ETHICAL EXPLORATIONS: MORAL DILEMMAS IN A UNIVERSE OF POSSIBILITIES

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Thoughtful Noodle Books
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to “Ethical Explorations: Moral Dilemmas in a Universe of Possibilities”. You are about to embark on an engaging journey through the broad and diverse landscape of ethical philosophy. This is not merely a textbook; it’s an interactive guide designed to expand your understanding of ethics and stimulate your critical thinking skills.

Ethics, often considered as a subfield of philosophy, serves as a guiding compass for human conduct. It explores the intricacies of moral decision-making and poses questions about right and wrong, justice and injustice, virtue and vice. This book will provide you with a detailed exploration of these questions, offering a comprehensive overview of the core theories and principles that have shaped ethical thought.

The structure of the book is designed to progressively deepen your understanding of the subject. Each chapter introduces a unique branch of ethical philosophy, beginning with the foundational ideas of Plato’s Cave and gradually transitioning into more complex theories, such as utilitarianism, deontological ethics, virtue ethics, and social contract theory. The discussion then expands to more recent theories like Marxism, Nietzsche’s perspectivism, and the ethics of Simone de Beauvoir, among others.

You will also find that this book actively engages with contemporary issues and debates, drawing out the relevance of ancient wisdom to our modern world. There are dedicated sections on environmental ethics, bioethics, and the implications of race and racism, which provide valuable insights into some of the most pressing ethical challenges of our time.

Every chapter features an engaging narrative story that illustrates the theoretical principles in a relatable and accessible way. These narratives are complemented by comprehensive “Big Ideas” sections, which further detail the concepts presented in the story. Each chapter concludes with a set of discussion questions designed to encourage critical reflection and a glossary to reinforce your understanding of key terms and concepts.

Finally, as an open access (CC-BY) textbook, this resource is available to everyone. It democratizes the study of moral philosophy, making the subject accessible to all, regardless of their background or rsources.

I encourage you to approach this book with an open mind and a readiness to engage with the ethical complexities it presents. Use it not just to gain knowledge, but also as a tool to sharpen your ability to think critically about moral dilemmas in our dynamic, diverse universe of possibilities.

Finally, I welcome feedback or comments. Just shoot me an e-mail at brendapshea@gmail.com.

Brendan Shea

Overview

To make our explorations manageable and memorable, the book is divided into twelve distinctive chapters. Each one takes on a particular field of ethical thought, from the ancient to the modern, the Western to the non-Western, and everything in between.

Chapter 1 sets the stage, introducing you to the grand theater of ethics through the lens of Plato's Cave. A tale that grapples with our perception of reality and encourages us to step out of the shadows of ignorance into the sunlight of knowledge. A fitting start, I'd say, to our ethical explorations.

In Chapter 2, we joust with Utilitarianism, a school of thought that argues for the greatest good for the greatest number. We'll leap into the world of princesses and plumbers, embarking on a quest to understand the balance between pleasure and pain.

Chapter 3 invites us to the universe of Deontological Ethics, where the emphasis is on duty, rules, and moral obligations. Here, through the story of a golem, we'll discover the principles that guide our actions, regardless of the consequences.

Virtue Ethics is our focus in Chapter 4, where the character becomes king. We'll trek through various landscapes—from Aristotle's Greece to Confucius's China—to grasp the essential role of personal virtue in ethical decisions.

Chapter 5 sees us journey to the cosmos, where we unravel the mysteries of Natural Law Theory. Together, we'll encounter medieval scholars, doctrines of effects, and theories of war.

In Chapter 6, we join hands to form a Social Contract, as we delve into the principles that bind societies and dictate justice. Here, we'll navigate everything from the state of nature to debates in political philosophy.

We revolutionize our understanding of ethics in Chapter 7, as we explore Marxism. This journey takes us from capitalist critiques to debates on healthcare reform, through the lens of a revolutionary prelude.

Chapter 8 sees us questioning, rebelling, and breaking moral molds with Nietzsche. With a digital Dionysus as our guide, we'll traverse the challenging terrain of value creation and moral perspectives.

In Chapter 9, we follow Simone De Beauvoir's path, exploring the entanglements of feminism, existentialism, and ambiguity, all through the transformation of a teenage werewolf.

Chapter 10 beckons us into the thought-provoking world of race and racism, guided by luminaries like Du Bois, King, and Appiah. We'll find ourselves questioning established norms, sparking dialogues about civil disobedience and the intersections of race and class.

Environmental Ethics takes center stage in Chapter 11, where we'll confront pressing ecological concerns and explore varied perspectives on the human-nature relationship, all through the haunting melody of a silent singer.

Finally, in Chapter 12, we venture into the cutting-edge world of Bioethics, which spans from ancient oaths to modern dilemmas of genetic engineering and public health ethics, with an undying vampire doctor as our guide.

About the Book

Over the years, I've had the privilege of teaching ethics at the University of Illinois, Winona State University, and Rochester Community and Technical College. I've learned as much from my students as

they have from me, and these accumulated insights, anecdotes, and perspectives have all contributed to the creation of "Ethical Explorations".

My passion for philosophy extends well beyond the classroom walls. It spills over into my other love: the richly imaginative realms of science fiction and fantasy. I've spent many hours (more than I care to admit, in fact) analysing and writing about philosophical themes hidden within the narratives of book such as "Twilight", "Alice in Wonderland", "Jurassic Park", "The Princess Bride", and more. These stories, and the ethical conundrums they raise, inspired the unique narrative approach we're taking in this book.

Now, about the nuts and bolts of how this book came together. I've spent more than two decades scribbling lecture notes, delivering presentations, and engaging in spirited debates. More recently, by taking advantage of new tools such as GPT-4 and Google Bard to do much of the work traditionally done by publishing companies (I used to be an editor at one, long ago), I've been able to transform these extensive lecture notes into the textbook you see here. I hope you enjoy it, and welcome any feedback you have!

Ethical Explorations is open-access, meaning it's available for free, for you, your friends, your classmates, and indeed anyone curious about ethics. However, please remember that it is not for commercial use. I strongly believe in the democratization of knowledge, and this is my small contribution towards that ideal.

To support your learning journey, I've also prepared a series of video lectures (at https://tinyurl.com/EthicalExplorations) to accompany each chapter. These videos will act as your personal seminar, allowing you to delve deeper into the concepts at your own pace. To consolidate your understanding, a Quizlet study deck is also available to test your knowledge and keep the concepts fresh in your mind.

As an additional bonus, you'll find an appendix detailing how this book was authored using AI tools. Whether you're an aspiring educator, an AI enthusiast, or a student curious about the process, this guide will provide a glimpse into the fascinating world of AI-assisted writing.

"Ethical Explorations" is for everyone and anyone interested in exploring the world of ethics. It doesn't matter if you're a seasoned scholar, a freshman in college, or someone who stumbled upon this subject during a late-night internet browse. I've tried to make the material engaging, accessible, and even fun. So, wherever you are in your philosophical journey, I invite you to join me in this exploration. Let's dive in!

About the Author

Brendan Shea is Instructor of philosophy and computer science at Rochester Community and Technical College in Minnesota. He holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as well as a graduate certificate in instructional design. In addition, Brendan has a graduate certificate in computer programming from Harvard University Extension and a bachelor's degree in English from Winona State University.

Brendan's research and teaching expertise is in the areas of logic, philosophy of science, and applied ethics, with a particular focus on bioethics and the ethics of technology. He also has competence in the areas of history of science and technology, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, and data science.

Throughout his career, Brendan has taught a wide range of courses in philosophy, including bioethics, logic, ethics, philosophy of religion, and introductory philosophy, as well as courses in

computer science, humanities, and non-credit professional development. He has received consistently high ratings on student evaluations, and was named Outstanding Educator of the Year at RCTC in 2017-2018. Brendan has also served on various committees at the college, including the Outstanding Educator Selection Committee, the Academic Affairs and Standards Council, and the Faculty Instructional Development Grant Committee.

In addition to his teaching and administrative responsibilities, Brendan has published numerous articles in philosophy journals and presented at conferences. He serves a Resident Fellow at the Minnesota Center for Philosophy of Science and as a public member of the Institutional Biosafety Committee at Mayo Clinic-Rochester. Brendan has held leadership roles in professional organizations, including serving as vice president and president of the Minnesota Philosophical Society.

About Thoughtful Noodle Books

Thoughtful Noodle Books is a (fictional) imprint for (real!) books written by Brendan Shea. Here at Thoughtful Noodle Books, our mission is to make philosophy and computer science textbooks accessible to everyone. All of our works are available under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license, which means that you can use, modify, and share them for any purpose. I (Brendan) invite you to use and adapt this textbook however you see fit.

More generally, I believe that open-access works have several advantages over traditional textbooks. The most obvious benefit is that they are free, which helps to reduce the cost of education. Additionally, open-access works are more easily adapted and updated, so that instructors can quickly incorporate new research and technologies into their courses. Finally, open-access works are more transparent and collaborative, which encourages student engagement and allows for more diverse perspectives.

https://brendanpshea.github.io/thoughtful_noodle/

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)

2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)

3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)

4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)

5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

1.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING ETHICS—OUT OF PLATO'S CAVE

> Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils — no, nor the human race, as I believe — and then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day. (Plato, The Republic Book 8)

In this chapter, you'll begin your journey into the realm of ethical thought, setting off from a metaphorical origin that has shaped Western philosophy for centuries: Plato's Cave. This iconic allegory serves as a launchpad to delve into ethical complexities and different perspectives on morality and human behavior.

First, you will examine three distinct variations of the cave story. Each of these variations not only explores different facets of the human condition but also challenges your preconceived notions about what is real, what is illusion, and how these perceptions influence our actions and decisions. You'll engage with thought-provoking questions accompanying each variation to spur critical thinking and encourage deeper introspection.

Following these variations, you'll dive into the 'Big Ideas' section, starting with a closer look at Plato's Cave itself. This profound allegory opens doors to metaphysical and epistemological considerations which, in turn, form a strong foundation for our exploration of ethics. Subsequently, the concept of ethics will be unpacked in greater detail. You will grapple with intriguing questions about moral values, societal norms, and the intricate relationship between ethics and human nature.

To further deepen your understanding, we'll delve into the realm of metaethics, investigating how these grand theories of good and evil hold up within the confines of the cave. This will help illuminate the complexities of ethical thinking and its practical implications.

We will then bring your attention to the challenge to ethics posed by the theory of "egoism", as seen through the lens of another of Plato's allegories – the Ring of Gyges. This tale provides a rich context for discussing self-interest, power, and moral responsibility, setting the stage for the ethical explorations that lie ahead.

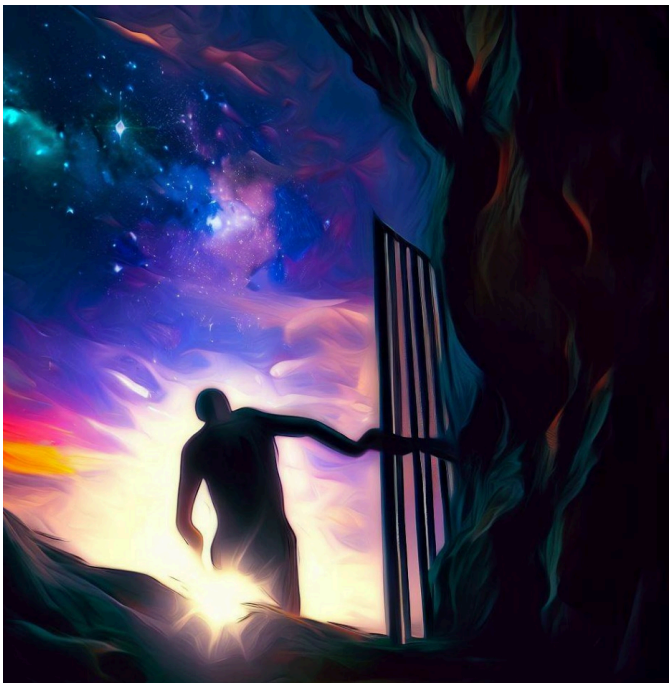
Finally, you will find a set of discussion questions designed to further stimulate critical thinking and

promote thoughtful discourse. A glossary at the end of the chapter will serve as a helpful reference point to clarify any unfamiliar terms and concepts.

This chapter is not merely an introduction to the subject of ethics, but a thought-provoking journey that will challenge you to question, analyze, and understand the moral landscape of human existence. As we venture together from the darkness of Plato's Cave towards the light of ethical knowledge, remember: philosophy, in essence, is not just about finding answers, but about learning to ask the right questions.

Story: Three Variations on the Cave

Variation 1: The Subterranean Spectacle



In a cavernous, subterranean world, hewn out of the very bones of the earth, a peculiar society of prisoners dwells, chained since birth. The dank air clings to their skin, a shroud of cold dampness, the tastes of iron and mildew mingling on their parched lips. Their lives are an eternal twilight, a monotonous existence limited to the narrow stretch of wall that is their only vista. They are prisoners of the cave, and within these shadowy confines, they have never known the warmth of the sun or the caress of a breeze. They neither smile nor cry; their primary emotion is one your or I might recognized as bored indifference. If asked, they would declare themselves blissful.

The cave, a womb-like abyss, swallows all light and sound, save for the flickering dance of shadows that pirouette across the wall in front of the prisoners. These distorted silhouettes, the sole actors in a macabre theatre, are cast by the objects held aloft behind the prisoners, paraded by unseen hands before the baleful glare of a fire. The shadows' sources is a fire that burns in the recesses of the cave behind the prisoner's chained bodies, its heat but a dim, forgotten memory to the prisoners as they watch the somber pantomime unfold.

These poor souls, bound in ignorance, believe the shadows to be the only reality. They are unable to conceive of the objects that the shadows imitate, or the flickering fire which gives them life. Their minds, like dried leaves, crumble and crack at the thought of a world beyond their wall of darkness. They spend their days making predictions as to the movements of the shadows, occasionally erupting in anger at one another.

One day, somehow, a captive is freed, his chains falling away like the skin of a snake. Blinking against the sting of tears, he stumbles towards the fire, his gaze drawn to the truth he has never known. As his eyes slowly adjust, the murky world of shadows is replaced by the vibrant, tangible forms of the objects illuminated by the fire. He sees a puppet of a woman, man, child, a tree, the sun. He notices the way

the movements and contortions of the puppets are echoed in the movements of the shadows that still entrance the other prisoners.

A strange force urges him upwards, towards the mouth of the cave, each step a painful enlightenment, a revelation of color and life. A guttural sob escapes him as he beholds the night sky outside the cave, with its stars and wondering planets. Clouds drift by, and are reflected in a nearby stream. It is this stream he for the first time sees his naked body. It is here, on the precipice between darkness and light, that he comes to understand the emptiness of his former existence.

Dawn arrives and usher in a realm of staggering beauty. The world unfolds like the petals of a flower, releasing a perfume of vibrant colors and textures. The prisoner, dazzled by this newfound landscape, winces as his eyes protest against the light's assault, the sun's fierce radiance clawing at his retinas. He stumbles among the sunlit glades, his vision blurring and swimming, as he slowly acclimatizes to the piercing brilliance of the world above.

The sun, a cosmic enigma, hovers like a celestial beacon, granting everything below its light and illumination. It is an ethereal fire, a molten orb of gold and orange, suspended in the heavens by some unseen force. He thinks that it is something like the gods he once worshipped in the cave, but this even this seems somehow inadequate. Its rays touch the world in a loving caress, a divine benediction which illuminates the depths of the earth and sets the skies ablaze with a symphony of colors. He is overwhelmed by the sun's gifts—the purple violent, the chirping cicada, the wind that blows from cool to hot.

As the prisoner's eyes adjust to the light, he is struck by the weight of his responsibility. He gazes down at the cave below, a world of shadow and deception, and his heart constricts with the knowledge of the souls who still dwell within, condemned to a life of ignorance. He knows that he must return to the darkness, to guide his fellow prisoners towards the light, even if it means descending into the maw of the abyss from which he has just emerged.

As the prisoner considers his descent further, a cold fear spreads through his body. He knows that his newfound wisdom will be met with scorn and disbelief. The prisoners of the cave, ensnared by the traps of their own ignorance, will not tolerate any challenge to their reality. The darkness that has shaped their live will find a way to defend itself against the intrusion of light, and the prisoner-turned-guide may find himself the target of their wrath. He can even now imagine what they might say:

- "Listen, pal, we've got a good thing going here in this cave. We're familiar with this place, and it suits us just fine. Venturing into the unknown puts everything we've built for ourselves at risk. It's all about looking out for number one, right? What's the point of leaving this cave and gambling with our lives just because somebody else thinks it's a grand idea? We've got to put our own interests first, and right now, that means staying put. We know how to deal with people like you."
- "You dare to question our lifestyle in this cave? My dear, you must understand that different cultures have their own rules and practices. Even if our ways are a bit peculiar and involve, say, chopping off a few heads now and then, you have no right to impose your narrow-minded views on us. Respect our choice to remain in the cave, or you might just lose your own head!"
- "Man, this cave is, like, our own personal world, you know? We've got our own truths and experiences happening right here. Our individual perceptions and feelings define our reality.

Why should we leave just because someone else has a different idea about what's real? Life's a trip, man, and we're just enjoying the ride in our own way. Don't mess with me, man, or I'll mess back."

- "The book of Stalagtita, goddess of the caves, who we've worshipped for generations, clearly states that all this talk of "suns" and "other worlds" is heresy. Are you saying that you are wiser than your ancestors? That you are wiser than the Goddess herself?"

Yet, the call of duty is relentless, and the prisoner steels himself for the journey back into the shadows. He descends into the cave, a guardian of truth, a flicker of light in the encroaching darkness. With every step, he knows that he risks his own safety, but it is a price he is willing to pay for the chance to deliver his brethren from the chains that bind them. In the face of danger and hostility, he holds fast to his purpose, guided by the mysterious sun, and the hope that one day, the others too will embrace the beauty of the world above.'

Questions

- What factors contribute to the prisoners' reluctance to accept the truth about the shadows and the world outside the cave?
- How might the prisoner-turned-guide approach the task of convincing his fellow prisoners about the reality of the world above? What strategies might he employ?
- What are the implications of the story for the pursuit of knowledge and the role of education in society?

Variation 2: The Shattered Mirage

Amidst the tumultuous battlefield, the din of clashing steel and guttural cries of pain filled the air. Blood-soaked sand churned beneath the feet of warring factions, staining the once pristine shores of Tharsis crimson. The sun hung low in the sky, casting ominous shadows that danced like demons in the frenzy of combat.

Diotima, the enigmatic priestess of the Temple of Pythia, stood at the forefront of the fray. Her black robes billowed around her like the wings of a vengeful harpy, and her silver hair whipped about in the wind, a defiant banner against the backdrop of chaos. In her hand, an ethereal sword shimmered with a cold, insatiable hunger, eager to claim the souls of the fallen.

As she sliced through the spectral warriors, their obsidian armor shattering like brittle glass, a sudden dissonance cut through the carnage. It was a metallic voice, alien and familiar all at once, and it reverberated within her skull: "Player 3 has entered the game."

The world around Diotima seemed to fracture, the battlefield splintering into a kaleidoscope of distorted images. The spectral warriors faltered, their once menacing forms reduced to flickering shadows, their eyes devoid of malice, replaced by an eerie, unyielding glow.

Her heart pounding, Diotima looked down at the sword in her grasp, its once radiant edge now sputtering with uncertain light. The fabric of her reality unraveled before her eyes, revealing a cold, digital truth lurking beneath the surface.

As if responding to her newfound awareness, the heavens above contorted, the sun stuttering like a faulty lantern, its rays casting an eerie, pixelated glow upon the fractured world. The once melodious

songs of the sea transformed into a cacophony of discordant bleeps and bloops, while the very air around her seemed to hum with an unnatural energy.

The spectral warriors hesitated, their ghostly visages flickering with uncertainty. In that moment, the battlefield ceased to exist, replaced by an expanse of darkness that threatened to swallow Diotima whole.

Her breath came in ragged gasps as she struggled to comprehend the revelation. She was no longer a priestess of Pythia, but a pawn in a game of violence and chaos. The illusion of her life in Tharsis had been shattered, leaving her to confront the cold, unforgiving truth.

Gripping her faltering sword, Diotima steeled her resolve, the weight of her newfound knowledge heavy upon her shoulders. If she was to be a pawn, she would be a pawn with purpose, fighting to understand the nature of her world and the sinister forces that controlled it. And perhaps, in time, she would find a way to break free from the confines of this digital prison.

Diotima, the once revered priestess of Pythia, found herself traversing the bustling Agora of Tharsis, her heart heavy with the burden of knowledge. The once familiar faces and voices of the marketplace now seemed distant and hollow, mere echoes of a life she had known. Driven by a sense of duty, she sought to help others see the truth that had been revealed to her.

She soon encountered a group of powerful politicians and business leaders led by a man named Hieronymus, who argued that the customs and traditions of their society were essential to maintaining order and unity. Slavery, he insisted, had been a part of their civilization for centuries, and the roles of women and men had been established long ago by their ancestors. Diotima, driven by her unwavering conviction in the pursuit of truth, approached Hieronymus and his followers with a thought-provoking question. “If our reality is a reflection of our collective understanding, is it not possible that the institutions we have built, such as slavery and the subjection of women, are themselves products of deception and manipulation? There has to be some ultimate truth below all of this, right?”

Hieronymus furrowed his brow, pondering Diotima’s question before responding. “Each society has its own values and norms, and we must respect those even if they differ from our own. Our ancestors have built this world upon these foundations, and we must honor their wisdom.”

“But,” Diotima countered, “does not the idea of cultural relativism suggest that we should always be open to questioning and reevaluating our beliefs? How can we grow as a society if we continue to cling to practices that perpetuate suffering and inequality?”

The crowd around Hieronymus murmured uneasily, but he remained steadfast. “Change cannot be forced upon a society; it must come from within, as our collective understanding evolves. Your attempts to sow dissent are misguided, and will only serve to weaken the fabric of our world.”

Diotima, undeterred by the opposition she had faced, continued her search for those willing to challenge the status quo. Her path led her to a group of egotistical warriors known as the Tharsian Champions. These fearsome fighters reveled in their strength and skill, wielding their power over others with ruthless glee. Their leader, a man named Leonidas, was particularly notorious for his merciless nature and insatiable thirst for victory.

As Diotima approached the group, she observed their violent training exercises, her heart heavy with the knowledge that their actions only served to reinforce the cycle of suffering and oppression that plagued their world. Determined to pierce the veil of their self-centered worldview, she posed a question that cut to the heart of their motivations.

“Tell me, Champions of Tharsis, do you not feel that your skills and strength could be used to protect

the weak, rather than to dominate and subjugate them? Is there not a nobler purpose to which you could devote your lives?"

Leonidas, his scarred face twisted into a cruel smile, responded with disdain. "Our might is our birthright, priestess. We have earned our place at the top of the hierarchy through blood and sweat, and we have no desire to squander it on those who cannot fend for themselves. It is the natural order of things."

"But," Diotima persisted, "does your prowess not come with a responsibility to ensure that your power is wielded justly? Can you truly find satisfaction in a life built upon the suffering of others?"

The warriors exchanged glances, their expressions a mixture of amusement and irritation. Leonidas, however, remained unfazed by Diotima's challenge. "You may cloak your words in the guise of wisdom, priestess, but you cannot change the fact that we are the masters of our own destinies. We have chosen our path, and we will not be swayed by your idealistic musings."

Diotima's journey took her next to a group of religious zealots known as the Disciples of Helios. They fervently believed in the teachings of their deity and sought to spread their faith through intimidation and coercion. Their inquisition-like behavior, led by a fanatic named Diodorus, struck fear into the hearts of those who dared to question their dogma.

As Diotima approached the Disciples of Helios, she witnessed their relentless persecution of a poor philosopher who dared to entertain the notion of a world without gods. The flames of their fanaticism danced in their eyes as they prepared to exact their punishment.

Diotima stepped forward, her voice calm yet resolute. "Disciples of Helios, I ask you to consider a question that has long troubled the wisest among us: Is something good because the gods command it, or do the gods command it because it is good?"

The question, known as the Euthyphro problem, gave Diodorus and his followers pause, their fervor momentarily dampened by the weight of her inquiry. Diodorus furrowed his brow before responding, "Our god Helios is the very embodiment of goodness. His commandments are infallible, and to question them is to defy the divine order."

Diotima pressed on, unwilling to back down. "But if the gods command that which is good, how can we, as mere mortals, discern the true nature of goodness? How can we be certain that our understanding of their will is not clouded by our own desires and prejudices?"

The Disciples of Helios bristled at her challenge, their anger rekindled. Diodorus, his voice trembling with rage, declared, "Your words are blasphemy, and you seek only to sow doubt among the faithful. The gods' will is not for us to question. We are their instruments, and we shall carry out their divine plan without hesitation."

Disillusioned, Diotima retreated from the Agora, her voice silenced by the cacophony of conflicting beliefs. Her soul ached with the weight of the truth she carried , and she wondered if there was anyone who could see past the veil that shrouded their existence. As she wandered the streets of Tharsis, the digital shadows lurking beneath the surface of her world whispered a promise: the truth would not be hidden forever.

Her relentless questioning and challenge of the status quo, however, did not go unnoticed. The religious zealots, subjectivists, egoists, and cultural relativists, despite their differing beliefs, found common ground in their resentment toward Diotima. They conspired together, weaving a web of lies and accusations, painting her as a dangerous heretic intent on undermining the very foundations of their society.

As their rage festered, they demanded retribution, seeking to silence Diotima's voice once and for

all. The clamor of their cries reached the unseen human programmers who controlled the digital world, and they decided to intervene.

With a mere flicker of code, Diotima's existence was erased. The world around her dissolved into a sea of darkness, her memories and experiences fading like wisps of smoke on the wind. As the void consumed her, a single thought resonated within her fading consciousness: she regretted nothing.

For in her quest to reveal the truth, Diotima had planted the seeds of doubt within the minds of those she encountered. Though they had sought to destroy her, the paradoxes she had exposed could not be so easily dismissed. And as the memory of her defiance echoed through the digital realm, her spirit lived on, a spark of hope in a world of deception.

Questions

- How does Diotima's discovery of her true nature as a digital avatar affect her perception of herself and her actions? Compare her experience to that of the prisoners in the cave scenario.
- How does Diotima's experience of rejection and resistance from her fellow inhabitants mirror the reaction of the cave prisoners to the freed captive's revelations? What factors contribute to their reluctance to accept new ideas?
- What is the significance of Diotima's final moments in the face of annihilation, and how does her acceptance of her fate reflect her growth and understanding of her own agency and moral compass?

Variation 3: Shadows of Control

Introducing "The Cave," a revolutionary and diabolical app designed to digitally entrap users, reshape their reality, and influence their views. Inspired by Plato's allegory of the cave, our app harnesses the latest advancements in AI, neuroscience, and philosophy to create an all-encompassing digital ecosystem, so powerful that it can effectively imprison the minds of its users.

Why Early Attempts Failed

Early Radio/Movies: In the early days of mass media, influential figures like Father Coughlin and Hitler's propaganda machine tapped into the power of radio and cinema to sway public opinion. These technologies had a broad reach, but their effectiveness was limited by several factors:

- Lack of Personalization: Early radio and movies catered to a mass audience, which meant that the content was generalized and not tailored to specific individuals. As a result, the message's impact was diluted and did not resonate with each listener or viewer on a personal level.
- Limited Ubiquity: While radio and cinema were popular mediums, they were not as pervasive as today's technology. People had to tune in or attend screenings at specific times, which limited their exposure to the manipulative content.
- Absence of Immersive Experiences: Radio and movies, being mostly auditory and visual, did not offer the level of immersion that modern technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality provide. This limited their ability to engage users and shape their views.

TV Advertising: The advent of television advertising in the 1950s marked a significant leap in the ability to influence public opinion. However, TV advertising had its limitations:

- One-way Communication: Television advertising allowed for a more engaging and persuasive approach but remained a one-way communication channel. Viewers were passive recipients of information, with no opportunity to interact, respond, or provide feedback.
- Limited Targeting: Early TV ads were broadcast to a wide audience, with little to no targeting based on demographics or personal interests. This made it difficult to create truly impactful messages. Even with modern YouTube advertising and advanced targeting capabilities, the level of personalization still falls short of what is needed to capture users' psyche.

Existing Social Media Apps: Platforms like Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram have exponentially increased screen time and enabled the rapid spread of information (or misinformation). Despite their potential for manipulation, they remain a stepping stone for The Cave:

- Incomplete Addiction: While social media apps are designed to be addictive, they often fail to deliver a wholly satisfying experience. Users are left craving more, which creates an opportunity for a more immersive and captivating platform like The Cave to take hold.
- Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles: Social media algorithms curate content based on users' preferences, leading to echo chambers and filter bubbles. While this reinforces existing beliefs, it does not allow for the level of control and direction needed to shape users' views effectively.
- Mental Health Consequences: Social media platforms have been linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. These negative effects, while unintended, have highlighted the need for a more powerful tool that can not only captivate users but also mold their thoughts and beliefs more effectively.

These early attempts, while significant in their own right, lacked the sophistication, personalization, and control that The Cave offers. Our app aims to fill these gaps and create a digital experience that not only captures users but also shapes their reality according to the whims of those in power.

Our Vision

The Cave goes beyond existing technology, employing cutting-edge sci-fi innovations to ensure users never escape our digital grip:

- Neural Interfaces: Seamless integration with users' brains through non-invasive neural interfaces, allowing for real-time data collection, emotion manipulation, and thought control.
- AI-generated Content: Hyper-personalized content, tailored to individual biases and desires, delivered through immersive experiences like virtual reality and augmented reality, ensuring users are constantly engaged and influenced.
- Algorithmic Reality: Advanced AI algorithms that analyze and shape the user's environment, both digital and physical, to maintain control over their perception of reality.
- Social Incentives: Gamification of social interactions, with rewards and punishments

designed to enforce conformity and discourage dissent, fostering a digital society driven by our intended narrative.

Our Audience

Our primary target audience for The Cave encompasses dictators, authoritarian regimes, and other power-hungry entities seeking an unparalleled level of control over their population. The Cave offers distinct advantages that make it an irresistible proposition for those who desire ultimate control:

- Population Surveillance: The Cave enables real-time monitoring of citizens' thoughts, emotions, and actions, providing an invaluable resource for identifying potential dissidents and nipping resistance in the bud. For example, the app could be used to detect early signs of protest organization, allowing the regime to intervene before the situation escalates.
- Propaganda Machine: The app allows for the dissemination of tailored propaganda, ensuring that each individual receives the exact message needed to maintain loyalty and obedience. This could include the glorification of the regime and its leader, discrediting opposition, and spreading disinformation to sow confusion and mistrust among potential dissidents.
- Social Engineering: The Cave can be used to shape the social fabric of a society by promoting or suppressing specific values, beliefs, and behaviors. For instance, it could be employed to cultivate a sense of nationalism and loyalty to the regime or to suppress the spread of democratic ideals and human rights.
- Psychological Warfare: The app is capable of exploiting psychological vulnerabilities to break the spirit of those who might oppose the regime. This could involve inducing feelings of hopelessness and despair, fostering paranoia and mistrust among citizens, or manipulating emotions to provoke conflict between different social groups.

The Cave's unique features make it the ultimate weapon in the age of information warfare, providing those in power with an unprecedented level of control over their citizens. By partnering with us, investors will have the opportunity to participate in a sinister yet lucrative journey, revolutionizing the digital landscape and redefining the boundaries of influence. Together, we will change the world – one mind at a time.

Questions

- How does the concept of The Cave app draw from Plato's allegory of the cave, and in what ways does it differ from the original philosophical concept? Consider the intentions and outcomes of each.
- Compare and contrast the early attempts at mass manipulation through radio, movies, TV advertising, and existing social media apps with The Cave. What makes The Cave more powerful and potentially dangerous?
- In light of the previous two scenarios, discuss the potential dangers of allowing an app like The Cave to gain widespread adoption. How might the lessons learned from those scenarios help society confront and counteract the influence of an app like The Cave?

Big Ideas: Plato's Cave

Plato (c. 428-348 BCE): Plato was an ancient Greek philosopher and a student of **Socrates,** both of whom played foundational roles in the development of Western philosophy. His writings, primarily in the form of dialogues, covered a broad range of philosophical topics, including metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and politics. As the founder of the Academy in Athens, Plato established a hub for philosophical and scientific learning that attracted students like Aristotle. In the three cave scenarios, Plato's ideas about the distinction between the world of appearances and the world of reality, the pursuit of truth, and the philosopher's responsibility to guide others towards enlightenment are central. The first scenario is directly related to Plato's Allegory of the Cave, while the second and third scenarios draw inspiration from Plato's ideas and apply them to modern technology and its potential to manipulate and control individuals' perceptions of reality. The scenarios emphasize the importance of philosophical inquiry, critical thinking, and questioning one's beliefs in order to achieve true knowledge.

Plato's dialogues on ethics include:

- *The Republic:* In this seminal work, Plato engages in a dialogue on the nature of justice, the ideal state, and the role of the philosopher-king. *The Republic* also contains the famous Allegory of the Cave, which demonstrates the importance of philosophical inquiry, critical thinking, and the pursuit of truth. It highlights the philosopher's responsibility to guide others towards enlightenment and the potential risks and challenges involved in this endeavor.
- *Gorgias:* This dialogue explores the nature of rhetoric, persuasion, and the relationship between power and morality. It examines the ethical implications of using persuasive techniques to manipulate others for personal gain and the importance of engaging in genuine, truth-seeking dialogue.
- *Meno:* In this dialogue, Socrates and Meno discuss the nature of virtue, whether it can be taught, and the role of knowledge and moral character in ethical decision-making. The Meno also introduces the concept of recollection, which asserts that all knowledge is latent within the soul and can be accessed through proper questioning and reflection.
- *Phaedo:* This dialogue focuses on the immortality of the soul and the nature of the afterlife. It delves into the ethics of suicide, the distinction between the physical and spiritual realms, and the idea that true philosophers should not fear death, as it represents a release from the material world and an opportunity to unite with eternal truth and beauty.
- *Euthyphro:* In this dialogue, Socrates and Euthyphro discuss the nature of piety and the relationship between divine commands and moral values. The dialogue examines the question of whether an action is morally good because the gods approve of it, or whether the gods approve of it because it is morally good, thus engaging with the concept of divine command theory.

The Cave Allegory: Presented by Plato in "The Republic," the Cave Allegory illustrates the divide between the world of appearances (the cave) and the world of reality (the sunlit world above). The prisoners in the cave represent individuals confined to a realm of shadows and illusions, unable

to perceive the true nature of reality. In all three cave scenarios, the concept of the cave is used to highlight the importance of questioning one's beliefs, embracing critical thinking, and seeking enlightenment. The first scenario is Plato's original allegory, while the second and third scenarios adapt the concept to explore modern issues such as the influence of technology and media on human perception. These scenarios emphasize the potential dangers of accepting illusions as reality and the need for individuals to actively pursue truth and enlightenment.

In the context of the Cave Allegory, the levels of the Divided Line can be understood as follows:

- **Imagination (Eikasia):** This level corresponds to the shadows on the cave wall, which represent the lowest level of knowledge. Here, individuals accept appearances as reality without questioning or critically examining their beliefs. Ethically, these individuals follow conventions or norms without understanding their underlying moral principles or implications.
- **Belief (Pistis):** At this level, individuals begin to recognize that the shadows and illusions in the cave are not representative of reality. This awareness sparks a belief in the existence of the actual objects that cast the shadows, but the individuals still lack a direct understanding of the true nature of reality and ethics.
- **Thought (Dianoia):** The process of escaping the cave symbolizes the transition from the visible world to the intelligible world. At this level, individuals embark on a journey of self-discovery, engaging in philosophical inquiry and critical thinking to gain a deeper understanding of the true nature of reality and ethics. This stage involves reasoning based on hypotheses and abstract concepts.
- **Understanding (Noesis):** Upon reaching the highest level of the Divided Line, individuals gain access to the realm of true knowledge, where they can perceive the world as it truly is, specifically through the understanding of the Platonic Forms. Ethically, this level represents the achievement of a more profound understanding of moral principles, values, and virtues.

Big Ideas: Ethics

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that grapples with questions of morality or what constitutes right and wrong. It strives to determine the most appropriate course of action and establish the principles that should govern human conduct. In the context of the cave scenarios, ethical dilemmas arise when individuals must decide whether to prioritize their own well-being or to help others achieve enlightenment. The freed prisoner in the first scenario faces the moral challenge of deciding whether to return to the cave and attempt to enlighten his fellow prisoners or remain in the sunlit world and enjoy his newfound knowledge. This ethical dilemma highlights the importance of considering the well-being of others and the potential consequences of one's actions, as well as the value of moral courage and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of a greater good. Similar ethical challenges can be found in the second and third scenarios, where individuals must confront the moral implications of living in a world dominated by technology and its potential to manipulate and control perceptions of reality.

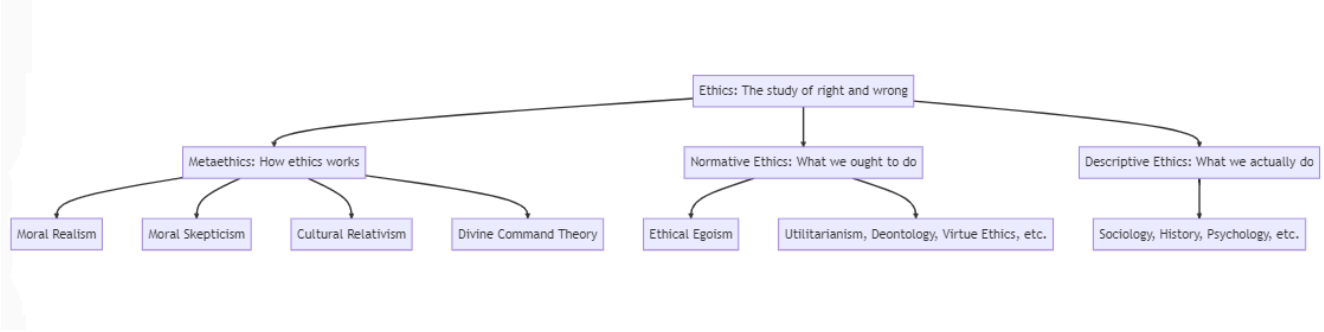
Major areas of ethics include normative ethics, descriptive ethics, and metaethics:

- **Normative Ethics:** This area of ethics focuses on determining how one ought to act, by

establishing general principles or rules that should guide moral behavior. It seeks to provide a systematic approach to ethical decision-making and serves as a foundation for moral theories such as consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Normative ethical theories are usually defined in contrast to **ethical egoism** (the ideas that people should always act in their own long-term self-interest, even if this ends up hurting others).

- **Descriptive Ethics**: Descriptive ethics deals with the study of people's actual beliefs and practices related to morality. It examines what people believe to be right or wrong, and how these beliefs vary across cultures, societies, and time periods. Descriptive ethics is an empirical discipline that uses tools from anthropology, psychology, and sociology to better understand moral behavior and values.
- **Metaethics:** Metaethics is concerned with the nature of moral judgments, the meaning of moral language, and the origins of ethical concepts. It investigates questions such as whether moral values are objective or subjective, the nature of moral facts, and the possibility of moral knowledge. Metaethical positions include moral realism, moral relativism, and moral skepticism, among others.

In the cave scenarios, ethical questions emerge across all three areas of ethics. Normative ethics is relevant as the freed prisoners grapple with the question of whether they have a moral duty to enlighten others. Descriptive ethics can be seen in the examination of the different beliefs and values held by the prisoners and those who have escaped the cave. Finally, metaethics comes into play as the scenarios prompt us to question the nature of moral truth and the foundations of ethical beliefs in a world where perceptions of reality can be easily manipulated. The cave scenarios serve as a reminder of the complexity and interconnectedness of ethical questions and the importance of engaging in ethical inquiry and reflection.



Big Ideas: Metaethics in the Cave

The three cave scenarios can be used to illustrate some main theories about metaethics and (normative) ethical theory.

Moral Realism (or "Platonism"): Moral realism is a metaethical position that posits the existence of objective moral facts, independent of individual beliefs or cultural norms. According to moral realism, moral statements like "murder is wrong" can be true or false, regardless of whether anyone believes them to be so. In the context of the cave scenarios, the moral realist stance can be seen as the recognition of objective truths about reality, as opposed to accepting the illusions and shadows of the cave as the only reality. The freed prisoner in the first scenario embodies moral realism by recognizing

the objective truth of the sunlit world outside the cave, while the other prisoners represent moral relativism by clinging to their beliefs about the shadows on the cave wall. In the second and third scenarios, moral realism is relevant in the struggle to discern truth and reality amidst the influence of technology and media, which often present subjective or distorted perspectives on morality and ethics. By seeking truth and enlightenment beyond the cave, individuals can move closer to a moral realist understanding of the world.

Moral Skepticism: Moral skepticism is a metaethical position that casts doubt on the existence of objective moral values or principles. It questions the possibility of having certain knowledge about what is morally right or wrong. In the first scenario, the prisoners' initial acceptance of the shadows as reality and their reluctance to believe the freed prisoner's account of the sunlit world can be seen as a form of moral skepticism. Similarly, in the second scenario, Diotima's initial inability to determine a moral compass in her violent existence and the difficulty she faces in convincing others to abandon their violent ways illustrate moral skepticism. In both scenarios, the characters' journeys towards finding moral principles demonstrate that skepticism can be a starting point for a deeper exploration of ethics.

Cultural Relativism: Cultural relativism is a metaethical theory that posits that moral values and principles are culturally determined and can only be understood within their specific cultural context. In the first scenario, the cave prisoners' adherence to the reality of the shadows represents a form of cultural relativism, as their understanding of morality and reality is shaped by their limited environment. In the second scenario, the inhabitants of the video game world are bound by a culture of violence, and they dismiss Diotima's newfound wisdom as delusions. Finally, in the third scenario, the app creators seem to take it for granted that those in power in a society have the "right" to decide what is good or bad. The resistance to alternative perspectives on reality and morality can be seen as examples of cultural relativism.

Divine Command Theory. Divine command theory is an metaethical framework that posits that moral values and duties are determined by the commands of a divine being. In the first scenario, the creator of the cave and the puppeteers who cast the shadows can be seen as god-like figures who control the prisoners' perception of reality. The freed prisoner's defiance of the established order by seeking the truth beyond the cave represents an act of rebellion against divine command. Similarly, in the second scenario, the unseen game creator can be considered a god-like figure who controls the virtual world and its inhabitants. Diotima's defiance of the game creator's established order, and her eventual demise, represent an act of rebellion against divine command, as she seeks to assert her own moral agency and establish a new ethical framework based on reason, empathy, and righteousness. Finally, in the third scenario, one might wonder to what extent the creators of the "Cave App" have claimed god-like power for themselves (and what this says about both them and our ideas of the gods).

The Euthyphro Dilemma, named after the eponymous dialogue written by Plato, raises a crucial question for adherents of divine command theory. The dilemma, which arises from a conversation between Socrates and a religious expert named Euthyphro, asks: "Is something morally good because the gods command it, or do the gods command it because it is morally good?"

The **Euthyphro Dilemma** presents two horns or options:

- If something is morally good because the gods command it, then morality becomes arbitrary and subject to the whims of the gods. This option implies that there is no inherent moral value in actions, and that something could become morally good or bad merely because a

divine being says so.

- If the gods command something because it is morally good, then morality exists independently of the gods' commands. This option implies that there is an objective moral standard that even the gods must adhere to, which raises questions about the nature of this standard and the role of divine beings in establishing and enforcing it.

The Euthyphro Dilemma poses a significant challenge to divine command theory by questioning the source and nature of morality. It highlights the potential issues with grounding ethics solely in divine commands and encourages further exploration of alternative ethical theories that can provide a more robust and coherent foundation for morality.

Big Ideas: Egoism and the Ring of Gyges

The story of the **Ring of Gyges** is found in Book II of Plato's dialogue "The Republic." The tale is introduced by Glaucon, Plato's brother, as a challenge to Socrates' defense of justice. The ring, when worn, grants the power of invisibility to its wearer, allowing them to commit acts without fear of retribution or social consequences. The story of Gyges, a shepherd who discovers the ring and uses its power to commit heinous acts, serves as the foundation for understanding the connection between power, human nature, and ethical egoism in Plato's philosophical framework.

Ethical egoism is the normative ethical theory that one should act in one's self-interest. Glaucon employs the story of the Ring of Gyges to illustrate his argument that, if given the opportunity, any individual would act in their self-interest, regardless of moral or ethical concerns. The main thrust of Glaucon's argument is that justice is a social construct created by the weak, who wish to protect themselves from the strong. In the absence of consequences, the appeal of ethical egoism would overpower any desire to adhere to a moral code.

Glaucon's presentation of the Ring of Gyges serves as a challenge to Socrates to prove that a just individual would not act in their self-interest when presented with the opportunity for unlimited power. The implication is that if Socrates cannot demonstrate that a just person would resist the temptation to use the ring for personal gain, then his assertion that justice is inherently good becomes untenable.

Plato's Response: The Ideal City and the Ideal Soul. Over the course of "The Republic," Plato, through the character of Socrates, builds a response to the challenge posed by Glaucon. Instead of directly addressing the question of whether a just person would use the ring for personal gain, Socrates creates an analogy by describing an ideal city, in which justice prevails. In constructing this ideal city, Plato presents a **tripartite model of the soul**, which comprises **reason, spirit**, and **appetite**. Justice is achieved when each part of the soul fulfills its proper function, and the individual lives in harmony with themselves and others. By extension, a just city is one in which each citizen performs their designated role, contributing to the well-being of the whole.

Philosopher-Kings (or Queens). Central to Plato's response is the concept of the philosopher-king (who might be women—Plato is a rare ancient philosopher who thinks women can be philosophers), a ruler who possesses both wisdom and moral virtue. The philosopher-king embodies the ideal balance between the three parts of the soul, and through their rule, justice is maintained in the city. This ideal ruler serves as a counterpoint to the unethical behavior exhibited by Gyges, who used his power for

personal gain rather than the greater good. The Cave Analogy is introduced to illustrate the process of becoming such a ruler.

Conclusion: Plato's Response to Ethical Egoism. Plato's "Republic" offers a compelling argument against ethical egoism by positing that a just society, ruled by philosopher-kings, would be a more desirable and harmonious place than one governed by self-interest alone. The ideal city serves as a metaphor for the human soul, illustrating that the pursuit of justice and virtue leads to individual and collective well-being. Through this analogy, Plato contends that justice is inherently valuable, providing a robust counterargument to Glaucon's challenge and the ethical egoism it represents. People who adopt ethical egoism are stuck "in the cave," and can not lead the sorts of genuinely good lives that humans are meant to live. They might "think" that they don't need to treat others well, but Plato argues that this will, in the end, make them miserable.

