It can be hard to find a single rule to fully characterize an action.
Produces *universal* moral guidelines.	Sometimes there is no way to resolve a conflict between rules.
All people are moral equals.	No exceptions to perfect duties.

Act Utilitarianism

An action is right to the extent that it increases the total happiness of the affected parties.

FOR	AGAINST
Focuses on happiness.	The "calculus" is not practice: a lot of energy for every moral decision.
It is practical.	Ignores sense of duty.
It is comprehensive.	We have no crystal ball to predict consequences.

Rule Utilitarianism

Adopt the moral rule(s) that maximize the total happiness over all affected parties.

Applies the principle of utility to *moral rules,* not to individual moral actions.

FOR	AGAINST
Reduces the need for the utilitarian calculus.	Uses a single scale to evaluate different consequences.
Reduces the problem of bias.	Ignores sense of duty.
Appeals to a wide cross section of society.	We have no crystal ball to predict consequences.

Social Contract Theory

"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."   James Rachels

FOR

Framed in the language of "rights."

In the absence of common agreement, people act out of self-interest.

Under certain circumstances, civil disobedience can be morally right.

AGAINST

Who did ever sign the *social contract*?

Some actions can be characterizes in multiple ways.

May be unjust to those who cannot uphold their side of the social contract.

Rawl's Theory of Justice

Determine the rights and benefits of others using a **veil of ignorance** (before people know where they will be in society).

Principles of Justice:

1. Your claims for "adequate" rights and benefits must be consistent with the claims of others.

2. Inequalities are only fair if everyone has equal opportunities for growth and if the inequalities benefit the least advantaged.

Normative Ethics

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What makes an action morally right?

Accordance w/correct moral rule.

Maximum increase of total good
(ACT UTILITARIANISM)

What makes a moral rule correct?

Consistent with actions of a virtuous person.
(VIRTUE THEORY)

Maximum increase of total good if all follow rule all the time
(RULE UTILITARIANISM)

Everyone follows rule without a logical contradiction that undermines it
(KANTIANISM)

Rational people accept it as binding because it brings benefit to group
(SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY)

A Rubric

1. What are the facts?

2. What are the moral issues?

3. Who is affected by the decision you have to make?

4. What are your options?

5. What are the expected outcome of each possible action?

6. What are the personal costs associated with each possible action?

7. Where can you get some help in thinking through the problem?

8. And the bottom line?

From: *The Right Thing to Do*

P. Aarne Vesilind, 2nd Edition, Lakeshore Press