CS 105: Philosophical Ethics

Chris Kauffman

Week 2
A few more Logistics

Our Text

Expectation
Assigned readings done before class

Previous text editions
Nothing against them, but see me in office hours to get appropriate reading sections

Office hours
Tue 3:00-5:00pm
Engineering 5341
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Goals

Kantianism, Utilitarianism, Social Contract theory

- Details
- Get ready for Assignment 1
- Activity
# Last Weeks Results

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Ethical Theories

Not just what to do, also *why* to do it

- A note on axioms
Quiz Time

- Take 15 minutes - actual quiz length
- Fill in answers as best you can
Group Up and Check

- Find a few friends in your neighborhood
- Share, cooperate, improve
- Justify your answers
- CK will query people on their answers
- 10 minutes
Feedback

Keep your own notes / quizzes
Participation sheet, 3 questions

(1) Did this activity work for you?
  ▶ Yes, gave me flavor for doing analysis, overview of theories
  ▶ No, structured lecture or alternative would be more useful

(2) What was most confusing about ethical theories?
  ▶ 1-2 sentences

(3) Which theory of the 4 resonates most with you?
  ▶ 1-2 sentences
Another Scenario

Dee Lemma is a computer science student at GMU who does not have enough money to make her next tuition payment. This endangers her chances of completing her degree. While looking for ways to make additional money, she finds an ad online in which an anonymous buyer will pay a programmer $404.50 to write a key logger. Dee is a good programmer and is confident she can write the program. She is familiar with how key loggers are typically used but decides to contact the anonymous buyer to take the job anyway. After several days of work, she delivers the program and receives her compensation. Dee is able to make her tuition payment with the money and enroll for the next semester of classes.

Analyses

Act Utilitarian, Rule Utilitarian, Kantian, Social Contract Theory
Analyze

**Always**: identify who is involved, both directly and indirectly, and what they have at stake.

- **Act Utilitarianism**
  - Who stands to gain and lose happiness and by how much?
- **Rule Utilitarianism**
  - If it were a rule (everyone acted this way), what is the net change in happiness?
- **Kantianism and the Categorial Imperative**
  - If it were a rule...
  - (First Formulation) Would it lead to a contradiction?
  - (Second Formulation) Would people be used as means to an end? Does the actor have good intentions towards all stakeholders?
- **Social Contract Theory**
  - If it were a rule, would rational people agree to it for mutual benefit and preservation of rights?
Act Utilitarianism

Does the action increase total happiness?

- Pick a unit to measure happiness ($, hours, lives, etc.)
- Identify stakeholders
- How much happiness does each gain or lose by the action?

- Act Increases Happiness $\rightarrow$ Moral Action
- Act Decreases Happiness $\rightarrow$ Immoral Action

Jeremy Bentham
Rule Utilitarianism

Does everyone following the moral rule increase happiness?

- Generalize the action to a rule: specify the rule
- Pick a unit to measure happiness ($, hours, lives, etc.)
- Identify stakeholders
- Calculate total gain and loss of happiness
- Rule Increases Happiness → Moral Action
- Rule Decreases Happiness → Immoral Action
Kantianism

The Categorical Imperative

Form 1  The rule does not create a contradiction.

Form 2  People are ends, not means.

Immanuel Kant
### Form 2 Arguments

People are ends, not means
- Identify the stakeholders
- Does the moral actor use a stakeholder as a means to achieve an end?
- Does the moral actor have **bad intentions** towards the target of their actions?
  - Yes $\rightarrow$ Immoral Action
  - No $\rightarrow$ Moral Action

### Form 1 Arguments

#### Noncontradiction
- Generalize behavior to a rule: specify the rule
- Assume
  - Everyone follows the rule
  - Everyone has been following the rule for years before the scenario
- Would the moral actor be able to act in the same way under these circumstances?
  - Yes $\rightarrow$ Moral action
  - No $\rightarrow$ Immoral action
Social Contract Theory

Thomas Hobbes

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Mutual benefit and rights

- Generalize the action to a rule: specify the rule
- Lower the veil of ignorance: race, religion, age, wealth, location determined randomly after a "vote"
- Would society accept the rule for mutual benefit?
- Would the rule preserve rights society wants for its members?
- Yes → Moral action
- No → Immoral action
Intentions and Consequences

Utilitarianism: Consequentialist

There is no such thing as any sort of motive that is in itself a bad one. If motives are good or bad, it is only on account of their effects.
- Jeremy Bentham

Kantianism: Intentions Matter

- Good will is central
- Doing the "right" thing for the wrong reason is unethical
SCT isn’t Always "Fair"

Rawls’ Theory of Justice: Rules don’t need to be fair

- Inequality in rules is acceptable if vulnerable segments of society benefit
- Progressive taxes
- Income-based scholarships
- Food stamps
- Affirmative action

John Rawls
Ethical Arg Decision Tree (augmented from Quinn, Ch 2)

What makes an action morally right?

- Act Utilitarianism
  - It results in an increase in the total good of the affected parties.

What makes a moral rule correct?

- Kantianism, Form 1
  - We can imagine everyone following this rule all the time without producing a logical contradiction that undermines the rule.

- Virtue Ethics
  - It is consistent with the actions of a virtuous person.

- Kantianism, Form 2
  - No moral agent is used as a means to an end.

- Rule Utilitarianism
  - The effect of everyone following this rule all the time would be the greatest increase in the total good.

- Social Contract Theory
  - Rational people would collectively accept it as binding because of the resulting benefits to the community.
For Next Week

- Quinn 9.1-2, 9.5-6, Skim 9.3-4
- Integrity statement, CS Honor Code
- Quinn: Appendix A