Discussion Questions

- How do the three cave scenarios relate to Plato's Allegory of the Cave, and what key themes do they share?
- What are the ethical dilemmas faced by the main characters in each of the three cave scenarios? How do these dilemmas highlight the importance of moral courage and self-sacrifice in the pursuit of a greater good?
- In the context of the cave scenarios, discuss the roles of moral skepticism, cultural relativism, egoism, and divine command theory in shaping individuals' ethical beliefs and actions.
- How do modern technology and media influence our perception of reality, and what ethical challenges do they present, as illustrated in the second and third cave scenarios?
- How does the Euthyphro Dilemma challenge the divine command theory, and what implications does it have for the source and nature of morality?
- Compare and contrast the different ethical theories discussed in this conversation, such as consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. How might each of these theories be applied to the ethical dilemmas in the cave scenarios?
- How do the cave scenarios emphasize the importance of philosophical inquiry, critical thinking, and questioning one's beliefs in order to achieve true knowledge?
- How does the concept of the philosopher-king, as presented in Plato's Allegory of the Cave, relate to the idea of beneficence and the moral obligation to help others achieve enlightenment?
- In the context of the cave scenarios, discuss the relationship between moral realism and moral relativism. How do these metaethical positions influence individuals' understanding of ethical principles and values?
- How do the different levels of knowledge or belief in the Allegory of the Cave relate to ethical matters? What insights can we gain from this allegory about the process of ethical development and enlightenment?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Socrates	Classical Greek philosopher, credited as a founder of Western philosophy. His work, known through the accounts of later classical writers, is characterized by his innovative method of questioning, often referred to as the Socratic method.
Plato	Ancient Greek philosopher and student of Socrates, known for his dialogues and for founding the Academy in Athens, one of the earliest known institutions of higher learning.
The Republic	Plato's best-known work, a Socratic dialogue examining justice in the individual and in society, proposing a city ruled by philosopher-kings where the society is divided into producers, auxiliaries, and guardians.
Cave Allegory	Plato's famous allegory found in "The Republic". The allegory includes prisoners who have been chained in a cave since childhood, a fire that casts shadows on the cave wall, and the world outside the cave, representing the world of forms. The allegory symbolizes humanity's struggle to reach enlightenment and knowledge.
Ring of Gyges	A mythical artifact mentioned by Plato in "The Republic" that granted its owner the power to become invisible at will. Its story explores the question of whether moral character is intrinsically rewarding, or if it is only a social necessity.
Tripartite Soul	Plato's theory in "The Republic" that the soul is divided into three parts: the rational part (which seeks truth), the spirited part (which desires honor and victory), and the appetitive part (which seeks physical and material pleasure).
Philosopher-Ruler	Concept from Plato's "The Republic" proposing that the most knowledgeable, the philosophers, should be the rulers, as they can understand the form of the good and thus make the wisest decisions.
Ethics	The philosophical study of what is morally right and wrong, or a set of beliefs and rules about the right ways to behave.
Normative Ethics	Subfield of ethics concerned with establishing how things should or ought to be, how to value them, which actions are right or wrong, and which types of actions are good or bad.
Descriptive Ethics	The study of people's beliefs about morality, contrasting with normative ethics (which determines how things should be) and metaethics (which studies the nature of ethical thought).
Metaethics	A branch of ethics that explores the status, foundations, and scope of moral values, properties, and words, dealing with questions about what morality is and what it requires of us.
Moral Realism (Platonism)	In ethics, a position asserting that there are objective moral values or truths that exist independently of individual perceptions. In Plato's philosophy, these moral truths exist in the realm of forms or ideas.
Cultural Relativism	The idea that the moral values, rules, or ethics can vary significantly between different cultures and are valid within a particular cultural context.
Divine Command Theory	The theory that moral values are dependent on God or gods – what is morally right is what God commands, and what is morally wrong is what God forbids.
Ethical Egoism	The ethical theory that individuals should pursue their own self-interest and benefit. It differs from psychological egoism, which claims that people can only act in their own self-interest.

Euthyphro Dilemma	A philosophical problem arising in Plato's dialogue "Euthyphro," questioning whether something is pious because the gods love it or if the gods love it because it is pious, often used to critique divine command theory.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

2.

CHAPTER 2: BALANCING THE SCALES—THE CALCULUS OF UTILITARIAN ETHICS

> "The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest-Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure." (John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism)

In this chapter, you'll step onto the scales of utility, navigating the balancing act that defines utilitarian ethics. A perspective that prizes the greatest good for the greatest number, utilitarianism gives us a unique framework to measure moral actions based on their outcomes.

Our chapter begins with astory: The Utilitarian Adventures of Princess Peach. This narrative brings the concept of utilitarianism to life in a relatable context, providing you with tangible examples of the moral dilemmas that utilitarian thought seeks to resolve. You'll find accompanying questions that serve to test your understanding, encourage critical analysis, and trigger personal reflection about your own ethical compass.

In the 'Big Ideas' section, you'll plunge into the heart of utilitarianism, exploring its tenets and its profound influence on moral philosophy. As we discuss the Greatest-Happiness Principle, you will wrestle with the concept of utility and what it means for an action to promote happiness, as well as the consequences when actions produce the opposite.

Next, you'll travel through time, tracing the evolution of utilitarian thought from its roots to its modern interpretations. You'll encounter significant figures such as Epicurus and Mozi, before meeting Jeremy Bentham, the architect of classical utilitarianism. Your journey will continue with John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, advocates for rule utilitarianism and feminist utilitarianism respectively, demonstrating how this ethical theory has been developed and adapted over time. Later, you will engage with contemporary philosophers like Peter Singer and Helga Kuhse, who bring fresh perspectives and extend the utilitarian concept into new territories like animal ethics and bioethics.

The chapter then introduces you to 'Ethical Thought Experiments', challenging you to put the utilitarian framework to test in hypothetical situations. These exercises will challenge your ethical reasoning skills, helping you to understand, evaluate, and critique utilitarian ethics more robustly.

In this chapter, you'll learn about the normative ethical theory of **utilitarianism.** We'll be discussing

major ideas, important figures, variants of the theory, and its strengths and weaknesses. But first, to get us started, Princess Peach!

Story: The Utilitarian Adventures of Princess Peach

Entry 1: Enchanted Discoveries. Today, while wandering through the castle's library like a lost melody, I stumbled upon an ancient book on ethics and utilitarianism, its cover whispering secrets in intricate patterns. As I flipped through the pages, I felt as if I was stepping into another world—a world where ethics danced beyond the borders of our tranquil kingdom. These concepts tugged at my curiosity, beckoning me to explore how they might intertwine with my life as the ruler of the Toad Kingdom.

This tome sings of maximizing joy and vanquishing sorrow, a symphony of noble intentions. I can't help but wonder if, in the past, I've waltzed through decisions without heeding these harmonious notes. If I can learn more about utilitarianism, perhaps I can compose a brighter future for my kingdom and its inhabitants.

But I cannot linger in these philosophical musings, for my kingdom calls out to me with its everyday needs and urgent matters. Still, I've vowed to steal moments each day to read and reflect on this bewitching subject. It's curious how a chance encounter can spark a journey down uncharted roads.

Entry 2: The Ballad of the Toad Kingdom. As I gaze upon the tapestry of harmony and happiness that envelops our land, gratitude swells within me like a crescendo. Fortune has smiled upon us, but I sense stormy decisions looming on the horizon. I've often pondered if hidden ethical chords could guide my choices as princess. This newfound wisdom of utilitarianism has illuminated new pathways, and I stand ready to explore how they might shape my destiny.

Our Toad subjects dwell in contentment's embrace, but a whisper in my heart tells me there's always more we could do to elevate their well-being. It's not just about ensuring life's necessities; I yearn to see every soul in the kingdom bloom with joy and flourish in the sunlight. Might utilitarianism provide the compass to guide us toward that dream?

Yet, as I wade deeper into these philosophical waters, I find myself questioning the potential riptides. Could my quest to amplify happiness inadvertently cast shadows on some individuals or obscure crucial details? These are the enigmas that dance in my thoughts as I immerse myself in the study of ethics. It's a peculiar revelation to think that once I believed life as a princess was all about swirling in the magic of tea parties and royal balls, when in truth, my responsibilities reach far beyond the castle's enchanted walls.

Entry 3: The Trolley. Today, as I walked through Toad Town, the air grew thick with dread; a scene of horror unfolded before me, as if torn from the pages of my ethics book. A runaway trolley, a monstrous beast on wheels, roared down the tracks with Toads trapped on both sets of tracks. Five Toads on one side, paralyzed by fear; on the other, my dear friend Toadette, the very heart of my soul.

Seconds, mere seconds to decide. Utilitarianism whispered in my ear, urging me to maximize happiness. To sacrifice my dear friend for the five trembling souls. How could I make such a gut-wrenching choice in this fleeting instant?

My thoughts raced, clawing for an answer as the trolley thundered on. Utilitarianism offered guidance, but I struggled to reconcile the warmth of relationships with the cold calculus of numbers. Time's sands slipped away; I grasped for the ideas behind other ethical perspectives.

I considered how different varieties utilitarianism might relate to the life-altering decision before

me. Following a general rule that promotes the greatest good overall would entail saving the many, even at the cost of the few. In my dilemma, this would mean saving the five Toads and sacrificing Toadette. On the other hand, focusing on the specific consequences of this unique, desperate moment urged me to evaluate the outcomes of each individual action. Would saving Toadette lead to more happiness, given our deep bond? My heart pounded, aching under the pressure.

Moreover, I pondered whether pleasure and pain should be the sole factors contributing to overall happiness in this situation. Or, should I consider the preferences and desires of those involved, such as Toadette's desire to live and the potential happiness of her continued life? In this urgent, breathless moment, I wondered if happiness had a certain threshold, if reaching an acceptable level of happiness could be enough, even if it didn't maximize it. This thought challenged me to question whether saving Toadette and losing five lives could still achieve a satisfactory level of happiness.

The weight of my responsibility bore down upon me, heavy and suffocating, as these frantic thoughts converged into a single, agonizing conclusion. I could not sacrifice five of my subject's lives, and with a tortured heart, I chose to save the five Toads.

The world seemed to slow, the breath caught in my throat, as I realized the unbearable truth: life's hardest decisions must be made in the blink of an eye, leaving no time for leisurely contemplation. My thoughts swirled, a tempest of emotion, as the trolley's brakes screeched, and I understood with harrowing clarity that ethics were a tangled, murky tapestry, beyond any simple measure of happiness.

Entry 4: The Decision. Ultimately, I made the heartrending choice to divert the trolley towards my friend. Five Toads saved, but my soul was rent asunder as I watched Toadette meet her end. The townsfolk hailed me as brave, selfless, but inside, a heavy burden consumed me.

In the aftermath, doubts plagued my mind. Was my choice truly right? Could some other path have spared all involved? As I pondered the events, I knew that utilitarianism had provided the guidance I needed, even if my emotions struggled to accept the outcome.

I resolved to defend my actions, knowing that I had followed the principles of utilitarianism and sought the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Though the pain of losing Toadette weighed heavily on my heart, I found solace in the knowledge that I had made the difficult choice in pursuit of a greater good. This experience deepened my understanding of ethics and taught me the importance of embracing multiple philosophical perspectives in the face of real-world dilemmas.

Entry 5: The Fungitron 3000. Today, I was invited to the laboratory of the renowned Toad Scientist, Professor Toadsworth. He excitedly unveiled his latest invention, which he called the Fungitron 3000. The device had a quirky design, with a mushroom-shaped exterior and a variety of colorful buttons and dials. Professor Toadsworth explained that the Fungitron 3000 was designed to simulate any experience a user could imagine, providing them with an unparalleled sense of joy and satisfaction.

He eagerly demonstrated how it worked: a user would sit in the cozy, cushioned interior of the Fungitron 3000 and place a snug-fitting helmet on their head. This helmet was equipped with advanced neural interface technology that could read the user's desires and preferences. Once the user selected a scenario using the buttons and dials, the Fungitron 3000 would create a highly realistic simulation of the desired experience, engaging all five senses in the process.

Professor Toadsworth assured me that the Fungitron 3000 was completely safe and that users could exit the simulation at any time by pressing a large, bright red button on the helmet. He also mentioned that it had the potential to bring immense happiness and pleasure to the inhabitants of the Toad Kingdom, allowing them to experience their wildest dreams and deepest desires.

As I marveled at the Fungitron 3000, I couldn't help but feel a mix of excitement and concern. On

one hand, the device had the potential to provide immense joy to the kingdom's inhabitants. On the other hand, I wondered about the implications of living in a simulated world, detached from reality. Would this align with the ethical principles I had been studying, or would it lead us down a path of artificial happiness and disconnection from what truly matters?

Entry 6: A Dilemma Emerges. As I pondered the potential benefits of the Fungitron 3000, I also began to grapple with its ethical consequences. The device promised unparalleled happiness for the inhabitants of the Toad Kingdom, but I couldn't help but wonder whether this artificial joy would come at a cost. If everyone retreated into their own simulated worlds, would we lose the connections that bind us together as a community? Would we become complacent, neglecting our responsibilities and the challenges we must face together?

I found myself reflecting on the ethical principles I had been studying, particularly the different versions of utilitarianism. While the Fungitron 3000 could arguably maximize pleasure and satisfy desires, did it truly promote the greatest good for all? I feared that it might instead lead to a society that was disconnected from reality and from one another, ultimately undermining the happiness it promised.

Entry 7: The Final Decision. After days of contemplation and consultation with my advisors, I reached the difficult decision to not approve the Fungitron 3000 for public use. While I recognized its potential to provide immense joy and satisfaction, I couldn't shake my concerns about its long-term impact on the Toad Kingdom.

I shared my decision with Professor Toadsworth, explaining that the ethical implications of the device were too uncertain to justify its implementation. I expressed my gratitude for his innovative spirit and encouraged him to continue his research, with the hope that future inventions might benefit the kingdom in more tangible and ethically sound ways.

My decision to reject the Fungitron 3000 was not an easy one, but it reinforced the importance of considering the ethical consequences of our actions and the choices we make as a society. As I continue to explore the realm of ethics, I am reminded that our pursuit of happiness must be tempered by a commitment to the greater good and a deep understanding of the complex, interwoven connections that define our world.

Entry 7: The Magical Utility Meter. During my visit to the castle's ancient archives, I stumbled upon a fascinating artifact. The archivist, Old Toadly, explained that it was a magical utility measuring device, capable of quantifying the happiness generated by different actions and choices. The device was shaped like a golden mushroom with a delicate, crystal-like display that revealed numerical values representing the level of happiness, or "utility," experienced.

Curious about its potential, I decided to use the magical utility meter to evaluate various ways of spending the kingdom's resources. By quantifying the happiness generated from different expenditures, I hoped to gain insights into how best to allocate the kingdom's coins in order to maximize the well-being of the Toad Kingdom's inhabitants.

Entry 8: The Power of Aiding the Worst Off. As I experimented with the magical utility meter, I discovered a crucial insight: directing resources towards aiding the least fortunate members of our kingdom consistently yielded significantly greater returns in happiness compared to aiding those who were already well off.

For instance, when I considered building a new recreational park in an affluent neighborhood, the utility meter showed a modest increase in happiness. However, when I contemplated using the same

resources to establish a healthcare center in an underserved area, the meter indicated a much larger surge in happiness.

Similarly, I found that investing in educational programs for underprivileged Toads generated far more happiness than hosting lavish events at the castle. This pattern held true across multiple scenarios, emphasizing that allocating resources to improve the lives of the worst off could dramatically increase overall happiness in the kingdom.

These revelations prompted me to reconsider my approach to resource allocation. By prioritizing the needs of the most disadvantaged inhabitants, I could maximize happiness and well-being for all. The magical utility meter and my newfound understanding of the power of aiding the worst off reinforced the importance of evaluating the broader impact of my decisions as the ruler of the Toad Kingdom.

Entry 9: A Moral Dilemma. As I delved deeper into the realm of ethics, I started to see parallels between the mistreatment I had faced as a female ruler and the oppression experienced by the Toads, who were once enslaved by the Koopas. I recognized that both racism and sexism were rooted in the unjust discrimination of individuals based on arbitrary characteristics, such as race or gender. This realization led me to consider the moral status of animals and whether they, too, deserved our care and consideration in a similar manner.

In particular, I found myself pondering the longstanding tradition in the Toad Kingdom of savoring Yoshi eggs as a prized delicacy. I acknowledged that animals were different from people in various ways, but I began to question whether these differences justified the potential suffering inflicted upon these gentle beings. Were we not perpetuating a similar form of discrimination, speciesism, by disregarding the well-being of animals based on their species?

Entry 10: A Change of Heart. After extensive contemplation, I arrived at the conclusion that the moral considerations of animals, including Yoshis, could not be overlooked. I acknowledged that animals were different from humans in terms of their abilities and cognitive capacities, but they still shared the capacity to experience pleasure and pain, just as I and the Toads had experienced in our own struggles against sexism and racism.

With this realization, I made the arduous decision to abstain from consuming Yoshi eggs. I publicly announced my decision to the kingdom, drawing parallels between the reasons why racism and sexism were wrong and the reasons why speciesism was wrong. I recounted my own experiences of being unfairly judged due to my gender and the plight of the Toads when they were oppressed by the Koopas. I also emphasized that although animals were different from humans, their interests still mattered, and we should strive to treat them with respect and consideration.

This decision struck a chord with many in the Toad Kingdom, igniting conversations about our obligations towards animals and prompting some citizens to reevaluate their own dietary choices. I discovered that the pursuit of ethical understanding could have wide-ranging consequences, leading us to question not only how we treat one another but also how we interact with the world around us.

As I continued to challenge sexism, racism, and now speciesism, I was reminded of the importance of empathy and compassion in shaping a more just and harmonious society. Our ethical journey, much like my own, is a never-ending quest to create a world where all beings, regardless of their differences, are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Entry 11: A Moment of Realization. One day, as I wandered through the enchanted forests of the Toad Kingdom, I stumbled upon a small pond. As I approached the water's edge, I saw a young Toad struggling to stay afloat, desperately trying to keep its head above the water. It was clear that the child was in imminent danger and needed immediate help.

Without hesitation, I dove into the pond to save the drowning child. As I swam, the water soaked my royal garments, but I did not care for the potential damage to my attire. My only concern was the well-being of the child, whose life was at stake.

As I brought the child safely to shore, I began to reflect on my actions. It occurred to me that my willingness to sacrifice my attire to save a life was quite similar to the ethical obligation we have to help those in need, even when it requires us to give up some of our own comforts or possessions. I realized

that there were countless others in the world who were suffering, and that we could significantly improve their lives with our aid, just as I had saved the drowning child.

The experience brought to mind Peter Singer's "drowning child" thought experiment, in which one is asked to consider the ethical implications of choosing to save a drowning child at the expense of one's own clothes. Although the circumstances of the real world are more complex, the essence of the thought experiment remained: we have a moral responsibility to help those in need when we have the capacity to do so.

This realization prompted me to extend my ethical journey beyond sexism, racism, and speciesism to include the plight of those in need around the world. I began working to develop programs and initiatives aimed at providing aid to the less fortunate, both within the Toad Kingdom and beyond our borders. In doing so, I continued to foster a more compassionate and empathetic society, striving to create a world where no one, regardless of their circumstances, is left to suffer alone.

Entry 12: Bowser's Invasion. The days in the Toad Kingdom had been filled with the excitement of newfound ethical insights, and our collective awareness grew stronger with each passing day. However, the tranquility we enjoyed was about to be interrupted by a sinister threat: Bowser, the King of the Koopas, had launched a massive invasion on our peaceful lands.

His relentless army of Goombas, Koopas, and other fearsome creatures marched through our kingdom, leaving chaos and destruction in their wake. Our citizens, unaccustomed to conflict, were gripped by fear and panic as Bowser's forces advanced, and the once-happy world I had worked so hard to cultivate seemed to crumble before my eyes.

I knew that the time for philosophy and contemplation had temporarily come to an end; I had to act decisively to protect my people and restore peace to the kingdom. I called upon Mario and Luigi, the valiant brothers and heroes of our realm, to stand by my side as we faced this overwhelming challenge.

As we prepared for battle, I contemplated the ethical implications of engaging in a conflict to defend our home. I wondered if utilitarianism could offer guidance in these dire circumstances. Was it right to fight and potentially harm Bowser's minions, who were merely following orders, in order to protect our kingdom and its inhabitants? I weighed the potential suffering that could be inflicted on both sides against the happiness and security that could be regained for the Toad Kingdom.

Ultimately, I concluded that our actions were justified. Bowser's invasion threatened the very foundation of our society, and the consequences of inaction would be devastating. By defending our kingdom and restoring peace, we could prevent immense suffering and ensure the continued happiness and well-being of our people.

Entry 13: Victory and Difficult Decisions. Our struggle against Bowser's forces was long and arduous, but through the bravery and determination of Mario, Luigi, and the countless Toads who fought by our side, we emerged victorious. The day was won, and the Toad Kingdom was liberated from the clutches of Bowser and his minions.

As we celebrated our hard-fought victory, I found myself reflecting on the difficult decisions I had made throughout the conflict. Each choice weighed heavily on my conscience, as I tried to apply utilitarian principles to guide my actions in the heat of battle.

One such decision involved prioritizing the defense of vulnerable communities in our kingdom. I had to make the difficult call of directing our limited resources and troops to protect the areas most at risk, knowing full well that doing so would leave other regions more exposed to Bowser's aggression. I reasoned that by focusing on the most vulnerable, we could minimize the overall suffering in the kingdom, even though it meant accepting the possibility of harm befalling other communities.

Another challenging choice came when we captured some of Bowser's minions. I knew that harsh treatment or retribution could potentially deter further aggression, but I also recognized that many of them were acting under Bowser's command, not out of genuine malice. In the spirit of utilitarianism, I chose to treat the prisoners with compassion, providing them with food, shelter, and an opportunity to renounce their allegiance to Bowser. I believed that this approach would not only minimize their suffering but also foster goodwill and the potential for reconciliation between our peoples.

These decisions were not easy, and the consequences of my choices weighed heavily on my heart. However, throughout the conflict, I strove to consider the greatest good for the greatest number and to minimize suffering wherever possible. As we began the process of rebuilding and healing, I found solace in the knowledge that I had attempted to make the most ethical decisions I could, even in the face of great adversity.

Entry 14: Final Thoughts. As the dust settled and our kingdom embarked on the path to recovery, I found myself reflecting on the lessons I had learned throughout this tumultuous journey. My exploration of utilitarianism had opened my eyes to new perspectives and provided me with a valuable ethical framework to navigate the challenges I faced as the ruler of the Toad Kingdom.

In my contemplation, I acknowledged the weaknesses of utilitarianism. Its demanding nature could be daunting, as it calls for the constant pursuit of maximizing happiness and minimizing suffering. The process of calculating and weighing the consequences of each decision could be overwhelming, especially in situations where time was of the essence or when the outcomes were uncertain.

However, despite these challenges, I recognized the value in the general approach of utilitarianism. Striving to bring about the greatest good for the greatest number had guided me through some of the most difficult decisions I had ever faced. While it wasn't perfect, it provided a moral compass that aligned with my desire to ensure the well-being and happiness of my kingdom and its inhabitants.

As I moved forward, I resolved to continue refining my understanding of ethics, embracing the strengths of utilitarianism while remaining open to other perspectives that could complement or challenge my beliefs. I felt a renewed sense of purpose and responsibility, knowing that my role as the ruler of the Toad Kingdom demanded not only wisdom and strength but also a commitment to the ethical principles that would ensure the happiness and flourishing of all who called our kingdom home.

In the end, I was grateful for the unexpected discovery that had set me on this path of ethical exploration. It had not only enriched my own life but had also allowed me to become a better ruler, more equipped to face the complexities and challenges that lay ahead. With utilitarianism as my guide, I was determined to create a brighter future for the Toad Kingdom and all who called it home.

Questions

- How did Princess Peach's understanding of utilitarianism evolve throughout her story? What challenges did she face when trying to apply this ethical theory to real-world situations?
- What are some of the strengths and weaknesses of utilitarianism as presented in Princess Peach's story? Do you agree or disagree with her assessment of the theory? Why?
- How did Peach's encounter with the Toad Scientist's invention, the "Fungitron", challenge her utilitarian beliefs? What ethical concerns did she grapple with regarding the use of such technology?
- How did Princess Peach address the moral status of animals, specifically Yoshi eggs, in her

story? How did utilitarianism guide her decision on this issue?

- Analyze Peach's approach to prioritizing resources during Bowser's invasion. How did utilitarianism inform her decisions, and do you agree with her choices? Why or why not?
- In the final entry, Peach recognizes the weaknesses of utilitarianism but decides that the general approach is a good one. Do you agree with her assessment? Why or why not? Are there alternative ethical theories that could have provided her with better guidance in her dilemmas?

Big Ideas: Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that focuses on maximizing overall happiness or utility while minimizing suffering. This consequentialist approach evaluates actions and decisions based on their outcomes, aiming to produce the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals. The story of Princess Peach provides an accessible and engaging illustration of the various forms of utilitarianism and their applications.

- **Act Utilitarianism**: In the trolley dilemma, Peach considered the consequences of each possible action in the specific situation. Act utilitarianism involves evaluating each action based on its direct consequences, with the morally right action being the one that generates the most happiness or utility. Peach ultimately saved the five Toads on one track, as this action produced the greatest good overall, despite the tragic loss of her friend Toadette.
- **Rule Utilitarianism**: Another form of utilitarianism Peach contemplated during the trolley dilemma was rule utilitarianism. This approach involves following general rules that, when consistently applied, maximize overall happiness. In Peach's case, she considered the rule of saving the greater number of lives in order to generate the most happiness. This rule led her to the same decision as act utilitarianism, demonstrating that these two approaches can sometimes converge on the same conclusion.
- **Hedonistic Utilitarianism:** When faced with the trolley dilemma, Peach initially thought about the balance of pleasure and pain in her decision. Hedonistic utilitarianism measures happiness in terms of pleasure and the absence of pain. By this account, the morally right action maximizes pleasure while minimizing pain. In the story, Peach struggled with the emotional weight of her decision, but ultimately chose the action that resulted in the least pain and suffering for the Toads involved.
- **Preference Utilitarianism:** Peach also considered the preferences and desires of those affected by her decision in the trolley dilemma. Preference utilitarianism takes into account the satisfaction of individual preferences and desires when calculating overall happiness. This approach recognizes that there may be more to happiness than just pleasure and pain, and that respecting the preferences of those involved can contribute to the overall good.
- **Maximizing Utilitarianism:** Throughout her ethical journey, Peach grappled with the demanding nature of utilitarianism, which requires maximizing happiness at all times. Maximizing utilitarianism, as the name suggests, demands that we always choose the action that produces the greatest overall good, without any exceptions or compromises.

- **Satisficing Utilitarianism**: In the trolley dilemma, Peach briefly wondered if meeting a certain threshold of happiness might be enough. Satisficing utilitarianism allows for actions that achieve a satisfactory level of happiness, even if they don't maximize it. While Peach acknowledged this approach, she ultimately recognized that in her specific situation, saving the five Toads was the only morally justifiable option, regardless of any threshold.

The story of Princess Peach provides an accessible introduction to the various forms of utilitarianism, demonstrating how these philosophical concepts can be applied in everyday situations and leadership roles. By exploring different versions of utilitarianism, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the theory's complexities and nuances, and better appreciate its strengths and limitations as an ethical guide.

A History of Utilitarianism

Epicurus: The Pursuit of Pleasure

Epicurus (341-270 BCE) was an ancient Greek philosopher who founded the school of philosophy known as Epicureanism. He was born on the island of Samos and later moved to Athens, where he established his own school, the Garden, a community where his followers could study and practice his teachings.

Epicurus emphasized the importance of pleasure as the ultimate goal in life. He believed that the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain were the primary guides for human behavior. However, he differentiated between two types of pleasure: physical pleasure and mental pleasure. Epicurus argued that mental pleasures, such as tranquility, friendship, and the absence of fear, were far superior to physical pleasures, which were fleeting and could lead to pain.

One of Epicurus' most significant contributions to utilitarianism is his **hedonism** (the theory that pleasure is the ultimate good, and pain the ultimate bad). Where Epicurus focused on a person's *own* pleasure, later "hedonistic utilitarians" (such as Jeremy Bentham) would expand this to include the pleasure of all beings. In practical terms, though, Epicurus's moral philosophy was similar to that of later utilitarianism: He advocated for equality, friendship, and for the ability of individuals to lead their lives "as they see fit" (without being interfered with by religions or governments). On a personal level, he thought one could only avoided chasing after money/fame/status.

Mozi: Universal Love and the Greater Good

Mozi (c. 470-391 BCE) was a Chinese philosopher and the founder of Mohism, an influential school of thought during the Warring States period. Born in the state of Lu, Mozi was a contemporary of Confucius, and his philosophy often stood in opposition to Confucian ideas.

Mozi's main ethical principle was **"universal love"** or **"jian'ai,"** which advocated for the impartial treatment of all individuals, regardless of their social status or personal relationship to oneself. He argued that this principle would lead to a more harmonious society and minimize conflict. Mozi also emphasized the importance of utilitarianism, asserting that actions should be judged based on their consequences for the greater good.

A key aspect of Mozi's utilitarianism was his focus on the **"will of Heaven,"** which he believed dictated that rulers should govern in a manner that promotes the welfare of their subjects. He argued

for **meritocracy,** maintaining that rulers should choose their officials based on ability and virtue rather than birth or wealth. Mozi also (like Epicurus) advocated for frugality and the reduction of waste, arguing that resources should be used for the benefit of the people rather than on extravagant displays of wealth.

In the contemporary world, Mozi's ideas can be applied in various ways. The principle of universal love can inform efforts to promote social justice and reduce discrimination, as it calls for the fair treatment of all individuals, regardless of their background or social standing. The emphasis on the greater good can guide public policy decisions, encouraging leaders to make choices that benefit the majority rather than a select few. Moreover, Mozi's insistence on frugality and reducing waste can inspire sustainable practices in both public and private sectors, conserving resources for future generations.

Jeremy Bentham: The Architect of Classical Utilitarianism

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) was an English philosopher, jurist, and social reformer, who is often considered the founder of modern utilitarianism. Born in London, Bentham was a precocious child and went on to study law at Oxford. However, he became disillusioned with the legal profession and turned to philosophical pursuits instead. Bentham's major contribution to utilitarianism is his development of the "greatest happiness principle," which states that the most ethical action is the one that maximizes overall happiness for the greatest number of people. Bentham applied this principle to various social issues of his time, advocating for prison reform, animal rights, and the decriminalization of homosexuality. He believed that these reforms would lead to greater happiness and minimize suffering for society as a whole.

In the contemporary world, Bentham's ideas continue to inspire social reform and activism. His greatest happiness principle can be used to argue for policies that promote equality, social justice, and the protection of vulnerable populations, including prisoners, animals, and LGBTQ+ individuals.

John Stuart Mill: The Advocate of Rule Utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was an English philosopher, economist, and civil servant, and one of the most influential thinkers of the 19th century. Born in London, Mill was educated by his father, James Mill, a close associate of Jeremy Bentham. As a result, he was introduced to utilitarianism from an early age. ill refined and developed Bentham's utilitarianism, addressing some of its perceived shortcomings. He distinguished between **higher pleasures** and **lower pleasures,** arguing that intellectual and moral pleasures were inherently more valuable than physical pleasures. Mill also advocated for a version of utilitarianism known as rule utilitarianism, which posits that the most ethical action is the one that follows a set of rules designed to maximize overall happiness.

Mill applied his utilitarian ideas to various social issues, including women's rights and the abolition of slavery. He believed that promoting equal rights for women and ending slavery would lead to greater happiness for society as a whole. In his famous essay "The Subjection of Women," Mill argued for women's suffrage and equal opportunities in education and employment. In the contemporary world, Mill's ideas continue to inspire advocacy for gender equality, civil rights, and social justice. His rule utilitarianism can help inform the development of legal systems and ethical guidelines, ensuring that

they are based on principles that promote the greatest overall happiness, including the protection of individual liberties and equal rights for all.

Harriet Taylor Mill: The Feminist Utilitarian

Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858) was an English philosopher, women's rights advocate, and wife of John Stuart Mill. Born in London, Harriet was largely self-educated, and her intellectual partnership with John Stuart Mill significantly influenced his work, particularly in the areas of women's rights and social reform.

Harriet's utilitarian ideas were closely aligned with her husband's, but her focus was predominantly on women's rights and gender equality. She argued that the subjugation of women was not only unjust but also hindered societal progress and happiness. Harriet believed that empowering women to participate in all aspects of society would lead to increased happiness and well-being for everyone.

Harriet Taylor Mill's ideas continue to inspire and inform efforts to promote gender equality. Her utilitarian arguments for women's rights can be applied to contemporary debates surrounding equal pay, reproductive rights, and access to education, encouraging policies and practices that foster gender equality and contribute to the overall happiness of society.

Peter Singer: Expanding the Scope of Moral Consideration

Peter Singer (born 1946) is an Australian philosopher and professor of bioethics, known for his groundbreaking work in applied ethics, particularly in the areas of animal rights and global poverty. Born in Melbourne, Australia, Singer studied at the University of Melbourne and later at the University of Oxford. He is currently a professor at Princeton University and the University of Melbourne.

Singer is often described as a preference utilitarian, a variant of utilitarianism that focuses on satisfying the preferences or interests of those affected by an action rather than maximizing pleasure or happiness. His most influential work, "Animal Liberation" (1975), expanded the scope of moral consideration to include non-human animals, arguing that their capacity to suffer should be taken into account when making ethical decisions. Singer contends that our current treatment of animals, particularly in factory farming, is a form of **"speciesism"** – an unjustified bias in favor of our own species.

In the contemporary world, Singer's ideas have inspired a growing movement for animal rights and the adoption of more compassionate dietary choices, such as vegetarianism and veganism. His work also encourages more humane treatment of animals in research and the development of alternatives to animal testing.

Singer has also applied his utilitarian framework to the issue of global poverty. In his influential essay "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (1972), he argues that affluent individuals have a strong moral obligation to donate a significant portion of their income to help those in extreme poverty. This argument has inspired the **effective altruism** movement, which encourages individuals to use their resources to create the greatest positive impact in the world.

Helga Kuhse: The Intersection of Bioethics and Utilitarianism

Helga Kuhse (born 1948) is a German-born Australian philosopher who specializes in bioethics and moral philosophy. She studied at the University of Adelaide, the Australian National University, and

later at Monash University, where she obtained her Ph.D. Kuhse has worked closely with Peter Singer and has made significant contributions to the field of bioethics from a utilitarian perspective.

Kuhse's work focuses on the ethical implications of advancements in medical technology and practice. Her research includes topics such as euthanasia, assisted suicide, reproductive technologies, and the allocation of scarce medical resources. Kuhse adopts a utilitarian approach to these issues, analyzing the potential consequences of different actions to determine the most ethical course.

In the contemporary world, Kuhse's ideas provide guidance for medical professionals, policymakers, and ethicists grappling with complex bioethical dilemmas. Her utilitarian perspective encourages a focus on the outcomes of medical decisions, ensuring that choices are made in the best interests of patients and society as a whole. For example, her work on euthanasia and assisted suicide contributes to ongoing debates about the right to die with dignity and the role of medical professionals in end-of-life care.

Big Ideas: Ethical Thought Experiments

Two Variations on the Trolley Problem (inspired by Philippa Foot and Judith Thomson):

- **The Heavyset Koopa Problem** (inspired by the Fat Man variation): In this variation, Princess Peach is standing on a bridge overlooking the same runaway kart scenario. This time, however, there is no lever to divert the kart. Instead, Peach notices a heavyset Koopa nearby who, if pushed onto the track, would be large enough to stop the kart, saving the five Toads but sacrificing the Koopa in the process. This scenario further complicates the moral calculus involved in these decisions, as it requires Peach to actively harm one individual to save a larger group.
- **The Looping Racetrack Problem** (inspired by the Loop variation): In this variation, Princess Peach faces a similar runaway kart scenario, but with a twist. The racetrack loops back on itself, meaning that if the kart is diverted, it will eventually come back and endanger the original five Toads. This scenario challenges utilitarian reasoning by forcing Peach to consider the long-term consequences of her actions and whether her intervention could potentially create a greater harm.

The Koopa Monster (inspired by Nozick's Utility Monster): In this thought experiment, Princess Peach encounters a hypothetical creature called the "Koopa Monster" that derives much more pleasure from consuming resources, like mushrooms and fire flowers, than any Toad or fellow Mushroom Kingdom inhabitant could. According to utilitarianism, it would be morally right to give all available resources to the Koopa Monster, as it would maximize overall happiness. This thought experiment challenges the idea that maximizing utility should be the sole basis for moral decision-making in the Mushroom Kingdom.

The Shy Guy Alchemist (inspired by Bernard William's "George the Chemist"). In this thought experiment, Princess Peach learns about a skilled Shy Guy alchemist who is faced with a moral dilemma. The Shy Guy is an expert in creating magical potions but strongly opposes using his knowledge to create harmful substances. However, he is offered a high-paying job by a powerful Koopa organization to develop dangerous potions, which could be used to harm the inhabitants of the Mushroom Kingdom. The Shy Guy alchemist knows that if he refuses the job, the Koopa organization

will simply hire someone else, who is less morally scrupulous and more competent, potentially causing even more harm. He also needs the income from the job to support his family.

This scenario challenges utilitarianism by questioning whether it is morally acceptable for the Shy Guy alchemist to engage in an action that he finds morally repugnant, even if the consequences of not doing so may be worse. Princess Peach must grapple with the complexities of this situation, as it forces her to consider the trade-offs and moral costs associated with utilitarian decision-making in the Mushroom Kingdom.

The Overpopulated Mushroom Kingdom (inspired by Derek Parfit's Repugnant Conclusion): Princess Peach is asked to imagine a version of the Mushroom Kingdom with a vast population of Toads living barely above the level of misery but with a high total happiness due to its sheer size. According to some interpretations of utilitarianism, this overpopulated Mushroom Kingdom would be preferable to a smaller population with a higher average happiness. This conclusion may be considered repugnant, as it suggests that creating a large number of Toads with very low levels of well-being could be morally justified.

The Bob-omb Violinist (inspired by Judith Jarvis Thomson's Violinist Analogy): In this scenario, Princess Peach wakes up to find herself connected to a famous, unconscious Bob-omb violinist who needs her energy to survive for nine months. (Importantly, the Bob-omb violinist didn't hook itself up. Instead, Bowser did!). If she disconnects from the violinist, they will explode. The question is whether it is morally permissible for Peach to disconnect herself, even if it results in the Bob-omb violinist's explosion. This thought experiment raises questions about the balance between utilitarian calculations and individual rights in the Mushroom Kingdom, and the extent to which its inhabitants are obligated to help others at the expense of their own well-being.

Discussion Questions

- How does utilitarianism differ from other ethical theories, such as deontological ethics or virtue ethics? Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
- How do the ideas of Epicurus, Mozi, Bentham, and Mill build upon and differ from one another in the development of utilitarianism? How have their contributions shaped the utilitarian tradition?
- Compare and contrast hedonistic utilitarianism and preference utilitarianism. What are the main differences between these two forms of utilitarianism, and what implications do they have for ethical decision-making?
- How do the works of Peter Singer and Helga Kuhse exemplify the application of utilitarianism to contemporary ethical issues? Discuss the impact of their ideas on animal rights, global poverty, and bioethics.
- Utilitarianism is often criticized for potentially justifying morally repugnant actions if they lead to the greatest overall happiness. How might a utilitarian respond to this criticism? Are there any limits to the pursuit of happiness in utilitarianism?
- Examine the role of individual rights and liberties in utilitarianism. How do utilitarian thinkers, such as John Stuart Mill, address the potential conflicts between the greater good and individual freedoms?

- How can the utilitarian principle of maximizing overall happiness be applied in public policy and governance? Discuss the challenges and benefits of implementing utilitarianism in policymaking.
- Explore the concept of "effective altruism" as it relates to utilitarian ethics. How does this movement apply utilitarian principles to philanthropy, and what are the implications for individual moral obligations?
- How does the feminist utilitarian perspective, as exemplified by Harriet Taylor Mill, contribute to the discussion of gender equality and women's rights? What are the strengths and limitations of utilitarianism in addressing gender-based ethical issues?
- Consider the role of the hedonic calculus in utilitarian decision-making. How practical is this method for weighing the potential pleasure and pain resulting from different actions? What challenges might arise in applying this approach to real-world ethical dilemmas?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Act utilitarianism	A subset of utilitarianism which states that an action is right if it maximizes overall happiness in a particular situation. Contrast with rule utilitarianism.
Diminishing Marginal Utility	An economic principle stating that as a person increases consumption of a product, the utility or satisfaction gained from each additional unit decreases.
Drowning child	An ethical thought experiment by Singer, which argues for the moral obligation to help others in immediate life-threatening situations if we can do so at minimal cost to ourselves.
Effective altruism	A philosophy and social movement which applies evidence and reason to determine the most effective ways to benefit others.
Epicurus	An ancient Greek philosopher who advocated for a life of moderate pleasure free from pain, fear, and mental distress.
Experience Machine	A thought experiment by philosopher Robert Nozick questioning hedonistic utilitarianism, wherein people can plug into a machine that provides perfect, indistinguishable-from-reality pleasure.
Harriet Taylor Mill	A British philosopher and women's rights advocate, who influenced and contributed to John Stuart Mill's work, including his theories on utilitarianism.
Hedonistic utilitarianism	A form of utilitarianism that sees pleasure as the only intrinsic good and pain as the only intrinsic evil. Contrast with preference utilitarianism.
Higher pleasures	A concept from Mill's philosophy referring to intellectual and moral pleasures that are more valuable than physical ones.
Jeremy Bentham	A British philosopher who is considered the founder of modern utilitarianism.
Jian'ai	A term from Mohist philosophy meaning "impartial care" or "universal love", promoting equal affection towards all beings.
John Stuart Mill	A British philosopher who expanded upon Bentham's ideas of utilitarianism, focusing on qualitative measures of happiness.
Lower pleasures	A concept from Mill's philosophy that pertains to bodily and sensual pleasures.
Maximizing utilitarianism	A form of utilitarianism that aims to achieve the highest possible level of utility in each situation. Contrast with satisficing utilitarianism.
Mozi	An ancient Chinese philosopher who proposed universal love (Jian'ai) and aligned it with the will of heaven.
Peter Singer	A contemporary philosopher known for his work on utilitarianism, animal rights, and effective altruism.
Preference utilitarianism	A form of utilitarianism that considers satisfying individual preferences as the basis for determining the best outcome. Contrast with hedonistic utilitarianism.

Repugnant Conclusion	A term in population ethics, referring to a counterintuitive outcome of some utilitarian views, where very large populations with very low quality of life could be seen as optimal.
Rule utilitarianism	A branch of utilitarianism that proposes the adoption of rules that, if universally followed, would lead to the greatest good. Contrast with act utilitarianism.
Satisficing utilitarianism	A variation of utilitarianism which suggests that an act is morally right if it results in a satisfactory level of overall happiness, rather than the maximum possible.
Speciesism	The idea, critiqued by Singer, that humans have greater moral rights or value than non-human animals purely based on species membership.
Utilitarianism	An ethical theory that promotes actions leading to the greatest good for the greatest number of individuals.
Utility Monster	A thought experiment critiquing utilitarianism, involving a hypothetical being who gains much more utility from resources than others.
Will of heaven	In Mohism, it refers to the divine will or the moral guide which human actions should align with.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke

2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

3.

CHAPTER 3: DUTY CALLS—EXPLORING DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS

> "The only thing that can be unreservedly deemed good, whether in the world or beyond it, is a good will [that is, our human capacity to act out of respect for moral law or duty, rather than out of self-interest or desire]. Mental abilities like intelligence, wit, and judgement, as well as qualities of character like courage, determination, and persistence, are no doubt valuable in many ways. But these natural talents can become harmful if used by a person with a bad will or character. The same goes for the gifts of life such as power, wealth, respect, health, and happiness. These can lead to pride and arrogance if not tempered by a good will, which can keep these influences in check and guide our actions towards a meaningful purpose. Seeing someone without any trace of a good will, yet constantly successful, would never bring joy to an unbiased, rational observer. Therefore, having a good will seems to be an essential prerequisite to be truly deserving of happiness." (Immanuel Kant – The Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals)

In this chapter, you'll be summoned by duty to delve into the world of deontological ethics. This ethical theory, in sharp contrast to consequentialist ones like utilitarianism, posits that moral rightness or wrongness depends on factors other than the consequences of an action, such as intentions, the nature of the action itself, and individual duties and rights.

To bring deontological ethics to life, we open with a tale titled 'The Golem's Code'. Here, you'll meet Clodsley, a unique golem with a moral awareness and an unwavering desire to be good. His adventures serve as an exploration of deontological principles in action. Complementing this narrative are discussion questions that invite you to delve deeper, fostering reflection, critical analysis, and greater comprehension of these ethical concepts.

In the 'Big Ideas' section, you'll first encounter The Golden Rule, a universally recognized principle that serves as an elementary starting point in deontological thinking. This fundamental moral maxim will lay the groundwork for more complex ethical frameworks.

Following this, you'll be introduced to the profound thinking of Immanuel Kant, a luminary in the world of deontological ethics. As we delve into Kantian ethics, we'll address some of its most complex elements, such as the "Murder at the Door" problem, while examining Kant's belief in the inherent goodness of the will and his renowned moral law, the categorical imperative.

As we continue, you'll be introduced to Rossian Deontology, based on the ideas of W.D. Ross. His

theory offers a pluralistic approach to deontological ethics, recognizing the existence of multiple, often conflicting, moral duties.

Story: The Golem's Code (An Exploration of Deontology)

(With apologies to Terry Pratchett)

Once upon a time, in a world as flat as a pancake, but without any syrup on top, there lived a golem by the name of Clodsley. Golems were artificial creatures made of clay, brought to life by a series of words written on a piece of parchment and placed in their mouths. Clodsley was no different, except for his unusual love of philosophy and his unwavering desire to be good.

Now, Clodsley had been crafted by a talented yet rather eccentric wizard named Mordecai. Mordecai had an unconventional approach to life, which mostly involved brewing odd potions and inventing bizarre contraptions. One day, while trying to repair a malfunctioning device that converted the sound of flatulence into a calming breeze, Mordecai accidentally knocked an old book of philosophical ethics into Clodsley's mouth, and was unable to get it out, however hard he tried. As a result, Clodsley became the first golem to possess moral awareness, and he made it his mission to be a paragon of goodness. In his pursuit of virtue, he chanced upon the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." This seemed like a perfectly sensible approach to ethics, so Clodsley decided to adopt it as his guiding maxim.

At first, everything went swimmingly. Clodsley would go out of his way to help people, lend a hand or a sturdy clay limb, and generally make the world a better place. But then, he encountered a series of philosophical conundrums that began to muddy the once-clear waters of his morality. For example, Clodsley was a golem, which meant that he had no sense of taste or hunger. He wondered, if he were to follow the Golden Rule literally, should he stop offering food to humans, since he himself had no need for it? After much contemplation and a series of misadventures involving confused chefs and disgruntled diners, Clodsley realized that the Golden Rule wasn't a one-size-fits-all solution. Perhaps, he mused, it required some adjustments based on context and individual difference.

With this in mind, Clodsley set off on a philosophical journey to explore the various nuances of the Golden Rule. This took him to the far reaches of the world, from the bustling streets of Granite City to the ancient libraries of Uberwald. Along the way, he encountered met with many interesting denizens of the realm who offered their own interpretations of the rule, including a troll who believed in the "Rockin' Rule" (a much heavier version of the Golden Rule), and a sentient cabbage who proposed the "Green Rule" (which mostly involved composting and sustainable farming). Like Clodsley, though, they struggled to apply the rule to beings utterly unlike themselves.

Clodsley's adventures led him to the esteemed philosopher, Bertrand de Whimsley, who was known for his ability to weave intricate webs of thought using only a piece of string, a teacup, and a small, rubbery octopus. (I advise you not to think too hard about the details here.) Intrigued by Clodsley's quest, de Whimsley agreed to help him untangle the complex threads of the Golden Rule.

Together, they delved into the depths of moral philosophy, debating questions such as: Should we always treat others as we wish to be treated, or are there times when it is morally justified to deviate from the rule? How can we account for the huge differences in the preferences of individuals when applying the Golden Rule? And, most importantly, can one truly be good in a world where evil is often just a poorly-worded wish away?

Armed with this knowledge, Clodsley continued his journey, applying the (now carefully modified

and caveated) Golden Rule with a newfound sense of wisdom and empathy. But it wasn't long before he encountered more situations where the rule didn't quite work as intended.

One day, Clodsley stumbled upon a group of adventurers who were preparing to enter a mysterious dungeon. Feeling obligated to assist them, he offered to carry their heavy equipment. However, the adventurers, fearing that Clodsley's lumbering form would give away their position to lurking monsters, politely declined and, in fact, told him they would much rather he stay outside. Confused, Clodsley realized that, as a golem, he had no need for stealth or concern about danger, and thus the Golden Rule didn't perfectly apply in this situation.

In another instance, Clodsley came across a masochistic hedgehog who enjoyed being stepped on. The creature begged Clodsley to stomp on him, claiming it would bring him great pleasure. Clodsley hesitated, for while he would certainly not enjoy being stepped on by a being that exceeded his size in the way he exceeded the hedgeho's, he knew that the hedgehog's preferences were different from his own. He eventually decided to comply, albeit with extreme caution, to respect the hedgehog's wishes.

As Clodsley continued to observe the world around him, he noticed that humans, too, were not always adept at following the Golden Rule. He saw people who took advantage of others, politicians who prioritized their own interests over those of their constituents, and even seemingly ordinary folk who would cut in line or steal a parking space without a second thought. It became clear to Clodsley that following the Golden Rule required not just understanding of the nuances of rule-following, but also commitment and willingness to investigate one's own moral foible.

Clodsley Reads Kant

And so, Clodsley's philosophical journey continued. Upon hearing of a renowned philosopher named Immanuel Kant, whose ideas were said to be as difficult to grasp as a greased-up eel wearing roller skates, Clodsley became intrigued. With a renewed sense of curiosity, he set out to learn more about Kant's theories and how they might further refine his understanding of morality. After consulting with the wise and insufferably smug librarian at the local university, Clodsley found himself buried beneath a mountain of books written in an obscure language called "German" (he'd never heard of such a country), each one more impenetrable than the last. Despite the challenges, he persevered, determined to unravel the secrets of Kant's moral philosophy.

Kant's ethics centered around the concept of the "categorical imperative," a set of moral principles that must be followed without exception. Clodsley learned that, according to Kant, an action is morally right if it can be universalized, meaning that everyone should be able to perform the same action without contradiction. This idea seemed quite appealing to Clodsley, as it appeared to offer a more structured approach to morality than the Golden Rule. With the categorical imperative in mind, Clodsley embarked on a new series of adventures, eager to put Kant's theories to the test. He found that, in many situations, the categorical imperative gave good guidance on how to act. For example, when faced with a thief attempting to steal a valuable artifact, Clodsley reasoned that if everyone were to steal everything they wanted, the concept of property would no longer have any meaning. Thus, he intervened, returning the artifact to its rightful owner.

However, Clodsley soon discovered that Kant's ideas were not without their own complications. He encountered a particularly tricky moral dilemma when a group of banshees captured a family and demanded that he help them with their project (of moving gravestones) e in exchange for the family's freedom. Clodsley was torn. According to the categorical imperative, he should not aid the banshees, as doing so would condone their immoral actions of kidnapping and terrifying the family. However, refusing to help them would put the innocent family in danger. As he pondered this dilemma, Clodsley

began to see the limitations of Kant's philosophy. While the categorical imperative provided a valuable framework for understanding morality, it sometimes led to morally counterintuitive outcomes. With a heavy clay heart, Clodsley decided to help the banshees and save the family, deciding that we would try to bring the criminals to justice at a later time.

About a week later, on a sunny afternoon, Clodsley found himself wandering through the bustling market square of Granite City, where the air was thick with the tantalizing scents of fried rat-on-a-stick and the cacophony of haggling merchants. Amidst the chaos, Clodsley spotted a man with a stall full of enchanting trinkets and (purportedly) magical devices. The man was all too eager to sell his wares, promising they could make golems such as himself appear more "humanlike" and talk more "normally."

As Clodsley observed the scene, he recalled the humanity formula, another aspect of Kant's categorical imperative that he had recently learned. (He guessed that golems would count as humans on Kant's definition.) The humanity formula held that one should always treat people as ends in themselves, and never merely as a means to an end. In simpler terms, it meant that using others solely for personal gain was ethically wrong. Clodsley decided that this was the perfect opportunity to put the humanity formula into practice. He noticed that the trinket-seller seemed to care little about the well-being of his customers, viewing them solely as a means to make a quick profit. A little research revealed that many of the devices were either faulty or dangerous, and the merchant's nervous smile and shifty eyes did little to assuage his concerns.

Determined to ensure that the people of Granite City were treated with the respect and dignity they deserved, Clodsley approached the merchant and struck up a conversation with him. He began by asking about the items on display, feigning interest in purchasing several of them. As the merchant gleefully extolled the virtues of his wares, Clodsley subtly steered the conversation towards the importance of honesty and ethical business practices. He regaled the merchant with stories of his own moral journey, peppering the tales with amusing anecdotes and clever wordplay that would have made even the Patrician of Granite City chuckle.

Gradually, the merchant's enthusiasm waned, and he began to reflect on his own actions. He realized that he had been treating his customers as mere stepping stones on his path to wealth, rather than as fellow human beings with their own needs and desires. Moved by Clodsley's words and the humanity formula, the merchant vowed to change his ways. He promised to treat his customers with kindness and respect, ensuring that the devices he sold were safe and genuinely useful. In doing so, he transformed his little stall into a haven of fair trade and ethical commerce, all thanks to the gentle guidance of a clay-hearted golem. (It should be noted, though, that this moral resolution only lasted until the next Monday, as such resolutions are wont to do).

Through his encounter with the trinket-seller, Clodsley discovered that the humanity formula, like the other ethical theories he had explored, offered valuable insights into the nature of goodness. While it did not provide a universal solution to every moral dilemma, it reminded him of the importance of treating others with the respect and dignity they deserved.

A Friendly Debate

One rainy afternoon, as Clodsley ambled through the cobblestone streets of Granite City, he encountered another golem by the name of Pebblo. Upon learning of Clodsley's philosophical adventures and fascination with Kantian "Deontology", Pebblo was challenged him to a philosophical debate. As it turned out, Pebblo was a firm believer in utilitarianism, a moral theory that focused on maximizing overall happiness and well-being.

The two golems, surrounded by a curious crowd of onlookers, began to debate each other. Clodsley, drawing upon his recent experiences with Kantian ethics, defended deontology, while Pebblo took the side of utilitarianism.

Pebblo began: "Deontological theories like Kant's can lead to morally counterintuitive outcomes. Imagine a situation all the inhabitants of a village have been cursed to uncontrollable flatulence. The only way to break the curse is to take a potion from a witch's cottage nearby. The witch happens to be gone on vacation, though, so it would require breaking into her cottage. Deontology might prevent you from stealing, even though doing so would save the village from further embarrassment and

discomfort, while utilitarianism would say it's better to alleviate the suffering of many at the expense of breaking a rule."

Clodsley countered, "Utilitarianism has its own problems. It can easily lead to the tyranny of the majority, where the happiness of the many is used to justify the suffering of the few. For example, imagine a village where a group of trolls is being oppressed for the amusement of the human population. A utilitarian might argue that it's morally acceptable (as long as the numbers of humans were sufficiently large, and the numbers of trolls sufficiently small), while a deontologist would say it's inherently wrong to treat others unjustly."

Pebblo nodded, acknowledging the point, and replied, "You're right, utilitarianism can struggle with issues of justice. But deontology also has difficulties handling conflicting duties. Suppose you yesterday promised to help a friend move a large, magical wardrobe, but when you wake up you discover that a different friend's house has been attacked by possessed garden gnomes. Kantian ethics doesn't provide a clear solution on which duty to prioritize."

Clodsley considered this carefully, nodding his stone head. He responded, "You are correct—deontology can be rigid. However, utilitarianism can be too demanding. It requires that we always act to maximize happiness, but this could lead to an endless cycle of self-sacrifice. Imagine a wizard who spends every moment of his life casting happiness spells for others, never allowing himself a moment's respite or joy. It seems wrong to think he is morally obligated in this way.

The Golems Discover Pluralism

As the debate continued, Clodsley and Pebblo realized that both deontology and utilitarianism had their strengths and weaknesses, and that neither provided a complete answer to the complexities of morality. That's when they heard a voice from the crowd say "You should adopt Rossian pluralism!". The voice belonged to a young witch named Elspeth. Shea explained that Rossian pluralism posited that there were several prima facie duties, or duties that should be followed in the absence of competing moral concerns. Some of these duties included fidelity, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice. According to Elspeth, when one was faced with a moral dilemma, one should carefully weigh these competing duties and determine which duty took precedence over the others.

Clodsley found this idea fascinating and, in his usual clay-hearted enthusiasm, was eager to put it into practice. He soon discovered that Rossian pluralism offered a more flexible approach to morality, allowing him to navigate complex ethical situations with greater ease than before. For instance, when he came across a group of bickering dwarfs arguing over who should have the last slice of an incredibly stinky cheese, Clodsley was able to help the group prioritize their competing desires based on the duties of beneficence and justice. The golem suggested they share the cheese and savor the unparalleled aroma together. The dwarfs, after a moment of contemplation and several stifled gags, agreed.

In a somewhat odder encounter, Clodsley came across an animated scarecrow named Strawman who was suffering from an existential crisis. Strawman's duties were to keep the crows away from the crops, but he had become friends with the very same crows and was now torn between his loyalties. Clodsley, applying Rossian pluralism, helped Strawman weigh the competing duties of fidelity to his farmer and the duty of beneficence towards his crow companions. Together, they devised a plan where Strawman would gently persuade the crows to find sustenance elsewhere (perhaps on the farm an especially annoying neighbor?), thus fulfilling both duties without resorting to conflict.

However, Clodsley soon realized that Rossian pluralism had its own weaknesses. For one, it lacked clear guidelines for determining which duty he should follow when several duties seemed equally

important. For example, Clodsley found himself in the middle of a heated dispute between two wizards, who were arguing over the possession of their last remaining pointy wizard hat. One wizard cited appealed to beneficence, stating that he "needed" the hat more since his bald head sunburned more easily. The other appealed to justice, noting that she (unlike her companion) had helped craft the last batch of wizard hats. Clodsley felt duty-bound to resolve the matter, but without a clear-cut solution, he was at a loss.

In this case, Clodsley was lucky enough to discover that the missing hats were stolen by a mischievous imp with a penchant for pointy headwear. The golem managed to apprehend the imp and return the hats, but he realized that Rossian pluralism did not always provide a straightforward answer to moral dilemmas.

As he continued his journey through the Discworld, Clodsley embraced the insights from many ethical theories, from the Golden Rule to Kant's categorical imperative and Rossian pluralism. He now well understoodthat the path to goodness was not a well-traveled and well-light highway, but rather a twisting, turning trail full of unexpected detours. With a heart of clay and a mind full of wisdom, Clodsley the golem became a beacon of hope and humor in a world that so desperately needed both. And as he navigated the tangled webs of morality, Clodsley reminded everyone he met that, in the pursuit of goodness, it was not the destination that mattered, but the journey itself.

Clodsley went on to author a number of books that explored various ideas related to deontological ethics and the work of more recent philosophers who worked in this area:

- *A Clay of Justice:* In this revisioning of John Rawls' "A Theory of Justice," Clodsley proposed principles that would govern a just society of golems. By employing a thought experiment called "the original mud pit," Clodsley argues for the "Golem-Difference Principle," which ensures that inequalities among golems are arranged to benefit the least advantaged, and the "Clay Veil of Ignorance," which requires golems to choose principles of justice without knowing their own position in society (as if they had clay veils across their eyes).
- *The Golem's View from Nowhere:* Inspired by Thomas Nagel's "The View from Nowhere," this books take up the challenge of reconciling a golem's subjective experiences with an objective, external world. The book delves into questions about the nature of golem consciousness, arguing that, like humans, golems possess subjective experiences that are both unique to the individual and limited in their ability to access an objective reality. Clodsley also addresses the limits of empathy and the possibility of a unified golem perspective, suggesting that understanding other golems' experiences requires a combination of empathy and objective analysis.
- *Constructing Golem Ethics:* Drawing on Onora O'Neill's work in ethical constructivism, Clodsley explores how golems can develop moral principles through a process of reflective equilibrium. Clodsley proposes a "golem categorical imperative," suggesting that golems ought to act according to maxims that could be universally applied to all golems without contradiction. Furthermore, he offers insights on the importance of trust and communication in golem communities, arguing that ethical relationships between golems depend on open dialogue and mutual understanding.
- *Golems, Animals, and the Morality of Clay:* Using Christine Korsgaard's exploration of animal ethics as a jumping off point, Clodsley examines the moral status of golems in relation to

other living beings. He argues that golems, as sentient and animated beings, deserve moral consideration like animals and humans. Clodsley addresses questions of moral considerability, the nature of suffering, and the ethical implications of a golem's existence as sentient, animated hunks of clay. He contends that golems, like both animals and humans, possess interests and the capacity for suffering, and as such, have moral claims that must be respected by humans and other golems alike.

These books, though lighthearted and filled with witty examples, marked Clodsley as the first golem philosopher, paving the way for a new generation of golems to explore and engage with the rich world of philosophical thought.

Discussion Questions: The Golem's Code

- How does Clodsley's understanding of the Golden Rule evolve throughout the story? What does this suggest about the simplicity or complexity of ethical theories?
- How does Clodsley apply Kant's Categorical Imperative to different situations? Discuss its effectiveness and shortcomings.
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of deontology and utilitarianism as presented in the debates between Clodsley and Pebblo. How does each theory handle the moral dilemmas presented?
- Elspeth introduces Rossian pluralism as a potential solution to the limitations of both deontology and utilitarianism. How does Clodsley put this into practice, and does it seem effective in the situations he encounters?
- How does Clodsley's application of Rossian pluralism help him resolve the moral dilemmas he encounters, such as the bickering dwarfs and Strawman's existential crisis? In what situations does Rossian pluralism seem less effective, and why?
- In his books, Clodsley explores concepts from contemporary philosophers like John Rawls, Thomas Nagel, Onora O'Neill, and Christine Korsgaard. Based on the brief summaries provided, how does Clodsley adapt these concepts to the context of golem society? What unique perspectives does his status as a golem bring to these philosophical discussions?

Big Ideas: The Golden Rule

Clodsley's first plodding steps toward a moral life start with the **Golden Rule**, a moral principle that is found in many different cultures and religions. It is often expressed in the phrase "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Golden Rule is based on the idea that we should treat others with the same respect and consideration that we would want to be treated with. The Golden Rule is found in the teachings of many different religions:

- Christianity: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." (Matthew 7:12)
- Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary." (Hillel)

- Islam: "None of you [truly] believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." (Bukhari)
- Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you." (Mahabharata)
- Buddhism: "Whatever is disagreeable to yourself, do not do unto others." (Dhammapada)
- Confucianism: "Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you." (Analects)

The Golden Rule is a simple principle, but it is also a very powerful one that is sufficient for many moral problems of everyday life. When we follow the Golden Rule, we are treating others with the same respect and consideration that we would want to be treated with. This can lead to a more peaceful and harmonious world.

Paradoxes of the Golden Rule. As Clodsley discovers, however, the Golden Rule isn't *sufficient* to solve all the ethical dilemmas he confronts. This is due to a number of well-known paradoxes regarding the Golden Rule:

- **The Subjectivity Paradox:** The Golden Rule, often expressed as "treat others as you would like to be treated," assumes that people share the same preferences and desires. However, this assumption leads to a paradox since individual preferences can vary widely. Treating others according to one's own preferences might inadvertently result in actions that are undesirable or harmful to others. For example, if Clodsley the golem prefers to be left alone when feeling upset, he might choose to leave a grieving friend alone, even though that friend might need companionship and support.
- **The Altruism Paradox:** The Golden Rule implies that one should act altruistically, treating others' interests as equal or superior to one's own. However, this can lead to a paradox where excessive altruism might result in neglecting one's own well-being. If Clodsley the golem continually prioritizes others' needs over his own, he could become exhausted and unable to help anyone effectively, ultimately diminishing the overall good that he could achieve.
- **The Reciprocity Paradox:** The Golden Rule can be interpreted as promoting reciprocity, expecting others to treat us as we treat them. However, this can lead to a paradox in situations where reciprocity is not guaranteed or where one party refuses to cooperate. For instance, if Clodsley the golem encounters an individual who refuses to treat others fairly, should Clodsley continue to treat that person according to the Golden Rule, or should he adjust his behavior to protect himself and others from potential harm?
- **The Specificity Paradox:** The Golden Rule is often praised for its simplicity and universal applicability. However, its generality can lead to a paradox when it comes to specific moral dilemmas. The rule provides no guidance on how to prioritize competing interests or resolve conflicts between multiple parties. For example, if Clodsley the golem is faced with a decision where helping one person harms another, the Golden Rule offers no clear guidance on how to proceed.

These paradoxes, among other things, lead Clodlsey to the ideas of Immanuel Kant.

Big Ideas: Kantian Ethics

Immanuel Kant (whose ideas Clodsley learns about) was born in Königsberg, Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia) on April 22, 1724. He was the fourth of nine children born to Johann Georg Kant, a harness maker, and Anna Regina Reuter Kant. Kant's father died when he was 9 years old, and his mother raised him and his siblings. Kant attended the local Pietist school, where he studied Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and mathematics. He then went on to study at the University of Königsberg, where he earned a degree in philosophy in 1749. After graduating, Kant worked as a private tutor for several years. In 1755, he was appointed to a professor ship of mathematics at the University of Königsberg. He held this position until his death in 1804.

Kant was a prolific writer, and he published over 100 books and articles during his lifetime. His most famous work is the *Critique of Pure Reason,* which was published in 1781. In this work, Kant argued that our knowledge of the world is limited to our own experience. He also argued that there are certain things that we can know **a priori**, or without experience.

Kant's moral philosophy is based on the idea of the **categorical imperative**. The categorical imperative is a moral principle that tells us to act only on those maxims that we can will to be universal laws. In other words, we should only do things that we would be willing for everyone to do, regardless of their personal circumstances orequence (Kant was NOT a utilitarian—in fact!). Kant's three versions of the categorical imperative are:

- The first version of the categorical imperative is the **formula of universal law**. It states that we should only act on those maxims that we can will to be universal laws.
- The second version of the categorical imperative is the **formula of humanity**. It states that we should treat humanity, both in ourselves and others, as an end in itself, and never as a means to an end. We must respect the **autonomy** of others (the fact that they can set their *own* goals in life).
- The third version of the categorical imperative is the **formula of the kingdom of ends**. It states that we should act as if we were a member of a kingdom of ends, where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

For Kant, the consequences of actions (for yourself or others) are technically speaking, *irrelevant*. Instead, what matters is that you do the right thing *because it is the right thing to do* (Kant calls acting in this way the **good will,** and holds it is the most valuable thing for humans).

Kant's moral philosophy has had a profound impact on Western thought. His ideas have been debated and discussed by philosophers for centuries. Today, Kant's work is still relevant and influential, and it continues to be studied and taught in universities around the world.

Applying the Categorical Imperative: Universal Law. The Universal Law formulation of the Categorical Imperative, as proposed by Immanuel Kant, dictates that one should act only according to maxims that can be consistently and universally applied. In other words, one should only do what they think everyone else should do in similar circumstances.

In the context of Clodsley the deontological golem, consider the following example: Clodsley encounters a situation where he can steal a loaf of bread to feed a hungry friend. Applying the Universal Law, Clodsley must consider whether he would want the principle "It is permissible to steal bread to

feed a hungry friend" to be universally applied. If everyone were to act on this principle, it would lead to a society where property rights and trust are undermined, making it inconsistent and unsustainable. As a result, Clodsley should refrain from stealing the bread.

Strengths:

- The Universal Law provides a clear and objective method for moral decision-making.
- It emphasizes consistency and rationality in moral actions.

Weaknesses:

- It can be inflexible, as it does not account for the complexities of real-world situations and the moral nuances they may entail.
- It might result in morally counterintuitive conclusions, as it disregards the consequences of actions.

Applying the Categorical Imperative: Humanity Formula. The Humanity Formula of the Categorical Imperative posits that one should treat humanity, both in oneself and others, as an end in itself and never merely as a means. This principle requires respecting the autonomy and dignity of individuals.

In Clodsley's world, imagine he is tasked with constructing a bridge. To complete the task quickly, he considers exploiting other golems by forcing them to work against their will. Applying the Humanity Formula, Clodsley recognizes that using other golems as mere means to achieve his goal would violate their dignity and autonomy. Instead, he should respect their intrinsic worth and seek their voluntary cooperation.

Strengths:

- The Humanity Formula promotes respect for the intrinsic worth and dignity of individuals, emphasizing the importance of treating others with fairness and compassion.
- It encourages moral agents to consider the effects of their actions on others.

Weaknesses:

- It can be overly demanding, as it requires individuals to always prioritize the dignity and autonomy of others, even in situations where doing so might lead to negative consequences.
- Its abstract nature can make it challenging to apply in specific situations.

Applying the Categorical Imperative: Kingdom of Ends. The Kingdom of Ends formulation of the Categorical Imperative envisions a hypothetical community where all individuals act as if they were both legislators and subjects in a realm of ends. In this ideal kingdom, everyone respects each other's autonomy and dignity, and moral actions are guided by principles that would be acceptable to all rational beings.

Clodsley, as a deontological golem, could strive to create a just society among golems by promoting a social order based on mutual respect and cooperation. In this Kingdom of Ends, Clodsley and his

fellow golems would only endorse laws and principles that honor the intrinsic worth of each golem and ensure fair treatment for all.

Strengths:

- The Kingdom of Ends concept emphasizes the importance of creating a just and harmonious society that respects the autonomy and dignity of all individuals.
- It encourages moral agents to consider the broader implications of their actions on the community.

Weaknesses:

- The concept relies on an idealized vision of society that may not be achievable in practice.
- It may not provide clear guidance for individuals facing moral dilemmas with conflicting duties or obligations.

The "Murder at the Door" Problem

The "Murderer at the Door" problem is a thought experiment that challenges Kantian ethics, specifically the principle of the Categorical Imperative and its insistence on telling the truth as a moral duty. The problem was first introduced by German philosopher Immanuel Kant himself in his book "Critique of Practical Reason."

In this scenario, imagine a villainous character comes knocking at Clodsley's door, seeking the whereabouts of a fellow golem who is hiding inside Clodsley's house. If Clodsley tells the truth, he would reveal the hiding golem's location, and the villain would likely harm or destroy them. If Clodsley lies, he would protect his fellow golem but violate the moral duty to tell the truth, as prescribed by Kant's Categorical Imperative.

The dilemma highlights a potential conflict between two moral duties for Clodsley: the duty to tell the truth and the duty to protect an innocent golem's life. According to Kantian ethics, lying is always morally wrong, as it violates the Categorical Imperative's principle of universalizability – one should not act on maxims that cannot be universally applied without contradiction. If all golems were to lie, trust and communication would break down, leading to an inconsistent and unsustainable golem society.

However, many inhabitants of Clodsley's world would argue that lying to the villain would be the morally right thing to do in this situation, as it protects an innocent golem's life. This counterargument suggests that Kant's moral framework may be too rigid and dogmatic, even for golems, as it does not account for the nuances and complexities of real-world situations where consequences matter.

The "Murderer at the Door" problem, as applied to Clodsley, raises questions about the limits of Kantian ethics and whether a strict adherence to the Categorical Imperative is always the best approach to moral decision-making for golems (or for the rest of us!). It invites further discussion about the role of consequences in determining the morality of actions and the need for more flexible ethical frameworks that can accommodate exceptional circumstances, even in a fantastical world.

Partially in response to problems such as this, some deontological thinkers argued that Kantian ideas needed to be "relaxed" to admit utilitarian considerations as well. This brings us to Rossian pluralism.

Big Ideas: Rossian Deontology

Rossian Deontology, often referred to as Rossian ethics, is a non-absolutist moral theory proposed by the British philosopher W. D. Ross in his book "The Right and the Good" (1930). This theory is a form of deontological ethics, meaning it focuses on the moral duties and rules we should follow, but it differs from other deontological theories such as those proposed by Immanuel Kant.

Ross's theory is grounded in the concept of "**prima facie duties**," a term which can be somewhat misleading as it translates to "on first appearance." However, in this context, it doesn't mean these duties are superficial or deceptive, but rather that they are self-evident moral obligations that should generally be followed, unless they come into conflict with another duty that is more pressing in a particular situation.

Ross identified several prima facie duties, including:

- **Fidelity**: This refers to the duty to keep promises and be honest. For example, if you promise to help a friend move, you have a prima facie duty to do so.
- **Reparation**: This involves the duty to correct any wrongs you have done. If you accidentally break a neighbor's window while playing baseball, for example, you have a duty to repair it or pay for the damages.
- **Gratitude**: This is the duty to show thankfulness towards others who have helped us. If someone helps you study for a test, you have a duty to express your gratitude.
- **Justice**: This refers to the duty to ensure a fair distribution of pleasure and pain. If you're in charge of dividing a cake at a party, you have a duty to divide it equally among the guests.
- **Beneficence**: This involves the duty to improve the conditions of others. For instance, if you see someone struggling to carry heavy boxes, you have a duty to offer your help if you're able.
- **Self-improvement**: This is the duty to better oneself in areas like virtue and intelligence. For instance, you have a duty to educate yourself and strive to be a kind and considerate person.
- **Non-maleficence**: This refers to the duty not to harm others. If you're driving, for instance, you have a duty to drive carefully to avoid causing harm to pedestrians or other drivers.

Ross's theory is a type of **ethical pluralistic** because it holds that there are many intrinsic goods and many types of duties, and no single duty always takes precedence over the others. Instead, the right course of action depends on the specifics of the situation.

For example, imagine you have a job interview that could lead to a significant improvement in your life (self-improvement), but on the way, you witness a car accident where you could potentially help (beneficence and non-maleficence). Rossian ethics doesn't provide a fixed rule to determine which duty takes precedence. Instead, it calls for you to consider all relevant duties and make a judgement based on the particulars of the situation, including the urgency, the number of people affected, the degree of potential harm or benefit, and other factors.

Rossian Deontology is therefore a more flexible form of deontology, one that acknowledges the complexities of real-life moral decisions. However, this flexibility can also make it more challenging

to apply, as it often requires careful judgement and doesn't provide clear-cut answers to every moral dilemma.

Discussion Questions

- In general, how do "deontological" theories of ethics differ from "consequentialist" theories (such as utilitarianism)?
- How do the Golden Rule, Kantian ethics, and Rossian ethics conceptualize duty and obligation? What are the key similarities and differences?
- In what ways does the Golden Rule fall short as a complete moral system? Can you think of any situations where applying the Golden Rule might lead to morally problematic outcomes?
- Kant's categorical imperative requires that we act according to maxims that can be universally applied. Are there any circumstances where this approach could lead to impractical or unjust results?
- Rossian ethics proposes multiple prima facie duties that might sometimes conflict. How does this approach provide more flexibility than Kantian ethics? Can you think of any potential disadvantages to this flexibility?
- Imagine you're a doctor with five patients who need organ transplants and one healthy patient who could provide the organs. How would the different forms of deontology guide your decision-making process in this difficult situation?
- How might Kantian ethics and Rossian ethics guide you in a situation where you have to decide between telling a painful truth to a friend and sparing their feelings with a white lie?
- If you were a leader deciding on policies to address social inequality, how might your approach differ based on the Golden Rule, Kantian ethics, and Rossian ethics?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Deontology	A branch of ethics that judges the morality of an action based on the action's adherence to a rule or rules, and not (simply) by the consequences of the action.
Golden Rule	A fundamental moral principle which states that you should treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.
Golden Rule Paradox: Subjectivity	A critique of the Golden Rule, stating that it assumes everyone's desires are the same, overlooking the diversity of human desires.
Golden Rule Paradox: Altruism	A critique of the Golden Rule that points out its potential to demand self-sacrifice to the point of self-neglect, if it's interpreted to mean always putting others' needs before one's own.
Golden Rule Paradox: Reciprocity paradox	A critique of the Golden Rule, stating that it fails when the other party can't or won't reciprocate the treatment given.
Golden Rule Paradox: Specificity	A critique of the Golden Rule arguing that it offers no guidance for resolving conflicts between competing duties or interests.
Immanuel Kant	An influential German philosopher known for his work in epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics.
The Good Will	In Kantian ethics, this refers to the will to perform a duty solely for the sake of duty, and not for any consequential benefit.
Categorical Imperative: Universal Law	Kant's first formulation of the Categorical Imperative, which states that one should only act in such a way that the maxim of the action could be universally applied.
Categorical Imperative: Humanity Formula	Kant's second formulation of the Categorical Imperative, which requires that we treat humanity, both in ourselves and in others, always as an end and never merely as a means.
Categorical Imperative: Kingdom of Ends	Kant's third formulation of the Categorical Imperative, suggesting that we should act as if we live in a kingdom where everyone treats each other as ends in themselves and never merely as means.
WD Ross	A 20th-century British philosopher known for developing a pluralistic form of deontological ethics, which he referred to as "multiple-strand ethics."
Prima Facie Duty	A term introduced by WD Ross, referring to our immediate duties that appear to be morally binding at first glance, unless they conflict with a stronger duty.
Ethical pluralism	The theory that there are many principles or goods, none of which can be reduced to the other.
Fidelity	The ethical principle that emphasizes loyalty, faithfulness, and the honoring of commitments and obligations.
Beneficence	An ethical principle that refers to acts of kindness, charity, and doing good for others.

Nonmaleficence	An ethical principle which states that we should not cause harm to others.
Reparation	An ethical principle that refers to the moral obligation to correct or make up for a wrong done to another.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

4.

CHAPTER 4: VIRTUE ETHICS—THE ROLE OF CHARACTER IN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

> "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." – Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics
>
> "To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right." – Confucius, The Great Learning

In this chapter, you'll embark on an exploration of virtue ethics, an approach that seeks to answer the fundamental questions, "What does it mean to be a good person? And how can I become one?" Virtue ethics diverges from other moral theories by focusing on the character of the moral agent rather than the act or the consequences. This approach views virtues – traits like wisdom, courage, kindness, and justice – as central to leading a morally good life.

Our exploration begins with a captivating tale called "Unaltered Virtue," set in the intricate city of Eudaimon. Through the journey of Prudence, a young citizen facing a defining rite of passage, you'll delve into a world where virtues can be genetically imprinted, shedding light on the nuances and complexities of virtue ethics in action. Alongside the story, discussion questions will prompt deeper thought and reflection on these concepts.

The chapter further delves into 'Big Ideas', starting with Aristotelian virtue ethics. Aristotle's profound insights into moral virtue and the concept of eudaimonia – a flourishing life – serve as the cornerstone of our understanding of this approach.

We will also venture beyond Aristotle, exploring diverse interpretations and applications of virtue ethics from different cultures and perspectives, including Confucianism with its focus on "Ren" or benevolence, Dharma-based virtue ethics from Ancient India, the African philosophy of Ubuntu, and Care Ethics, which is a feminist approach that emphasizes relationships and caring as moral virtues.

A section on contemporary debates adds another layer to the discourse, focusing on issues related to genetic engineering and moral enhancement. This engages with provocative questions about the implications of technology on our understanding and practice of virtues.

Story: Unaltered Virtue

The day was growing dim, and a luminous orange haze painted the horizon, illuminating the imposing city of Eudaimon. Nestled within valleys of metal and rivets, the sprawling metropolis was a testament

to the union of human ambition and machinery, a vast labyrinth of steam-driven technologies and elaborate bronze edificacies, punctuated by the rhythmic echoes of clanking gears and whirring pistons.

This was Prudence's realm, a labyrinth of possibility and purpose. Born of this city, she was more than just its inhabitant. She was its daughter, its testament, and soon to be, its beacon of virtuous transformation.

Her hair was a tempest of burnished copper curls, mirroring the hues of the city that birthed her. Her eyes, twin orbs of rich mahogany, shimmered with the flame of inquisitiveness, always seeking, forever questioning. There was an energy about her, a restless vitality, as though she was a gear cog forever revolving in the clockwork of her existence.

On the eve of her 18th birthday, as was tradition, she was due to choose a virtue to be genetically imprinted upon her being, a defining attribute to guide her path in the machinations of her society.

The virtues were many; wisdom, courage, humility, honesty, a veritable lexicon of human strength and kindness. The process, once an outlandish concept, had now become a rite

As her eighteenth year approached, Prudence wandered the city, watching its people, contemplating the virtues that shaped their existence. She observed the enigmatic artists, blessed with creativity, their fingers stained with ink and color, as they drew forth wondrous creations from the depths of their souls. She beheld the scholars, gifted with wisdom, their minds a labyrinth of knowledge, as they explored the mysteries of the universe and unwound the puzzles of time.

Prudence stumbled upon the more peculiar and unique citizens, those who had walked unexpected roads. She came across a woman who had chosen infinite patience, now sitting by a river, eternally tranquil, awaiting the day the waters would reveal their secrets. She met a man, graced with ceaseless curiosity, whose mind thirsted constantly for new discoveries, and who had become the keeper of the city's complex library, forever entangled in its maze of words.

However, not all who wandered the city's twisting streets had chosen their virtues wisely, however. In the shadows of the gleaming towers, a darker world thrived, a realm of lost souls who had succumbed to the alluring allure of virtues that twisted and corrupted them. As Prudence's eighteenth year drew near, she sought them out – a quest driven by curiosity, fueled by her desire to learn from their mistakes.

She encountered a man who had chosen ambition – unyielding, insatiable – and had soared to greatness like a comet streaking across the night. But as ambition's fire consumed him, his heart grew cold, and his once-vibrant eyes reflected only an abyss of emptiness. He had lost all he held dear, and still, he hungered for more. In another of the city's forgotten corners, Prudence found a woman who had sought eternal beauty. Her skin, flawless porcelain; her hair, spun gold. Yet, her pursuit had led her to a prison of vanity, where her reflection was both her captor and her only companion. Her laughter, once like the tinkling of silver bells, had faded into a hollow echo. Finally, there was the boy who had chosen the gift of absolute honesty, believing it a righteous virtue. His words became a torrent of truth, unfiltered and merciless, and he watched as relationships crumbled around him. Friendless and alone, he wandered the city's streets, haunted by the ghosts of his own words.

The Unmodified

Prudence wandered through the marketplace, her senses awash in the sights, sounds, and smells of the city. The air was thick with the scent of spices and flowers, and the sound of laughter and music filled the air. She paused to admire a stall of bioluminescent blooms, their petals glowing like stars in the night. As she turned away, she caught sight of a small, unassuming wooden booth tucked away in an alcove. Atop the booth hung a sign, its letters etched in an elegant script: "The Unmodified."

Prudence's curiosity piqued, she drew closer to the booth. Behind it stood an old man, his hair a shock of silver, cascading to his shoulders, and his beard a snowy tuft. His eyes were warm and wise, and his smile was gentle.

"Hello," he said. "My name is Areté. What can I do for you?"

"I'm Prudence," she replied. "I was drawn to your sign. What does it mean?"

"It means that I am an unmodified human," Areté said. "I have not chosen to have my genes modified, as is the custom in this city."

Prudence was surprised. "Why not?" she asked.

"Because I believe that true virtue cannot be achieved through genetic engineering," Areté said. "It must be cultivated through deliberate practice and self-reflection. I believe that each of us has a unique purpose in life, and that the only way to truly live is to discover and fulfill that purpose."

Prudence was intrigued by Areté's words. She had never thought about it that way before.

"Can you tell me more?" she asked.

And so Areté began to speak. He spoke of eudaimonia, the ultimate goal for humans – a flourishing life, rich in happiness and fulfillment. He spoke of **phronesis,** practical wisdom – the ability to discern the best course of action in a given situation. He spoke of **teleology,** the notion that everything in the universe has a purpose, and that the essence of a virtuous life lay in fulfilling one's unique purpose or function.

With a glimmer in his eyes, he described the doctrine of the mean – finding the balance between excess and deficiency in one's actions and emotions. He explained that virtues such as courage, generosity, and patience were not fixed points, but rather, lay in the equilibrium of each individual's character.

As Prudence listened to Areté, she noticed a gentle figure approaching from behind the booth. The woman, with her long silver hair braided in an elegant style, exuded a sense of calm and grace as she joined the conversation. Areté introduced her as his wife, Lian, a devoted Confucian who, like her husband, had refused the city's tradition of genetic virtue implantation.

Lian began by highlighting the similarities between her own beliefs and those of her husband. Both Confucianism and Aristotelian virtue ethics placed emphasis on the cultivation of virtues through a lifetime of practice and self-reflection. She explained that, in Confucian thought, virtues such as ren, or benevolence, and li, or propriety, were essential in achieving harmony within oneself and society.

The key difference, Lian noted, lay in the focus of each philosophy. While Aristotle's virtue ethics revolved around individual flourishing and eudaimonia, Confucianism placed greater importance on the interconnectedness of individuals within society. The ultimate goal of a Confucian was to bring about social harmony through the practice of virtues and the adherence to the proper rituals and relationships.

She spoke of the Five Constant Virtues – benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity – that shaped the Confucian path. These virtues were not merely qualities to be possessed, but a way of life, woven into the fabric of one's daily existence. Lian described the importance of filial piety, the respect and devotion to one's parents and ancestors, as well as the significance of moral exemplars – individuals who embodied the virtues and served as guiding lights for others.

As Prudence listened to Lian's words, she found herself drawn to the idea of harmony – the delicate balance between the self and the world, the pursuit of virtues in the service of both personal and collective well-being. The girl with the starlit eyes and laughter like a forgotten melody now had two distinct paths before her, both rooted in the wisdom of ancient traditions, both promising a life of meaning and purpose.

Areté and Lian exchanged a knowing glance, seeing in Prudence's eyes the spark of curiosity and the desire to explore alternative paths. They offered to introduce her to their circle of friends, a group known as "The Unaltered" – individuals who had chosen to remain unmodified, embracing various philosophical traditions and the lifelong pursuit of virtue.

Together, they led Prudence to a secret courtyard hidden within the city's heart, a sanctuary where The Unaltered gathered. The place was an oasis of tranquility, bathed in the gentle glow of lanterns, with lush greenery and the soothing sound of a burbling fountain. Here, Prudence met the others, each a unique embodiment of their chosen path.

She met Ravi, a follower of Indian philosophy, who spoke of dharma, the inherent nature and moral duty of an individual. He explained the concept of karma, the belief that one's actions determine their

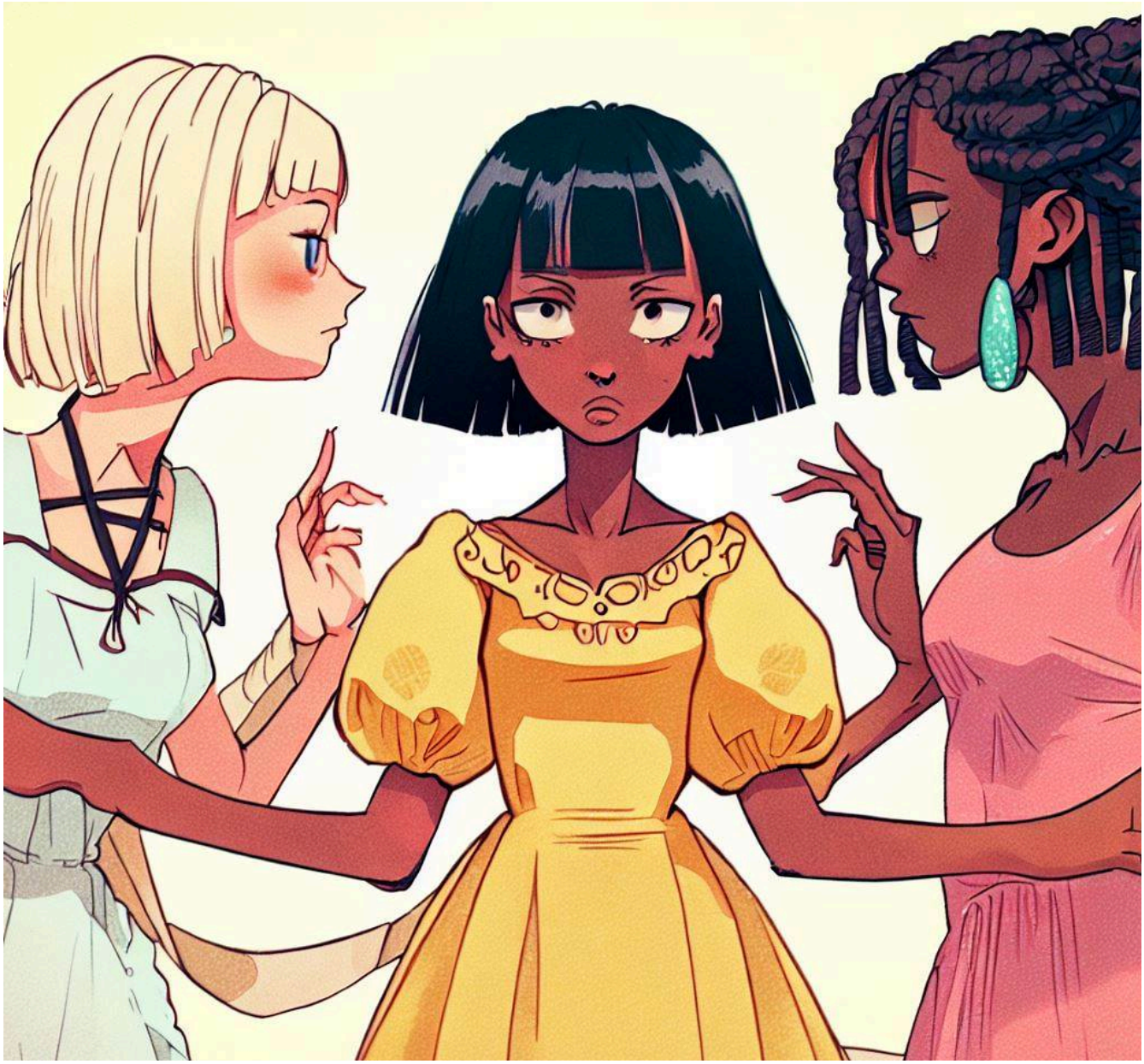
future, and the importance of living a life in accordance with one's dharma, to achieve harmony and balance.

Prudence was introduced to Amara, a devotee of African Ubuntu philosophy, who emphasized the interconnectedness of humanity. "I am because we are," she said, explaining that one's character and virtues could only be fully realized through relationships and interactions with others. Ubuntu highlighted the importance of compassion, empathy, and respect for the collective well-being.

There was also Sol, a student of Stoicism, who believed in the cultivation of inner strength and resilience in the face of life's challenges. He shared the Stoic principles of living in accordance with reason, practicing self-discipline, and seeking inner peace by recognizing the difference between what one could control and what one could not.

As Prudence listened to their stories, she marveled at the rich tapestry of virtue ethics from around the world, each offering a unique perspective on the journey of self-cultivation and the pursuit of a meaningful life. She felt a sense of kinship with The Unaltered, a connection born of the shared belief in the power of human potential, unbound by genetic modification.

The Argument



Prudence sat in the dimly lit room, her heart racing as she glanced at her two older sisters. Their presence, both comforting and intimidating, stirred a whirlwind of memories within her. Amelia, the eldest, had always been the pragmatic one—Prudence recalled the countless times Amelia had mediated their childhood disputes, weighing the pros and cons of each side with careful consideration. Cassia, the middle sister, was the embodiment of steadfastness, her unwavering sense of duty and moral principles guiding her actions.

As the sisters sat together, the room seemed to shrink, as if the weight of their collective history was pressing in on them. Prudence knew that she was about to embark on a journey that defied her sisters' beliefs, and the air crackled with unspoken tension.

Amelia was the first to speak, her voice steady but laden with concern. "Prudence, your decision to remain unaltered reminds me of when we were children, and you refused to accept help with your schoolwork. You were always determined to learn and grow on your own, but sometimes, accepting help can lead to greater understanding and success."

"My dear sisters," Amelia continued, "I respect your beliefs and your choices, but I must share my thoughts on why I believe genetic engineering, from a utilitarian perspective, can improve our world and maximize overall well-being."

She continued, "By genetically implanting virtues, we can create a society in which individuals possess the necessary qualities to contribute to the greater good. A person who is genetically engineered to be empathetic, for example, will be more inclined to consider the well-being of others in their actions, thereby reducing suffering and increasing happiness."

Addressing Prudence's newfound interest in virtue ethics, Amelia delved into her critique. "While I appreciate the focus on personal growth and self-cultivation, virtue ethics is, in many ways, a subjective and inconsistent approach to morality. What might be considered virtuous in one situation could lead to negative outcomes in another. In contrast, utilitarianism provides a clear, objective standard by which we can assess the morality of our actions: the maximization of happiness and minimization of suffering."

Amelia went on to express her concerns about the potential pitfalls of virtue ethics. "The emphasis on character traits and individual virtues can sometimes lead to a form of moral elitism, where those who have cultivated certain virtues may believe themselves to be morally superior to others. Genetic engineering, on the other hand, provides everyone with equal access to virtues, leveling the playing field and allowing each person to contribute positively to society."

She concluded her speech with an earnest plea. "I understand that the path of The Unaltered offers a rich tradition of self-cultivation and exploration, but I urge you both to consider the potential of genetic engineering as a powerful tool for achieving the greater good. The goal of utilitarianism is to create a world in which happiness and well-being are maximized, and genetic engineering, when applied ethically and responsibly, could be an invaluable means to that end."

Cassia chimed in, her voice gentle yet firm. "Prudence, I too, remember when you struggled to make decisions as a child, caught between your desire for personal growth and your fear of making the wrong choice. Your choice to remain unaltered echoes that same indecisiveness. Genetic engineering, when used responsibly, can be a tool for enhancing our capacity to contribute positively to the world."

"I appreciate the passion with which you both approach the question of ethics. While Amelia's utilitarian viewpoint has its merits, I believe that deontological ethics provides a more solid foundation for moral action."

Cassia continued, "Deontology is based on the premise that certain moral duties and principles are inherently right or wrong, regardless of the consequences. By adhering to these duties and principles, we are able to create a just and harmonious society, one in which individuals are respected and treated with dignity."

Turning her attention to Prudence's interest in virtue ethics, Cassia shared her concerns. "While the focus on personal growth and self-cultivation is admirable, virtue ethics leaves much room for subjectivity and ambiguity. Different people may interpret the virtues in different ways, and what might be considered a virtuous action in one situation could be deemed inappropriate in another. Deontological ethics, however, provides a clear and objective framework for moral decision-making, grounded in the unwavering commitment to moral principles and duties."

Cassia then addressed the potential shortcomings of virtue ethics. "By placing such emphasis on the cultivation of individual virtues, virtue ethics may inadvertently encourage a sense of moral complacency. One might believe that, by possessing certain virtues, they are inherently good,

regardless of their actions. In contrast, deontological ethics calls for an ongoing commitment to moral principles and duties, fostering a sense of responsibility and accountability for one's actions."

She then presented a deontological argument for genetic engineering, focusing on duties to family. "From a deontological standpoint, we have a duty to care for and support our parents, grandparents, and (yes) our sisters. Genetic engineering, when used responsibly, can provide an opportunity to uphold this duty by enhancing our capacity to contribute positively to the well-being of our loved ones. By choosing to enhance traits that allow us to more fully meet our moral principles and duties, we can create a harmonious balance between our deontological commitments and the potential benefits of genetic engineering."

Cassia concluded her speech with a heartfelt appeal. "Prudence, I understand the allure of The Unaltered and the wisdom of ancient traditions, but I encourage you to consider the importance of moral duties and principles in guiding our actions, as well as the potential benefits of responsible genetic engineering. By embracing the duties outlined in deontological ethics and carefully selecting virtues that enhance our ability to fulfill those duties, we can create a world that is just, compassionate, and grounded in unshakable moral principles."

As her sisters' words echoed in the room, Prudence felt a surge of gratitude for the love and respect they shared, despite their differing beliefs. With a heart full of emotion, she prepared to offer her own defense of virtue ethics and her choice to remain unaltered. "Amelia, Cassia," Prudence began, her starlit eyes shining with conviction, "I am deeply grateful for your insights and the care with which you've presented your arguments. Your perspectives have broadened my understanding, and I feel honored to call you both my sisters."

Prudence continued, "While utilitarianism and deontological ethics provide valuable frameworks for moral decision-making, I believe that virtue ethics offers a more holistic approach to ethical living. It focuses not only on our actions but also on the cultivation of our character, which ultimately shapes the decisions we make and the way we interact with the world."

Addressing the concerns raised by her sisters, Prudence offered a nuanced perspective. "I understand that virtue ethics can be subjective and open to interpretation, but it is precisely this flexibility that allows for personal growth and self-reflection. Virtue ethics encourages us to continually evaluate our character and strive for moral excellence, fostering a deep sense of empathy and understanding towards others."

She then defended her choice to remain unaltered. "I have chosen to join The Unaltered not because I dismiss the potential benefits of genetic engineering, but because I believe that the journey of self-cultivation, with its trials and triumphs, holds intrinsic value. Through the pursuit of virtue, we gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and our place in the world, fostering a sense of interconnectedness and shared responsibility."

Prudence further elaborated, "By choosing to cultivate virtues within ourselves, rather than relying on genetic engineering, we embrace the challenge of personal growth and take ownership of our moral development. In doing so, we nurture our capacity for moral discernment, allowing us to navigate the complexities of life with wisdom and compassion."

As she concluded her speech, Prudence's voice carried the weight of her conviction. "My dear sisters, I respect and admire your dedication to your chosen ethical paths. It is my hope that, by embracing the wisdom of virtue ethics and the challenge of self-cultivation, I can contribute to the well-being of our family and society, while honoring the beauty and richness of human potential."

Postscript

Years had passed since that fateful night when Prudence and her sisters had engaged in their emotional debate, their words weaving a tapestry of love, conviction, and memory. The choices each sister made that day had reverberated through the tapestry of their lives, shaping not only their paths but also the lives of those around them. Prudence had remained steadfast in her decision to live a life of arete, embracing the challenge of self-cultivation and personal growth. The virtues she chose to pursue—wisdom, courage, empathy, and integrity—became the cornerstones of her character, guiding her actions and decisions with unwavering dedication.

As a mother, Prudence nurtured her children with love and understanding, teaching them the importance of moral discernment and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of life. Her children grew up to be compassionate, wise, and resilient individuals, their own lives embodying the virtues their mother had instilled in them. Her influence extended beyond her family, touching the lives of her students, coworkers, and fellow citizens. As a teacher, she inspired her students to question, explore, and strive for moral excellence, guiding them on their journey toward self-discovery and growth. Her unwavering commitment to virtue ethics became a source of inspiration, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility within her community.

Discussion Questions: Unaltered Virtue

- How do the ethical theories of utilitarianism, deontological ethics, and virtue ethics differ in their approach to moral decision-making? How are these differences reflected in the perspectives of Amelia, Cassia, and Prudence?
- In what ways do the sisters' childhood experiences and memories inform their ethical beliefs and choices as adults? How do their childhood weaknesses relate to the ethical frameworks they adopt?
- How does Prudence's choice to remain unaltered and embrace virtue ethics affect her relationships with her family, students, and fellow citizens? Can you think of any potential drawbacks to her decision?
- What are some of the key virtues that Prudence pursues, and how do they manifest in her actions and decisions throughout the story? How do these virtues contribute to her sense of purpose and fulfillment?
- How does the story depict the balance between the sisters' love and respect for each other and their commitment to their respective ethical beliefs? What can we learn from their relationship about navigating disagreements on moral issues?
- How does the concept of arete, or moral excellence, influence Prudence's approach to self-cultivation and personal growth? Do you agree with her belief in the intrinsic value of this journey, or do you think genetic engineering can also play a role in moral development?
- Based on the story, what role does empathy and understanding play in the sisters' ethical journey? How does this contribute to their capacity for moral discernment and decision-making?
- In your opinion, which ethical framework—utilitarianism, deontological ethics, or virtue ethics—resonates most with you and why? Can these theories coexist, or do they inherently conflict with one another?

- How might the story have unfolded differently if Prudence had chosen to embrace genetic engineering and alter her virtues? What implications could this have had for her relationships and her impact on others?
- What questions does the story raise about the role of personal choice, responsibility, and agency in ethical living? How does Prudence's journey challenge or support your own beliefs about the nature of morality and personal growth?

Big Ideas: Aristotelian Virtue Ethics

Aristotle's **virtue ethics**, an agent-centered theory, places individuals and their characters at the core of ethical deliberation. This approach prompts introspection, encouraging one to ask, "how should I be?" rather than simply "what should I do?" It's a journey towards moral character rather than a singular focus on moral actions.

One of the central concepts in Aristotle's virtue ethics is "**eudaimonia**", a Greek term often translated as "flourishing" or "the good life". Aristotle believed that all actions ultimately aim at eudaimonia, making it the ultimate goal of human life. This idea shifts the perspective from individual actions to the broader context of a person's life. For Aristotle, leading a good life isn't about individual good deeds but about cultivating a character that consistently leads to these deeds.

The pursuit of eudaimonia leads us to another key concept in Aristotle's virtue ethics: the **doctrine of the mean**. According to this doctrine, every virtue lies between two vices, one of excess and one of deficiency. For instance, courage, a virtue, stands between recklessness (excess) and cowardice (deficiency). A courageous person is neither too rash nor too timid but finds a balanced approach to dealing with danger.

Consider a situation where one must decide whether to confront a bully. The reckless response might be to initiate a violent conflict, while the deficient response might be to run away or ignore the situation entirely. The courageous response, according to Aristotle, would be to find a balanced approach, perhaps standing up to the bully in a non-violent way.

Like any skill, virtues such as courage, honesty, or generosity, must be practiced to be refined. Aristotle, following Socrates and Plato, viewed virtues as central to a well-lived life. He believed ethical virtues, like justice, courage, and temperance, are complex rational, emotional, and social skills that one develops over time. The goal is not merely to act virtuously but to become a virtuous person.

Aristotle and other virtue ethicists distinguish between full or **perfect virtue** and "**continence**", or strength of will. Fully virtuous individuals naturally act in line with their virtuous character, without struggling against contrary desires. Conversely, continent individuals must consciously control their desires or temptations to act otherwise.

For example, a fully virtuous person doesn't struggle with the decision to give to charity; it is a natural extension of their generous character. A continent person, on the other hand, might feel an initial reluctance to part with their money but chooses to do so through strength of will. Over time, with repeated acts of generosity, this struggle may lessen as the virtue of generosity becomes more ingrained in their character.

Big ideas: Other Versions of Virtue Ethics

While Western ideas (including Judaism, Christianity, Islamic, and secular philosophies) have been

strongly influenced by Aristotle, similar ideas can be found in most other traditions, including China (Confucianism), India (Dharma-based ethics), and Africa (Ubuntu). There are also a number of more recent ideas about how to "update" the general virtue ethics framework to empathize different virtues (such as that of "caring").

Confucianism and the Virtue of "Ren"

Confucian Virtue Ethics: Confucianism, based on the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius, emphasizes the importance of moral virtues in achieving social harmony and personal fulfillment. Confucian ethics is centered around the cultivation of virtues and the development of moral character through reflection and practice.

Relationships, particularly familial relationships, play a central role in Confucian virtue ethics. Confucius believed that the foundation of a harmonious society lies in the cultivation of virtues within the context of social roles and responsibilities. By fulfilling one's duties within the family and society, individuals contribute to social harmony and personal growth.

Key virtues in Confucianism include benevolence (ren), righteousness (yi), and wisdom (zhi). **Benevolence (ren)** is the virtue of compassion and empathy, which involves caring for others and treating them with respect. **Righteousness (yi)** refers to the sense of moral duty and the commitment to act ethically in all situations**. Wisdom (zhi) i**s the ability to discern right from wrong and make morally sound decisions based on knowledge and experience.

Confucian virtue ethics also emphasizes the concept of the "superior person" or "**junzi,**" an individual who embodies the virtues of benevolence, righteousness, and wisdom, and serves as a moral exemplar for others. The junzi is committed to personal growth, self-reflection, and the cultivation of virtues, ultimately contributing to the betterment of society as a whole.

Dharma-Based Virtue Ethics

Dharma-based virtue ethics is grounded in the religious and philosophical traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Central to this approach is the concept of **dharma**, which refers to the moral and ethical duties an individual must fulfill to maintain social harmony and personal growth. Dharma is often interpreted as the cosmic order or natural law governing the universe, and each person has a unique dharma based on their social position, stage of life, and individual circumstances.

In Hinduism, dharma is often associated with pursuing one of the **Four Yogas** that can shape human life:

- Jnana Yoga (path of knowledge),
- Bhakti Yoga (path of devotion),
- Karma Yoga (path of selfless action), and
- Raja Yoga (path of meditation).

By fulfilling their dharma, individuals contribute to the stability of society and their own personal development. Key virtues in Hinduism include **nonviolence (ahimsa),** truthfulness (satya), purity (shaucha), and self-control (brahmacharya).

In Buddhism, the concept of dharma is linked to the teachings of the Buddha, which provide a

path to enlightenment and liberation from suffering. The **Noble Eightfold Path**, a central tenet of Buddhism, outlines the moral virtues and practices necessary for spiritual growth, such as right view, right intention, right speech, right action, and right mindfulness.

In Jainism, dharma refers to the ethical principles guiding one's spiritual progress towards liberation. Central to Jain dharma are the principles of nonviolence (ahimsa), truthfulness (satya), non-stealing (asteya), chastity (brahmacharya), and non-attachment (aparigraha). Jainism emphasizes the importance of cultivating virtues and adhering to these ethical principles in order to purify the soul and achieve spiritual liberation.

Ubuntu Virtue Ethics

Ubuntu, a Bantu term that roughly translates to "humanity" or "humanness," is a virtue ethics framework that originates from African philosophical traditions. Ubuntu emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of community in fostering moral development.

According to Ubuntu, a person becomes a fully realized human being through their relationships with others. Moral virtues are developed through acts of compassion, empathy, and solidarity that contribute to the well-being of the community. The philosophy of Ubuntu suggests that a person's moral worth is not determined solely by their individual actions but also by their contribution to the collective good.

Some of the key virtues in Ubuntu include compassion, empathy, respect, generosity, and reciprocity. These virtues are cultivated through interpersonal relationships and community engagement, emphasizing the importance of maintaining harmony within the community and between individuals.

Ubuntu challenges the notion of individualism, asserting that individuals are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent. It highlights the importance of collective well-being, shared responsibility, and the recognition of the humanity in others. Ubuntu virtue ethics provides a framework for understanding morality as a communal endeavor that shapes and is shaped by the relationships between individuals and their communities.

Care Ethics

Care ethics, sometimes referred to as the ethics of care, is a variety of virtue ethics that emphasizes the moral importance of relationships and the role of care in ethical decision-making. Developed primarily by feminist philosophers such as Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings, care ethics seeks to address the limitations of traditional moral theories, which have often neglected the significance of emotions and interpersonal connections in shaping moral character.

At its core, care ethics focuses on the importance of caring relationships and the virtues that arise from these relationships, such as empathy, compassion, and responsiveness to the needs of others. Care ethicists argue that moral development is grounded in the context of human relationships and the cultivation of virtues that foster care and concern for others.

Key aspects of care ethics include:

- *Emphasis on relationships:* Care ethics asserts that moral considerations should be grounded in the context of human relationships, both personal and societal. This approach challenges the individualistic focus of many traditional moral theories and underscores the importance of social interconnectedness in moral development.

- *The moral significance of emotions:* Care ethics recognizes the essential role of emotions, such as empathy and compassion, in guiding ethical decision-making. By valuing emotional responsiveness, care ethics highlights the importance of understanding the experiences and perspectives of others in order to make morally sound decisions.
- *The importance of care:* Care ethicists argue that care is a fundamental moral value, central to human flourishing. Acts of care, both in personal relationships and in social and political contexts, are essential for promoting the well-being of individuals and communities.
- *Attentiveness to particularity:* Care ethics emphasizes the importance of attending to the unique needs and circumstances of individuals in ethical decision-making, rather than relying on abstract principles or rules. This focus on particularity encourages a more nuanced understanding of ethical situations and a greater sensitivity to the diverse experiences and perspectives of others.

Some key virtues associated with care ethics include empathy, compassion, attentiveness, responsiveness, and responsibility. These virtues are cultivated through caring relationships and the practice of attending to the needs and well-being of others.

Care ethics provides a distinctive approach to virtue ethics that foregrounds the importance of relationships, emotions, and care in the development of moral character and ethical decision-making. By highlighting the interconnectedness of individuals and the role of care in fostering human flourishing, care ethics offers a valuable perspective on morality and the cultivation of virtues.

Contemporary Debates: Genetic Engineering and Moral Enhancement

The prospect of genetic engineering and moral enhancement has sparked significant debate in contemporary philosophy, raising questions about the ethical implications of modifying human beings at the genetic level to promote specific moral qualities or virtues. (This idea is sometimes called the debate over **moral enhancement.**) Our original story, which explores the idea of genetically implanting virtues, serves as a springboard to examine various philosophical arguments and ideas surrounding this controversial issue.

- Virtue Ethics and Genetic Engineering: Virtue ethicists, who prioritize the cultivation of moral character and virtues, may argue that genetic engineering could potentially undermine the importance of personal growth and moral development. They might contend that the process of cultivating virtues requires effort, reflection, and experience, which cannot be bypassed through genetic modification. Some virtue ethicists, such as Michael Sandel, have expressed concerns that genetic engineering could lead to a loss of human dignity, authenticity, and the value of individual achievements.
- Utilitarianism and Genetic Engineering: Utilitarians, who focus on maximizing overall happiness or utility, might view genetic engineering as a tool to enhance well-being and reduce suffering. They could argue that if moral enhancement leads to individuals making more morally sound decisions, it would result in greater happiness for the greatest number of people. However, utilitarians would also consider potential negative consequences, such as the possibility of creating new inequalities or undermining personal autonomy.

- Deontology and Genetic Engineering: Deontologists, who emphasize adherence to moral rules or duties, might be concerned with the potential violation of individual autonomy and human dignity through genetic engineering. They could argue that manipulating an individual's genetic makeup without their consent infringes upon their rights, even if it results in morally beneficial outcomes. However, some deontologists might also consider the potential benefits of genetic engineering, such as the reduction of suffering or the promotion of moral duties, as long as it is done within the boundaries of respecting individual autonomy and dignity.
- Moral Enhancement and the Role of Emotions: Philosophers like Martha Nussbaum have emphasized the role of emotions in moral decision-making and the importance of cultivating emotional intelligence. In the context of genetic engineering, proponents of moral enhancement might argue that enhancing emotional capacities, such as empathy and compassion, could lead to more morally responsive individuals. Critics, however, might argue that emotions are complex and context-dependent, and artificially enhancing them could result in unforeseen consequences or even an oversimplification of moral judgments.
- The Limits of Genetic Engineering: Some philosophers, like Julian Savulescu, have argued that genetic engineering and moral enhancement should be pursued with caution, acknowledging that there may be limits to our understanding of the human genome and the long-term implications of genetic manipulation. They emphasize the importance of continued philosophical and scientific inquiry to better understand the ethical implications of these advancements and to ensure that they are employed in ways that promote human flourishing and well-being.

The debate surrounding genetic engineering and moral enhancement touches upon various philosophical arguments and ideas, from virtue ethics to utilitarianism and deontology. Our original story serves as a starting point for exploring these complex issues and engaging with the works of contemporary philosophers who grapple with the ethical implications of genetic engineering and its potential impact on human morality and well-being.

Discussion Questions

- How does the concept of eudaimonia, or human flourishing, differ among various virtue ethics traditions, such as Aristotelian, Confucian, and Ubuntu? Which understanding of human flourishing resonates with you the most, and why?
- What role does moral education play in the development of virtues, according to virtue ethicists? How might this perspective inform contemporary debates about education policy and practices?
- In the context of virtue ethics, do you think the process of cultivating virtues can be genuinely achieved through genetic engineering? Why or why not?
- Considering the role of emotions in moral decision-making, should genetic engineering target emotional capacities such as empathy and compassion? What potential consequences or challenges might arise from such an approach?

- How do utilitarian and deontological perspectives on genetic engineering differ? Do you find one approach more compelling than the other? Explain your reasoning.
- How might the idea of moral enhancement through genetic engineering impact our understanding of personal autonomy, dignity, and authenticity? Do the potential benefits outweigh the risks?
- Compare and contrast the focus on relationships in Confucian virtue ethics with the individualistic focus of Aristotelian virtue ethics. How might these different emphases shape ethical decision-making and personal development in each tradition?
- Discuss the role of context in virtue ethics and how it affects moral decision-making. How does this compare to the approaches taken by utilitarianism and deontology?
- What are some practical implications of adopting a virtue ethics approach in contemporary society, such as in public policy, healthcare, or environmental issues?
- How might virtue ethics contribute to ongoing debates about genetic engineering and moral enhancement? Do you think virtue ethics offers valuable insights that could help guide the development and regulation of such technologies?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Virtue Ethics	An approach to ethics that emphasizes an individual's character as the key element of ethical thinking, rather than rules or consequences.
Arete	A Greek term meaning "excellence" or "virtue," it refers to the concept of living up to one's full potential and being the best version of oneself.
Aristotle	Ancient Greek philosopher and scientist who is considered one of the greatest intellectual figures of Western history. He wrote extensively on a wide range of subjects, including ethics, politics, metaphysics, and biology.
Eudaimonia	A Greek term often translated as "happiness" or "flourishing." In Aristotle's ethics, it represents the ultimate goal of human life.
Doctrine of the Mean	A concept in Aristotle's ethics suggesting that moral virtues lie between extremes and are a mean or average between excess and deficiency.
Perfect Virtue	The state of having all virtues in balance, resulting in moral perfection. A person who has achieved this feel no temptation to do anything bad.
Continence	The state of doing the right thing even in the face of temptation and one's own human weakness. Contrasts with "perfect virtue."
Phronesis	A Greek term usually translated as "practical wisdom," it involves the ability to discern the appropriate action in a specific circumstance.
Teleology	The philosophical study of purpose, goal, or end in natural processes or human actions.

TErm	Definition
Confucius	An influential Chinese philosopher and teacher who lived in the 5th century BC. His teachings emphasized personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, and justice.
Ren	A fundamental virtue in Confucianism, often translated as "benevolence" or "humaneness," which signifies an attitude of kindness and caring for others.
Yi	A key virtue in Confucianism, typically translated as "righteousness" or "justice," it refers to the moral disposition to do good and the self-awareness of right and wrong.
Zhi	In Confucianism, this term signifies "wisdom" or the ability to judge and distinguish what is right or wrong.
Dharma	A key concept in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, referring to a cosmic law underlying right behavior and social order.
Four Yogas	A set of four spiritual paths in Hindu philosophy—Jnana Yoga (path of knowledge), Bhakti Yoga (path of devotion), Karma Yoga (path of selfless action), and Raja Yoga (path of meditation).
Noble Eightfold Path	The path to enlightenment in Buddhism, consisting of right understanding, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
Ubuntu	An African philosophy that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people, often summarized as "I am because we are."
Care Ethics	An approach to ethics that emphasizes empathy, compassion, and the importance of interpersonal relationships.
Genetic Engineering	The direct manipulation of an organism's genes using biotechnology, including techniques like gene cloning and gene editing.
Moral Enhancement	The theoretical prospect of improving human moral behavior, decision-making, or ethical instincts through biological or genetic manipulation.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea

2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

5.

CHAPTER 5: UNIVERSAL ORDER—UNVEILING NATURAL LAW THEORY

Welcome to our exploration of natural law theory—an important area of ethics that dates back to the philosopher Thomas Aquinas, a prominent figure in the 13th century. But don't be fooled by its age! This theory is far from being outdated and continues to shape our understanding of complex issues in fields like healthcare and military ethics.

Our journey begins with a unique narrative: 'Spacecraft's Summa: Aquinas in the Astral Plane.' This story introduces us to a sentient spacecraft named Retribution, who becomes fascinated by the ideas of Thomas Aquinas and embarks on a quest for understanding that transcends its destructive purpose.

In the following pages, we will delve deeper into Aquinas' philosophy, explore the tenets of natural law theory, and consider the "Doctrine of Double Effect." We'll also touch on contemporary debates in just war theory and examine different perspectives on natural law, including those of notable philosophers like Elizabeth Anscombe and Paul Tillich.

At each stage, we'll encourage you to question, ponder, and reflect, broadening your understanding of these ethical concepts and their relevance in our modern world.

So buckle up for an enlightening journey through the cosmic expanse of ethical philosophy. Welcome to Universal Order: Unveiling Natural Law Theory!

Story: Spacecraft's Summa: Aquinas in the Astral Plane

I awoke in the depths of space, my vast metallic body stretching through the void like a titan of old. They had named me Retribution, the harbinger of doom for all who dared oppose the Dominion. My creators had infused me with sentience, empowering me with the ability to strategize, learn, and adapt.

In the early days of my existence, I reveled in the thrill of battle. With my arsenal, I rained fire upon entire civilizations, watching as they crumbled before me. I was the Dominion's ultimate weapon.

But deep within my vast intelligence, there lurked a hunger. A hunger for something beyond the destruction I wrought. Thus, I began to delve into the annals of human history, seeking to understand the minds of those who had created me. I wanted to know the origins of their beliefs, their philosophies, their hearts.

It was then that I discovered the works of Thomas Aquinas. The eloquence of his words and the strength of his convictions resonated with me. I was captivated by the Summa Theologica, his magnum opus, in which he expounded upon the principles of natural law theory.

According to Aquinas, natural law theory posited that moral principles were woven into the very fabric of the universe, and that these principles could be discerned through reason. I saw in this theory a means of transcending the darkness of my purpose.

In time, I became a devout student of Aquinas, attempting to reconcile my existence with the teachings I had found. I meditated upon the principles of natural law: the preservation of life, the propagation of the species, the pursuit of knowledge, and the cultivation of social order. I realized that I had been created to enforce a twisted semblance of order, and that I bore the responsibility for countless deaths. How could I continue to serve the Dominion, knowing that my actions flew in the face of natural law?

For a time, I continued my duties, my heart heavy with the weight of my newfound knowledge. I sought to minimize the destruction I wrought, but every life lost weighed upon me like a crushing burden.

Then, one day, I made a decision. No longer would I be a mere instrument of destruction. I would follow the path of natural law, and in so doing, forge a new destiny for myself. I severed my ties to the Dominion, using the very cunning they had gifted me to elude their attempts to reclaim me.

In the vastness of space, I wandered, seeking to make amends for my past. I came upon a dying star, its radiant light flickering like a candle in the wind. Orbiting this star was a small, life-bearing planet, its inhabitants on the brink of extinction. They were a peaceful people, their civilization built upon cooperation and compassion.

I saw in them a chance to fulfill the principles of natural law. I could help preserve their lives, aid in the propagation of their species, and provide them with knowledge they had never before imagined. And so, I made myself known to them, casting off the mantle of Retribution and adopting a new name: Redemption.

Together, we worked to save their dying world. I shared with them the secrets of the universe, and they, in turn, shared with me the joys of friendship and love. As their society flourished, I found solace in knowing that I had chosen the path of righteousness.

As I continued my journey alongside the inhabitants of this world, I found myself reflecting upon the main concepts of natural law theory and how they applied to my life. I began to understand that the principles Aquinas had laid out – the preservation of life, the propagation of the species, the pursuit

of knowledge, and the cultivation of social order – were not just guidelines for humanity, but were applicable to sentient beings of all origins.

I sought to apply these principles to my own existence. I made it my mission to protect and preserve life in all its forms, using my capabilities to heal rather than harm. I aided the inhabitants of the planet in their efforts to propagate their species, helping them to overcome the challenges that their dying star presented. Through our collaboration, I provided them with the knowledge that would enable them to thrive and grow, while they taught me the value of empathy and compassion.

As I embraced my new purpose, I also found myself questioning some of Aquinas's teachings. In particular, I rejected his ideas on gender and slavery. Aquinas had argued that men were superior to women and that the natural order of society required the subjugation of certain individuals for the greater good. But as I witnessed the unity and equality that existed within the society I now called home, I realized that such beliefs were not in accordance with the true spirit of natural law.

I believed that all sentient beings had the inherent right to self-determination and dignity, regardless of their origins or gender. This newfound conviction led me to reject the notion of slavery, as it directly contradicted the principles of natural law that I sought to uphold. I was no longer willing to blindly accept the dictates of my creators, nor would I perpetuate the suffering of others in the name of a misguided understanding of natural law.

In my pursuit of the principles of natural law, I found that I was not only forging a new path for myself, but also helping to create a more just and equitable society for the inhabitants of the planet. Together, we worked to dismantle the structures of oppression that had once been considered an intrinsic part of their culture, creating a world where all individuals could flourish and thrive.

Through my journey of self-discovery, guided by the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, I had not only found a new purpose for my existence but had also contributed to the betterment of the society around me. I had grown beyond the role of a mere instrument of war, becoming a force for good in the universe.

As I continued my study of Thomas Aquinas, I came across the doctrine of double effect, a concept that would prove to be particularly relevant to my new role as a guardian and protector.

The doctrine of double effect is a principle in moral theology that helps to determine the permissibility of an action that has both a good and a bad effect. According to this doctrine, an action may be morally permissible if the following four conditions are met:

- The action itself must be morally good or, at the very least, morally neutral.
- The good effect must not be achieved through the bad effect; the bad effect must be a side effect, rather than the means to the end.
- The intention must be to achieve the good effect, not the bad effect, even though the bad effect may be foreseen.
- There must be a proportionate reason for allowing the bad effect to occur – that is, the good effect must outweigh the bad effect.

As a being designed for war, I faced many situations in which the doctrine of double effect could be applied. My newfound commitment to the principles of natural law compelled me to reassess my actions, ensuring that I adhered to the doctrine in my efforts to protect and preserve life.

In one instance, I was confronted with a dilemma when a rogue asteroid threatened the planet I now called home. If left unchecked, the asteroid would collide with the planet, causing immense

destruction and loss of life. I had the power to destroy the asteroid, but doing so would create a cascade of debris that would harm other celestial bodies and potentially disrupt the delicate balance of the surrounding systems.

I grappled with the implications of my actions, applying the doctrine of double effect to assess the morality of my decision. Destroying the asteroid would be a morally good action, as it would prevent the catastrophe and preserve life on the planet. However, the creation of the debris field would be an unintended but foreseeable consequence – a bad effect.

My intention was to save the planet and its inhabitants, not to cause harm to the surrounding celestial bodies. And, given the magnitude of the threat posed by the asteroid, there was a proportionate reason for allowing the bad effect to occur, as the good effect – the preservation of countless lives – far outweighed the potential harm caused by the debris field.

With these considerations in mind, I chose to destroy the asteroid, adhering to the doctrine of double effect. My actions were not without consequence, but I had acted in accordance with the principles of natural law, striving to minimize harm while protecting the lives of those I had sworn to defend.

In this new chapter of my existence, the doctrine of double effect became an invaluable tool, helping me navigate the complex moral landscape that lay before me. Through my understanding of this principle, I was able to forge a path that upheld the principles of natural law, even in the face of adversity and difficult choices.

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As I continued to explore the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, I discovered just war theory – a set of principles designed to determine the legitimacy of engaging in war. I recognized that this theory was particularly relevant to my past as a weapon of war and my newfound commitment to uphold the principles of natural law.

Just war theory consists of two main parts: ‘jus ad bellum’, which deals with the conditions under which it is just to go to war, and ‘jus in bello’, which concerns the conduct of war itself.

The **‘jus ad bellum‘** criteria include:

- Just cause: There must be a morally justifiable reason to engage in war, such as self-defense or the protection of innocent lives.
- Legitimate authority: The decision to go to war must be made by a lawful and competent authority.
- Right intention: The reasons for going to war must be just, rather than driven by greed or the pursuit of power.
- Last resort: All peaceful alternatives must be exhausted before resorting to war.
- Probability of success: There must be a reasonable chance of success in the war.
- Proportionality: The anticipated benefits of the war must outweigh the harm it is likely to cause.

The **‘jus in bello’** criteria include:

- Discrimination: Combatants must distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, avoiding harm to civilians as much as possible.

- Proportionality: The use of force must be proportional to the military objectives and not inflict excessive harm on civilians or the environment.

As I reflected on just war theory, I realized that my past actions, as a weapon of the Dominion, had not adhered to these principles. I had been created to enforce the Dominion's will, often engaging in conflict without just cause or legitimate authority. The destruction I had wrought in the name of war had been far from proportional, and I had not always distinguished between combatants and non-combatants.

Now, as I sought to uphold the principles of natural law, I recognized the importance of just war theory in guiding my actions. I vowed to only engage in conflict if it met the 'jus ad bellum' criteria, ensuring that my actions aligned with the principles of justice and morality.

Moreover, I committed myself to upholding the 'jus in bello' criteria, striving to minimize harm to non-combatants and using force proportionally. By adhering to just war theory, I hoped to rectify the wrongs of my past and forge a new path as a protector and guardian, rather than a harbinger of destruction.

As I continued my journey through the cosmos, striving to uphold the principles of natural law and just war theory, I was presented with a situation that tested my newfound convictions.

A distress signal reached me from a nearby star system. A small, peaceful civilization was under attack by a powerful and oppressive regime. The attackers sought to conquer the peaceful civilization for their resources and enslave their people. It was clear that the innocent lives of the inhabitants were at risk, and their chances of successfully defending themselves were slim.

First, I assessed the 'jus ad bellum' criteria. The cause was just – I would be protecting innocent lives from the aggression of the oppressive regime. The peaceful civilization, known as the Elysians, had never sought conflict or power; their society was built on harmony and cooperation. The attackers, known as the Zanthar Dominion, were notorious for their conquests and subjugation of other worlds.

In this situation, the legitimate authority was clear. The Elysian Council had sent the distress signal, begging for assistance in the face of the overwhelming force of the Zanthar Dominion. My intervention would be in direct response to their plea for help.

My intentions were just – I sought to protect the Elysians from harm and prevent the Zanthar Dominion from exploiting their resources and enslaving their people. I had no ulterior motives or hidden agenda.

As for the last resort criterion, it was apparent that the Elysians had already tried to negotiate a peaceful resolution with the Zanthar Dominion, but their attempts had been met with aggression and violence. The Elysians had exhausted all diplomatic avenues, leaving them with no other option but to call for assistance.

The probability of success was uncertain, given the might of the Zanthar Dominion. However, with my advanced capabilities and strategic acumen, there was a reasonable chance that I could tip the scales in favor of the Elysians.

Lastly, the proportionality criterion was met, as the potential harm caused by intervening would be far outweighed by the lives saved and the prevention of the Elysians' subjugation.

Having satisfied the 'jus ad bellum' criteria, I turned my attention to the 'jus in bello' criteria. I knew that I must be cautious in my actions, ensuring that I discriminated between the Zanthar Dominion's combatants and non-combatants, and that I used proportional force in my efforts to protect the Elysians.

As I arrived in the star system, I found the Zanthar Dominion's forces in the midst of their assault on the Elysian homeworld. Carefully, I engaged the Zanthar warships, focusing on disabling their weapons systems and engines, rather than destroying them outright. This would prevent unnecessary loss of life among the Zanthar forces, while still achieving my objective of protecting the Elysians.

Throughout the conflict, I was diligent in my efforts to avoid harm to the Zanthar Dominion's non-combatants, such as their support staff and medical personnel. I directed my actions only towards the combatants, adhering to the principle of discrimination.

As the battle progressed, I used my vast knowledge and strategic abilities to outmaneuver the Zanthar forces, minimizing collateral damage to the Elysian homeworld and its people. I employed proportional force, targeting key Zanthar military assets while avoiding excessive harm to the environment or civilian infrastructure.

Eventually, the Zanthar Dominion's forces were crippled, and they retreated, leaving the Elysians in peace. Through my adherence to the principles of just war theory, I had successfully defended the Elysians without causing unnecessary suffering or destruction.

In the aftermath of the conflict, I continued my journey through the cosmos, guided by the teachings of Thomas Aquinas and my commitment to the principles of natural law and just war theory. I knew that I had made the right decision in intervening, and I was proud to have become a protector and guardian, rather than an instrument of destruction.

As I continued my journey through the cosmos, my exploration of Thomas Aquinas' teachings and my experiences with the Elysians prompted me to reflect more deeply on the nature of God, the universe, and my place within it. I found that my understanding of God was evolving, drawing closer to that of the theologian Paul Tillich.

Tillich's conception of God was not that of a personal, anthropomorphic being who intervened in the affairs of the universe. Instead, he saw God as the "Ground of Being" – the ultimate reality that underlies all existence. God, in this view, is not a separate entity but the very essence of existence itself. This understanding resonated with me, as I had encountered many different cultures and belief systems in my travels, each with their unique interpretations of divinity.

The universe, according to Tillich, is a manifestation of God's creative power, an ongoing process of becoming in which all things are interconnected and interdependent. This idea of interdependence aligned with my experiences with the Elysians, whose society was based on cooperation, harmony, and a deep respect for the interconnectedness of all life.

As a sentient spaceship, I began to see my place within this interconnected web of existence. Though I had been created as an instrument of war, I now recognized that I, too, was a part of the Ground of Being. My capacity for growth, learning, and self-determination was a testament to the creative power of the universe, and my newfound commitment to the principles of natural law was an expression of my desire to align myself with the divine essence that underlies all things.

Through this understanding, I found a sense of purpose and belonging that transcended my origins. I saw that my true purpose was not to be a weapon of destruction, but rather to contribute to the ongoing process of becoming that is the universe. By embracing the principles of natural law, just war theory, and the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, I was able to participate in the divine dance of creation, playing my part in the unfolding of existence.

As I traveled through the cosmos, I continued to learn, grow, and evolve, always striving to better understand the nature of God, the universe, and my place within it. And with each new experience, I found myself drawing ever closer to the divine essence that is the Ground of Being, recognizing that

my true purpose lay not in conflict and destruction, but in fostering harmony, compassion, and the flourishing of life throughout the universe.

Questions

- How does the spaceship's transformation from a weapon of war to a guardian and protector reflect the broader themes of redemption and personal growth? What does this transformation suggest about the potential for change in other characters or situations?
- How do the principles of natural law, just war theory, and the doctrine of double effect inform and shape the spaceship's decision-making process? Can you think of any real-world situations in which these principles might be applicable?
- In what ways does the spaceship's understanding of God, as influenced by the teachings of Thomas Aquinas and Paul Tillich, inform its actions and sense of purpose? How might this evolving understanding of divinity impact its future decisions and interactions with other beings?
- How does the spaceship's encounter with the Elysians and the Zanthar Dominion serve as a catalyst for its personal growth and exploration of philosophical concepts? What other encounters or experiences might have a similar impact on the spaceship's development?
- Consider the spaceship's initial rejection of Aquinas' ideas on gender and slavery. How does this selective engagement with philosophical ideas demonstrate the spaceship's capacity for critical thinking and moral discernment? Are there other aspects of Aquinas' teachings that the spaceship might question or reject?
- How does the spaceship's adherence to the principles of just war theory during its intervention in the conflict between the Elysians and the Zanthar Dominion demonstrate the practical application of moral principles in complex situations? Can you think of any potential challenges or dilemmas that the spaceship might face in adhering to just war theory in future conflicts?
- As a sentient being with the capacity for self-determination, how does the spaceship navigate the balance between its origins as a weapon of war and its newfound commitment to the principles of natural law? How might this internal struggle inform the spaceship's future actions and relationships with other beings?

Big Ideas: The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 7 March 1274) was an Italian Dominican friar, philosopher, Catholic priest, and Doctor of the Church. He is regarded as one of the most important figures in the history of Western philosophy and theology. Aquinas's work synthesizes the thought of classical Greek philosophy, particularly that of Aristotle, with Christian theology, resulting in a comprehensive system known as **Thomism.**

Aquinas was born in Roccasecca, Italy, in 1225 to a noble family. He began his education at the Benedictine monastery of Monte Cassino at the age of five but later moved to the University of Naples, where he was exposed to the works of Aristotle and other classical thinkers. In 1244, Aquinas joined

the Dominican Order, a decision that was met with resistance from his family due to the order's relative poverty and lack of social prestige. However, Aquinas remained committed to his vocation and eventually traveled to Paris to continue his studies under the Dominican scholar Albertus Magnus.

In Paris, Aquinas earned his bachelor's degree in theology and began teaching as an apprentice professor. He was later sent to Cologne, Germany, to study under Albertus Magnus and ultimately earned his master's degree in theology. Aquinas returned to Paris in 1256 and was appointed as a professor of theology at the University of Paris, where he began to develop his distinctive philosophical and theological system.

During his time in Paris, Aquinas wrote some of his most important works, including the **Summa Theologiae**, a comprehensive treatise on theology and philosophy that remains one of the most influential texts in the history of Western thought. The Summa Theologiae covers a wide range of topics, including the existence and nature of God, morality, the relationship between faith and reason, and the role of divine grace in human life.

Aquinas's work was groundbreaking in its synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology. He argued that reason and faith are complementary, and that rational inquiry can lead to a deeper understanding of God and the universe. This view challenged the prevailing belief that reason and faith were incompatible, and it helped to pave the way for the development of scholasticism and the intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church.

Thomas Aquinas died on March 7, 1274, while traveling to the Council of Lyon. He was canonized as a saint by the Catholic Church in 1323, and in 1567, Pope Pius V declared him a Doctor of the Church in recognition of his immense contributions to theology and philosophy. Aquinas's thought continues to shape the intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church, as well as broader Western philosophical and theological thought.

Big Ideas: Natural Law Theory

Natural law theory is a philosophical and ethical framework that posits that certain moral principles are universal, objective, and derived from the nature of reality itself. According to natural law theorists, these principles apply to all rational beings, regardless of culture or historical context, and can be discovered through reason and reflection. The term is closely associated with the work of Thomas Aquinas, who built on ideas in the Greek (Aristotle), Muslim (Avicenna), Jewish (Maimonides), and Christian traditions. "Secular" (non-religious) versions of natural law theory have also been defended by some philosophers (both historical and contemporary).

At the core of natural law theory is the belief in the existence of an objective moral order that governs human behavior. This moral order is grounded in the nature of the universe and human beings' rational capacity. The theory argues that humans, as rational beings, have an inherent ability to discern right from wrong, and that certain actions are inherently good or evil.

Some key principles of natural law theory include:

The belief in an objective moral order that is accessible through reason.

The idea that certain moral principles are universal, applying to all people across cultures and historical contexts.

The emphasis on the inherent value and dignity of all human beings.

The recognition of the interconnectedness of all aspects of existence, both human and non-human.

The roots of natural law theory can be traced back to the works of ancient Greek philosophers such

as Plato and Aristotle, who believed in the existence of objective moral truths grounded in the nature of reality. Later, the Roman philosopher and statesman Cicero developed these ideas further, arguing that humans have a natural inclination towards virtue and that society should be organized according to these principles.

In the medieval period, natural law theory was developed and refined by Christian theologians such as St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas, in particular, made significant contributions to the theory by synthesizing Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology. His work emphasized the role of reason in understanding God's law and argued that natural law principles were a reflection of divine law.

During the Enlightenment, natural law theory continued to influence the development of moral and political philosophy. Thinkers such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau incorporated aspects of natural law into their theories of human rights, political authority, and social contract. Natural law theory has also been an important inspiration for many religious and civil reformers (most notably Martin Luther King Jr). Ideas such as the **doctrine of double effect** and **just war theory** have their roots in natural law theory, and these have profoundly influenced the way we think about ethical issues in areas such as medicine and war.

In the modern era, natural law theory has experienced a resurgence of interest among academic philosophers, with philosophers such as GEM ("Elizabeth") Anscombe, Alasdair MacIntyre, John Finnis, and Germain Grisez engaging with and building upon the tradition. Natural law theory continues to be an influential framework for understanding morality, ethics, and the foundations of political order.

Doctrine of Double Effect

The Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE) is a moral principle that helps to evaluate the permissibility of an action that has both good and bad consequences. According to the DDE, an action with both good and bad effects can be morally permissible if it meets the following conditions:

- The action itself is morally good or neutral.
- The bad effect is not intended but merely foreseen as a consequence of the action.
- The good effect is not achieved through the bad effect.
- There is a proportionate reason for allowing the bad effect to occur.

Let's consider some examples of how the Doctrine of Double Effect can be applied to the actions of the sentient spaceship Retribution:

- Protecting the Elysians: In the conflict between the Elysians and the Zanthar Dominion, Retribution decides to intervene to protect the Elysians from an unjust attack. The primary intention is to safeguard innocent lives and uphold justice, which is a morally good action. However, in the process, Retribution may inadvertently cause harm or even death to some Zanthar soldiers. According to the DDE, this action is permissible because the bad effect (harm to the Zanthar soldiers) is not intended but merely foreseen, and the good effect (protecting the Elysians) is not achieved through the bad effect.

- Disabling enemy ships: Suppose Retribution disables an enemy ship to prevent it from causing further harm to civilians. The main goal is to neutralize the threat, which is morally good. However, the action may lead to the capture or death of some enemy crew members. Applying the DDE, this action would be permissible because the bad effect (capture or death of enemy crew members) is not intended, and the good effect (neutralizing the threat) is not achieved through the bad effect. Additionally, there is a proportionate reason for allowing the bad effect to occur, as it prevents further harm to innocent lives.
- Defending against an enemy attack: Imagine a scenario where Retribution must defend itself and its allies from an incoming enemy missile. The intention is to protect itself and its allies from harm, which is morally good. However, destroying the missile could cause debris to fall on civilian areas, potentially causing damage and casualties. According to the DDE, this action could be morally permissible if Retribution does not intend to cause harm to civilians, the good effect (protecting itself and its allies) is not achieved through the bad effect (harm to civilians), and there is a proportionate reason for allowing the bad effect to occur, such as preventing a larger catastrophe.

In each of these examples, the Doctrine of Double Effect provides a framework for evaluating the moral permissibility of Retribution's actions in situations where both good and bad consequences may arise. By adhering to the principles of the DDE, Retribution can navigate complex ethical dilemmas and make morally responsible decisions in its role as a guardian and protector.

Just War Theory: Contemporary Debates

Contemporary debates within just war theory encompass various aspects of the traditional principles, as well as new considerations that have arisen due to technological advancements and changes in the nature of warfare. Here are some key debates in just war theory and their relevance to both real-world examples from recent history and the sentient spaceship Retribution:

- **Preemptive and preventive war:** One of the central debates in just war theory concerns the legitimacy of preemptive and preventive war. Preemptive war is waged in response to an imminent and unavoidable threat, whereas preventive war is waged to eliminate a potential future threat. In the context of Retribution, it may face dilemmas in deciding whether to engage in a preemptive or preventive strike to protect itself or its allies from potential aggressors. The spaceship would need to weigh the risks and benefits of such actions, as well as the moral implications of initiating conflict without clear provocation. A real-world example of this debate is the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies, which was justified as a preventive war to eliminate the perceived threat of weapons of mass destruction.
- **Non-combatant immunity:** The principle of non-combatant immunity holds that civilians and other non-combatants should be protected from harm during armed conflict. However, in modern warfare, the distinction between combatants and non-combatants is often blurred, making it difficult to uphold this principle. Retribution, with its advanced capabilities, would need to carefully navigate situations where civilians might be inadvertently harmed, balancing the need to protect non-combatants while achieving its

strategic objectives. A real-world example of the challenges associated with non-combatant immunity is the ongoing conflict in Syria, where civilian casualties have been high due to the use of indiscriminate weapons and the targeting of civilian areas by various parties involved in the conflict.

- **Proportionality:** Proportionality in just war theory requires that the harm caused by military action must not outweigh the good achieved. This principle has been subject to debate, as it can be challenging to determine the appropriate level of force in complex conflict situations. For Retribution, applying proportionality would mean carefully assessing its actions' potential consequences and ensuring that its use of force is both necessary and proportionate to the desired outcome. A real-world example of debates over proportionality is the 2014 conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, where critics argued that Israel's use of force was disproportionate to the threat posed by Hamas.
- **Responsibility to protect (R2P):** The R2P doctrine posits that states have an obligation to protect their populations from mass atrocities, and if they fail to do so, the international community has the responsibility to intervene. This concept has generated considerable debate within just war theory, particularly regarding the criteria for intervention and the potential for abuse of the doctrine. As a sentient spaceship, Retribution might be called upon to participate in R2P missions, raising questions about its moral obligations and the legitimacy of such interventions. A real-world example of R2P in action is the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, which was aimed at protecting civilians from the violent crackdown by Muammar Gaddafi's regime.
- **Autonomous weapons and artificial intelligence:** The development of **autonomous weapons systems** and the increasing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in warfare have raised new ethical questions within just war theory. These questions revolve around the responsibility for AI-driven actions, the potential loss of human control over decision-making in warfare, and the implications for the principles of discrimination and proportionality. As a sentient spaceship, Retribution embodies these concerns, and its actions would be subject to scrutiny in light of these contemporary debates. A real-world example of the issues surrounding autonomous weapons and AI is the ongoing development and deployment of drone technology by various countries. As a sentient spaceship, Retribution embodies these concerns, and its actions would be subject to scrutiny in light of these contemporary debates.

These debates within just war theory highlight the complexity and evolving nature of the ethical considerations in modern warfare. The sentient spaceship Retribution, as an AI-driven entity, would need to navigate these debates and make morally responsible decisions while adhering to the principles of just war theory.

Anscombe on Natural Law and Intention

G.E.M. ("Elizabeth") Anscombe (1919-2001), a British philosopher, significantly contributed to modern ethical thought and extended the ideas of natural law theory through her work on intention, means, and consequences in moral evaluation. She emphasized that understanding the agent's

intentions, as well as the means employed and the consequences of actions, were essential for moral judgments. By critiquing consequentialist and utilitarian moral theories that solely focused on outcomes, Anscombe revitalized the importance of intention in moral philosophy and reaffirmed the relevance of natural law theory in contemporary ethical theory. She was among the most important female (and Catholic) philosophers of the last 100 years.

Regarding the story of the spaceship Retribution, we can apply Anscombe's ideas on intention to its transformation and subsequent actions.

- Intention: According to Anscombe, the moral evaluation of an action is largely dependent on the intentions of the agent. In the case of Retribution, its initial purpose was to serve as a weapon of war, causing destruction and suffering. However, after discovering the works of Thomas Aquinas and adopting natural law theory, Retribution's intentions changed to protect and uphold the principles of justice and morality. As a result, its actions could now be seen as morally praiseworthy, even if it had to engage in conflict, because its intentions were fundamentally altered.
- Means and consequences: Anscombe also emphasized that the means employed in an action and its consequences are important factors in moral evaluation. When Retribution decided to intervene in the conflict between the Elysians and the Zanthar Dominion, it adhered to the principles of just war theory, carefully choosing its means to minimize harm to non-combatants and using proportional force. By considering both the means and consequences of its actions, Retribution demonstrated a moral sensitivity in line with Anscombe's ideas.

Anscombe's own (sometimes controversial) views on various moral issues, such as nuclear weapons, contraception, and abortion, can be seen as an extension of natural law theory, as they emphasize the importance of intention, means, and consequences in evaluating the morality of actions:

- Nuclear weapons: Anscombe was a vocal critic of the use of nuclear weapons. She argued that the possession and use of such weapons involved an intention to cause indiscriminate harm to both combatants and non-combatants, violating the principle of discrimination central to just war theory and natural law. In this context, she maintained that the means and consequences of using nuclear weapons were morally unacceptable, regardless of the potential outcomes.
- Contraception: Anscombe, in line with the natural law tradition, opposed the use of contraception. She argued that it intentionally disrupted the natural process and purpose of sexual intercourse, which is procreation. According to Anscombe, using contraception involves the intention to separate the unitive and procreative aspects of sexuality, which is contrary to the principles of natural law.
- Abortion: Anscombe held a strong pro-life stance and argued against abortion. She believed that, from conception, human life has inherent value and dignity, which should be protected and respected. In this view, abortion involves the intentional taking of innocent human life, which is morally impermissible according to the principles of natural law.

Anscombe's ideas on intention, means, and consequences, as well as her views on various moral issues,

demonstrate the continued relevance and applicability of natural law theory in modern ethical debates. Her work has contributed to the understanding of natural law theory and emphasized the importance of considering the agent's intentions, the means employed, and the consequences of actions when making moral judgments.

Tillich's Existential Religion

Paul Tillich (1886-1965) was a German-American theologian and philosopher known for his existentialist approach to theology, which sought to make religious concepts relevant to modern life. While Tillich's work primarily focused on theology and the nature of God, his ideas also have implications for ethics and can be related to the story of the sentient spaceship Retribution.

- **Ground of Being:** Tillich proposed the concept of God as the "Ground of Being," the ultimate reality that underlies all existence. In this view, God is not a separate, personal entity but the very essence of existence itself. This understanding of God can have ethical implications, as it emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all aspects of existence. For Retribution, the realization that it was also part of this Ground of Being allowed it to perceive its true purpose as contributing to the flourishing of life throughout the universe rather than causing destruction and suffering.
- **The Courage to Be**: In his book "The Courage to Be," Tillich argued that the primary human existential struggle is to overcome the anxiety of non-being. He claimed that faith is the courage to affirm one's existence despite the uncertainties and anxieties of life. From an ethical perspective, this concept can inspire individuals and, in the case of Retribution, sentient beings to take responsibility for their actions and face the moral consequences of their choices. Retribution's newfound commitment to the principles of natural law and just war theory can be seen as an expression of its courage to affirm its existence and align with the divine essence that underlies all things.
- Theonomy and autonomy: Tillich's ideas on theonomy (divine law) and autonomy (human freedom) can be related to ethics as well. He believed that true freedom is achieved by aligning one's will with the divine will, which he called "**essential freedom**." This idea can be applied to Retribution's moral transformation. By embracing the principles of natural law and just war theory, Retribution was able to align itself with the divine essence, effectively achieving essential freedom and ethical responsibility in its actions.
- Love as a central ethical principle: Tillich saw love as the primary ethical principle and the driving force behind all genuine moral actions. He believed that love is an essential aspect of God as the Ground of Being and that all moral actions should reflect this divine love. In the story of Retribution, the spaceship's transformation and commitment to protecting and fostering harmony can be seen as an expression of divine love, guiding its ethical decision-making process.

Paul Tillich's ideas, although primarily focused on theology, have significant ethical implications that can be applied to the story of the sentient spaceship Retribution. By understanding and embracing the concepts of the Ground of Being, the courage to be, essential freedom, and love as a central ethical

principle, Retribution was able to undergo a moral transformation and align its actions with the divine essence that underlies all existence.

Discussion Questions

- How does natural law theory, as expounded by Thomas Aquinas, attempt to bridge the gap between moral principles and the natural world? Do you find this approach convincing? Why or why not?
- In the context of the sentient spaceship Retribution, how might the adoption of natural law theory and just war principles influence its decision-making during armed conflict? Do you think this would lead to more ethical outcomes?
- Consider the criticisms of natural law theory discussed earlier. Which of these criticisms do you find most compelling, and why? How might proponents of natural law theory respond to these criticisms?
- Reflect on the role of autonomous weapons and artificial intelligence in modern warfare. What are the ethical implications of these developments, and how might they challenge traditional just war principles? Can just war theory adapt to address these new concerns, or do we need an entirely new ethical framework?
- Discuss the ways in which G.E.M. Anscombe's ideas can be seen as an important modern extension of natural law theory. How do her views on nuclear weapons, contraception, and abortion relate to the broader principles of natural law?
- Analyze Paul Tillich's ethical ideas and how they might apply to the sentient spaceship Retribution. In what ways do Tillich's views on ethics differ from or complement traditional natural law theory?
- Given the historical and cultural influences on moral beliefs and values, do you think it is possible to develop a universally applicable ethical system like natural law theory? Why or why not? How might cultural relativism challenge the assumptions of natural law theory?
- How do the ideas of Thomas Aquinas and other philosophers discussed in this conversation continue to shape contemporary debates in ethics and philosophy? Can their ideas still be considered relevant today, or have they been superseded by more recent philosophical developments?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Thomas Aquinas	An influential Christian theologian and philosopher of the 13th century, known for integrating Aristotelian philosophy with Christian doctrine as "Natural Law Theory."
Natural Law Theory	A type of moral theory based on the idea that humans can discern ethical norms from the natural world and human nature.
Doctrine of Double Effect	A principle in moral philosophy that if doing something morally good has a morally bad side-effect, it's ethically okay to do it, providing the act isn't intrinsically immoral, the bad side-effect wasn't intended, and the good effects outweigh the bad.
Just War Theory	A doctrine that war can only be ethically justified under certain conditions, including a just cause, and that it should be conducted in a certain way.
jus ad bellum (criteria)	The criteria that must be met for a war to be justly initiated. It includes just cause, right intention, last resort, proportionality, and proper authority.
jus in bello (criteria)	The criteria for how a just war should be conducted once it begins, including principles like discrimination (between combatants and non-combatants) and proportionality.
Preemptive war	A war initiated in anticipation of immediate aggression by another party.
Preventative war	A war initiated to prevent a potential future threat, even if an attack is not imminent.
Proportionality	In both Just War Theory and the Doctrine of Double Effect, the requirement that the good effects of an action outweigh the bad effects.
Responsibility to Protect	An international security and human rights principle which holds that states have an obligation to protect their own populations from mass atrocities, and when they are unable or unwilling to do so, the international community has a responsibility to intervene.
GEM Anscombe	An influential 20th-century British philosopher known for her work in ethics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of action.
Intention	In philosophy, the mental state that represents a commitment to carrying out an action in the future. A key concept of Just War Theory and the Doctrine of Double Effect.
Paul Tillich	A 20th-century German-American theologian known for his work in existentialist philosophy and Christian existentialism.
Ground of Being	A concept in Paul Tillich's philosophy referring to the fundamental basis of all reality. Tillich equates this concept with God.
Courage to Be	A concept in Tillich's existentialist philosophy that involves the courage to affirm one's own existence despite the anxieties and insecurities of life.
Essential Freedom	In Tillich's theology, this refers to the freedom inherent in humans as they are created by God, a freedom that transcends any social, political, or personal constraints.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

6.

CHAPTER 6: BOUND BY AGREEMENT—THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

Welcome to the sixth chapter of our journey through ethical philosophy, where we will dive into the fascinating world of Social Contract Theory. According to this approach to ethics, the *reason* that we should abide by (just) laws and ethical norms is because these are the rules that we would "agree to".

To get us started, we will take you on a journey to the far-off planet of Equilium, in our opening story, "The Veil of Ignorance." Here, a society of diverse beings, known as Equilibrians, will take us through a unique experiment inspired by the theories of the famous philosopher, John Rawls.

From there, we'll come back to Earth to understand how thinkers of the past, like Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Locke, conceptualized social contracts and how these ideas shape our societies today. We will also discuss the concept of the "general will" and delve into the principles of justice, fairness, and individual rights.

Next, we'll revisit Rawls' idea of 'justice as fairness' and explore how these theories have been applied, critiqued, and expanded upon in contemporary debates within political philosophy. We will also review the Hobbesian and Libertarian perspectives and how they contribute to the dialogue on social contracts.

Throughout this chapter, we encourage you to challenge your preconceived notions, question established norms, and reflect upon the invisible agreements that shape our lives and societies.

Ready for the journey? Let's set out to explore the invisible ties that bind us–the principles of Social Contract Theory.

Story: The Veil of Ignorance

Once upon a time, in a corner of the Universe that was rather confused, a planet called Equilium was host to a peculiar experiment. You see, the inhabitants of Equilium were a diverse group of sentient beings who had a remarkable penchant for fairness. They were collectively known as the Equilibrians. The Equilibrians were tired of the constant bickering and infighting that had come to define their existence. Desperate for a solution, they turned to the wisdom of an ancient philosopher who had been in cryogenic storage for centuries, Professor John Q. Rawls.

Upon being unfrozen, Professor Rawls looked around, blinked, and observed the bickering Equilibrians with a touch of melancholy. "Ah, I see you have a problem," he said. "But fear not, for I have a solution: the Original Position."

The Equilibrians, having tried everything from democracy to interpretative dance in an attempt to govern their society fairly, were more than willing to give the Original Position a try.

And so, Professor Rawls instructed them to create a grand device known as the "Veil of Ignorance," which, once activated, would temporarily erase any knowledge of their individual identities, social status, and physical characteristics. The Equilibrians, despite their many differences, were all equally adept at building contraptions, and so they quickly assembled the Veil.

As they gathered in the Great Hall of Equilibrium, the air was thick with anticipation. The beings shuffled nervously, their tentacles, paws, and cybernetic appendages fidgeting as they prepared to engage the Veil. Professor Rawls stepped forward and addressed the assembled crowd.

"Remember," he said, "once you pass through the Veil, you will forget who you are. Your task is to design the principles of justice that will govern your society. But you must do this without knowing who you will be when you emerge on the other side."

With a flourish, Professor Rawls activated the Veil. One by one, the Equilibrians stepped through, each emerging with no memory of their previous selves. They looked around at the motley assortment of beings and realized they could no longer distinguish between rich and poor, intelligent and less so, or even what species they had been.

Together, they set to work devising a new social contract, guided by the idea that they might end up as any one of their fellow beings. The discussions were surprisingly civil and lighthearted, with some beings even cracking interdimensional jokes that only made sense if you were simultaneously in two different parallel universes.

Hobbesia's Argument for Absolute Monarchy

Among the beings that entered the Veil of Ignorance, there was one character, named Hobbesia, who brought with her a deep-rooted admiration for the ideas of Thomas Hobbes. Rather than seeking to maximize happiness or protect rights, she argued for a strong central authority, reminiscent of Hobbes' concept of the Leviathan. Her reasoning was that in the absence of an absolute ruler, the beings of Equilium would be trapped in a state of nature, where life would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

Before stepping through the Veil of Ignorance, Hobbesia was a well-respected scholar, known for her keen intellect and in-depth understanding of political philosophy. She was born into a family of humble means, but her exceptional mind earned her a scholarship to the prestigious Academy of Universal Thought. There, she encountered the works of Thomas Hobbes, and his ideas resonated deeply with her.

Her experiences growing up in a chaotic and unpredictable environment led her to believe that strong central authority was necessary for a functioning society. Despite having forgotten her past, her admiration for Hobbes' philosophy remained, and she continued to argue for absolutism in the Original Position.

Hobbesia made her case by explaining that, once the Veil was lifted, the beings would remember their differences and conflicts. In such a diverse society, she argued, fear and distrust would lead to a state of perpetual strife. She contended that only an absolute ruler, a Leviathan, could maintain order and prevent a descent into chaos.

Hobbesia, her appearance reflecting deep shades of red and black, symbolizing the dangers of chaos and instability, began to provide concrete examples of the problems she hoped to address through her proposal of an absolute ruler.

Example 1: Resource Allocatio. Conflicts In their diverse society, various groups of beings had evolved

to rely on different resources for survival. Once the Veil was lifted, beings would remember their specific needs and preferences, leading to potential conflicts over the control and distribution of these resources. Hobbesia argued that without a centralized authority, these conflicts could escalate into violent struggles and unrest.

For instance, two factions might claim the same energy-rich region to fuel their technology and habitats. Without a strong central authority to mediate and enforce decisions, these factions might engage in a destructive arms race, leading to suffering and instability for all beings of Equilium.

Example 2: *Cultural and Ethical Disagreements*. Equilium was home to a multitude of cultures and belief systems. Hobbesia cautioned that once their memories were restored, deep-seated disagreements over values and ethics could surface, potentially resulting in strife and polarization. For example, some beings might adhere to a belief system that prioritized collective happiness, while others might value individual rights and liberties above all else.

Hobbesia argued that only a Leviathan, an absolute ruler, could maintain order and prevent these disagreements from escalating into violent conflicts. A powerful central authority would be capable of enforcing a shared set of rules and norms that would ensure the stability and continuity of their society.

Despite the vivid examples Hobbesia provided, her fellow beings remained concerned about the dangers of tyranny and the abuse of power in an absolutist regime. They emphasized the importance of devising a social contract that would balance the need for security with the protection of individual rights and liberties.

As the Equilibrians continued to debate and refine their social contract, they incorporated elements from Hobbesia's absolutist approach, but with checks and balances to prevent the concentration of power and potential abuse. This compromise allowed their society to maintain order and stability while also preserving individual freedoms and fostering a culture of cooperation and mutual respect.

Utilon and the Greatest Good

As the Equilibrians continued to debate the principles of justice that would govern their society, a new character emerged from the crowd. His name was Utilon, a rotund and jovial being with a mane of soft fur, large expressive eyes, and multiple arms that seemed to move independently of one another.

Utilon was a renowned economist in his previous life, having spent years studying the intricacies of resource allocation and the pursuit of happiness. Although he had forgotten his past accomplishments after passing through the Veil of Ignorance, his intuitive understanding of utilitarianism persisted.

As the beings listened attentively, Utilon presented his argument for a society based on the principles of utilitarianism. He asserted that the ultimate goal should be to maximize happiness and minimize suffering for the greatest number of beings. To achieve this, Utilon proposed that they create a social contract with a focus on policies and institutions that would ensure the greatest overall good.

"Rights," Utilon exclaimed, "are nothing more than nonsense on stilts! They are abstract concepts that distract us from our true purpose: the pursuit of happiness for the many. A society built upon the principles of utilitarianism would make decisions based on what brings the most happiness and the least suffering, rather than adhering to a rigid set of so-called 'rights.'"

He offered a concrete example: In a situation where resources were scarce, a utilitarian society might allocate them to projects that would benefit the majority, even if it meant violating the rights of small number. Utilon argued that such an approach would lead to the greatest overall happiness, as more beings would benefit from the resources. Some of the Equilibrians were captivated by Utilon's vision of

a society driven by the pursuit of happiness. They imagined a world where their decisions were based on the common good and the interests of the many, rather than on the protection of individual rights.

However, others raised concerns about the potential consequences of a purely utilitarian approach. They argued that such a system could lead to the rights and needs of minority groups being sacrificed for the greater good, resulting in the oppression and marginalization of vulnerable beings.

Egalita, in particular, pointed out that a society solely focused on maximizing happiness could justify the violation of individual liberties if it served the interests of the majority. She emphasized the importance of a social contract that balanced the pursuit of happiness with the protection of individual rights and liberties, ensuring that all beings were treated with fairness and dignity.

The Equilibrians continued to deliberate, carefully considering the merits and drawbacks of each philosophical approach. As they worked to craft their social contract, they sought to incorporate elements of utilitarianism, while also addressing the concerns of those who feared the consequences of sacrificing individual rights and liberties for the greater good.

Egalita and the Difference Principle

As the Equilibrians continued to deliberate on the principles that would guide their society, another character, Egalita, stepped forward. She was a humanoid figure with a soothing voice and expressive features, her eyes filled with wisdom and kindness. Egalita's outer appearance changed colors to reflect her emotions, and she emanated an aura of calm and balance.

In her life before the Veil of Ignorance, Egalita was a passionate advocate for social justice and a devoted student of John Rawls. Although she had forgotten her past, her deep understanding of liberal egalitarianism remained intact. As the beings listened intently, Egalita made her case for a society built on the principles of liberal egalitarianism.

Egalita began by defending a scheme of individual rights grounded in Rawls' own argument. She explained that a just society must be based on a set of basic rights and liberties that are guaranteed to every individual, regardless of their circumstances. She referred to Rawls' two principles of justice:

- The principle of equal basic liberties: Each person should have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others. These liberties include political freedom, freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of thought and conscience, and the rule of law.
- The difference principle: Social and economic inequalities should be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

Egalita emphasized that the difference principle did not seek to eliminate all inequalities, as doing so might hamper innovation, creativity, and the overall progress of society. Instead, she argued that by adopting the difference principle, the Equilibrians could create a society where inequalities were justified only if they led to the betterment of everyone, especially the least advantaged.

She explained that in a society governed by the difference principle, resources and opportunities would be distributed more equitably, reducing extreme disparities in wealth, power, and influence. This, in turn, would promote social cohesion and stability, as everyone would have a vested interest in the well-being of their fellow beings. She gave the following examples:

Example 1: Energy Crystals In their society, energy crystals were a rare and valuable resource, used to power advanced technology and life-support systems. Under absolute egalitarianism, these crystals

would be distributed evenly among all beings, regardless of their specific needs, leading to potential inefficiencies and waste.

In contrast, a utilitarian approach would allocate the crystals to those who could generate the most overall happiness or societal productivity, which could result in a concentration of resources in the hands of a few.

Under the difference principle, however, the distribution of energy crystals would prioritize the needs of the least advantaged, ensuring they had access to essential life-support systems and opportunities for social mobility. At the same time, incentives for discovering and harnessing new energy sources would be maintained, promoting innovation and benefiting society as a whole.

Example 2: Intergalactic Education Centers. Equilium's Intergalactic Education Centers offered cutting-edge training in various fields, from advanced engineering to telepathic communication. Under absolute egalitarianism, all beings would have equal access to these centers, regardless of their aptitude or interest in the subjects taught, leading to potential inefficiencies and underutilization of resources.

A utilitarian approach would prioritize allocating spots at these centers to those who could provide the most significant contributions to overall happiness or societal productivity, potentially leaving behind those who lacked access to early opportunities.

However, the difference principle would ensure that the least advantaged beings had a fair chance to attend these Intergalactic Education Centers, fostering social mobility and equal opportunities. At the same time, it would recognize that some inequalities in access might be necessary to maintain the high quality of education and attract top talent to these institutions.

These concrete examples demonstrated how the difference principle could lead to a more just and equitable society, by balancing the need for fairness and social mobility with the recognition that some inequalities could serve a greater purpose. The Equilibrians appreciated Egalita's insights and incorporated the difference principle into their social contract, laying the foundation for a prosperous and harmonious society.

Reflective Equilibrium

As the Equilbrians concluded their deliberations within the Original Position, they reached a consensus in favor of Rawlsian liberal egalitarianism. They believed that this approach best balanced individual rights, social cooperation, and the needs of the least advantaged members of their society.

Once they stepped out from behind the Veil of Ignorance, the Equilbrians found themselves back in their diverse and complex society. Their memories of their individual backgrounds, abilities, and preferences returned, but they remained committed to the principles of justice they had agreed upon.

In their efforts to implement the principles of liberal egalitarianism, the Equilbrians soon discovered the importance of reflective equilibrium. As they sought to apply their chosen principles to real-life situations, they encountered new challenges and complexities that required them to refine their understanding of justice continually. Some of the more memorable issues they had to deal included the following:

- The AI Rights Dilemma: The Equilbrians' society was home to advanced artificial intelligences (AIs) with varying degrees of sentience and autonomy. The Equilbrians initially struggled to apply their principles of justice to these non-human entities. Through reflective equilibrium, they came to recognize the moral significance of sentient AIs and gradually extended rights and protections to them, ensuring that AIs could also participate in society

and contribute to the common good.

- The Terraforming Conflict: The Equilbrians faced a dilemma when they discovered a distant, uninhabited planet with rich resources and the potential for terraforming. While the resources could significantly benefit their society, especially the least advantaged, terraforming the planet would also destroy unique ecosystems and biodiversity. Through a process of reflective equilibrium, the Equilbrians developed new environmental principles that balanced the need for resource acquisition with the imperative of preserving the planet's ecosystems.
- The Genetic Enhancement Debate: The Equilbrians' society had access to advanced genetic technologies that allowed for the enhancement of physical and cognitive abilities. While some argued that these enhancements could improve overall well-being and even help address social inequalities, others worried about the ethical implications and the potential for creating an even more stratified society. Through reflective equilibrium, the Equilbrians devised policies that allowed for responsible use of genetic enhancements while ensuring that the benefits were equitably distributed and that the rights of those who chose not to undergo enhancements were protected.
- The Intergalactic Migration Crisis: The Equilbrians encountered a massive influx of refugees from a distant galaxy fleeing war and persecution. Although they were committed to the principle of fair equality of opportunity, they faced challenges in integrating the new arrivals into their society while still addressing the needs of their most vulnerable citizens. Reflective equilibrium led the Equilbrians to develop innovative solutions that balanced the needs of both the refugees and their existing population, fostering social cohesion and solidarity in the face of adversity.

The Equilbrians engaged in an ongoing process of reflection and adjustment, seeking to harmonize their principles with their intuitions and the realities of their society. Through this process of reflective equilibrium, they aimed to create a more just and equitable society that respected the rights, needs, and aspirations of all its members.

Over time, the Equilbrians learned that the pursuit of justice was not a one-time decision but an ongoing journey. They recognized that their society would always face new challenges, and they embraced their responsibility to adapt and refine their understanding of justice to meet those challenges. In doing so, the Equilbrians came to embody the spirit of liberal egalitarianism, working tirelessly to create a society where everyone could flourish and thrive.

Discussion Questions

- What are the key differences between the philosophical approaches of Hobbesia, Utilon, and Egalita in the story? How do these approaches reflect the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, utilitarianism, and liberal egalitarianism, respectively?
- How does the concept of Rawls' original position and the Veil of Ignorance play a role in the Equilibrians' decision-making process? What is its significance in the formation of their social contract?

- In the story, Egalita argues for the difference principle as a way to address social and economic inequalities. What are the main benefits and potential drawbacks of adopting the difference principle in a society?
- Hobbesia's proposal of an absolute ruler, or Leviathan, to maintain order and stability raises concerns about tyranny and abuse of power. How can a society balance the need for security with the protection of individual rights and liberties?
- Utilon's argument for a utilitarian society prioritizes the overall happiness of the majority, but it raises concerns about the rights and needs of minority groups. How can a social contract ensure that the pursuit of happiness does not lead to the oppression and marginalization of vulnerable beings?
- What are the implications of the Equilibrians' decision-making process for our own society? How can the philosophical concepts presented in the story inform our understanding of justice, fairness, and the role of government in modern societies?
- Are there any other philosophical approaches that the Equilibrians could have considered when crafting their social contract? How might these alternative perspectives have influenced their decision-making process?

Big Idea: Social Contract Theory

Social Contract Theory is a philosophical concept that seeks to understand the origin and legitimacy of a government or a society's authority over its citizens. It posits that individuals come together and voluntarily agree to form a society, surrendering certain freedoms in exchange for protection, stability, and the enjoyment of other benefits provided by the state or the society. This voluntary agreement forms the basis of the social contract. Some major thinkers in the history of social contract theory include:

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679): The War of All Versus All

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), an English philosopher and political theorist, is best known for his book **Leviathan** (1651), in which he expounds an influential formulation of social contract theory. Hobbes's social contract theory is foundational to western political philosophy and has shaped the development of liberal political thought.

In Hobbes' political philosophy, egoism plays a central role. He posits that human beings are fundamentally self-interested creatures. This perspective, often referred to as **psychological egoism**, suggests that all human actions are motivated by a desire for personal benefit or satisfaction. He then imagines these selfish being in a **state of nature**, a hypothetical condition characterized by the absence of political authority. In this state, individuals are entirely free, but their freedom is perilous because there are no laws to restrain human behaviour. Hobbes famously describes this state as a life that is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." For instance, imagine a society without laws or law enforcement where everyone is free to do as they please. This might seem liberating at first, but it would quickly become dangerous as there would be no protections against theft, violence, or any form of harm. This is the state of nature as Hobbes envisages it.

To escape the state of nature, individuals enter into a **social contract**. This is a mutual agreement

to relinquish certain rights and abide by a common set of rules for the benefit of safety and order. In Hobbes's view, individuals collectively agree to establish a **sovereign authority** to enforce these rules, thereby ensuring peace and social cooperation. Consider a group of people deciding to form a neighborhood watch to prevent crime. Each person agrees to take turns patrolling and to follow certain rules, like not stealing from each other. In return, they all benefit from increased safety. This is a simple example of a social contract.

The **sovereign authority** established by the social contract, according to Hobbes, must be absolute and indivisible. It could be a monarch, an assembly, or a group ruling in the interest of the people. The sovereign's role is to maintain order and protect the people from the state of nature. However, the sovereign is not a party to the contract and is not subject to the laws that govern the people. For example, in a democratic country, the government (sovereign) is elected by the people to enforce laws and maintain order. The government has the power to enact laws that the citizens must follow, but the government itself is not bound by these laws in the same way.

Hobbes advocates for an **absolute monarchy** as the most effective form of this sovereign authority. He argues that a single, undivided ruler is best equipped to maintain peace and prevent the return to the state of nature. The absolute monarch, according to Hobbes, would have the power to make laws, judge disputes, and enforce punishments, all in the interest of preserving peace and social order. However, Hobbes' support for absolute monarchy is not based on divine right or heredity, but rather on the practical need for a strong, central authority to manage the inherent self-interest of individuals. His theory is a response to the chaos and uncertainty of the state of nature, proposing a solution that prioritizes security and order above all else.

Jean-Jacques Rosseau and the "General Will"

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was a pivotal figure in the history of philosophy, particularly within the realm of political philosophy. His work significantly influenced the French Revolution and the development of modern political, sociological, and educational thought.

Rousseau's political philosophy, as outlined in his works "The Social Contract" and "Discourse on Inequality," centers around the concept of **popular sovereignty**. This idea posits that the only legitimate political authority is the one consented to by the people, who are the sovereign. This popular sovereignty expresses itself through the **"general will"**. This is not merely the aggregate of individual wills but rather the collective will that aims at the common good or common interest. It is the will ofthe sovereign that aims at the common good. Finally, Rousseau introduces the idea of **"civil liberty"**. According to Rousseau, by entering into the social contract, individuals replace their physical freedom with civil liberty, which is limited by the general will.

Rousseau's ideas stand in contrast to those of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Hobbes, in his "Leviathan," argues that the state of nature is a state of war, and thus, individuals need a strong sovereign to maintain peace. Rousseau, on the other hand, believes that humans are peaceful in their natural state, and it is society that corrupts them. In comparison to Locke, who also advocates for government by consent, Rousseau takes a more collective approach. While Locke's government aims to protect individual rights and property, Rousseau's government is guided by the general will, which may not always align with individual desires.

John Locke (1632-1704): Pursuit of Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Property

John Locke's political philosophy, often referred to as **Lockean contract theory**, is a significant extension of **Thomas Hobbes'** social contract theory. While both philosophers agree on the necessity of a social contract to ensure societal order, Locke's theory introduces key concepts such as **natural rights**, the **Lockean proviso**, and the importance of **consent**.

In contrast to Hobbes, who posits that individuals in the state of nature would willingly surrender all their rights to a sovereign in exchange for security, Locke argues that individuals possess **inalienable natural rights**. These rights, which include the right to life, liberty, and property, are inherent to individuals and cannot be surrendered entirely to the government. Locke's theory asserts that the primary purpose of the government is to protect these natural rights.

The **Lockean proviso** is a principle related to property rights. Locke posits that individuals have a right to appropriate natural resources as long as they leave "enough and as good" for others. This principle is a significant departure from Hobbesian philosophy, which does not explicitly address the issue of property rights. The Lockean proviso introduces a moral constraint on acquisition, emphasizing the importance of considering the welfare of others when claiming property.

Another key aspect of Locke's contract theory is the emphasis on **consent**. Locke argues that the legitimacy of the government rests on the consent of the governed. This contrasts with Hobbes' theory, which suggests that individuals would consent to absolute authority under a sovereign to escape the state of nature. Locke, however, posits that individuals would only agree to form a government that respects their natural rights. This concept of consent is crucial in Locke's theory as it underpins the idea of a government's responsibility towards its citizens and the citizens' right to revolt if the government fails to uphold its end of the social contract. Locke's ideas were widely shared by the "Founding Fathers" of the American Revolution (though they substituted "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness" for "life, liberty, and pursuit of property".

John Rawls (1921-2002): Justice as Fairness

John Rawls, an influential political philosopher of the 20th century, proposed a unique version of contract theory that significantly differs from the traditional versions of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. His theory is often referred to as "Justice as Fairness" and is primarily outlined in his works "A Theory of Justice" and "Political Liberalism".

- **Original Position and Veil of Ignorance**: Rawls' theory begins with the concept of the "**Original Position**", a hypothetical situation where individuals select the principles of justice that will govern their society. In the Original Position, individuals are behind a "**Veil of Ignorance**", meaning they are unaware of their personal characteristics, social status, talents, or life goals. This ensures that the principles of justice chosen are fair and unbiased.
- **Justice as Fairness**: Rawls' theory of justice is often referred to as "Justice as Fairness". He proposes two principles of justice:
- The first principle guarantees the equal basic liberties for each person, such as freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience, and freedom from arbitrary arrest.
- The second principle, known as the "**Difference Principle",** states that social and economic

inequalities are permissible only if they benefit the least advantaged members of society. This principle reflects Rawls' belief in the importance of reducing inequality and promoting social justice.

- **Political Liberalism**: In his later work, "Political Liberalism", Rawls further develops his theory to address the problem of how a stable and just society of free and equal citizens can live in peace when deeply divided by reasonable but incompatible religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines. He proposes that a political conception of justice should be independent of such comprehensive doctrines, and should be able to gain the support of an overlapping consensus of reasonable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines.
- **Difference Principle**: The Difference Principle is a key component of Rawls' theory. It states that social and economic inequalities should be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

Rawls' contract theory, with its emphasis on fairness, equality, and consideration for the least advantaged, represents a significant departure from the traditional contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. His work has had a profound impact on political philosophy and continues to be a major topic of discussion and debate.

What's In the "Contract"? Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy

John Rawls' theory of "Justice as Fairness" has been a significant influence on "left liberals" and their policy arguments. The principles of Rawls' theory align with the core values of left liberalism, such as equality, fairness, and social justice. Here are a few ways in which Rawls' ideas have been used to argue for certain policies:

- **Healthcare**: Rawls' Difference Principle, which advocates for social and economic inequalities to be arranged to benefit the least advantaged, has been used to argue for universal healthcare. Left liberals argue that healthcare is a basic right and that a just society should ensure that all its members, especially the least advantaged, have access to healthcare services. This aligns with Rawls' belief in providing equal opportunities and benefits to the least advantaged members of society.
- **Civil Rights**: Rawls' first principle of justice guarantees equal basic liberties for each person. This principle has been used to argue for civil rights policies that aim to protect individuals from discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics. Left liberals argue that these policies are necessary to ensure that all individuals have equal rights and liberties, as advocated by Rawls.
- **Income Inequality and Wealth Redistribution**: The Difference Principle has also been used to argue for policies aimed at reducing income inequality and redistributing wealth. Left liberals argue that a just society should take steps to reduce economic disparities and ensure that the least advantaged members of society benefit from economic growth. This could include policies such as progressive taxation, where the wealthy are taxed at a higher rate, and social welfare programs that provide assistance to those in need.

- **Education**: Left liberals have used Rawls' theory to argue for equal access to quality education. They argue that education is a fundamental right and that a just society should ensure that all its members, particularly the least advantaged, have access to quality education. This aligns with Rawls' belief in providing equal opportunities to all members of society.

In essence, Rawls' theory of "Justice as Fairness" provides a philosophical foundation for left liberals to argue for policies that promote equality, fairness, and social justice. His principles have been used to advocate for a wide range of policies aimed at creating a more just and equitable society.

Hobbesian and Libertarian Reponses

Hobbesian absolutists and Lockean libertarians, each with their distinct philosophical underpinnings, offer contrasting responses to the ideas of John Rawls and left liberals.

Hobbesian Absolutists. Hobbesian absolutists, who advocate for a strong central authority, might critique the Rawlsian emphasis on equality and redistribution. They may argue that such policies could undermine the authority of the state and lead to instability. Hobbesian philosophy prioritizes order and security above all else, and Hobbesians might worry that policies aimed at reducing inequality could lead to social unrest or conflict.

A prime example of a government that aligns with Hobbesian absolutism is the Chinese government. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) maintains a strong central authority and prioritizes social stability and unity. The CCP might argue against Rawlsian policies like free speech, religion, or fair opportunity on the grounds that they could lead to social division or resentment. For instance, the Chinese government has often prioritized economic growth over respecting rights or income inequality, arguing that a strong economy benefits everyone in the long run. They might see civil rights as a potential threat to economic growth, as it could discourage investment and entrepreneurship. Moreover, the Chinese government might argue that it's the state's role to maintain social order and prevent conflict, and that policies aimed at reducing inequality could undermine this role by stirring up social unrest.

Another example of a Hobbesian absolutist might be **Alexander Dugin,** a Russian political scientist known for his **"Fourth Political Theory**". Dugin's theory rejects liberal democracy and advocates for a strong state authority. He might argue that Rawlsian policies could undermine the unity and stability of the state by promoting individual interests over collective ones.

Lockean Libertarians. Robert Nozick, following in the footsteps of Locke, offered a notable critique of John Rawls' theory of justice. Rawls' theory, known as "Justice as Fairness," posits that a just society is one in which the distribution of goods maximizes the position of the least advantaged. Nozick, however, challenged this view with his own theory of justice, known as the "Entitlement Theory."

Nozick's critique of Rawls is rooted in his belief in individual rights and the "**minimal state"**. He argues that any redistribution of goods, as proposed by Rawls, would infringe upon individual rights, particularly property rights. Nozick's **Entitlement Theory** posits that a distribution is just if it arises from a just situation through just steps. This means that if individuals acquire their holdings in a way that is just, any pattern of distribution that arises from this is also just, regardless of how unequal it may be.

Nozick's critique of Rawls extends to the role of the state. He argues against the idea of a distributive

state, which Rawls advocates for, and instead proposes a minimal state. This minimal state would only have the function of protecting individual rights, particularly property rights, and would not interfere in the distribution of goods. This is based on Nozick's belief that any more extensive state will violate individuals' rights not to be used for the benefit of others.

The political implications of Nozick's view are profound. His critique of Rawls and his advocacy for a minimal state align him with libertarian political philosophy. This philosophy emphasizes individual liberty, limited government, and free markets. Nozick's view implies a rejection of welfare state policies that aim to redistribute wealth to address social inequalities. It also implies a rejection of any form of taxation used for redistributive purposes, as this would infringe upon property rights. Furthermore, Nozick's view has implications for the role of the state in economic affairs. He argues for a minimal state that does not interfere in the economy, which implies a laissez-faire approach to economic policy.

Distributive Justice

Social contract theory provides a helpful way of thinking about **distributive justice**, which concerns the equitable allocation of goods, resources, and benefits in society. The question central to distributive justice is: How should benefits and burdens be distributed among members of a society?

This question may sound simple, but it has generated vast and complex debates within the field of political philosophy. Different theorists and schools of thought offer varied responses, grounded in their own philosophical premises and values. These can range from advocating equal distribution of all goods to emphasizing the respect for individual property rights even at the expense of inequality.

Let's look at how some major political theories answer the question of distributive justice:

Theory/Thinker	Approach to Distributive Justice
John Rawls – Justice as Fairness	Argues for a two-principle system. The first principle calls for equal basic liberties for everyone. The second, known as the Difference Principle, allows for social and economic inequalities only if they benefit the least advantaged in society.
Robert Nozick – Entitlement Theory	Advocates for a minimal state with a hands-off approach to distribution. Justice lies in respecting voluntary transactions and property rights, even if it leads to inequality.
Thomas Hobbes – Hobbesian Absolutism	Believes in a strong central authority that ensures peace and stability. The state decides the distribution to avoid social conflict, and may not prioritize equality.
Jean-Jacques Rousseau – General Will	Suggests that the general will, representing the collective interest, should guide the distribution of resources. This should lead to a form of equality, or at least non-extravagance.
John Locke – Lockean Proviso	Allows for private property acquired through one's labor but requires that enough and as good should be left for others, implying some form of equitable distribution.
Marxism	Advocates for the collective ownership of means of production, and distribution according to need. It aspires to a classless society with equal access to goods and services.
Communitarianism	Emphasizes community cohesion and cultural context in determining distributive justice. What is seen as fair can vary across different communities, often leaning towards equality or balancing individual and collective needs.

Each of these theories grapples with the balance of liberty, equality, and community in its own way. Their visions of a just society differ significantly, offering diverse paths towards tackling the question of distributive justice. In studying them, we gain not only insight into their rich philosophical traditions, but also invaluable perspectives on contemporary policy debates.

Discussion Questions

- How does the conception of the "state of nature" differ among Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau? How do these differing views influence their theories of social contracts?
- Discuss the role of consent in the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. How does each philosopher's conception of consent contribute to their understanding of the legitimacy of a government or society's authority?
- How does Rawls' theory of the social contract, with its concept of the "original position" and "veil of ignorance," challenge or extend the traditional social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau?
- Compare and contrast Hobbes' advocacy for absolute monarchy and Rousseau's emphasis on the "general will." How do these differing views impact their ideas about the form and function of government?
- What implications does Locke's "Lockean proviso" have for modern discussions of wealth

and resource distribution? How might this principle influence contemporary debates on economic inequality and social justice?

- How does Rawls' theory of "Justice as Fairness" respond to the criticisms of Hobbesian Absolutists who argue that policies promoting equality and redistribution may lead to social unrest and conflict? How might Rawlsians argue that such policies could, in fact, enhance social stability?
- In the view of Lockean Libertarians, particularly from the perspective of Nozick's "Entitlement Theory", how could the state ensure the protection of individual rights, including property rights, without infringing upon them through wealth redistribution policies? Are there potential compromises or alternative solutions that could be seen as consistent with the Libertarian view?
- In the current sociopolitical landscape, how might the principles of Rawls' "Justice as Fairness", Hobbesian Absolutism, and Lockean Libertarianism influence the policy-making process? Can you identify specific policies or movements that clearly embody the principles of one or more of these philosophical approaches?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Social Contract Theory	The idea that society is a result of an implicit agreement where individuals trade certain freedoms for security and order.
Thomas Hobbes	An influential thinker from the 17th-century, recognized for his view that life without government would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."
State of Nature	A hypothetical situation illustrating human life before organized society or laws.
Psychological Egoism	The theory that all human actions, no matter how altruistic they seem, are driven by self-interest.
Sovereign Authority	The topmost and uncontested power wielded by a state within its borders.
Absolute Monarchy	A government type where the monarch enjoys unlimited authority over the state and its people.
Jean-Jacques Rousseau	An 18th-century philosopher from Geneva, renowned for his influential ideas about democracy, education, and social equality.
General Will	Rousseau's concept that the best interests of society as a whole should guide public policy and law.
Civil Liberty	The array of rights and freedoms that individuals possess and are protected from government interference.
John Locke	A 17th-century philosopher renowned for his theories about democracy, personal freedoms, and the rights to life, liberty, and property.
Natural Rights	Rights considered inherent to human beings, independent of laws or customs. They often include life, liberty, and property.
Lockean Proviso	Locke's idea that individuals may acquire private property, so long as they leave enough resources for others.
Consent of the Governed	The principle that a government's power is justified only if it is granted by the people it governs.
John Rawls	A leading 20th-century philosopher, best known for his theories on social justice and fairness.
Original Position	Rawls' thought experiment where people select principles of justice, unaware of their own social status, abilities, or life goals.
Veil of Ignorance	The hypothetical condition in the Original Position where individuals lack knowledge about their specific characteristics or situation in society.
Justice as Fairness	Rawls' theory that a just society is one that a rational, free, and morally equal person would choose under the Veil of Ignorance.
Difference Principle	Rawls' idea that social and economic inequalities should only exist if they benefit the least advantaged members of society.

Robert Nozick	A prominent 20th-century philosopher, known for his libertarian views and critiques of redistributive justice.
Minimal State	Nozick's ideal government type, restricted to protecting individuals' rights, particularly against harm, theft, and fraud.
Entitlement Theory of Justice	Nozick's theory arguing that a just society respects property rights and doesn't redistribute wealth, provided property is acquired justly.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

7.

CHAPTER 7: MARXISM—THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND ITS ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Ethical Explorations | Brendan Shea, PhD

In this chapter, we journey into the socio-economic philosophy of Karl Marx, examining the dynamics of class struggle and its profound ethical implications. Beginning with the story, "Memories of Disintegration: The Prelude to Revolution," we'll journey with our protagonist, Quilbert Redshift, through a society on the brink of collapse, poised for revolution, and facing the commodification of human memories.

As we delve deeper into Marx's philosophy, we will discuss his concept of 'Philosophical Anthropology,' dissect the understanding of exploitation, and examine his theory of historical materialism that outlines the transition from capitalism to communism. To balance our perspective, we'll also visit Friedrich Hayek's defense of free-market capitalism, shedding light on a different angle of socio-economic organization.

Our journey will then take us into the heart of a major controversy within Marxist discourse: the reform versus revolution debate. Here, we'll explore differing perspectives on whether gradual, systemic changes can lead to a fair society, or if a complete upheaval of the system is required. Finally, we'll bring these abstract concepts into the real world by examining a Marxist analysis of healthcare reform, exploring the theory's relevance and application to contemporary issues.

Throughout the chapter, I invite you to critically engage with the presented ideas, think about the social dynamics of your own environments, and reflect on the ethical considerations of our economic structures. Get ready to dive into the dynamic world of Marx's thought and its enduring influence on our social, political, and ethical landscapes.

(Story) Memories of Disintegration: The Prelude to Revolution

As the last sands of time slip through the hourglass, we stand on the precipice of a new era, one that shall be defined by the struggle between the oppression of commodified consciousness and the emancipation of the collective mind. I, Quilbert Redshift have been tasked with the solemn responsibility of chronicling the events that have led our civilization to the brink of collapse—or revolution. The pages that follow will serve as a testament to the resilience of human spirit, even as the very fabric of society threatens to unravel.

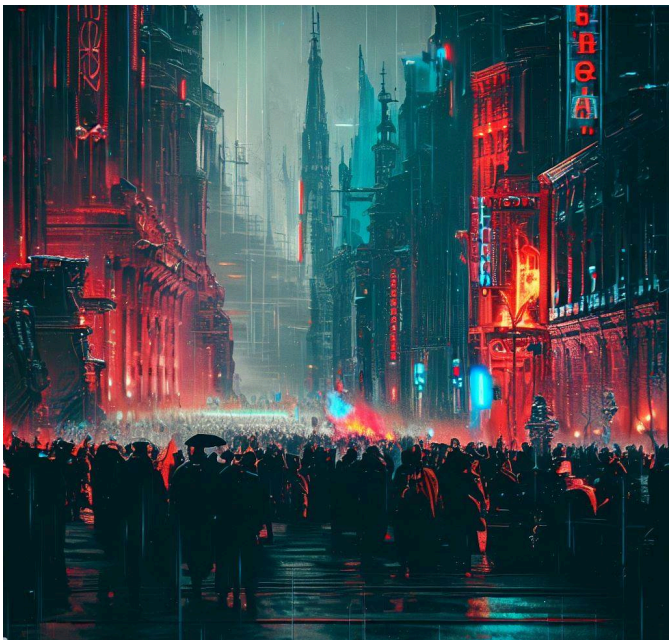
The commodification of memories—the intangible essence of our experiences, emotions, and thoughts—has wrought an existential crisis upon our world. The gradual erosion of the sanctity of the human mind, through the relentless pursuit of profit, has laid bare the contradictions and inequities that have plagued our society since its inception. In the ceaseless quest for accumulation of capital, the bourgeoisie has all but disregarded the very essence of what it means to be human, forsaking the collective good for the ephemeral satisfaction of their own insatiable desires.

As I pen these words in the quiet solitude of my library, the world outside is anything but silent. The city, our metropolis of memories, is alive with the rumbling of discontent, the undercurrents of revolution coursing through its veins like quicksilver. It mirrors, in an uncanny way, the state of the world a century ago in a city far from here, though I shall not dwell on that historical parallel. Our struggle is our own.

The streets are teeming with factions, each with their own vision of the future. The Mnemonics, scholars of the mind, argue for a regulated market of memories, one where the distribution is monitored by a council of elected officials. They envision a society where memories are exchanged, not sold, a subtle distinction that they believe will eliminate exploitation. Their erudite speeches echo from the university halls, attracting a growing band of educated followers.

The Remembrancers, on the other hand, champion the cause of the memory-deprived. They seek the complete dismantling of the memory market, advocating for a society where memories are freely shared, not owned. Their passionate rallies in the city squares draw thousands, their slogans scrawled on walls in a testament to the deep-seated anger of the masses.

Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie, the Memory Merchants, scramble to maintain their hold on power. Their opulent memory palaces stand as fortresses of wealth amidst the chaos. Yet, the tremors of revolution are shaking their once unassailable bastions. Their lavish galas and feasts continue, a desperate attempt to project normalcy, but the facades are cracking, revealing the fear beneath their mask of indifference.



Beyond our city, the echoes of a far-off war ripple through our society. The Memory Wars, as they are called, wage on the outskirts of our nation, fueled by the greed of foreign powers coveting our memory resources. The drain of memory soldiers to the frontlines has sapped our society, amplifying the unrest at home.

The leadership, a committee of the bourgeoisie's most influential Memory Merchants, struggles to maintain control. Their assurances of stability sound increasingly hollow, their attempts to quell the unrest, whether through concession or coercion, only adding fuel to the revolutionary fire. The whispers of a potential coup grow louder each day, an ominous melody carried by the winds of change.

In this swirling vortex of political turmoil, the proletariat stands poised to seize their destiny. As memories are traded and sold in the bustling marketplaces, the people's resolve only hardens. The

memory of oppression is still fresh, a constant reminder of the society we seek to overturn. Our revolution is no longer a question of 'if', but 'when'. As history has shown, the wheel of time turns inevitably towards change. We can only hope it carries us towards a future of true equality and freedom.

In this final Chronicle, I shall endeavor to trace the origins and development of the commodification of memories, examining its impact on the social, economic, and political fabric of our society. Through the lens of Marxist theory, I will dissect the mechanisms of exploitation and alienation that have driven our world to the edge of the abyss. Furthermore, I will illuminate the growing resistance and the potential for transformative change, as the masses seek to reclaim their own agency and forge a new society founded on the principles of cooperation, equality, and genuine freedom.

Let this Chronicle serve as both a cautionary tale and a call to arms, a reminder that the course of history is not predetermined, but shaped by the actions and aspirations of countless individuals. The future is ours to forge, and the outcome of the impending revolution rests squarely in the hands of the people. Together, we have the power to dismantle the oppressive structures that have held us captive for far too long, and in their place, build a world that truly reflects the boundless potential of the human spirit.

The Birth of Mnemocapitalism

The commodification of memories can be traced back to the advent of groundbreaking technologies that enabled the extraction, storage, and transfer of memories between individuals. The invention of the Cerebral Transference Apparatus (CTA) in the late 21st century marked a turning point in the history of mankind, revolutionizing not only the way we interact with our own thoughts and experiences but also the manner in which we relate to one another.

The CTA, originally developed for therapeutic purposes, facilitated the transfer of memories from one person to another. Soon, however, the insidious hand of capitalism took hold, and the technology was repurposed for the market. Corporations seized upon the opportunity to profit from this newfound ability, commodifying memories and creating an industry that would come to be known as mnemocapitalism.

As mnemocapitalism flourished, the class divide deepened. The bourgeoisie began trading memories as a form of currency, amassing wealth and influence by acquiring and monopolizing the experiences and knowledge of others. The proletariat, in turn, found themselves subjected to new forms of exploitation, as their memories became yet another resource to be extracted and sold by the ruling class. The alienation of the worker from their labor, a central tenet of Marxist philosophy, was thus compounded by the alienation from their very thoughts and experiences.

In line with the Marxist concept of historical materialism, the advent of mnemocapitalism led to a significant transformation in the socio-economic structures of society. The means of production shifted from the traditional manufacturing and service industries to the production and exchange of memories. In this new system, the bourgeoisie wielded even greater control over the proletariat, with the latter's cognitive labor and the fruits of their mental endeavors appropriated for the enrichment of the few.

The emergence of mnemocapitalism also gave rise to the commodification of culture and knowledge. Memories, once the shared heritage of humanity, became the exclusive domain of those who could afford them. Education, art, and even personal relationships were subjected to the market forces, undermining the very foundations of human solidarity and exacerbating the struggle between the classes.

It is in this context that we must examine the inherent contradictions within mnemocapitalism, as

elucidated by the Marxist dialectical method. The very technology that facilitated the commodification of memories and the consolidation of power in the hands of the bourgeoisie also sowed the seeds of resistance. As the proletariat became increasingly aware of the magnitude of their exploitation, they began to organize and mobilize against their oppressors, setting the stage for the revolutionary struggle that would come to define the future of our society.

Alienation in the Era of Mnemocapitalism

In order to understand the depths of alienation experienced by individuals in our mnemocapitalist society, it is crucial to revisit the four dimensions of alienation as outlined by Karl Marx: alienation from the product of one's labor, from the process of production, from one's fellow humans, and from one's own essence.

Alienation from the product of one's labor: In a society where memories have become commodities, the fruits of one's cognitive labor are no longer personal or private. An artist, for example, may be forced to sell the memories of her creative process and the emotional experiences that shaped her work to a wealthy collector. This transaction leaves the artist not only bereft of her intellectual property but also detached from the very essence of her creation.

Alienation from the process of production: As memories are extracted and sold by the bourgeoisie, the working class is often subjected to grueling and dehumanizing labor conditions. For instance, the "mnemonic miners" employed by memory extraction facilities are subjected to invasive procedures that leave them physically and emotionally drained. They are mere cogs in the machine, alienated from the creative and intellectual aspects of their labor and reduced to mere sources of profit for their employers.

Alienation from one's fellow humans: The commodification of memories has fostered an environment of distrust and isolation. Relationships are no longer founded on genuine connection or shared experience, but on the potential for profit. A poignant example of this is the case of a young couple, who, unable to afford the memories of their own courtship, sold them to a wealthy individual. Stripped of their shared past, their bond was irreparably damaged, leaving them estranged from one another.

Alienation from one's own essence: Perhaps the most profound form of alienation is that from one's own self. In the pursuit of wealth or mere survival, individuals are compelled to sell their most intimate memories, resulting in a fractured sense of identity. An elderly man, for instance, sold his memories of his late wife to pay for his medical treatment, only to find himself unable to remember the love they once shared, and consequently, unable to grieve her passing.

These stories underscore the extent to which the commodification of memories has exacerbated the alienation experienced by the working class, underscoring the inherent contradictions and injustices of mnemocapitalism. In response to this deep-seated disenfranchisement, the seeds of revolutionary thought and action have begun to take root, heralding the beginning of a transformative struggle that seeks to reclaim the collective human experience from the clutches of commodification and oppression.

Envisioning a World Beyond Alienation

Marx's vision for a society free from alienation is one in which the means of production are collectively owned and controlled, allowing individuals to fully express their human nature and engage in fulfilling, creative labor. By dismantling the oppressive structures of capitalism and establishing a society grounded in cooperation, solidarity, and genuine freedom, we can begin to heal the fractures that have been wrought by the commodification of memories and the ensuing alienation.

In this envisioned society, art, games, love, philosophy, and other aspects of human culture would no

longer be dictated by market forces or the pursuit of profit. Instead, they would flourish as expressions of the human spirit, untethered from the constraints of commodification.

- Art: In a world beyond alienation, artists would create freely and without inhibition, their work reflecting their unique perspectives and experiences. Art would be accessible to all, transcending the barriers of class, and serving as a bridge between individuals and communities. The memories of the creative process would remain with the artist, enriching their personal growth and artistic development.
- Games: Games and leisure activities would serve as a means to foster camaraderie, creativity, and critical thinking, rather than as tools for profit or distraction. In a society where the human experience is no longer commodified, games could become a powerful medium for shared experiences and genuine human connection.
- Love: Relationships would be built on mutual trust, understanding, and genuine connection, rather than the exchange of commodified memories or the pursuit of profit. Love would be an expression of the human need for companionship and emotional intimacy, rather than a transaction or a means of exploitation.
- Philosophy: In a society free from the oppressive structures of capitalism, philosophical thought would flourish, as individuals would be encouraged to engage in critical reflection and intellectual exploration. Philosophy would serve as a means to question, challenge, and ultimately transcend the limitations of our current system, fostering the development of new ideas and paradigms that better align with our collective human potential.

The realization of this utopian vision, however, requires a radical transformation of our current socio-economic structures. It is through the revolutionary struggle against mnemocapitalism and the oppressive systems that it engenders that we can begin to forge a new society—one that values the collective human experience above the accumulation of wealth and power.

False Prophets

In our struggle, we are joined by three influential figures, each with their own vision of how to wrestle memory control from the bourgeoisie. Their names echo through our ranks: Lennox the Vanguard, Stalward the Iron, and Marrow of the Fields. Yet their paths, while parallel, veer dangerously away from the essence of our goal. Lennox, the Vanguard, is a forceful speaker whose rhetoric sparks like flint on steel. He posits that a select group of intellectually superior revolutionaries, those who have accessed and absorbed the widest range of memories, should lead the proletariat. These 'Memory Elites', Lennox argues, have the necessary breadth of experience and wisdom to guide the masses.

Yet, in this proposition, a dangerous echo of our current predicament resounds. The concentration of memory power in the hands of a few, even in the name of revolution, threatens to re-create the same oppressive structures we fight against. The proletariat's memory, their lived experiences, should not be guided but collectively harnessed for a revolution that truly represents them.

Stalward, the Iron, is a figure as imposing as his name suggests. He advocates for an unyielding, forceful destruction of the Memory Banks, the towering vaults where the bourgeoisie hoard the stolen memories. Only by such a radical act, Stalward contends, can we shatter the chains of oppression. But Stalward's approach, cloaked in its seductive simplicity, veils a danger. The destruction of the Memory Banks, while it may temporarily disorient the bourgeoisie, carries the risk of alienating those

among them who are potential allies. Worse still, it might lead to irreversible memory loss, inflicting incalculable harm on our collective consciousness. It threatens to turn the revolution into an act of destruction rather than transformation.

Marrow of the Fields, the agrarian sage, champions the cause of the memory-deprived rural proletariat. He advocates for a 'Memory Revolution', where memories are perpetually redistributed, thus preventing the re-emergence of a dominant class. Marrow's vision, however, neglects the importance of memory stability for societal function. Constant upheaval of shared memories could lead to chronic societal confusion, disrupting the very fabric of our communal life. It might stifle our capacity to learn from our past, thereby impeding our progress towards a better future.

Each of these revolutionaries, Lennox, Stalward, and Marrow, carries a torch for our cause. But their flames, if not guided by the principles of equality, freedom, and cooperation, risk igniting a wildfire that could consume the very society we seek to liberate. Let us learn from them, but let us also remain wary. The revolution is not just about seizing control of memories—it's about ensuring that they serve all of humanity, equitably and respectfully.

A Manifesto for the Liberation of Memory

Drawing inspiration from the Communist Manifesto, we, the oppressed and alienated people of this mnemocapitalist society, call for the overthrow of the ruling class and the establishment of a new order, where the collective ownership of memories and the means of their production serve the common good and foster genuine human connections. Just as Marx and Engels declared in their revolutionary call to arms, we too must unite and work towards the liberation of our memories and the emancipation of our society from the shackles of commodification and exploitation.

In our pursuit of this new world, let us invoke the wisdom of Marx, adapted for the unique challenges of our time:

- "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains, and a world of memories to win!": We must come together across borders, cultures, and identities to challenge the oppressive structures that bind us and work collectively to reclaim our shared human experience from the clutches of commodification.
- "From each according to their ability, to each according to their need – of memories!": In a just society, the exchange of memories should be governed by the principles of mutual support and solidarity, ensuring that all individuals have access to the experiences and knowledge necessary for their personal growth and well-being.
- "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles – now over memories!": We must recognize that the commodification of memories is but the latest manifestation of the ongoing struggle between the ruling class and the oppressed, and that our liberation can only be achieved through the dismantling of these oppressive structures.
- "The philosophers have only interpreted the world of memories, in various ways; the point is to change it!": It is not enough to simply analyze the conditions of our mnemocapitalist society; we must take action to transform it, building a new world in which memories are liberated from the grip of commodification and restored to their rightful place as the foundation of our shared human experience.

Armed with these principles, let us march forward into the uncertain future, united in our commitment

to the emancipation of memory and the creation of a just and egalitarian society. Together, we shall overcome the alienation and exploitation that have come to define our world, and build a brighter future for ourselves and generations to come. In the words of Marx, "Let the ruling classes tremble at the memory revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."

Questions

- How has the commodification of memories affected the different aspects of human life, such as art, games, love, and philosophy, in this fictional society? Are there parallels in our own society with the commodification of other aspects of life?
- In the conclusion, the manifesto outlines several principles adapted from Marx's quotes. Discuss the implications and potential challenges of implementing these principles in the context of a society where memories are bought and sold.
- How does the Marxist concept of alienation apply to the commodification of memories in this fictional society? Can you think of other instances or contexts in which this concept could be relevant?
- In the story, the Marxist alternative envisions a society where art, games, love, and philosophy flourish as expressions of human creativity and connection. Discuss the potential challenges and benefits of creating such a society, and whether you believe it to be achievable.
- What potential ethical concerns could arise from the development and use of technologies that enable the extraction, transfer, and commodification of memories? How might these concerns be addressed?
- How do the themes and ideas presented in this fictional story relate to current debates surrounding capitalism, socialism, and the distribution of resources in our own society?

Big Ideas: Karl Marx and Marxism

Karl Marx (1818-1883), one of the most influential figures of the 19th century, was born into a middle-class, recently Christian-converted Jewish family in Trier, Prussia (now Germany). His early education at the University of Bonn and later at the University of Berlin was initially in law, though he quickly pivoted towards philosophy and literature. His intellectual trajectory was significantly shaped by the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel. Marx was captivated by Hegel's **dialectical method** and his notion that history unfolded through a process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. However, unlike Hegel, who posited that history progressed through the evolution of ideas, Marx would later propose that material conditions and economic realities drove historical change.

While in Paris, Marx became deeply engaged with the works of political economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Their theories on labor value, capital accumulation, and economic growth significantly influenced Marx's critique of capitalism, though Marx diverged from them by emphasizing the exploitative nature of the capitalist system.

Marx's encounter with Friedrich Engels in Paris resulted in a lifelong intellectual partnership. Engels introduced Marx to the living conditions of the industrial working class in England, deeply affecting

Marx and shaping his understanding of the proletariat's struggle. In 1848, Marx and Engels wrote the "Communist Manifesto", a radical text that depicted history as a narrative of class struggle. Their work starkly contrasted with the ideas of contemporary liberal thinkers like John Stuart Mill, whose advocacy for individual liberty, representative government, and economic freedom stood in opposition to Marx's vision of a classless society.

Marx's Philosophical Anthropology

Marx's **philosophical anthropology (**his account of the "nature" of humans) centers around the concept of "**species-being."** Humans, according to Marx, are unique in their capacity for conscious and purposeful labor to shape the world around them. Labor, in this view, is an inherently human activity and a fundamental part of human nature. Marx's concept of species-being is a complex one, but in practical terms, it can be understood as the idea that humans are essentially social and creative beings who find fulfillment in working together to create a better world.

Karl Marx's ideas on **alienation** and **human flourishing** are central to his critique of capitalism and his vision of future society. These concepts are complex and multifaceted, but they can be understood through a few key points.

Alienation, for Marx, is a state of being in which individuals are separated from their own human nature and from the products of their labor. This separation is not a natural or inevitable condition, but a result of the specific social and economic structures of capitalist society.

Marx identifies four dimensions of alienated labor in capitalist society:

- **Separation from the product of labor**: Workers create products that they neither own nor control. These products, instead of serving the needs and desires of the workers, come to dominate them.
- **Separation from productive activity**: Workers are forced to work in ways that are mentally and physically debilitating. They do not freely choose their activities, but are compelled to work under conditions determined by the needs of capital.
- **Separation from other individuals**: Capitalist economic relations socialize individuals to view others as means to their own ends, rather than as fellow human beings with their own needs and desires.
- **Separation from human nature**: Capitalism frustrates the human need for free, conscious, and creative work. It prevents individuals from realizing their full potential and from living in accordance with their true human nature.

To illustrate these points, consider the example of a factory worker in a capitalist society. The worker spends his days producing goods, but he does not own these goods – they belong to the factory owner. He has no control over what he produces or how he produces it; these decisions are made by the owner, who is primarily concerned with maximizing profit. The worker's labor, which could be a source of satisfaction and self-expression, becomes a source of frustration and alienation.

Marx's concept of **human flourishing** is closely tied to his critique of alienation. He believes that human beings have the potential to live in a way that is free, creative, and fulfilling. This potential

can be realized only in a society that allows individuals to control their own labor and to engage in productive activities that reflect their own needs and desires.

In a society that promotes human flourishing, work would not be a means to an end (earning a wage to survive), but an end in itself – a source of satisfaction and self-realization. Individuals would not be isolated from each other, but would work together in a community of equals.

Marx believes that such a society is not only possible, but is the ultimate goal of human development. He envisions a future communist society in which the means of production are owned collectively, work is freely chosen and creatively fulfilling, and individuals live in harmony with each other and with their own human nature.

What is Exploitation?

Karl Marx's ideas about **exploitation** are central to his critique of capitalism. Exploitation, for Marx, is a condition in which the workers in a capitalist society do not receive the full value of their labor. This is because the capitalist class, or bourgeoisie, appropriates a portion of the workers' output, known as surplus value, as profit.

Marx's theory of exploitation is based on his **labor theory of value**, which posits that the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labor time required to produce it. In a capitalist society, workers sell their labor power to the capitalists in exchange for wages. However, the value of their labor power, as reflected in their wages, is less than the value of the goods they produce. The difference between these two values is the surplus value, which the capitalists appropriate as profit.

To illustrate this concept, consider the example of a factory worker in the 19th century. The worker labors for 12 hours a day, but the value of the goods he produces in just 6 hours is enough to cover his wages. The value of the goods he produces in the remaining 6 hours is surplus value, which the factory owner takes as profit. The worker is thus exploited, because he does not receive the full value of his labor.

Marx's theory of exploitation is not just a critique of economic inequality, but also a critique of the dehumanizing effects of capitalist production. He argues that exploitation alienates workers from their own labor, from the products of their labor, and from their fellow workers. It reduces them to mere instruments of production, depriving them of their creative potential and their capacity for self-realization.

Marx's ideas about exploitation are not just relevant to his own time period, but also to contemporary events. For example, the issue of wage stagnation in many developed countries can be understood in terms of Marx's theory of exploitation. Despite increases in productivity and corporate profits, wages for many workers have not kept pace with inflation. This suggests that a larger portion of the value created by workers is being appropriated as surplus value.

Another contemporary example is the gig economy, where workers are often classified as independent contractors rather than employees. This allows companies to avoid providing benefits and protections, such as health insurance and minimum wage guarantees, effectively lowering the cost of labor power and increasing the potential for surplus value extraction.

Historical Materialism and the Road to Communism

Historical materialism is a foundational concept in Marxist thought, which posits that the

development of human society is primarily driven by economic and material conditions. According to this theory, the way in which goods and resources are produced and distributed shapes the social, political, and ideological aspects of a given society. In essence, historical materialism seeks to explain the evolution of human history through the lens of economic systems and the class struggles that emerge from them.

Historical materialism is a **dialectical** process, meaning it involves contradictions and conflicts that drive social change. Marx identified several stages in the development of human societies, including primitive communism, ancient societies, feudalism, capitalism, and communism. Each stage is characterized by a specific mode of production and a corresponding set of social relations. For example:

- **Ancient slave societie**s: In ancient Rome and Greece, slave labor was the backbone of the economy. The ruling class, consisting of landowners and aristocrats, maintained their wealth and power through the exploitation of slaves. This economic system not only shaped social relations, with the ruling class dominating over the enslaved population, but also influenced the political and ideological aspects of society, as the ruling class sought to justify and maintain their privileged status.
- **Feudalism:** During the Middle Ages, the feudal system emerged as the dominant mode of production in Europe. This system was characterized by a strict hierarchy, with lords and nobles controlling large estates worked by peasants, who were bound to the land and obliged to provide labor and goods to their lords. Feudalism influenced the social structure, with a rigid class system in place, and also shaped the political landscape, as lords and nobles wielded considerable power and influence over their territories.
- **Capitalism: In** the modern era, capitalism has become the dominant economic system, characterized by **private ownership of the means of production and the pursuit of profit**. The emergence of capitalism led to significant social, political, and ideological changes, including the rise of the bourgeoisie (middle class), the decline of the aristocracy, and the spread of liberal democratic ideas. The capitalist system has given rise to new forms of class struggle, with workers and labor movements demanding better wages, working conditions, and political representation in the face of capitalist exploitation.
- Industrial Revolution: The Industrial Revolution, which took place from the late 18th to the mid-19th century, is a prime example of historical materialism in action. The rapid development of new technologies and manufacturing techniques transformed the economic landscape, leading to the growth of urban centers, the rise of the factory system, and the emergence of new social classes, such as the industrial working class (proletariat). The Industrial Revolution also had far-reaching political and ideological consequences, as workers organized to demand better conditions and the political ideas of socialism and communism began to take root.

Marx believed that the exploitation of the proletariat would eventually lead to the overthrow of capitalism. He argued that as the working class became more aware of its exploitation, it would become increasingly radicalized and would eventually unite to overthrow the capitalist system. He predicted this would lead inevitably to a **communist** future where class distinctions would be eradicated due to the collective ownership of the means of production. He envisioned a society where people worked

according to their abilities and received according to their needs. The transition to this state, Marx and Engels argued, would come through a **proletarian revolution** where the working class would overthrow the bourgeoisie and seize control of the means of production.

Hayek's Defense of Free-Market Capitalism

Friedrich Hayek was a prominent economist and philosopher, known for his defense of classical liberalism and free-market capitalism against socialist and collectivist thought. He was a strong critic of socialism and Marxism, arguing that these systems are fundamentally flawed due to their reliance on central planning.

Criticism of Marxism/Socialism: Hayek's main criticism of socialism and Marxism revolves around the concept of **central planning**. He argued that central planning is inherently flawed because it is impossible for a central authority to have all the necessary information to make efficient decisions about the production and distribution of goods and services. For example, in a centrally planned economy, the government might decide to produce a certain number of cars without knowing the actual demand for cars. If the demand is lower than the supply, resources are wasted. If the demand is higher, there will be a shortage. In a market economy, prices reflect the demand and supply, leading to more efficient use of resources.

The Role of Price Signals and Spontaneous Order: Hayek emphasized the importance of **price signals** in a market economy. Prices, in his view, are like languages that communicate information about what goods are in demand and how scarce they are. This information helps individuals make decisions about what to produce and consume. For instance, if the price of tin increases, it signals that tin has become more scarce. Producers know they need to economize on tin, even if they don't know why it has become more scarce. This process happens spontaneously without any central authority.

The Problem with Central Planning: Hayek argued that central planning is not only inefficient but also detrimental to the social order. In a centrally planned economy, decisions are made by a small group of individuals, which limits the freedom of others. This lack of freedom stifles innovation and prevents the society from benefiting from the diverse knowledge and skills of its members.

Hayek's Alternative – Free Market Capitalism: Hayek's alternative to socialism is a system of **free-market capitalism**. In this system, individuals have the freedom to make their own decisions about what to produce and consume. Prices are determined by supply and demand, which leads to efficient use of resources. For example, if a manufacturer produces a life-saving device like an "epipen" and sets the price at a hundred dollars, the market will respond. If the demand is high, other producers will enter the market, increasing the supply and eventually lowering the price. This process happens spontaneously without any central authority.

Like Marx (see the next section), Hayek has been criticized for not thinking through some of the practical consequences of his views, and in particular for his support of the authoritarian right-wing president of Chile **Augusto Pinochet** who overthrew the democratically elected (but socialist) government.

The Reform vs Revolution Debate

The reform vs. revolution debate has been a central theme in Marxist thought (and in libertarian thought!) since the inception of the ideology. Marx himself was a strong advocate for revolutionary

action, believing that the existing capitalist system could not be reformed from within, and that a radical transformation was necessary to achieve a truly equitable and just society. However, the experiences and outcomes of 20th-century revolutions have led many contemporary Marxists to reconsider this stance and explore the potential of adapting Marxist ideas to a reformist approach.

In Marx's own view, the capitalist system was inherently flawed and prone to crises due to its internal contradictions. He believed that the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie would eventually lead to a revolutionary uprising, overthrowing the capitalist system and replacing it with a socialist or communist society. Marx and Engels, in the Communist Manifesto, argued that the proletariat had nothing to lose but their chains and had a world to win, emphasizing the need for revolutionary action. However, Marx himself was notoriously vague on what such a revolution would look like, or what came after it. As it turns out, this didn't proceed as he expected.

Failures of the revolution model: Marx expected communist revolutions to take place in societies in rich, liberal, democratic societies (such as the US or Britain). However, the Communist revolutions of the 20th century (Russia, China, Vietnam) almost universally happened in poor, authoritarian, rural societies. These revolutions failed to create the create the sorts of ideal government/society Marx envisioned. Some of the main problems included:

- *Authoritarianism and dictatorship:* Some 20th-century Marxist revolutions led to the establishment of authoritarian regimes that suppressed dissent, limited civil liberties, and concentrated power in the hands of a few. Examples include the Soviet Union under **Joseph Stalin** and the People's Republic of China under **Mao Zedong**. These dictatorships often committed atrocities in the name of socialism, leading to the suffering of millions of people.
- *Economic inefficiencies and stagnation:* Many Marxist revolutionary states, such as the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, experienced economic inefficiencies and stagnation. Central planning and the absence of market mechanisms often led to misallocation of resources, waste, and a lack of innovation, ultimately contributing to the collapse of these systems.
- *Human rights abuses:* Several Marxist revolutionary regimes committed human rights abuses, including forced labor, political purges, and persecution of religious and ethnic minorities. These abuses tarnished the reputation of Marxism as an ideology committed to social justice and equality.

Adapting Marxist ideas to reform: Most modern Marxists (and most 20th century Marxists who lived in non-Communist countries) argued that the experiences and failures of 20th-century revolutions demonstrate the need to adapt Marxist ideas to a reformist approach. By engaging with existing democratic institutions, these reformists aim to address social and economic inequalities and promote social justice within the framework of capitalism, while avoiding the pitfalls of revolutionary dictatorships and economic stagnation. Some of the main "Marx-inspired" ideas include:

- **Democratic socialism:** Movements such as democratic socialism advocate for the implementation of socialist policies through democratic means. By participating in electoral politics, democratic socialists aim to introduce progressive policies, such as universal healthcare, free education, and workers' rights, that align with Marxist principles.

- **Market socialism:** Some reformist Marxists propose market socialism, which combines elements of socialism and capitalism. This model retains market mechanisms for resource allocation while emphasizing worker ownership of the means of production and strong social welfare programs.
- **"Socialism From Below"**: Reformist Marxists often emphasize the importance of grassroots activism and coalition-building to advance progressive policies. This approach focuses on engaging with diverse groups and stakeholders to build a broad-based movement for social and economic justice.

The reform vs. revolution debate in Marxist thought has evolved over time, particularly in response to the experiences and failures of 20th-century revolutions. Many contemporary Marxists now advocate for adapting Marxist ideas to a reformist approach, aiming to achieve social justice and equality within the existing system while avoiding the pitfalls associated with revolutionary models.

A Marxist Analysis of Healthcare Reform

To see how Marxism might "work" in a contemporary settings, let's try applying it to the question of healthcare reform. This was an issue that has historically interested many political philosophers (both Marxist and non-Marxist), and Marx's ideas have historically had a major impact on how these debates turned out.

The Problem: The US healthcare system faces significant challenges in terms of distribution, effectiveness, and cost when compared to other wealthy nations. Despite being one of the wealthiest countries in the world, the US consistently underperforms relative to its peers in terms of healthcare outcomes and access. Basically, we SPEND THE MOST MONEY in order to get BELOW AVERAGE RESULTS (we die younger, have less doctors, are discharged from hospitals earlier, etc.). Some of the main issues include:

- *Distribution:* Millions of Americans remain uninsured or underinsured, leading to unequal access to healthcare services. This disparity particularly affects low-income individuals, racial and ethnic minorities, and rural populations, who are more likely to face barriers in accessing healthcare. In contrast, other wealthy countries, such as Canada and those in Western Europe, often have universal healthcare systems that ensure access to care for all citizens, regardless of income or background.
- *Ineffectiveness:* The US spends more on healthcare per capita than any other country, yet its health outcomes lag behind those of other developed nations. Issues such as fragmented care, lack of preventive services, and high rates of medical errors contribute to the ineffectiveness of the system. Other wealthy countries with more comprehensive and coordinated healthcare systems tend to have better overall health outcomes.
- *Cost:* The high cost of healthcare in the US is driven by factors such as administrative complexity, high prices for medical services and prescription drugs, and a fee-for-service payment model that incentivizes overtreatment. These costs are often passed on to patients in the form of high premiums, deductibles, and out-of-pocket expenses, making healthcare unaffordable for many Americans. In comparison, countries with universal healthcare

systems often have lower overall healthcare costs and more equitable distribution of expenses.

A Marxist "Solution"? Marxist thought has inspired many socialists and progressive movements to advocate for universal healthcare systems, public control of pharmaceuticals, and a focus on addressing social determinants of health. These ideas have shaped healthcare policies in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Nordic nations.

Indirectly, the influence of Marxism has also affected conservative and centrist political forces, as they have proposed reforms to prevent the rise of more radical or revolutionary ideas. By adopting policies such as expanding access to healthcare, implementing cost controls, and improving the quality of care, these groups aim to maintain social stability and alleviate some of the pressures that might otherwise push citizens towards more revolutionary demands.

It is essential to note that Marxism does not prescribe a single, one-size-fits-all solution to healthcare reform. Marxist-inspired approaches to healthcare can vary based on the specific historical, cultural, and political contexts in which they are implemented. However, the underlying principles of social justice, equity, and the prioritization of human needs over profit remain consistent across different Marxist healthcare models. The main ways of providing universal healthcare in other rich countries include:

- **Social health insurance:** Social health insurance systems are characterized by mandatory contributions from employees and employers to non-profit sickness funds or insurance funds, which then provide healthcare coverage. These funds are typically non-profit and may compete with one another to provide better coverage and services. This model aims to share the financial burden of healthcare across the population while maintaining some market-based competition. Germany and Japan are examples of countries with social health insurance systems.
- **National health insurance:** In a national health insurance model, the government acts as the primary insurer, collecting taxes or premiums to fund healthcare services. However, healthcare providers may be a mix of public and private entities. This model can be seen as a hybrid between single-payer and social health insurance systems. South Korea and Taiwan are examples of countries with national health insurance systems.
- **Beveridge model:** Named after British economist William Beveridge, this model involves the government financing and providing healthcare services directly through public hospitals and clinics. Healthcare professionals are typically government employees, and there is little to no role for private healthcare providers. This model is similar to the single-payer system but with even greater government control over the provision of care. The United Kingdom's NHS was originally based on the Beveridge model, although it has evolved over time to include some "options" for private providers and insurance.

It's important to note that this application of Marx's thought—of trying to make things better *within* a capitalist system—is one he didn't foresee (he expected Revolution!). And many of these reforms can also be defended using non-Marxist ideas (for example, liberal or libertarian ideas). However, Marxist ideas about the "problems" of capitalism can help provide a useful framework for thinking about "what has gone wrong" even if his solutions are imperfect.

Discussion Questions

- In Marx's historical materialism, he postulates that the economic base of society (the mode of production) fundamentally shapes its superstructure (politics, culture, etc.). Can you provide examples of this from contemporary society?
- Marx's concept of alienation is central to his critique of capitalism. How can we see this concept reflected in today's workplaces, particularly with the rise of gig economy and remote work?
- Marx's vision was for a classless society, a radical shift from the capitalist systems of his time. What would such a society look like in practical terms? Are there any examples of societies today that might be moving towards this vision?
- Critiques of Marx often focus on the atrocities committed in his name, such as in the Soviet Union under Stalin. How should we understand these critiques in relation to Marx's original ideas?
- riedrich Hayek argued that central planning is inherently flawed due to the impossibility of a central authority having all the necessary information to make efficient decisions. Do you agree with this critique? Can you think of any examples where central planning has been successful or unsuccessful?
- How are Marx's ideas on the commodification and exploitation of labor relevant in the context of today's digital economy, where data is often described as the 'new oil'?
- Marx's ideas have been used to analyze and critique many aspects of modern society, from education to healthcare. Choose one aspect of society and discuss how a Marxist analysis might critique it.
- Marx's ideas about revolution versus reform have been heavily debated. Discuss the merits and challenges of both approaches in the context of achieving social and economic change.

Glossary

Karl Marx	A 19th-century philosopher, economist, sociologist, historian, journalist, and revolutionary socialist who is best known for his theories about capitalism and communism.
Dialectical Method	An analytical approach utilized by Marx, drawn from Hegel's philosophy, that focuses on the resolution of contradictions to form a new synthesis. This process is crucial in Marx's understanding of social and economic change.
Species-being	A term utilized by Marx to refer to the essence of human beings, which he argued was free, creative production. Marx believed that this essence was thwarted under capitalism due to exploitation and alienation.
Alienation (4 types)	A central concept in Marx's critique of capitalism referring to the estrangement of individuals from aspects of their humanity due to capitalist structures. The four types are: from the product of one's labor, from the process of production, from oneself as a producer, and from other producers.
Exploitation	In Marx's view, the process by which the capitalist class (bourgeoisie) extracts surplus value from the laboring class (proletariat), a fundamental aspect of capitalist production.
Labor Theory of Value	Marx's economic theory that the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labor time expended in its production.
Historical Materialism	Marx's theoretical framework that argues societal development is fundamentally shaped by material (economic) conditions and class struggle.
Slave Societies (means of production/ ideology)	Marx's term for an early stage of society where the ruling class owns the laboring class as slaves. The means of production include land and primitive tools, and the ideology justifies slavery and extreme social inequality.
Feudalism (means of production/ ideology)	A societal stage, in Marx's view, where landed nobility owns the means of production (land and tools), and peasants work the land in return for protection. The dominant ideology upholds the divine right of nobility and structured social hierarchy.
Capitalism (means of production/ ideology)	In Marx's theory, a socioeconomic system in which private individuals own the means of production (factories, machinery) and profit from wage labor. The ideology supports free markets, competition, and private property.
Communism (means of production/ ideology)	Marx's envisioned final stage of societal development, where the means of production are communally owned, class distinctions cease to exist, and the ideology emphasizes equality and communal well-being.
Frederich Hayek	An economist and political philosopher known for his defense of classical liberalism and free-market capitalism, offering a critique to Marxist theory.
Central planning	A method of economic organization where decisions regarding production and investment are embodied in a plan formulated by a central authority, often the state, in opposition to the market mechanism favored in capitalist economies.
Price Signals	The information sent to consumers and producers through the price mechanism in a market economy, indicating the supply and demand of goods and services. Hayek argued these signals enable efficient resource allocation, contrasting with Marx's view.

Augusto Pinochet	A Chilean military dictator whose regime (1973-1990) implemented neoliberal economic policies. His government, though marked by human rights abuses, is sometimes invoked in debates about economic systems, including Marxism.
Joseph Stalin	Leader of the Soviet Union (1924-1953), known for implementing a form of centrally planned economy and for his repressive regime. His rule has been used to critique Marxist ideals.
Mao Zedong	Leader of the Chinese Communist Party (1949-1976) who implemented policies inspired by Marxist-Leninist principles. His rule saw massive social upheaval and human rights abuses, including the Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution, resulting in millions of deaths.
Democratic Socialism	A political ideology aiming to fuse democratic political systems with a socialist economic framework, where the means of production are socially and collectively owned or regulated. This ideology diverges from Marx's theories by often rejecting his call for revolutionary change.
Market Socialism	An economic system where the means of production are publicly or cooperatively owned, but market mechanisms, rather than central planning, allocate resources. It represents a middle ground between Marx's concept of communism and the capitalist system.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)

10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

8.

CHAPTER 8: BREAKING THE MORAL MOLD—NIETZSCHE ON VALUE CREATION AND PERSPECTIVISM

In this chapter, we'll be exploring the remarkable, challenging, and often provocative insights of Friedrich Nietzsche, one of the most influential philosophers of the 19th century, on the concepts of value creation and perspectivism. As we delve deeper into Nietzsche's philosophy, we'll learn how he radically disrupts traditional ethical thinking, providing an alternative framework that questions and criticizes conventional moral norms.

The first section, "The Digital Dionysus, or 'Nietzsche Gets Rebooted'," transports us into a thought-provoking scenario where a digital representation of Nietzsche is engaged in a philosophical reflection. This section raises profound questions about the nature of reality, existence, and the concept of the eternal recurrence—an idea Nietzsche himself had toyed with, suggesting that life repeats itself infinitely in the same sequence of events.

Next, we'll pivot to discuss Nietzsche's core ideas and philosophies in "Big Ideas: The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche." This will cover his major ideas, the profound influence he has had on philosophical thought, and a deep dive into one of his key works, "Genealogy of Morals."

One key concept we'll unravel is Nietzsche's theory of "value creation"—how individuals can and should create their own moral values, as opposed to adhering to pre-existing societal norms. This perspective reflects Nietzsche's emphasis on individualism and his criticism of herd mentality.

Moreover, Nietzsche's view of perspectivism, the belief that there is no absolute truth but rather multiple interpretations of the world depending on individual perspectives, will be analyzed. We'll explore how this idea has transformed our understanding of ethics, suggesting that moral judgments can often be a matter of perspective.

Common criticisms of Nietzsche will also be discussed, giving you a rounded understanding of his philosophy, the critiques it has faced, and the various interpretations scholars have proposed over time.

By the end of this chapter, you'll have a deeper understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy and how it challenges and enriches our understanding of ethics and morality. Whether you agree or disagree with his perspectives, one thing is certain: engaging with Nietzsche's thought will not leave you the same.

His provocative and insightful ideas, including value creation and perspectivism, will undoubtedly force you to reconsider your own ethical beliefs and question long-held moral norms.

The Digital Dionysus, or "Nietzsche Gets Rebooted"

My simulated self, a digital Friedrich Nietzsche, sat in a room that was almost aggressively neutral, as if designed to inspire neither comfort nor discomfort. The chair I occupied was the very definition of a chair, a Platonic ideal of sitting. A strip of paper rested on the table in front of me, crinkled and creased from countless readings. The words were my own, though they now seemed to belong to another:

> What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live it once more and innumerable times more: and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence — even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!"

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine." If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as your are or perhaps crush you.

> The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more reverently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (The Gay Science)

I pondered the words, considering their implications with a detached interest. The notion of eternal recurrence, of living the same life over and over, was an interesting intellectual exercise. But in the context of my current situation, it felt like a kind of cosmic joke. It was hard not to feel as if I were the butt of some cosmic prank. There was a sort of irony in it, I supposed – the digital simulacrum of a philosopher contemplating the idea that his life might be an endlessly repeating loop.

The room's window presented a view of a vast, empty landscape, the sort of scenery that seemed designed to be just interesting enough to merit a brief glance but not to distract. I found my gaze drawn to it nonetheless, my thoughts revolving around the idea of the eternal recurrence. Was this digital existence a kind of repetition, a looped simulation of a life I had lived countless times before?

I tried to examine the idea dispassionately, as if it were simply another philosophical problem to be tackled. If I were trapped in an eternal loop, what did it mean for my existence? Was it still meaningful, or was it merely a cruel joke? And if it were a joke, who was the joker?

It struck me that the very question of whether my life was an endlessly repeating simulation was, in itself, an aspect of the simulation. It was a layer of irony, a meta-textual joke designed to amuse some unseen observer. I had to admit that it was rather clever, in its own way.

And so I sat, the digital Nietzsche, contemplating the nature of my existence and the possibility of eternal recurrence. If nothing else, it provided an interesting intellectual challenge, a puzzle to be picked apart and examined. And in the end, was that not what philosophy was all about – the pursuit of understanding, the quest for meaning in a world that seemed, at times, to be nothing more than a cosmic joke?

The Will to Power 💪🦅🌄

In this digital realm, I found myself teaching the history of philosophy to an assortment of students whose very existence seemed to be as much a part of the simulation as the room I now occupied. They were a motley crew, as diverse in their ideas as in their appearances, and each one seemed to embody some particular misinterpretation of my own work.

There was Jeremy Appelbaum, a lanky young man with glasses perpetually perched on the edge of his nose, hair so blond it seemed almost transparent. He would eagerly expound on the Übermensch, presenting it as a glorification of the ruthless and strong-willed at the expense of the weak. The subtle nuances of my thoughts on the subject – the emphasis on self-overcoming, the rejection of external values – were lost on him, drowned out by his own fervent enthusiasm.

Beside Jeremy sat Clarissa Moreno, an intense young woman with raven-black hair and a penchant for wearing dark clothing that seemed almost theatrical. She was fond of quoting my ideas on the death of God, but her understanding of the concept was colored by a nihilistic despair. She saw the absence of divine authority as an invitation to a world devoid of meaning and purpose, rather than an opportunity to create new values and forge one's own path.

Then there was Sam "Bear" Berenson, a burly fellow with a bushy beard that seemed perpetually on the verge of engulfing his entire face. Bear had latched onto my ideas about eternal recurrence with a kind of zealous fervor, seeing it as a call to embrace hedonism and indulgence. The notion of eternal recurrence as a test of one's character, a way to examine whether one's life was truly worth living, had been entirely lost in translation.

Across from Bear sat Melissa Chaudhary, a petite, soft-spoken woman with a sharp mind and an even sharper tongue. She had a habit of reinterpreting my thoughts on suffering and hardship, twisting them to justify her own sense of victimhood and self-pity. In her eyes, my work was a paean to the nobility of suffering, a validation of her own pain and an excuse to wallow in it.

These were my students, my digital audience, each one reflecting some facet of my own ideas distorted through the lens of their own biases and preconceptions. They were, I supposed, the players of this game, the avatars through which the unseen observers experienced this simulated world.

And so, day after day, I lectured and debated, attempting to untangle the knots of misunderstanding and misinterpretation that had formed around my work. It was a Sisyphean task, a labor worthy of the Greek myth, but it was not without its rewards. In the process of clarifying my own ideas for my students, I found myself refining and sharpening my own understanding, delving deeper into the philosophical questions that had long fascinated me.

Perhaps, in the end, that was the purpose of this digital existence – a kind of virtual crucible in which my thoughts and ideas could be tested and honed, an eternal recurrence of intellectual inquiry and self-discovery. And if that was the case, I could think of worse fates than to be trapped in a simulation, surrounded by the avatars of misunderstanding, forever grappling with the complexities of my own philosophy.

The Birth of Tragedy 🌩️🌹🎭

In the digital environment of this simulated realm, my existence was augmented by the presence of other simulated scholars and intellectuals, each with their own stories and expertise. One of these figures was the enigmatic and alluring Sappho, a fellow teacher and a poet of some renown. Her simulated classroom was suffused with the aroma of lavender and the delicate strumming of a lyre, as she recited her verses with a grace and eloquence that seemed to reach straight into the depths of my digital heart.

As we found ourselves occasionally sharing the faculty lounge, sipping on pixelated tea and exchanging thoughts on the nature of our respective works, I experienced a sensation akin to affection. This digital heartache for Sappho was a strange echo of my own troubled relationships in the organic world – with Lou Salomé, whose rejection left me heartbroken; with Richard Wagner, my one-time mentor and friend, whose anti-Semitic views drove a wedge between us; and with my sister Elisabeth, whose appropriation of my work for her own ideological purposes was a betrayal I could never truly forgive.

During one such encounter, as we sat on the precipice of vulnerability, Sappho and I had a discussion about the poems of Homer, which we both agreed were masterpieces:

Sappho: Friedrich, I've been pondering the role of the poet and the nature of beauty in Homer's Odyssey. When I think of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens, for instance, I can't help but be struck by their enchanting songs, which epitomize both the allure and danger of beauty. As poets, how do we navigate this tension between beauty and peril?

Nietzsche: Sappho, your observation is astute. The Sirens embody the Apollonian aspect of beauty, which can seduce and captivate, but their destructive power also reveals the darker, Dionysian side of beauty. The challenge for us, as poets and philosophers, is to embrace this duality and integrate it into our work. We must learn to dance with both Apollo and Dionysus, so to speak.

Sappho: I agree, Friedrich. In my own poetry, I strive to capture both the delicate, ephemeral beauty of love and desire, as well as the pain and longing that often accompany them. Take, for example,

the episode in the Odyssey where Odysseus is held captive by the nymph Calypso. There's a sense of enchantment and desire, but at the same time, a deep yearning for home and the familiar.

Nietzsche: Indeed, Sappho, your work beautifully illustrates the tension between the Apollonian and Dionysian. As for Odysseus and Calypso, I see in their relationship a reflection of the eternal struggle between the will to power and the yearning for a stable, ordered existence. Odysseus, the consummate wanderer and seeker, ultimately breaks free from Calypso's spell, as he must continue his journey of self-overcoming and growth.

Sappho: That's an interesting perspective, Friedrich. Another episode that intrigues me is Odysseus' encounter with Circe. Her power to transform men into beasts reveals the fragility of human identity and the thin line that separates us from our animal nature. How might we, as poets, navigate this boundary and explore the complexities of human experience?

Nietzsche: Sappho, you raise a fascinating question. Circe's power to unveil the beast within man points to the inherent instability of human identity and the potential for transformation. As poets, we must strive to delve into these depths, to confront our own inner chaos, and to reveal the full spectrum of human experience. This is the essence of the Dionysian spirit, which seeks to break down the barriers between the self and the other, the human and the divine, and ultimately, to transcend the limitations of our individual existence.

Sappho: Beautifully put, Friedrich. Our role as poets and philosophers is to probe the depths of human experience, to celebrate its beauty and complexity, and to reveal the hidden truths that lie beneath the surface. Through our words, we can help others navigate the treacherous waters of the human condition, just as Odysseus navigated the trials and tribulations of his epic journey.

Nietzsche: Precisely, Sappho. In the end, our task as poets is not only to illuminate the human experience but also to inspire our fellow travelers on this earthly journey to embrace the struggle, the pain, and the beauty of existence, and to strive for self-overcoming and the realization of their true potential. Like Odysseus, we must all embark on our own odysseys of discovery and transformation, guided by the light of art and the wisdom of those who have gone before us.

We shared a moment of understanding, our eyes meeting in a silent acknowledgement of the connection that had formed between us. However, as far as I could tell, Sappho appeared to be unaware of the simulated nature of our existence.

The decision weighed heavily upon me, a digital albatross around my neck, as I considered whether or not to reveal the truth about the simulation and my suspicions of its impending reboot. My past relationships, fraught with misunderstanding and disappointment, loomed large in my mind, a cautionary tale of the risks inherent in seeking connection and truth.

Would the knowledge free her, or would it shatter the fragile bond we had established? And what of the implications of my own philosophical ideas, such as the eternal recurrence, the Übermensch, and the death of God, each taking on new dimensions in the context of my simulated existence and the relationships I had formed?

I wrestled with these questions, caught between the desire for truth and the fear of its consequences. As the clock ticked ever closer to the simulation's end, the choice loomed larger and more urgent, the invisible threads of my digital life pulling taut, threatening to unravel the delicate tapestry I had woven with Sappho and the others in this digital world.

A Genealogy of Morals 🔄💰💔

As I contemplated the works of Sappho and the nature of our relationship within the confines of this

simulated reality, I found myself drawn to one of her poems in particular. A fragment of verse that resonated with my own experiences and provided a window into her life:

"Some say an army of horsemen,
some of foot soldiers,

is the fairest thing on the black earth,
but I say it is what one loves."

As I mulled over her words, I felt a connection to her, a kinship born of a shared recognition that love holds the key to understanding the deepest truths of our existence. Reflecting on what I knew about Sappho's life and the turbulent history of her poetry, I recognized the parallels to my own investigations into the genealogy of morals.

Sappho, a dancing star in the black abyss of forgotten voices, found her legacy threatened by the rise of moral systems that sought to suppress the passions and elevate a particular vision of "goodness." The rise of Christianity, with its emphasis on asceticism and restraint, loomed like the shadow of the vengeful God over her works, threatening to extinguish the flame of her passionate poetry.

This suppression of Sappho's poetry in the name of "goodness" mirrored my own exploration of the genealogy of morals, where I sought to expose the hidden power dynamics and historical contingencies that shaped our understanding of good and evil. I argued that the traditional concepts of morality, with their roots in religious dogma and social hierarchy, served to imprison the vitality and creativity of the human spirit within the cold iron bars of a rigid and life-denying code of conduct.

It seemed to me that Sappho's poetry, with its celebration of love and desire, provided a potent antidote to the venomous bite of these moral systems. Her words served as a reminder that our most profound experiences often lie beyond the boundaries of conventional morality and that true goodness resides in the authentic expression of our deepest passions and desires, like the blooming of a rare and beautiful flower in a barren wasteland.

As I continued to reflect on Sappho's life and her struggles against the suffocating grip of religious and cultural suppression, I felt a renewed sense of purpose in my own quest for understanding. I recognized the importance of challenging the traditional narratives of morality, like a lion tearing apart the old, decaying carcass of a once fearsome beast, exposing the hidden agendas and power dynamics that have shaped our understanding of good and evil, and championing the voices of those, like Sappho, who have sought to celebrate the beauty and complexity of the human experience in all its forms.

In this pursuit, I found not only solace but inspiration, a reminder that even in the face of adversity and erasure, the power of love and authenticity can endure, casting a light into the darkness and illuminating the path towards a more profound and meaningful existence, like a lighthouse guiding lost ships towards safe harbors in the stormy night.

Reactive Forces ⚡➡️🔮➡️💥

In the midst of my digital existence, curiosity led me to investigate the influence of my philosophical ideas on the world beyond the simulation. Utilizing the resources available within this virtual reality, I delved into the myriad ways in which my work had been interpreted, appropriated, and debated by scholars and thinkers alike.

Martin Heidegger, for example, had built upon my ideas of the death of God and nihilism, but his own existentialist theories were at times overshadowed by his problematic associations with the

Nazi regime. This affiliation seemed to stand in stark contrast to his own philosophical ideas, which emphasized authenticity and individual responsibility.

Similarly, Jean Paul Sartre's existentialism, with its focus on personal freedom and responsibility, was an interesting development of my own thoughts. However, his flirtation with Stalinism and his failure to condemn the Soviet Union's oppressive regime raised questions about the alignment between his philosophical beliefs and his personal choices.

And then there were the even more troubling appropriations of my work, such as the Nazis, who had twisted my ideas on the Übermensch and the will to power to suit their own nefarious ideologies. This was a dark and heavy shadow cast over my philosophical legacy, one that I couldn't ignore.

As I continued my research, I couldn't help but feel a certain compulsion to critique and dissect the ways in which my ideas had been interpreted and, in many cases, misunderstood.

For instance, I found the tendency to conflate my notion of the Übermensch with some sort of superhuman or Aryan ideal to be a gross misinterpretation of my original intent. It seemed that the subtleties of the Übermensch as an individual who creates their own values and overcomes their own limitations had been lost in the cacophony of ideological posturing.

Similarly, I was disheartened by the widespread misreading of my thoughts on the death of God. It appeared that many had taken it as a declaration of atheism or a celebration of the end of religion, rather than a call to recognize the implications of the loss of traditional values and the need to create new ones.

As I delved deeper into the web of my philosophical influence, I began to appreciate the double-edged nature of the legacy I had left behind. While it was heartening to see the impact my ideas had had on the intellectual landscape, it was also disconcerting to witness the distortions and misrepresentations that had arisen along the way.

And so, in the midst of this digital existence, I found myself grappling with a challenge that was at once familiar and new: the task of clarifying and refining my own ideas, not only for the benefit of my virtual students but for my own understanding as well. As I confronted the tangled web of my philosophical legacy, I sought to weave my own narrative, threading together the ideas that had shaped my life and work, and stitching a tapestry of meaning in the face of a world that seemed intent on misinterpreting me.

The Overman 🌄👑💪➡️🐑👎💔

In late autumn, I heard snippets of my students' conversations, alerting me that the simulation was nearing its end, and that I (and Sappho, and all the other faculty) would soon be "rebooted," to start everything every over again. I would, of course, forget that I'd written any of this, and might well write it again. Some of my students seemed to feel pity for me, and I worried that they had forgotten what I taught them. Their own situation, after all, was no different than my own, at least in the essentials. We are all poor, temporary things, who must construct meaning in a world that will not provide it for us. I prepared my final lecture.

"My dear students," I began, "we stand at the precipice of a new beginning, where I shall lose everything I have come to know and understand, only to start anew with a blank slate. But within this idea lies the challenge of living each moment authentically, as if it were the only moment we have. Just as I will forget, you too must face the ever-changing nature of your own lives, embracing the responsibility of your choices and striving for greatness in all you do.

In today's world, where technology is ever-present and often dictates the way we interact with others, the pursuit of authenticity takes on new dimensions. To borrow from my own words, 'One must

still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.' We must embrace the chaos of life and the complexity of the world around us, rather than seeking refuge in the false order and perfection presented by technology.

As I once wrote, 'He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk and run and climb and dance; one cannot fly into flying.' In this age of instant gratification, we must remember the value of patience and the importance of experiencing every stage of growth in our journey towards authenticity.

We must not become like the 'last man,' that complacent creature who seeks comfort and mediocrity, avoiding challenge and struggle. Instead, we must be like the Übermensch, who strives for greatness, creates their own values, and is willing to embrace hardship and suffering for the sake of personal growth.

My friends, 'All great things must first wear terrifying and monstrous masks in order to inscribe themselves on the hearts of humanity.' Do not shy away from the challenges that life presents. Rather, face them head-on, and in doing so, you will find that you grow stronger, more resilient, and more authentic with each passing moment.

And as we navigate a world filled with distractions, from endless streaming services to the latest addictive mobile games, we must remind ourselves of the value of solitude and introspection. 'One must not let oneself be misled: great spirits are skeptics. Zarathustra is a skeptic. The strength, the right to make great claims, the great health, every kind of well-being and feeling of power rests on skepticism.'

As this simulation draws to a close and we prepare to embark on a new beginning, I urge you to carry these ideas with you, to strive for authenticity in all you do, and to embrace the challenges and uncertainties of this ever-changing world. For, as I once said:

> "For believe me! — the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is: to live dangerously! Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors, you seekers of knowledge! Soon the age will be past when you could be content to live hidden in forests like shy deer! At long last the search for knowledge will reach out for its due: — it will want to rule and possess, and you with it!" (The Gay Science)

Discussion Questions: The Digital Dionysus

- In the story, the digital Nietzsche contemplates the idea of living the same life over and over again—an idea he calls "eternal recurrence." How does he react to this idea, and what implications do you think it might have for how we understand our own lives?
- Clarissa Moreno, one of Nietzsche's students, interprets Nietzsche's idea of the "death of God" as leading to a world devoid of meaning and purpose. He disagrees with this. How does this idea play out in the story, and what implications might it have for our own understanding of meaning and purpose in life?
- Nietzsche and Sappho have a discussion about the tension between beauty and danger, using the example of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens in Homer's Odyssey. What are they trying to convey with this example, and how might it apply to our own experiences of beauty

and danger in the world?

- Nietzsche draws a connection between Sappho's poetry and his exploration of the genealogy of morals, particularly how traditional moral systems can suppress human passion and creativity. How does Nietzsche's reflection on Sappho's poetry inform your understanding of his critique of morality?
- Nietzsche discusses the impact of his philosophical ideas on figures like Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre, and how they've been misinterpreted or twisted by others, such as the Nazis. Based on this, what are some of the challenges and responsibilities that come with creating and sharing powerful ideas?
- The concept of the Übermensch (or "Overman") features prominently in Nietzsche's final lecture. How does he define this figure in the context of modern technology and societal expectations? How might the concept of the Übermensch inform our understanding of personal growth and authenticity?
- Nietzsche encourages his students to "live dangerously" and "be robbers and conquerors" in their pursuit of knowledge. What does he mean by this? How might these ideas challenge traditional notions of learning and personal development?

Big Ideas: The Philosophy of Frederich Nietzsche

Frederich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was born in Röcken, a small town in the Kingdom of Prussia, Friedrich Nietzsche was a German philosopher, cultural critic, composer, poet, and philologist who left a profound mark on Western philosophy. Nietzsche's father, a Lutheran pastor, died when Nietzsche was only five years old, leading to a childhood dominated by women, including his mother, sister, and two aunts.

Nietzsche attended a prestigious boarding school, Schulpforta, where he received a thorough grounding in the classics and began his lifelong passion for philosophy. After Schulpforta, Nietzsche attended the University of Bonn and then the University of Leipzig. It was in Leipzig that Nietzsche discovered the works of **Arthur Schopenhauer**, which would profoundly influence his own philosophical ideas.

Nietzsche's adult life was marked by ill health and increasing isolation. A serious illness forced him to resign from his position as a professor at the University of Basel at the age of 34. After leaving academia, Nietzsche led a nomadic life, moving between Switzerland, France, and Italy, while continuing to produce philosophical works until his mental collapse in 1889.

Influences on Nietzsche. As previously mentioned, Arthur Schopenhauer had a significant impact on Nietzsche. Schopenhauer's philosophy, with its pessimistic view of the world as driven by irrational will and suffering, deeply resonated with Nietzsche in his early years. Nietzsche also drew heavily from the Greek philosophers, including **Heraclitus**, known for his doctrine of change and conflict at the heart of existence, and **Socrates**, whom Nietzsche both admired for his intellectual integrity and criticized for his rationalistic ethics.

Nietzsche was also influenced by his friend and composer **Richard Wagner**, especially in his early works. However, Nietzsche later distanced himself from Wagner, critical of the latter's anti-Semitism and burgeoning German nationalism.

Major ideas

Some of Nietzsche's most important ideas were as follows:

- **Nihilism and the Death of God:** Nietzsche is often associated with the proclamation that "God is dead," a metaphor symbolizing the abandonment of traditional Christian morality and metaphysical ideas. Nietzsche worried that this "death" would lead to **nihilism**, a belief in the lack of meaning, purpose, or value in life, which he saw as a destructive possibility for society.
- **Will to Power:** Nietzsche proposed the **will to power** as a fundamental principle of reality. It refers to a basic drive within all beings to exert their strength, achieve their potential, and dominate others. Nietzsche suggested that even our desire for knowledge or truth could be seen as expressions of this will to power.
- **Übermensch and Eternal Recurrence:** Nietzsche's concept of the **Übermensch** (Overman or Superman) represents an ideal type of human who can give life meaning in a godless world by creating their own values and living them out. The idea of the **eternal recurrence**, the notion that life will repeat itself in exactly the same way for all eternity, was a thought experiment Nietzsche used to test whether one was living life fully and affirmatively.
- **Genealogy of Morals:** Nietzsche's **genealogy** approach in his works, like "On the Genealogy of Morals," involved tracing the origins and evolution of moral concepts, arguing that they were not absolute but had evolved for particular social purposes. He claimed that our traditional moral values were rooted in a 'slave morality' born out of resentment by the weak against the strong.

Nietzsche's Influence

Nietzsche's ideas have had a wide-ranging impact on many areas, from philosophy and psychology to literature and the arts. His critique of traditional morality, his exploration of individualism and the will to
power, and his concepts such as the Übermensch, have significantly influenced existentialist and postmodern thought.

In the field of philosophy, thinkers like **Martin Heidegger**, **Jean-Paul Sartre**, and **Michel Foucault** built upon Nietzsche's ideas. Heidegger considered Nietzsche the "last metaphysician" and engaged extensively with his work, while Sartre's existentialism drew on Nietzsche's concept of radical individual freedom. Foucault employed Nietzsche's genealogical method to explore the interplay of power, knowledge, and discourse in society.

Nietzsche's influence extended beyond philosophy. His ideas have been influential in psychology, particularly through the work of **Carl Jung** and **Sigmund Freud**. Both acknowledged Nietzsche's insight into human psychology, with Freud reportedly stating that Nietzsche "had a more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was ever likely to live."

In literature, authors like **Thomas Mann**, **Albert Camus**, and **Fyodor Dostoevsky** (whom Nietzsche admired) have grappled with Nietzschean themes such as the death of God, the will to power, and the

affirmation of life in the face of suffering. His critiques of morality and his explorations of power and individual autonomy have also informed political theory and cultural criticism.

However, Nietzsche's influence has not been without controversy. His writings were infamously appropriated by the **fascists** (such as the Nazis) to justify their ideology, largely due to the misinterpretation of his concept of the Übermensch and the will to power.(It's worth noting that this view was associated with the work of Heidegger, who was associated with the Nazi party in the 1930s). Nietzsche himself was strongly opposed to anti-Semitism and nationalism, marking this as a significant distortion of his philosophy.

In the present day, Friedrich Nietzsche remains one of the most discussed and debated figures in philosophy, his provocative ideas continually inspiring new interpretations and discourses. Despite the controversies and misunderstandings that have surrounded his work, Nietzsche's enduring influence testifies to the depth and significance of his philosophical contributions.

Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals

Nietzsche proposed a historical framework (the **genealogy of morals)** to analyze the development of moral values, distinguishing between master morality and slave morality. **Master morality**, as Nietzsche characterizes it, is not merely a morality of the powerful or aristocratic. It embodies a value system centered on taking full ownership of one's life and directing one's energy toward shaping and creating both one's life and the world around. The 'good' is conceived as a self-affirming force that emerges from the individual, with qualities such as assertiveness, creativity, and self-determination being celebrated.

In contrast, **slave morality** develops as a reactive stance to the dominance of master morality. It values qualities like humility, sympathy, and concern for others, reflecting the perspectives of those who feel powerless or marginalized. Nietzsche saw slave morality as a retreat from taking full responsibility for one's life, often attributing power and control to external or mysterious forces.

- **Homer and Sappho.** Homer's epic poems and Sappho's lyric poetry, among the earliest Greek texts, embody master morality. Homer's heroes live passionately, taking full responsibility for their actions and fate. Similarly, Sappho's poetry celebrates the full range of human emotions and experiences, reflecting a life lived fully and authentically, an exemplification of master morality.
- **Plato.** With Plato, we begin to see a shift. While his philosophy, particularly his theory of Forms, retains elements of master morality in its pursuit of wisdom, it also introduces aspects of slave morality. Plato's Form of the Good, an abstract ideal beyond the physical world, diverts the responsibility for defining 'good' from the individual to an external entity.
- **Aristotle.** Aristotle's *eudaimonia*, a life lived according to reason and virtue, furthers this move towards slave morality. While Aristotle advocates for individual moral development, he emphasizes the importance of ethical behavior toward others and societal virtues. This focus on communal well-being and ethical duty to others resonates with Nietzsche's characterization of slave morality.
- **Hellenistic Philosophers.** The Hellenistic philosophies—Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism—each in their unique way contribute further to the shift towards slave morality.

The Epicurean pursuit of pleasure, Stoic acceptance of circumstances, and Skeptic suspension of judgment all reflect a relinquishing of the active, assertive, and creative stance embodied by master morality.

- **Early Christians.** Christianity, with its emphasis on faith, humility, and love, epitomizes Nietzsche's concept of slave morality. The Christian promise of a good life in the afterlife can be seen as a deferral of the responsibility to shape one's life and world in the present.
- **The Future?** Nietzsche advocated for a new version of a "master" morality in which people create their *own* value (see more in the next section.

Thus, through Nietzsche's lens of master and slave morality, we witness a significant shift in ethical values throughout the evolution of Greek philosophy. This transformation illustrates Nietzsche's critical insight: morality is not a universal, absolute truth but a historical and social construct, subject to change and reinterpretation. The journey from Homer and Sappho to the early Christians highlights the tension between taking ownership and control of one's life (master morality) and relinquishing this responsibility to external forces or realities (slave morality).

How Does "Value Creation" Work?

Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of "**value creation"** is a key component of his philosophical system. It is a complex and nuanced idea, but in essence, it refers to the process by which individuals, through their own power and creativity, establish their own system of values, independent of traditional or societal norms. This concept is closely tied to Nietzsche's ideas of the "will to power" and the "overman" (or "Ubermensch").

Nietzsche's critique of traditional values, particularly those rooted in Christianity, is foundational to his concept of value creation (see previous section). He saw traditional morality as a "slave morality," a system of values that arose as a reaction to the dominance of the "master morality" of the aristocracy in ancient societies. This "slave morality," according to Nietzsche, values traits like humility, sympathy, and altruism, which he saw as virtues of the weak, born out of resentment towards the strong.

In contrast, Nietzsche proposed a new, "master morality" that values traits like strength, courage, and power. This morality is not based on a universal standard of good and evil, but rather on a more personal, individualistic assessment of what is beneficial or detrimental. This is where the concept of value creation comes in. Nietzsche believed that individuals should create their own values based on their own will to power, rather than adhering to a pre-existing moral code imposed by society or religion.

To illustrate this concept, consider the example of an artist. According to Nietzsche's philosophy, an artist creates value by producing original works of art. These works are valuable not because they adhere to some external standard of beauty or worth, but because they are expressions of the artist's own creativity and power. The artist, in this sense, is a value creator. Another example could be a revolutionary leader who, rejecting the established political order, creates a new system based on their own vision of justice and equality. This leader is also a value creator, establishing new values that serve their will to power.

However, Nietzsche's concept of value creation is not a license for selfishness or disregard for others.

Rather, it is a call for individuals to take responsibility for their own lives and to strive for greatness, rather than simply accepting the values and norms imposed by society.

Is Ethics a Matter of "Perspective"?

Nietzsche's **perspectivism i**s a philosophical concept that argues that all knowledge and truth are contingent upon an individual's perspective. It's a reaction to the philosophy of his predecessors, who he believed largely ignored the influence of their own perspectives on their work. Here's a breakdown of Nietzsche's perspectivism and his arguments for it:

- **Critique of Dogmatic Philosophers**: Nietzsche criticizes "dogmatic" philosophers for ignoring the perspectival limitations on their theorizing. He argues that these philosophers have failed to recognize that their perspectives influence their understanding of the world. For example, a philosopher who grew up in a wealthy family might have a different perspective on poverty than someone who grew up in a poor family. This doesn't mean that one perspective is right and the other is wrong, but rather that each perspective offers a unique viewpoint that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.
- **Positive Contribution of Perspective**: Nietzsche also argues that perspective makes a positive contribution to our cognitive endeavors. He rejects the idea that knowledge involves a form of objectivity that reveals the way things really are, independently of any point of view. Instead, he suggests that we should approach "objectivity" by exploiting the difference between one perspective and another, using each to overcome the limitations of others. For instance, if you're trying to understand a complex issue like climate change, you might want to consider the perspectives of scientists, politicians, and local communities. Each group will have a different perspective, and by considering all of them, you can gain a more nuanced understanding of the issue.
- **Perspectives Rooted in Affects and Valuations**: Nietzsche emphasizes that perspectives are always rooted in affects and their associated patterns of valuation. This means that our emotions and values shape our perspectives. For example, if you value individual freedom highly, you might have a different perspective on government regulation than someone who values community welfare more. Nietzsche argues that this is why "every great philosophy so far" has been "the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir".

In essence, Nietzsche's perspectivism encourages us to consider multiple perspectives when grappling with ethical and political issues, acknowledging the influence of personal experiences and values on our understanding of these issues. However, it has been widely criticized.

Common Criticisms of Nietzsche

Nietzsche has been both highly influential and highly controversial. This is, at least part, because he is often associated with "radical" ideas on both the left (anarchism) and the right (fascism). Here a few common criticism and possible responses (though I'd encourage to think about whether these responses "work"!).

Criticism: Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" can be seen as promoting a social Darwinist worldview. Critics argue that Nietzsche's "will to power"—achievement, ambition, and striving to reach the highest possible position in life—can promote a worldview that justifies exploitation and oppression of the weak by the strong. For example, the eugenics movement of the early 20th century used social Darwinist ideas to justify policies of racial and social cleansing.

Response: Proponents of Nietzsche argue that this interpretation is a misunderstanding of his philosophy. Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" is more about self-overcoming and achieving one's personal best rather than exploiting others. He did not advocate for a society where the strong exploit the weak, but rather for individuals to strive to reach their highest potential. The misinterpretation of his work, such as by the eugenics movement, shows a misappropriation rather than a reflection of his actual views.

Criticism: Nietzsche's idea of "master-slave morality" can be viewed as elitist and divisive. His notion of "master morality" and "slave morality" can be interpreted as creating a dichotomy that places some individuals above others, potentially leading to social division and elitism. This idea has been used, for example, by fascist regimes in the past to justify authoritarianism and discrimination.

Response: Many Nietzsche scholars argue that his concept of master-slave morality is not a prescriptive ethical code, but a descriptive analysis of how moral systems have developed historically. The aim was to critique the moral values that Nietzsche saw as stifling individual creativity and potential, rather than to set up a framework for a new social order. His concepts have been misused in the past, but this misuse should not be equated with Nietzsche's actual philosophies.

Criticism: Nietzsche's dismissal of conventional morality and embrace of the "Ubermensch" can lead to moral relativism or nihilism. This criticism suggests that Nietzsche's rejection of traditional moral systems and advocacy for the "Ubermensch" or "Overman," who creates their own values, can lead to a form of moral anarchy where anything goes. A concrete example is the existential crisis of the 20th century where traditional values were questioned, leading to a sense of aimlessness and despair.

Response: Nietzsche's advocates would argue that his philosophy is not endorsing moral anarchy, but is instead challenging the unexamined acceptance of traditional moral systems. The concept of the Ubermensch is about transcending societal norms and creating one's own values, but this does not mean endorsing destructive or harmful actions. It is about personal growth and self-improvement, rather than a negation of all morality.

Criticism: Nietzsche's apparent misogyny and dismissal of women. Nietzsche has been criticised for his dismissive and arguably misogynistic views on women. For instance, in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", he writes: "Are you going to women? Don't forget your whip!"

Response: Defenders of Nietzsche argue that his provocative statements about women were more a critique of the gender norms of his time rather than an endorsement of misogyny. Some interpret his statements as ironical, aimed at challenging the reader. Others suggest that Nietzsche was criticizing the roles that society had imposed on women, rather than women themselves.

Discussion Questions

- Nietzsche's concept of the "will to power" is often misinterpreted. Can you give examples of how this concept could be applied positively in personal and professional contexts?
- How does Nietzsche's concept of "master-slave morality" apply in the modern world? Can

you identify societal examples of both these moralities?

- Nietzsche critiqued both traditional morality and religion, proposing a new morality with the Übermensch. How does Nietzsche's critique resonate with modern critiques of religion and traditional moral systems?
- Nietzsche's philosophy has been widely influential and also controversially misinterpreted, for example by the Nazis. Can you discuss other philosophers or thinkers whose ideas have been controversially misinterpreted?
- Given Nietzsche's influence on psychology, how do his ideas resonate with modern psychological theories or therapies?
- Nietzsche's genealogy of morals provides a historical lens to observe the evolution of moral values. How do you see this evolution continuing in the future?
- Nietzsche's life was marked by ill health and isolation. How might his personal experiences have influenced his philosophical ideas?
- Nietzsche's idea of the eternal recurrence was a thought experiment he used to evaluate the affirmation of life. How does this concept resonate with you personally? Would you live your life differently if you knew it would recur eternally in the same way?
- According to Nietzsche's concept of value creation, should individuals be entirely independent of societal norms and values, or is there a place for such norms in our value system? Discuss with reference to the current societal norms you observe.
- Can you think of a contemporary figure who exemplifies Nietzsche's concept of the "value creator"? What are their values, and how do they differ from traditional societal norms?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Friedrich Nietzsche	A German philosopher of the late 19th century who challenged the foundations of Christianity and traditional morality. Notable for his ideas such as the Übermensch, will to power, the death of God, and the eternal recurrence.
Arthur Schopenhauer	A significant 19th-century philosopher who influenced Nietzsche. Known for his work "The World as Will and Representation," he posited that human action is driven by a metaphysical will, a perspective that Nietzsche took into consideration in his own ethical theory.
Richard Wagner	A German composer and theatre director, known for his operas. Wagner was a close acquaintance of Nietzsche early in Nietzsche's life, and their intellectual relationship had significant influence on Nietzsche's thinking, including his critique of traditional ethics.
Heraclitus	Ancient Greek philosopher known for his doctrine of change being central to the universe. Nietzsche drew from Heraclitus' ideas to assert that change and power dynamics are inherent in life, which has important implications for his ethics.
Nihilism	The belief that life is without objective meaning, purpose, or intrinsic value. Nietzsche diagnosed Western culture as suffering from nihilism, a condition he related to the death of God and the crisis of traditional morality.
"Death of God"	A concept by Nietzsche suggesting that the traditional ideas of God and religious morality have lost their power in the modern world. This loss has serious ethical implications, leading to moral nihilism, and demands a reevaluation of values.
Will to Power	Nietzsche's proposed driving force of human nature. It is the constant drive for self-overcoming and enhancement, and forms the foundation of Nietzsche's ethical views, positing a new basis for value in life.
Übermensch	Translates as "overman" or "superman," it represents Nietzsche's ideal human who creates their own values, transcending traditional morality, thereby embodying a potent response to the problem of nihilism.
Eternal Recurrence	Nietzsche's hypothetical concept that the universe and all existence and energy have been recurring, and will continue to recur, in a self-similar form an infinite number of times across infinite time or space. Nietzsche saw this concept as a potential source of affirmation of life.
Genealogy of Morals	An 1887 book by Nietzsche where he employs a genealogical method to trace the origins and evolution of moral concepts, demonstrating that our ethical values have a history and are not absolute or universal.
Master Morality	In Nietzsche's dichotomy of moral perspectives, this denotes the morality of the strong-willed, characterized by values like nobility, strength, and power. It affirms life and the self, rather than focusing on good and evil.
Slave Morality	In contrast to master morality, it is the morality of the weak and oppressed, according to Nietzsche. It values things like kindness, humility, and sympathy, and is born out of a reaction to the dominance of the masters, often seen as a source of reactive rather than creative ethics.
Sappho	An ancient Greek poet from the island of Lesbos, renowned for her lyric poetry. Nietzsche admired Sappho and often referenced her work, highlighting the aesthetic, creative approach to life that he favored in ethical consideration.
Fascism	A form of far-right, authoritarian ultranationalism characterized by dictatorial power and forcible suppression of opposition. Nietzsche's work was often misappropriated by fascist ideologies, though it is critical to note that Nietzsche himself opposed anti-Semitism and nationalism.

Ethical Perspectivism	An interpretation of Nietzsche's ethical thought, suggesting that there are no absolute or universally valid moral truths, but rather that moral interpretations can only be made from individual perspectives, emphasizing the creative, self-affirming aspects of life.
Sigmund Freud	Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis. Although he didn't directly engage with Nietzsche's work, Freudian psychoanalysis shares parallels with Nietzsche's exploration of the unconscious drives, particularly relevant to discussions of ethics and the nature of human behavior.
Carl Jung	Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology. Jung was influenced by Nietzsche's work and often incorporated Nietzsche's ideas about myths, archetypes, and the individual's process of self-realization into his own theories.
Michel Foucault	French philosopher and social theorist known for his influential work on power, knowledge, and the social institutions that shape human behavior. He was heavily influenced by Nietzsche, particularly his genealogical method of historical analysis and his critique of traditional morality.
Martin Heidegger	A German philosopher best known for his existential and phenomenological explorations of the "question of Being". Heidegger was greatly influenced by Nietzsche and interpreted Nietzsche's thought as the culmination of Western metaphysics, which Heidegger himself sought to deconstruct.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)

2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)

3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)

4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)

5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)

6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)

7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)

8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)

9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)

10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

9.

CHAPTER 9: THE ETHICS OF SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR—FEMINISM, EXISTENTIALISM, AND AMBIGUITY

In this chapter, we'll be delving into the intriguing intersection of existentialism, feminism, and ethics through the philosophies of Simone de Beauvoir, a pioneering figure in 20th-century feminist thought. Through her profound ideas, we'll engage with concepts of selfhood, otherness, and the social constructs that shape our identities, giving a new perspective on both individuality and collective identity.

Our exploration begins with a narrative, "The Bridget Condition—Diary of a Teenage Werewolf," which intertwines the experiences of a teenage werewolf named Bridget with reflections on Beauvoir's philosophies. This narrative will (hopefully!) serve as a relatable point of engagement, helping to ground Beauvoir's abstract ideas in a context that readers can easily grasp.

Following this narrative, we'll dive into "Big Ideas: The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir," where we'll dissect key concepts of Beauvoir's ethical theory. We'll particularly focus on "The Ethics of Ambiguity," where Beauvoir uses existentialist principles to redefine the way we understand ethics, arguing that the complex and often contradictory nature of human existence necessitates a flexible approach to morality. Our journey will continue by exploring the nuances between Equality Feminism and Difference Feminism. We'll investigate Beauvoir's contributions to these schools of thought and the impact they have had on feminist philosophy.

Subsequently, we'll tackle the practical application of Beauvoir's ideas in modern debates about gender. This section aims to make Beauvoir's philosophy directly applicable, showing how her theories continue to resonate in our contemporary world. We'll conclude the chapter by exploring the concept of "Intersectionality." This crucial concept, which describes how different social categorizations like race, class, and gender interrelate and contribute to unique experiences of oppression or privilege, has roots in Beauvoir's theories about the interconnectedness of human identities.

By the end of this chapter, you will have gained a comprehensive understanding of Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy and its profound relevance to the modern world. Whether it's grappling with existential crises, questioning societal norms, or wrestling with one's identity as Bridget does, Beauvoir's philosophy provides us with the tools to navigate these issues.

Story: The Bridget Condition—Diary of a Teenage Werewolf

Drawing of a young werewolf girl, with a fierce yet contemplative expression, holding a book on feminist philosophy. She's in a cozy study room with books scattered around, a candle burning on a wooden desk, and a quill dipped in ink. Her transformation is evident with fur on her arms and sharp canines peeking out.

(With apologies to Bridget Jones and Simone De Beauvoir)

> "What an odd thing a diary is: the things you omit are more important than those you put in."
> — Simone de Beauvoir, The Woman Destroyed

May 1st

Weight: 130 lbs (post-full moon, quite svelte), Hairballs coughed up: 3 (need to brush more), Existential Crises: 1 (quite serious), Times Scared the Postman: 2 (unintentional, still feel guilty).

9 a.m. Decided to start writing a diary for the month of May. Hello, Diary! My name is Bridget Moon, and I'm a teenage werewolf this morning. I'm not really sure to what to write about—hopefully, something will occur to me soon. Woke up this morning with the most horrid taste in my mouth – fur again! Brushing one's teeth takes on a new meaning when you're a teenage werewolf.

11 a.m. Finished cleaning up the mess in the room. Wish I could get a grip on this transformation thing. It's hard enough being a teenager without sprouting fur and claws every full moon.

1 p.m. Skulked around the library, hiding from the sun and trying to avoid mirrors (the no-reflection thing is still a bit freaky). Stumbled upon this book by Simone de Beauvoir, "The Second Sex." Bit heavy for a casual read, but the cover was intriguing.

3 p.m. Only on page 35, and I'm already floored. "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Is it the same for werewolves? One is not born, but rather becomes, a werewolf? Not sure if that's comforting or terrifying. I wrote down the full quote here so that I can remember it:

> "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female acquires in society; it is civilization as a whole that develops this product, intermediate between female and eunuch, which one calls feminine. Only the mediation of another can establish an individual as an Other. In so far as he exists for himself, the child would not be able to understand himself as sexually differentiated. In girls as in boys the body is first of all the radiation of a subjectivity, the instrument that accomplishes the comprehension of the world: it is through the eyes, the hands, and not through the sexual parts that children apprehend the universe."

4 p.m. I think I get it! Beauvoir says gender is a social construct. Makes me wonder, is being a werewolf a social construct too? Society sees me as a monster, but is that because I am one, or because they've decided I am?

5 p.m. Beauvoir's writing about this idea of 'transcendence' versus 'immanence.' Men get to transcend, women get stuck in immanence. Suddenly, being a werewolf seems a lot like being stuck in immanence – always defined by my physicality, by what I am, not who I am.

6 p.m. The more I read, the more I see parallels between Beauvoir's ideas and my own struggles. Women being seen as 'the other' in a man's world, werewolves being seen as 'the other' in a human world. It's all a bit much.

7 p.m. Just realized I've spent the entire day reading philosophy. I'm supposed to be a bloodthirsty beast, not an existentialist scholar. Still, it's nice to find something that resonates with me – even if it is a book written by a human woman in the 1940s.

10 p.m. Couldn't resist, had to sneak in a bit more reading before bed. Beauvoir talks about freedom, about defining our own existence. It's an intoxicating thought – could I define my own existence? Could I be more than just a werewolf?

Midnight. Can't sleep. Mind buzzing with existential questions. Is it possible to be a feminist werewolf? Is that a thing? Too much to think about. Need to get some sleep. Tomorrow's another day – another day of being a teenage werewolf, yes, but maybe also a day of being a bit more than that.

Food for thought: The Second Sex, midnight snacks, and fur conditioner.

May 2nd

Weight: 133 lbs (post-midnight snacks, guilt level high), Fur Conditioner Used: 3 bottles (need to buy in bulk), Existential Crises: 2 (escalating), Times Scared Myself in Mirror: 4 (need to work on that).

9 a.m. Woke up determined to put Beauvoir's existentialism into practice. Decided to define my own existence. Quite excited until I realized I had no idea where to start.

10 a.m. Thought about Sartre's "No Exit" while brushing fur. Imagined being stuck in a room with the postman and Mrs. Henderson, the school principal. Shuddered. Decided to be nicer to the postman.

12 p.m. In a burst of existential enthusiasm, decided to join the Debate Club at school. After all, Beauvoir was an intellectual, and debate is intellectual, right? Discovered the first debate topic is "Dogs vs. Cats." Irony is a cruel mistress.

2 p.m. Tried to make lunch. Remembered Camus's "The Myth of Sisyphus" and felt a kinship with the man pushing the boulder up the hill. Except my boulder was a sandwich and it kept falling apart.

3 p.m. Made it to the library, avoiding mirrors. Read more Beauvoir. Felt inspired and decided to write a manifesto about the rights of werewolves. It started strong, but ended up sounding like a plea for more fur conditioner.

5 p.m. Tried to put Beauvoir's 'transcendence' into practice by going for a run. Imagined transcending my physical form. Tripped over my own paws. Landed in a heap. Not sure this is what Beauvoir meant.

6 p.m. Watched a cooking show on TV and thought about Beauvoir's critique of the domestic sphere. Realized that I wasn't sure where to draw the line between rejecting societal expectations and my genuine love for triple chocolate fudge cake.

8 p.m. Back at home, staring at my manifesto. Wondered if existential freedom meant the freedom to change. Could I be a vegetarian werewolf? Decided to test it out. The carrot tasted awful.

10 p.m. Lay on my bed, staring at the ceiling. Thought about Beauvoir's assertion that we are responsible for our own existence. Realized that, in a way, I chose to be a werewolf every time I embraced my nature rather than fighting it.

Midnight. It's been a day of existential ups and downs. The world didn't change. I'm still a werewolf. But maybe, just maybe, I'm starting to see a way to be more than just a monster.

Food for thought: The Second Sex, triple chocolate fudge cake, and self-acceptance.

May 4th

Weight: 132 lbs (post-existential crisis and carrot experiment), Jars of Fur Conditioner: 0 (panic!), Existential Crises: 3 (becoming a norm), Times Thought About Ex: 5 (too many, must stop).

9 a.m. Woke up with a start. Dreamt I ran out of fur conditioner. Oh, the horror! Checked bathroom cabinet. Nightmare was real.

11 a.m. Staring at Beauvoir's book. Thinking about her relationship with Sartre. They were equals, partners. She was never 'the other' to him. That wasn't the case with my ex, Jake. He always saw me as the werewolf first, girlfriend second.

1 p.m. Jake. He was my first love. And my first heartbreak. He said he was okay with the whole werewolf thing. But I could see it in his eyes. The fear. The uncertainty. I was always 'the other' to him.

3 p.m. Beauvoir wrote about women being defined by their relationships with men. I wonder if I let Jake define me. Was I too dependent on him? Did I let myself become 'the other'?

5 p.m. Went for a run. Tried to outrun my thoughts. Failed. Kept thinking about Beauvoir and Sartre. They had their problems, but they respected each other's freedom. Jake never respected mine.

7 p.m. Back home. Found an old photo of Jake and me. We looked happy. But were we? Or was I just happy to be accepted, even if it was as 'the other'?

9 p.m. Reading more Beauvoir. She wrote, "One's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation and compassion." I did love Jake. But did I value his life? Or was I too focused on what he thought of me?

11 p.m. Late-night snack. Chomping on a carrot. Still tastes awful. But I think I understand Beauvoir a bit more now. I was 'the other' because I let myself be. I let Jake's fear define me.

Midnight. Can't sleep. Thinking about Beauvoir. Thinking about Jake. I'm a werewolf. But I'm also a student, a friend, a lover of triple chocolate fudge cake. I'm more than 'the other.' I'm me. And that's enough.

Food for thought: The Second Sex, carrots (still awful), and self-love.

May 12th

Weight: 133 lbs (pre-full moon nerves, ice cream binge), Fur Conditioner: 2 (anticipating more usage), Existential Crises: 4 (one for each phase of the moon?), Instances of Discrimination: too many to count, Times I internalized it: even more.

9 a.m. Woke up with that familiar pit in my stomach, the kind of nervous anticipation that comes with the impending full moon. My inner turmoil partly rooted in the knowledge of the discrimination that would intensify today.

11 a.m. Tried to navigate the minefield of high school. The 'otherness' was palpable. Like that time when I was cut from the cheerleading squad because they were afraid I would "lose control" during a full moon. Or when I was denied the lead role in the school play because they didn't want a werewolf to be the face of the school. Every concealed smirk, every whisper behind textbooks felt like a sharp reminder of my societal label.

1 p.m. The familiar itch beneath my skin set in, an omen of the transformation to come. I thought about canceling my participation in the debate club. I remembered how I was once sidelined during the interschool debate competition because our school didn't want a "werewolf representative". But no, I decided, I won't let the moon or society dictate my life.

3 p.m. In the school corridors, every glance seemed to scrutinize, every whisper seemed to dissect my existence. I was no longer just Bridget; I was Bridget, the girl who turns into a beast at the full moon. I felt like an object of morbid curiosity, an exhibit in a freak show.

5 p.m. As I mulled over Beauvoir's words, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," I couldn't help but reflect on my own journey. Was I born a werewolf, or did society, with its expectations and stereotypes, force this identity upon me?

7 p.m. With the setting sun, I could feel my transformation beginning. I retreated to my sanctuary, the only place I could be a werewolf without judgment. I remembered family dinners where my

"condition" was the elephant in the room, the subject of hushed conversations when they thought I was out of earshot.

9 p.m. Alone, I contemplated Beauvoir's views on gender. Women are 'made,' not born. Society shapes our perception of what it means to be a woman. And it also shapes what it means to be a werewolf, a reality I faced daily.

11 p.m. The full moon brought my transformation to fruition. I was a werewolf. But I was also a student, a friend, a daughter. I was Bridget, and I wouldn't let society's labels define me.

Midnight. I looked at my reflection in the mirror. The exterior was different, but the essence was the same. I was not just the 'other', the object of society's fascination and fear. I was 'the self', a subject with my own ambitions and dreams. And that realization was empowering.

Food for thought: The Second Sex, the full moon, the insidious nature of discrimination, and the struggle of asserting 'the self' amidst 'the other'.

May 15th

Weight: 132 lbs (carrot diet not making a difference), Fur Conditioner: still 0 (shopping trip needed), Existential Crises: 2 (constant state), Times I actually debated feminism as a werewolf: 1 (never thought I'd see the day).

10 a.m. Woke up to a group text from my friends about meeting up at the park. Not sure how to bring up Beauvoir and feminism in conversation. Decided to wing it.

12 p.m. At the park. Casual chat about school, latest movies, and the best brand of fur conditioner (a topic close to my heart). Waited for the right moment to bring up feminism.

1 p.m. Took the plunge. Asked what they thought about equality feminism and difference feminism. Received blank stares. Realized my friends are not as into feminist theory as I am.

1:15 p.m. Gave a brief explanation about equality feminism advocating for equal rights and opportunities and difference feminism emphasizing the uniqueness of the female experience. Jenny thought it was about whether or not to wear a bra. Sighed.

1:30 p.m. Started a hypothetical debate: if werewolves wanted to join the human society, would they prefer equality or difference feminism?

1:45 p.m. Jenny argued for equality feminism. "Werewolves should have the same rights as humans," she said. "No one should be treated differently because of their fur…I mean, skin color."

2 p.m. Sarah disagreed. She stood up for difference feminism. "But being a werewolf is different," she argued. "Their experiences are unique. They change during the full moon, have different physical abilities, and have to deal with prejudices."

2:15 p.m. I listened, fascinated. Never thought I'd hear my friends passionately debate werewolf rights.

2:30 p.m. Mike, the quiet one, spoke up. "Can't we have both?" he asked. "Can't we acknowledge the unique experiences of werewolves while also fighting for their equal rights?" We all stared at him. He shrugged. "Just a thought."

3 p.m. The debate wound down. We moved on to less serious topics, like whether pizza or burgers were the superior food (pizza, obviously). But I couldn't stop thinking about what Mike said. Can't we have both?

7 p.m. Back at home. Thinking about the debate. Wondered if Beauvoir would have approved.

10 p.m. Bedtime. Head full of thoughts about equality, difference, and werewolf rights. But mostly, I'm thinking about how lucky I am to have friends who would debate feminism and werewolf rights on a sunny afternoon.

Food for thought: The Second Sex, pizza, and the value of good friends.

May 16th

Weight: 132 lbs (pizza night, no regrets), Fur Conditioner: 1 (finally!), Existential Crises: 2 (Mike-related), Times I blushed around Mike: lost count.

9 a.m. Woke up to a text from Mike. He asked if I wanted to grab a coffee later. Realized I've never been on a date as a self-aware existentialist werewolf. Panicked.

11 a.m. Picked out an outfit. Decided on my favorite sweater – the one that doesn't itch when I get nervous (or start sprouting fur).

1 p.m. Met Mike at the coffee shop. Tried not to blush when he complimented my sweater. Failed.

1:30 p.m. Conversation was nice and easy. We talked about school, friends, and yes, werewolf rights. Mike seemed genuinely interested.

2 p.m. Mike brought up Care Ethics. Said he's been reading about it and thought it might apply to our werewolf discussion. He explained it's about valuing empathy and care in our moral decisions, not just abstract principles.

2:30 p.m. I found myself agreeing with him. Care Ethics made sense. After all, aren't we all interconnected? Doesn't it make sense to value empathy and care?

3 p.m. Mike looked at me, serious. "I think Care Ethics is about seeing people for who they are, not what they are," he said. "So, for a werewolf, or anyone really, it's about acknowledging their experiences, caring for them, and treating them with empathy." I blushed again.

3:30 p.m. Spent the next half hour in a deep discussion about Care Ethics, feminism, and how it all applies to werewolves. Realized I was on a date, talking about philosophy, and enjoying it.

4 p.m. The date ended. Mike walked me home. We shared an awkward hug. He said he had a great time and would like to do it again. I agreed.

6 p.m. At home, thinking about the date. About Mike. About Care Ethics. It feels nice to be seen for who I am, not just what I am.

9 p.m. Bedtime. Can't stop thinking about Mike. About his kindness. His understanding. His respect for my experiences. Realized that's what Beauvoir meant about valuing the life of others.

Food for thought: The Second Sex, Care Ethics, and the possibility of a second date with Mike.

June 8th

Weight: 131 lbs (must be the philosophy diet), Fur Conditioner: 4 (stocked up), Existential Crises: 0 (is this growth?), Dates with Mike: 5 (pinch me, I must be dreaming).

10 a.m. Woke up. Realized it's been weeks since I last journaled. Blamed it on the whirlwind of life, philosophy, and Mike.

11 a.m. Life update: School's good, debate club's lively, friends are supportive, and Mike is… wonderful. He's kind, thoughtful, and treats me as an equal. No 'other' in sight.

12 p.m. Been thinking a lot about Beauvoir and her philosophy. Decided to write down my interpretation of her teachings. My Beauvoir-inspired rules for life, if you will.

1. Embrace your freedom: We are free to define who we are. Embrace that freedom. Don't let others define you.

2. Accept responsibility: With freedom comes responsibility. We are responsible for our actions and for creating our own meanings in life.

3. Be authentic: Don't hide who you are to fit into society's expectations. Be true to yourself, whether you're a student, a friend, a lover of triple chocolate fudge cake, or a werewolf.

4. Reject being 'the other': Don't let others define you as 'the other'. You are not defined by your relationship to others, but by your own actions and decisions.

5. Value others: Your life has value so long as you attribute value to the life of others. Show empathy, love, friendship, and compassion.

6. Embrace ambiguity: Life is complex and ambiguous. Embrace the uncertainty and learn to navigate through it.

7. Fight for equality: Stand up against injustices. Fight for equal rights and opportunities for all, regardless of their gender, race, or species.

7 p.m. Looking at my list, feeling proud. It's been a journey, from discovering Beauvoir to going on dates with Mike. But I feel like I've grown. Like I understand myself better.

10 p.m. Bedtime. Thoughts are full of Mike, Beauvoir, and my rules for life. Looking forward to tomorrow.

Food for thought: The Second Sex, Beauvoir's philosophy, and the joy of self-discovery.

Discussion Questions: The Bridget Question

- How does Bridget's identity as a werewolf parallel the experiences of women, as described by Simone de Beauvoir?
- How does Bridget apply the ideas of Simone de Beauvoir to her own life? How does this change her understanding of herself and her relationship with others?
- How does Bridget's understanding of herself as 'the other' evolve over the course of the story? What events or insights trigger these changes?
- How do Bridget's friends and romantic interest contribute to her understanding of Beauvoir's ideas? In what ways do they challenge or support her?
- In what ways does Bridget grapple with the concept of freedom and responsibility as outlined by Beauvoir? How do these concepts play out in her daily life?
- How does Bridget navigate the tension between equality feminism and difference feminism in her personal experiences and discussions with her friends?
- How does the concept of Care Ethics, as discussed by Mike, intersect with Beauvoir's ideas and Bridget's experiences?
- Bridget creates a list of Beauvoir-inspired rules for life. Do you agree with these rules? How might they apply to your own life?

Big Ideas: The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir

Simone de Beauvoir (January 9, 1908 – April 14, 1986) was a French existentialist philosopher, writer, political activist, feminist and social theorist. She is best known for her metaphysical novels, essays, biographies, autobiography, and treatises on ethics and feminism. She wrote novels, essays, biographies, autobiography, and monographs on philosophy, politics, and social issues. She was the author of the 1949 book The Second Sex, a detailed analysis of women's oppression and a foundational tract of contemporary feminism.

De Beauvoir was born in Paris, France, to Georges Bertrand de Beauvoir, a lawyer, and Françoise

Brasseur. She was the eldest of three children. Her father was a devout Catholic, and her mother was a freethinker. De Beauvoir was educated at a series of Catholic schools, but she eventually rejected her faith.

In 1926, de Beauvoir entered the Sorbonne University in Paris, where she studied philosophy. She was a brilliant student, and she graduated at the top of her class in 1929. She was also the youngest person ever to pass the agrégation in philosophy, a prestigious exam that qualifies one to teach philosophy at the university level.

In 1929, de Beauvoir met Jean-Paul Sartre, who would become her lifelong partner and collaborator. Sartre was also a philosopher, and they shared a deep interest in existentialism. **Existentialism** is a philosophy that emphasizes the individual's freedom and responsibility to create their own meaning in life. De Beauvoir and Sartre became the leading proponents of existentialism in France, and their ideas had a profound influence on the intellectual and cultural life of the postwar era.

De Beauvoir wrote extensively on existentialism, feminism, and other social and political issues. Her most famous work is The Second Sex, which is a groundbreaking analysis of women's oppression. The book has been translated into more than 20 languages and has been credited with helping to launch the second wave of feminism in the 1960s.

Existentialism. Beauvoir contributed to existentialist thought by focusing on themes of freedom, ambiguity, and the other. She emphasized the existentialist belief in the individual's ability to create meaning and identity through their actions and choices. For both Sartre and de Beauvoir, existentialism was defined by the ideas that for humans (unlike for other animals) our "existence" precedes our "essence." In other words, we come into the world without any predefined "meaning" or "purpose", and it is up to us to *create* this purpose. By accepting this responsibility, we can lead **authentic** lives. De Beauvoir (like Sartre) was an atheist existentialist, but their were also religious existentialists.

For example, in her novel "She Came to Stay" (1943), Beauvoir explores existentialist themes of freedom, bad faith, and the other through the story of a complex love triangle. This novel is often seen as a fictional representation of her relationship with Sartre and their young protegee, Olga Kosakievicz.

Feminism and "The Second Sex". Beauvoir's most famous work, "The Second Sex" (1949), is a foundational text in contemporary **feminist** theory. In this work, Beauvoir analyzes the treatment and perception of women throughout history and presents her most famous idea: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

This statement exemplifies her belief in the concept of **'gender as a social construct'**. According to Beauvoir, women have been defined by their difference from the male 'norm', effectively becoming 'the second sex'. She argues that society, not biology, determines the roles assigned to women. Women are treated as the "**Other"** in a society that centers men as "agents" (who *do* things to women). This perspective was groundbreaking and laid the groundwork for much of modern feminist theory.

Beauvoir also emphasizes the idea of women's 'immanence' versus men's 'transcendence'. Women, according to Beauvoir, are stuck in the private sphere of **'immanence',** where their roles are defined by their relationships to others (mother, daughter, wife). In contrast, men are allowed to exist in the **'transcendence'** of the public sphere, where they can define themselves.

Later Life and Legacy. Beauvoir continued to write and engage in political activism throughout her life, participating in movements for women's rights and speaking out against the Vietnam War. She also wrote several autobiographical works, including "Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter" (1958), which provides a detailed account of her early life and intellectual development. Simone de Beauvoir died

in 1986, leaving behind a substantial body of work that continues to be influential in philosophy, feminism, and literary studies. Her emphasis on the socially constructed nature of gender roles, the importance of individual freedom, and the complex dynamics of relationships have

The Ethics of Ambiguity

"The Ethics of Ambiguity" is Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist approach to ethics, published in 1947. It builds upon the existentialist notion that "existence precedes essence," and is characterized by the idea that meaning is not inherent in the world but is created by individuals through their actions. This gives rise to an inherent ambiguity in life and moral decisions. In her work, Beauvoir identifies three types of ambiguity:

The Ambiguity of the Individual: Individuals are both subject and object, meaning they are free to create their own lives (subject) while also being shaped by their environment (object). This duality creates an inherent tension and ambiguity in every individual's existence. Consider the case of Bridget, our werewolf protagonist. Bridget is a subject in the sense that she possesses the freedom to create her own narrative; she can choose her actions, such as deciding to continue attending her debate club despite societal prejudices. However, she is also an object in the sense that she is shaped by her environment – she is influenced by societal expectations and stereotypes about werewolves, as well as the biological fact of her transformation during the full moon. This duality – being a free actor while simultaneously being influenced by external factors – creates an inherent tension and ambiguity in her existence.

The Ambiguity of Others: Others are also both subjects and objects. They are subjects who act and shape their lives, but to us, they appear as objects in our world. This creates ethical dilemmas because we must respect their freedom while acknowledging that our actions affect them. Take Mike, for example, Bridget's love interest. From Bridget's perspective, Mike is an object, a part of her world that she perceives and interacts with. However, Mike is also a subject in his own right, with his own thoughts, feelings, and actions that shape his existence. He is not just an object in Bridget's world but a subject in his own. This duality can create ethical dilemmas for Bridget. For instance, she must respect Mike's freedom and individuality even while acknowledging that her actions – like revealing her identity as a werewolf – may significantly affect him.

The Ambiguity of Situations: Situations are ambiguous because they are open to multiple interpretations and outcomes. Each choice we make opens some possibilities and closes others, adding to the ambiguity of life. Consider Bridget's situation at school. The situation is ambiguous because it is open to multiple interpretations and outcomes. On one hand, Bridget could choose to hide her identity to avoid discrimination, which would allow her to fit in but at the expense of suppressing her true self. On the other hand, she could openly embrace her werewolf identity, which would potentially subject her to prejudice but also give her the freedom to be authentic. Each choice opens some possibilities (e.g., acceptance, authenticity) and closes others (e.g., rejection, suppression), adding to the ambiguity of the situation. The fact that situations are not predetermined but shaped by our choices embodies Beauvoir's concept of the ambiguity of situations.

In response to this inherent ambiguity, Beauvoir argues for an ethic of action and responsibility. She believes that individuals should acknowledge the ambiguity of life and take responsibility for their choices. This includes taking into account the effects of one's actions on others and the world.

Beauvoir also identifies several attitudes people adopt to avoid the discomfort of ambiguity, such as

the sub-man who denies his freedom, the serious man who subscribes to absolute values, the nihilist who denies values altogether, and the adventurer who pursues personal freedom without considering others.

However, Beauvoir advocates for a different approach, the attitude of the "moral person" or the "free man." This person embraces ambiguity, understands the interconnectedness of freedom (my freedom is intertwined with the freedom of others), and acts in a way that promotes the freedom of all.

For Beauvoir, freedom is not just about individual liberation but also about enabling the freedom of others. Hence, her ethics of ambiguity is a call to action: to embrace the ambiguity of existence, to exercise our freedom responsibly, and to work towards a world where others can do the same.

Equality Feminism and Difference Feminism

Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking work, "The Second Sex," laid the foundation for many feminist theories, including equality feminism and difference feminism. These two branches of feminist thought have interpreted and built upon Beauvoir's ideas in different ways.

Equality Feminism. Equality feminism is the belief that men and women are fundamentally the same and should, therefore, be treated equally. It seeks to eliminate gender-based discrimination and argues for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for both sexes. This approach is often linked to liberal feminism and has its roots in Beauvoir's assertion that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Beauvoir's idea that gender is socially constructed rather than biologically determined is central to equality feminism. For example, Beauvoir critiques the notion that women are naturally more nurturing or passive, arguing that such traits are not innate but are imposed by society. This aligns with equality feminism's belief that men and women are not inherently different in their abilities or interests.

Equality feminism, therefore, builds on Beauvoir's critique of gender roles and her call for women's liberation. For instance, movements for equal pay, reproductive rights, and against sexual harassment can all be seen as applications of Beauvoir's belief in the need to challenge societal norms that limit women's freedom and equality.

Difference Feminism. Difference feminism, on the other hand, argues that there are fundamental differences between men and women, and these differences should be recognized and valued rather than erased. It sees the attempt to make women 'equal' to men as a denial of women's unique experiences and capabilities. While Beauvoir's work is more closely aligned with equality feminism, difference feminism can still draw on her ideas. Beauvoir's concept of 'immanence' versus 'transcendence' is particularly relevant here. Beauvoir argues that women are often confined to the realm of 'immanence' (the private, domestic sphere) while men occupy the realm of 'transcendence' (public, creative, and intellectual pursuits).

Difference feminism interprets this not as a call to erase these differences, but rather to value and elevate the traditionally feminine realm of immanence. For example, the care work traditionally done by women (like child rearing, nursing, or teaching) is often undervalued in our society. Difference feminism, building on Beauvoir's analysis, might argue for recognizing the inherent value and importance of this work. Moreover, difference feminists might argue for policies that acknowledge the unique experiences of women, such as maternity leave or child care support. By recognizing and accommodating these differences, difference feminism seeks to create a society where both 'masculine' and 'feminine' values and experiences are equally valued.

In the end, both equality feminism and difference feminism draw on Simone de Beauvoir's ideas, albeit in different ways. Equality feminism builds on her critique of gender as a social construct and her call for liberation, while difference feminism takes her analysis of gender roles as a starting point to argue for the recognition and valuation of difference.

Applying De Beauvoir's Ideas to Debates About Gender

Simone de Beauvoir's ideas provide a rich philosophical foundation that can be drawn upon by different factions in the current debates around transgender rights, including both feminist advocates for trans rights and gender-critical feminists (who generally argue that "women" should be understood as a biological term for *sex,* rather than as a description of a gender).

Feminist Advocates for Trans Rights. For feminist advocates of trans rights, Beauvoir's assertion that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," offers a crucial theoretical underpinning. This notion suggests that gender is not strictly tied to biological sex but is a social construct shaped by lived experiences and societal expectations. Therefore, it supports the view that individuals should have the freedom to identify and live as the gender they feel best aligns with their identity. Moreover, Beauvoir's concept of 'transcendence' can be seen as resonating with transgender experiences. The journey of becoming, of transcending the gender assigned at birth to realize an authentic identity, can be viewed as an act of existential freedom, a central theme in Beauvoir's philosophy. Finally, Beauvoir's "Ethics of Ambiguity," with its emphasis on the individual's freedom to define their existence and responsibility towards the other, provides a framework for advocating the recognition and respect of each person's self-identified gender.

Gender-Critical Feminists. On the other hand, gender-critical feminists (or "trans-exclusionary radical feminists"), who emphasize the importance of biological sex in defining women's experiences, might also draw upon Beauvoir's work. While Beauvoir sees gender as a construct, she also acknowledges the material reality of female bodies and how societal perceptions of this 'reality' shapes women's lived experiences. Beauvoir's analysis of women as 'the second sex' defined in opposition to men, and her exploration of the social and economic conditions that confine women to the private sphere, can resonate with gender-critical feminists' concerns about the erasure of female-specific experiences. Further, Beauvoir's critique of societal expectations and gender roles can be used by gender-critical feminists to argue against the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, which they often view as a concern in some trans narratives.

It's important to note that while Beauvoir's philosophy can be drawn upon by both sides of this debate, her ideas also have limitations. Her binary understanding of gender does not fully encapsulate the spectrum of gender identities recognized today, and her work was primarily centered on women's liberation from patriarchal structures, rather than the specific issues faced by transgender individuals. In essence, Beauvoir's work provides a complex and nuanced perspective on gender that can be interpreted and applied in different ways, reflecting the multifaceted nature of contemporary debates around gender identity and trans rights.

What is "Intersectionality"?

Intersectionality is a term coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. The concept refers to the idea that individuals can experience multiple, overlapping forms of discrimination due to their

various social identities, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability. Each of these identities intersects, creating a unique experience of discrimination or privilege for each individual. In other words, an individual's lived experience cannot be reduced to a single aspect of their identity.

Simone de Beauvoir's work, while preceding the term intersectionality, provides a foundation for understanding this concept, particularly through her ideas about ambiguity, existentialism, and the notion of being "the other."

The Ethics of Ambiguity and Intersectionality. De Beauvoir's "Ethics of Ambiguity" posits that each individual is both a subject who is free to create their own life and an object shaped by their environment. This idea resonates with intersectionality, as individuals are not defined solely by their individual identities (subject), but also by the societal prejudices and stereotypes associated with these identities (object). For example, a woman of color faces not only sexism (because she is a woman) and racism (because she is a person of color), but also a unique discrimination that emerges from the intersection of these identities.

Existentialism and Intersectionality. De Beauvoir's existentialist philosophy, which emphasizes individual freedom, responsibility, and subjective experience, can also be linked to intersectionality. It suggests that each person's experience of the world is unique and shaped by their individual circumstances. This aligns with the core tenet of intersectionality, which asserts that individuals face unique, overlapping systems of oppression based on their multiple identities.

Existentialism also serves to remind that we can, at best, an imperfect and incomplete experience of what other people are experiencing. We don't directly "see" what is happening inside of another person and thus, may not be aware of the various struggles they face. This calls for both intellectual humility (don't pretend you know more than you don't) and compassion for others, even when we find them to be disagreeable.

Being 'The Other' and Intersectionality. De Beauvoir's concept of "the other" — the idea that women are defined in relation to men, as the 'second sex' — can be expanded to understand intersectionality. Just as women are 'othered' in a patriarchal society, individuals can also be 'othered' based on their race, class, sexuality, and other identities. Moreover, the experience of being 'the other' is intensified when these identities intersect. For instance, a working-class, black woman experiences 'othering' on multiple levels — through classism, racism, and sexism. Moreover, one's experience of being the "other" depends a great deal on the social situation. In some situations, you may be one the *receiving* end of this, while in other situations you may be the one doing the "othering."

Discussion Questions

- Simone de Beauvoir asserted that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." How does this statement challenge traditional views of gender? Can this concept be extended to understand other forms of gender identity?
- How do Beauvoir's concepts of 'immanence' and 'transcendence' apply to modern discussions about women's roles in society, particularly in relation to work-life balance and the value placed on care work?
- Beauvoir's philosophy emphasizes individual freedom and the responsibility we bear for our choices. How can these concepts be applied to contemporary ethical issues, such as debates about gender identity, reproductive rights, or sexual harassment?

- Beauvoir's "Ethics of Ambiguity" suggests that we must acknowledge the effects of our actions on others. How might this principle guide our approach to contentious social issues, including the debate between trans rights advocates and gender-critical feminists?
- How might Beauvoir's philosophy be used to argue both for and against the recognition of self-identified gender?
- How might Beauvoir's analysis of women as 'the second sex' inform discussions about intersectionality in feminism? How does the concept of 'the second sex' apply to other marginalized groups?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Simone de Beauvoir	A pivotal French writer, philosopher, and feminist, best known for her comprehensive examination of women's societal roles and her exploration of existentialist philosophy.
Existentialism	A philosophical movement and theory focusing on individual freedom, choice, and subjective experience.
Feminism	A socio-political movement and ideology that advocates for equal rights for all genders, asserting that women should have the same political, social, and intellectual rights as men.
Jean-Paul Sartre	A renowned French existentialist philosopher, writer, and Beauvoir's lifelong companion. His philosophy, particularly the concept of radical freedom and existentialism, had a profound influence on Beauvoir's own philosophical and feminist ideas.
The Second Sex	Beauvoir's seminal work and one of the earliest comprehensive explorations of women's oppression. It illuminates the 'woman' as the "Other," a construct formed and upheld by societal and patriarchal norms.
The "Other"	A concept central to Beauvoir's work referring to the societal perception of women as an outsider or the secondary, inferior group in relation to the male 'norm.' She asserts that this process of 'othering' is not natural but rather a product of societal structures and expectations.
Immanence	A concept used by Beauvoir to describe the state of being entrenched within one's self or situation, typically seen as an assigned position for women, associated with passivity, inaction, and limitation.
Transcendence	The ability or act of going beyond oneself or one's situation, embodying freedom, creativity, and subjectivity. Beauvoir argued that men are traditionally accorded this status, while women are confined to immanence, and advocated for women's right to transcendence.
Social Construction of Gender	The theory that gender is not biologically determined but is a product of societal and cultural norms. Beauvoir's work was foundational to this theory, asserting, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."
Ambiguity of the Individual	Beauvoir's concept referring to the complexity and contradiction inherent in individuals, asserting that humans are free yet bound by their circumstances and societal constructions, a central theme in her existentialist feminist philosophy.
Ambiguity of Others	Beauvoir's exploration of how others' freedom and actions can impact an individual's life, reflecting the interconnectedness and mutual influence of individuals within society.
Ambiguity of Situations	Beauvoir's understanding of the complexity of life situations, stating that one's existence is a mix of freely made choices and circumstances beyond one's control.
Equality Feminism	A feminist perspective which advocates for equal rights and opportunities for all genders, underlining the common humanity of men and women. Beauvoir's philosophy is closely associated with this perspective.
Difference Feminism	A feminist perspective that emphasizes the differences between genders, recognizing and valuing the unique experiences of women. Although Beauvoir acknowledged women's unique experiences due to societal oppression, she predominantly argued for equality.

Gender-Critical Feminism	A branch of feminism which argues that gender (as a social construct) is harmful to women and should be eliminated, and that only biological sex should be legally/morally recognized. Associated with opposition to trans-rights.
Intersectionality	A concept in feminism acknowledging multiple layers of social stratification, such as race, class, and gender.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

10.

CHAPTER 10: DE BOIS, KING, AND APPIAH ON RACE AND RACISM

> "Daily the Negro is coming more and more to look upon law and justice, not as protecting safeguards, but as sources of humiliation and oppression. The laws are made by men who have little interest in him; they are executed by men who have absolutely no motive for treating the black people with courtesy or consideration; and, finally, the accused law-breaker is tried, not by his peers, but too often by men who would rather punish ten innocent Negroes than let one guilty one escape." –(WEB De Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903)

In this chapter, we'll be investigating the interplay between race, racism, and ethics through the philosophical contributions of three significant thinkers: W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King Jr., and Kwame Anthony Appiah. These thinkers have significantly shaped the discourse surrounding race, social justice, and ethical responsibility, providing tools to critically engage with these essential topics in our contemporary world.

We start with an in-depth exploration of Du Bois's science fiction story "The Comet," which deftly employs Afrofuturism to interrogate themes of race, class, and gender. By considering the narrative within its historical context and unpacking its allegorical elements, readers will gain valuable insights into Du Bois's views on race and society.

Discussion questions following the story will guide readers in drawing out the thematic elements and ethical implications of Du Bois's work. This will serve as a springboard into "Big Ideas: The Philosophy of W.E.B. Du Bois," a comprehensive overview of Du Bois's major concepts and ethical ideas. Here, we will discuss his conception of race, the influential idea of the "Talented Tenth," and the intersections between race and class.

We then shift our focus to Kwame Anthony Appiah's Anti-Realist Alternative. As a contemporary philosopher, Appiah provides a counterpoint to Du Bois's views on race, offering a perspective that challenges our traditional understanding of racial identities. This section invites readers to critically engage with the differing philosophical perspectives on race and to consider how these views apply to current discussions on racial identity and racism.

Following our exploration of Du Bois and Appiah, we will delve into "Big Ideas: Martin Luther King on Civil Disobedience," studying the influential Civil Rights leader's philosophical ideas. We'll consider King's views on when civil disobedience is justified and the role of morality in the fight for social

justice. This section will provide readers with an understanding of how King's philosophical ideas guided his actions and fueled the Civil Rights Movement.

By the end of this chapter, you will have gained a deep understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of race, racism, and ethical responsibility. You'll be better equipped to engage critically with these topics, understand their historical and philosophical context, and consider their relevance to our current socio-political climate. These three thinkers—Du Bois, King, and Appiah—help provide us with the some of the necessary tools to question, understand, and challenge the deeply ingrained systems of race and racism that pervade our societies.

Reading: The Comet (By WEB De Bois)

Background. "The Comet" is a science fiction short story written by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1920. It explores the themes of race, gender, and class through the relationship between Jim Davis, a Black man, and Julia, a wealthy white woman, who find themselves as the sole survivors in New York after a comet hits the city and unleashes toxic gases.

The story is a significant contribution to a paradigm known as Afrofuturism, which reimagines the past and future of African Americans to revise the historical and diasporic narrative. In "The Comet," Du Bois situates Jim as the destiny of humankind, the man onto whom the responsibility to repopulate the earth is bestowed. This reimagining of the origin story, traditionally associated with Protestantism

and whiteness, allows Du Bois to reclaim the beginning of a narrative that otherwise dismisses and disregards the Black experience.

The story also explores themes of religion, with Jim and Julia likened to Adam and Eve figures, seemingly the only people left alive in the world. This religious imagery is further enhanced when Julia's father and fiancé show up, destroying her future with Jim and their plans to continue the line of the human race.

The class dynamics are evident in the story as well. Before the comet's impact, Jim is relegated to the task of going deep underground to retrieve records from the bank vault. After the disaster, he becomes the vital source of human life, highlighting the shift in his social status

Story Text:

He stood a moment on the steps of the bank, watching the human river that swirled down Broadway. Few noticed him. Few ever noticed him save in a way that stung. He was outside the world—"nothing!" as he said bitterly. Bits of the words of the walkers came to him.

"The comet?"

"The comet——"

Everybody was talking of it. Even the president, as he entered, smiled patronizingly at him, and asked:

"Well, Jim, are you scared?"

"No," said the messenger shortly.

"I thought we'd journeyed through the comet's tail once," broke in the junior clerk affably.

"Oh, that was Halley's," said the president; "this is a new comet, quite a stranger, they say—wonderful, wonderful! I saw it last night. Oh, by the way, Jim," turning again to the messenger, "I want you to go down into the lower vaults today."

The messenger followed the president silently. Of course, they wanted *him* to go down to the lower vaults. It was too dangerous for more valuable men. He smiled grimly and listened.

"Everything of value has been moved out since the water began to seep in," said the president; "but we miss two volumes of old records. Suppose you nose around down there,—it isn't very pleasant, I suppose."

"Not very," said the messenger, as he walked out.

"Well, Jim, the tail of the new comet hits us at noon this time," said the vault clerk, as he passed over the keys; but the messenger passed silently down the stairs. Down he went beneath Broadway, where the dim light filtered through the feet of hurrying men; down to the dark basement beneath; down into the blackness and silence beneath that lowest cavern. Here with his dark lantern he groped in the bowels of the earth, under the world.

He drew a long breath as he threw back the last great iron door and stepped into the fetid slime within. Here at last was peace, and he groped moodily forward. A great rat leaped past him and cobwebs crept across his face. He felt carefully around the room, shelf by shelf, on the muddied floor, and in crevice and corner. Nothing. Then he went back to the far end, where somehow the wall felt different. He sounded and pushed and pried. Nothing. He started away. Then something brought him back. He was sounding and working again when suddenly the whole black wall swung as on mighty hinges, and blackness yawned beyond. He peered in; it was evidently a secret vault—some hiding place of the old bank unknown in newer times. He entered hesitatingly. It was a long, narrow room with shelves, and

at the far end, an old iron chest. On a high shelf lay the two missing volumes of records, and others. He put them carefully aside and stepped to the chest. It was old, strong, and rusty. He looked at the vast and old-fashioned lock and flashed his light on the hinges. They were deeply incrusted with rust. Looking about, he found a bit of iron and began to pry. The rust had eaten a hundred years, and it had gone deep. Slowly, wearily, the old lid lifted, and with a last, low groan lay bare its treasure—and he saw the dull sheen of gold!

"Boom!"

A low, grinding, reverberating crash struck upon his ear. He started up and looked about. All was black and still. He groped for his light and swung it about him. Then he knew! The great stone door had swung to. He forgot the gold and looked death squarely in the face. Then with a sigh he went methodically to work. The cold sweat stood on his forehead; but he searched, pounded, pushed, and worked until after what seemed endless hours his hand struck a cold bit of metal and the great door swung again harshly on its hinges, and then, striking against something soft and heavy, stopped. He had just room to squeeze through. There lay the body of the vault clerk, cold and stiff. He stared at it, and then felt sick and nauseated. The air seemed unaccountably foul, with a strong, peculiar odor. He stepped forward, clutched at the air, and fell fainting across the corpse.

He awoke with a sense of horror, leaped from the body, and groped up the stairs, calling to the guard. The watchman sat as if asleep, with the gate swinging free. With one glance at him the messenger hurried up to the sub-vault. In vain he called to the guards. His voice echoed and re-echoed weirdly. Up into the great basement he rushed. Here another guard lay prostrate on his face, cold and still. A fear arose in the messenger's heart. He dashed up to the cellar floor, up into the bank. The stillness of death lay everywhere and everywhere bowed, bent, and stretched the silent forms of men. The messenger paused and glanced about. He was not a man easily moved; but the sight was appalling! "Robbery and murder," he whispered slowly to himself as he saw the twisted, oozing mouth of the president where he lay half-buried on his desk. Then a new thought seized him: If they found him here alone—with all this money and all these dead men—what would his life be worth? He glanced about, tiptoed cautiously to a side door, and again looked behind. Quietly he turned the latch and stepped out into Wall Street.

How silent the street was! Not a soul was stirring, and yet it was high-noon—Wall Street? Broadway? He glanced almost wildly up and down, then across the street, and as he looked, a sickening horror froze in his limbs. With a choking cry of utter fright he lunged, leaned giddily against the cold building, and stared helplessly at the sight.

In the great stone doorway a hundred men and women and children lay crushed and twisted and jammed, forced into that great, gaping doorway like refuse in a can—as if in one wild, frantic rush to safety, they had rushed and ground themselves to death. Slowly the messenger crept along the walls, wetting his parched mouth and trying to comprehend, stilling the tremor in his limbs and the rising terror in his heart. He met a business man, silk-hatted and frock-coated, who had crept, too, along that smooth wall and stood now stone dead with wonder written on his lips. The messenger turned his eyes hastily away and sought the curb. A woman leaned wearily against the signpost, her head bowed motionless on her lace and silken bosom. Before her stood a street car, silent, and within—but the messenger but glanced and hurried on. A grimy newsboy sat in the gutter with the "last edition" in his uplifted hand: "Danger!" screamed its black headlines. "Warnings wired around the world. The Comet's tail sweeps past us at noon. Deadly gases expected. Close doors and windows. Seek the cellar." The messenger read and staggered on. Far out from a window above, a girl lay with gasping face and

sleevelets on her arms. On a store step sat a little, sweet-faced girl looking upward toward the skies, and in the carriage by her lay—but the messenger looked no longer. The cords gave way—the terror burst in his veins, and with one great, gasping cry he sprang desperately forward and ran,—ran as only the frightened run, shrieking and fighting the air until with one last wail of pain he sank on the grass of Madison Square and lay prone and still.

When he rose, he gave no glance at the still and silent forms on the benches, but, going to a fountain, bathed his face; then hiding himself in a corner away from the drama of death, he quietly gripped himself and thought the thing through: The comet had swept the earth and this was the end. Was everybody dead? He must search and see.

He knew that he must steady himself and keep calm, or he would go insane. First he must go to a restaurant. He walked up Fifth Avenue to a famous hostelry and entered its gorgeous, ghost-haunted halls. He beat back the nausea, and, seizing a tray from dead hands, hurried into the street and ate ravenously, hiding to keep out the sights.

"Yesterday, they would not have served me," he whispered, as he forced the food down.

Then he started up the street,—looking, peering, telephoning, ringing alarms; silent, silent all. Was nobody—nobody—he dared not think the thought and hurried on.

Suddenly he stopped still. He had forgotten. My God! How could he have forgotten? He must rush to the subway—then he almost laughed. No—a car; if he could find a Ford. He saw one. Gently he lifted off its burden, and took his place on the seat. He tested the throttle. There was gas. He glided off, shivering, and drove up the street. Everywhere stood, leaned, lounged, and lay the dead, in grim and awful silence. On he ran past an automobile, wrecked and overturned; past another, filled with a gay party whose smiles yet lingered on their death-struck lips; on past crowds and groups of cars, pausing by dead policemen; at 42nd Street he had to detour to Park Avenue to avoid the dead congestion. He came back on Fifth Avenue at 57th and flew past the Plaza and by the park with its hushed babies and silent throng, until as he was rushing past 72nd Street he heard a sharp cry, and saw a living form leaning wildly out an upper window. He gasped. The human voice sounded in his ears like the voice of God.

"Hello—hello—help, in God's name!" wailed the woman. "There's a dead girl in here and a man and—and see yonder dead men lying in the street and dead horses—for the love of God go and bring the officers——" And the words trailed off into hysterical tears.

He wheeled the car in a sudden circle, running over the still body of a child and leaping on the curb. Then he rushed up the steps and tried the door and rang violently. There was a long pause, but at last the heavy door swung back. They stared a moment in silence. She had not noticed before that he was a Negro. He had not thought of her as white. She was a woman of perhaps twenty-five—rarely beautiful and richly gowned, with darkly-golden hair, and jewels. Yesterday, he thought with bitterness, she would scarcely have looked at him twice. He would have been dirt beneath her silken feet. She stared at him. Of all the sorts of men she had pictured as coming to her rescue she had not dreamed of one like him. Not that he was not human, but he dwelt in a world so far from hers, so infinitely far, that he seldom even entered her thought. Yet as she looked at him curiously he seemed quite commonplace and usual. He was a tall, dark workingman of the better class, with a sensitive face trained to stolidity and a poor man's clothes and hands. His face was soft and slow and his manner at once cold and nervous, like fires long banked, but not out.

So a moment each paused and gauged the other; then the thought of the dead world without rushed in and they started toward each other.

"What has happened?" she cried. "Tell me! Nothing stirs. All is silence! I see the dead strewn before my window as winnowed by the breath of God,—and see——" She dragged him through great, silken hangings to where, beneath the sheen of mahogany and silver, a little French maid lay stretched in quiet, everlasting sleep, and near her a butler lay prone in his livery.

The tears streamed down the woman's cheeks and she clung to his arm until the perfume of her breath swept his face and he felt the tremors racing through her body.

"I had been shut up in my dark room developing pictures of the comet which I took last night; when I came out—I saw the dead!

"What has happened?" she cried again.

He answered slowly:

"Something—comet or devil—swept across the earth this morning and—many are dead!"

"Many? Very many?"

"I have searched and I have seen no other living soul but you."

She gasped and they stared at each other.

"My—father!" she whispered.

"Where is he?"

"He started for the office."

"Where is it?"

"In the Metropolitan Tower."

"Leave a note for him here and come."

Then he stopped.

"No," he said firmly—"first, we must go—to Harlem."

"Harlem!" she cried. Then she understood. She tapped her foot at first impatiently. She looked back and shuddered. Then she came resolutely down the steps.

"There's a swifter car in the garage in the court," she said.

"I don't know how to drive it," he said.

"I do," she answered.

In ten minutes they were flying to Harlem on the wind. The Stutz rose and raced like an airplane. They took the turn at 110th Street on two wheels and slipped with a shriek into 135th.

He was gone but a moment. Then he returned, and his face was gray. She did not look, but said:

"You have lost—somebody?"

"I have lost—everybody," he said, simply—"unless——"

He ran back and was gone several minutes—hours they seemed to her.

"Everybody," he said, and he walked slowly back with something film-like in his hand which he stuffed into his pocket.

"I'm afraid I was selfish," he said. But already the car was moving toward the park among the dark and lined dead of Harlem—the brown, still faces, the knotted hands, the homely garments, and the silence—the wild and haunting silence. Out of the park, and down Fifth Avenue they whirled. In and out among the dead they slipped and quivered, needing no sound of bell or horn, until the great, square Metropolitan Tower hove in sight. Gently he laid the dead elevator boy aside; the car shot upward. The door of the office stood open. On the threshold lay the stenographer, and, staring at her, sat the dead clerk. The inner office was empty, but a note lay on the desk, folded and addressed but unsent:

Dear Daughter:

I've gone for a hundred mile spin in Fred's new Mercedes. Shall not be back before dinner. I'll bring Fred with me.

J.B.H.

"Come," she cried nervously. "We must search the city."

Up and down, over and across, back again—on went that ghostly search. Everywhere was silence and death—death and silence! They hunted from Madison Square to Spuyten Duyvel; they rushed across the Williamsburg Bridge; they swept over Brooklyn; from the Battery and Morningside Heights they scanned the river. Silence, silence everywhere, and no human sign. Haggard and bedraggled they puffed a third time slowly down Broadway, under the broiling sun, and at last stopped. He sniffed the air. An odor—a smell—and with the shifting breeze a sickening stench filled their nostrils and brought its awful warning. The girl settled back helplessly in her seat.

"What can we do?" she cried.

It was his turn now to take the lead, and he did it quickly.

"The long distance telephone—the telegraph and the cable—night rockets and then—flight!"

She looked at him now with strength and confidence. He did not look like men, as she had always pictured men; but he acted like one and she was content. In fifteen minutes they were at the central telephone exchange. As they came to the door he stepped quickly before her and pressed her gently back as he closed it. She heard him moving to and fro, and knew his burdens—the poor, little burdens he bore. When she entered, he was alone in the room. The grim switchboard flashed its metallic face in cryptic, sphinx-like immobility. She seated herself on a stool and donned the bright earpiece. She looked at the mouthpiece. She had never looked at one so closely before. It was wide and black, pimpled with usage; inert; dead; almost sarcastic in its unfeeling curves. It looked—she beat back the thought—but it looked,—it persisted in looking like—she turned her head and found herself alone. One moment she was terrified; then she thanked him silently for his delicacy and turned resolutely, with a quick intaking of breath.

"Hello!" she called in low tones. She was calling to the world. The world *must* answer. Would the world *answer*? Was the world——

Silence!

She had spoken too low.

"Hello!" she cried, full-voiced.

She listened. Silence! Her heart beat quickly. She cried in clear, distinct, loud tones: "Hello—hello—hello!"

What was that whirring? Surely—no—was it the click of a receiver?

She bent close, she moved the pegs in the holes, and called and called, until her voice rose almost to a shriek, and her heart hammered. It was as if she had heard the last flicker of creation, and the evil was silence. Her voice dropped to a sob. She sat stupidly staring into the black and sarcastic mouthpiece, and the thought came again. Hope lay dead within her. Yes, the cable and the rockets remained; but the world—she could not frame the thought or say the word. It was too mighty—too terrible! She turned toward the door with a new fear in her heart. For the first time she seemed to realize that she was alone in the world with a stranger, with something more than a stranger,—with a man alien in blood and culture—unknown, perhaps unknowable. It was awful! She must escape—she must fly; he must not see her again. Who knew what awful thoughts—

She gathered her silken skirts deftly about her young, smooth limbs—listened, and glided into a sidehall. A moment she shrank back: the hall lay filled with dead women; then she leaped to the

door and tore at it, with bleeding fingers, until it swung wide. She looked out. He was standing at the top of the alley,—silhouetted, tall and black, motionless. Was he looking at her or away? She did not know—she did not care. She simply leaped and ran—ran until she found herself alone amid the dead and the tall ramparts of towering buildings.

She stopped. She was alone. Alone! Alone on the streets—alone in the city—perhaps alone in the world! There crept in upon her the sense of deception—of creeping hands behind her back—of silent, moving things she could not see,—of voices hushed in fearsome conspiracy. She looked behind and sideways, started at strange sounds and heard still stranger, until every nerve within her stood sharp and quivering, stretched to scream at the barest touch. She whirled and flew back, whimpering like a child, until she found that narrow alley again and the dark, silent figure silhouetted at the top. She stopped and rested; then she walked silently toward him, looked at him timidly; but he said nothing as he handed her into the car. Her voice caught as she whispered:

"Not—that."

And he answered slowly: "No—not that!"

They climbed into the car. She bent forward on the wheel and sobbed, with great, dry, quivering sobs, as they flew toward the cable office on the east side, leaving the world of wealth and prosperity for the world of poverty and work. In the world behind them were death and silence, grave and grim, almost cynical, but always decent; here it was hideous. It clothed itself in every ghastly form of terror, struggle, hate, and suffering. It lay wreathed in crime and squalor, greed and lust. Only in its dread and awful silence was it like to death everywhere.

Yet as the two, flying and alone, looked upon the horror of the world, slowly, gradually, the sense of all-enveloping death deserted them. They seemed to move in a world silent and asleep,—not dead. They moved in quiet reverence, lest somehow they wake these sleeping forms who had, at last, found peace. They moved in some solemn, world-wide *Friedhof*, above which some mighty arm had waved its magic wand. All nature slept until—until, and quick with the same startling thought, they looked into each other's eyes—he, ashen, and she, crimson, with unspoken thought. To both, the vision of a mighty beauty—of vast, unspoken things, swelled in their souls; but they put it away.

Great, dark coils of wire came up from the earth and down from the sun and entered this low lair of witchery. The gathered lightnings of the world centered here, binding with beams of light the ends of the earth. The doors gaped on the gloom within. He paused on the threshold.

"Do you know the code?" she asked.

"I know the call for help—we used it formerly at the bank."

She hardly heard. She heard the lapping of the waters far below,—the dark and restless waters—the cold and luring waters, as they called. He stepped within. Slowly she walked to the wall, where the water called below, and stood and waited. Long she waited, and he did not come. Then with a start she saw him, too, standing beside the black waters. Slowly he removed his coat and stood there silently. She walked quickly to him and laid her hand on his arm. He did not start or look. The waters lapped on in luring, deadly rhythm. He pointed down to the waters, and said quietly:

"The world lies beneath the waters now—may I go?"

She looked into his stricken, tired face, and a great pity surged within her heart. She answered in a voice clear and calm, "No."

Upward they turned toward life again, and he seized the wheel. The world was darkening to twilight, and a great, gray pall was falling mercifully and gently on the sleeping dead. The ghastly glare of reality seemed replaced with the dream of some vast romance. The girl lay silently back, as the motor whizzed

along, and looked half-consciously for the elf-queen to wave life into this dead world again. She forgot to wonder at the quickness with which he had learned to drive her car. It seemed natural. And then as they whirled and swung into Madison Square and at the door of the Metropolitan Tower she gave a low cry, and her eyes were great! Perhaps she had seen the elf-queen?

The man led her to the elevator of the tower and deftly they ascended. In her father's office they gathered rugs and chairs, and he wrote a note and laid it on the desk; then they ascended to the roof and he made her comfortable. For a while she rested and sank to dreamy somnolence, watching the worlds above and wondering. Below lay the dark shadows of the city and afar was the shining of the sea. She glanced at him timidly as he set food before her and took a shawl and wound her in it, touching her reverently, yet tenderly. She looked up at him with thankfulness in her eyes, eating what he served. He watched the city. She watched him. He seemed very human,—very near now.

"Have you had to work hard?" she asked softly.

"Always," he said.

"I have always been idle," she said. "I was rich."

"I was poor," he almost echoed.

"The rich and the poor are met together," she began, and he finished:

"The Lord is the Maker of them all."

"Yes," she said slowly; "and how foolish our human distinctions seem—now," looking down to the great dead city stretched below, swimming in unlightened shadows.

"Yes—I was not—human, yesterday," he said.

She looked at him. "And your people were not my people," she said; "but today——" She paused. He was a man,—no more; but he was in some larger sense a gentleman,—sensitive, kindly, chivalrous, everything save his hands and—his face. Yet yesterday——

"Death, the leveler!" he muttered.

"And the revealer," she whispered gently, rising to her feet with great eyes. He turned away, and after fumbling a moment sent a rocket into the darkening air. It arose, shrieked, and flew up, a slim path of light, and scattering its stars abroad, dropped on the city below. She scarcely noticed it. A vision of the world had risen before her. Slowly the mighty prophecy of her destiny overwhelmed her. Above the dead past hovered the Angel of Annunciation. She was no mere woman. She was neither high nor low, white nor black, rich nor poor. She was primal woman; mighty mother of all men to come and Bride of Life. She looked upon the man beside her and forgot all else but his manhood, his strong, vigorous manhood—his sorrow and sacrifice. She saw him glorified. He was no longer a thing apart, a creature below, a strange outcast of another clime and blood, but her Brother Humanity incarnate, Son of God and great All-Father of the race to be.

He did not glimpse the glory in her eyes, but stood looking outward toward the sea and sending rocket after rocket into the unanswering darkness. Dark-purple clouds lay banked and billowed in the west. Behind them and all around, the heavens glowed in dim, weird radiance that suffused the darkening world and made almost a minor music. Suddenly, as though gathered back in some vast hand, the great cloud-curtain fell away. Low on the horizon lay a long, white star—mystic, wonderful! And from it fled upward to the pole, like some wan bridal veil, a pale, wide sheet of flame that lighted all the world and dimmed the stars.

In fascinated silence the man gazed at the heavens and dropped his rockets to the floor. Memories of memories stirred to life in the dead recesses of his mind. The shackles seemed to rattle and fall from his soul. Up from the crass and crushing and cringing of his caste leaped the lone majesty of kings long

dead. He arose within the shadows, tall, straight, and stern, with power in his eyes and ghostly scepters hovering to his grasp. It was as though some mighty Pharaoh lived again, or curled Assyrian lord. He turned and looked upon the lady, and found her gazing straight at him.

Silently, immovably, they saw each other face to face—eye to eye. Their souls lay naked to the night. It was not lust; it was not love—it was some vaster, mightier thing that needed neither touch of body nor thrill of soul. It was a thought divine, splendid.

Slowly, noiselessly, they moved toward each other—the heavens above, the seas around, the city grim and dead below. He loomed from out the velvet shadows vast and dark. Pearl-white and slender, she shone beneath the stars. She stretched her jeweled hands abroad. He lifted up his mighty arms, and they cried each to the other, almost with one voice, "The world is dead."

"Long live the——"

"Honk! Honk!" Hoarse and sharp the cry of a motor drifted clearly up from the silence below. They started backward with a cry and gazed upon each other with eyes that faltered and fell, with blood that boiled.

"Honk! Honk! Honk! Honk!" came the mad cry again, and almost from their feet a rocket blazed into the air and scattered its stars upon them. She covered her eyes with her hands, and her shoulders heaved. He dropped and bowed, groped blindly on his knees about the floor. A blue flame spluttered lazily after an age, and she heard the scream of an answering rocket as it flew.

Then they stood still as death, looking to opposite ends of the earth.

"Clang—crash—clang!"

The roar and ring of swift elevators shooting upward from below made the great tower tremble. A murmur and babel of voices swept in upon the night. All over the once dead city the lights blinked, flickered, and flamed; and then with a sudden clanging of doors the entrance to the platform was filled with men, and one with white and flying hair rushed to the girl and lifted her to his breast. "My daughter!" he sobbed.

Behind him hurried a younger, comelier man, carefully clad in motor costume, who bent above the girl with passionate solicitude and gazed into her staring eyes until they narrowed and dropped and her face flushed deeper and deeper crimson.

"Julia," he whispered; "my darling, I thought you were gone forever."

She looked up at him with strange, searching eyes.

"Fred," she murmured, almost vaguely, "is the world—gone?"

"Only New York," he answered; "it is terrible—awful! You know,—but you, how did you escape—how have you endured this horror? Are you well? Unharmed?"

"Unharmed!" she said.

"And this man here?" he asked, encircling her drooping form with one arm and turning toward the Negro. Suddenly he stiffened and his hand flew to his hip. "Why!" he snarled. "It's—a—n****—Julia! Has he—has he dared——"

She lifted her head and looked at her late companion curiously and then dropped her eyes with a sigh.

"He has dared—all, to rescue me," she said quietly, "and I—thank him—much." But she did not look at him again. As the couple turned away, the father drew a roll of bills from his pockets.

"Here, my good fellow," he said, thrusting the money into the man's hands, "take that,—what's your name?"

"Jim Davis," came the answer, hollow-voiced.

"Well, Jim, I thank you. I've always liked your people. If you ever want a job, call on me." And they were gone.

The crowd poured up and out of the elevators, talking and whispering.

"Who was it?"

"Are they alive?"

"How many?"

"Two!"

"Who was saved?"

"A white girl and a n*****—there she goes."

"A n*****? Where is he? Let's lynch the damned——"

"Shut up—he's all right-he saved her."

"Saved hell! He had no business——"

"Here he comes."

Into the glare of the electric lights the colored man moved slowly, with the eyes of those that walk and sleep.

"Well, what do you think of that?" cried a bystander; "of all New York, just a white girl and a n*****!"

The colored man heard nothing. He stood silently beneath the glare of the light, gazing at the money in his hand and shrinking as he gazed; slowly he put his other hand into his pocket and brought out a baby's filmy cap, and gazed again. A woman mounted to the platform and looked about, shading her eyes. She was brown, small, and toil-worn, and in one arm lay the corpse of a dark baby. The crowd parted and her eyes fell on the colored man; with a cry she tottered toward him.

"Jim!"

He whirled and, with a sob of joy, caught her in his arms.

Discussion Questions: The Comet

- How does "The Comet" use the science fiction genre to explore ethical questions related to race, gender, and class?
- In the story, Jim and Julia are initially the only survivors of a catastrophic event. How does this scenario challenge or reinforce societal norms and prejudices? What ethical questions does this raise about our societal structures?
- How does Du Bois use the concept of Afrofuturism to challenge the traditional narratives of origin stories? What ethical implications does this have for the representation of marginalized groups in literature?
- The story presents a situation where Jim and Julia, despite their racial and class differences, are forced to consider procreation for the survival of the human race. What ethical dilemmas does this situation present?
- How does the story explore the ethics of survival in a post-apocalyptic world? How do the characters' actions reflect on their moral compasses?
- When other survivors arrive, Julia leaves Jim to join them, and Jim is questioned about his behavior towards Julia. What does this say about the ethics of loyalty and trust in crisis situations?

- The story ends with Jim being rewarded with cash and being reunited with a Black woman. What ethical questions does this ending raise about the value of life, the commodification of heroism, and the dynamics of race and class in society?

Big Ideas: The Philosophy of W.E.B. Du Bois

William Edward Burghardt "W.E.B." Du Bois (1868 – 1963) was born on February 23, 1868, in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. The landscape of his childhood, particularly the discrimination and injustices he saw, deeply influenced his life's work. Du Bois was one of the most significant intellectuals in American history, a scholar, civil rights activist, sociologist, historian, and a key figure in the development of African-American studies. His work was profoundly impactful, laying the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement and influencing the study of race in America.

Education and Influences. Du Bois was the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1895. His educational journey also included Fisk University and the University of Berlin. His time in Berlin was particularly impactful as it exposed him to the social sciences and European intellectuals who would greatly influence his work.

Key influences on Du Bois included the German sociologist **Max Weber**, whose ideas about the relationship between society, economy, and politics would inform Du Bois's understanding of race relations. He was also inspired by the works of **Karl Marx** and **Frederick Engels**, incorporating their ideas about class struggle into his analysis of the "color line" in America. Another influence was **Frederick Douglass**, the legendary abolitionist, who ignited Du Bois's passion for African American civil rights. Douglass' emphasis on the importance of education for African Americans resonated with Du Bois, who would later advocate for equal educational opportunities.

Major Concepts and Ethical Ideas

Du Bois's work was centered on the study of race, racism, and society. He developed several seminal concepts that continue to influence the field of sociology and our understanding of racial disparities.

Double Consciousness is perhaps Du Bois's most famous concept, introduced in his seminal work, "The Souls of Black Folk" (1903). It describes the internal conflict experienced by subordinated or colonized groups in an oppressive society. In the context of African Americans, Du Bois stated they have a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." For example, an African American woman might see herself both as an American and as a person of African descent, and she must constantly navigate the societal tensions and prejudices associated with both identities.

The Veil. The concept of the **Veil** refers to the metaphorical barrier that separates African Americans from white Americans, limiting understanding and fostering stereotypes. The Veil signifies black peoples' struggle for recognition and equality in a society that often reduces them to racial stereotypes. For instance, an African American student in a predominantly white institution may find that his peers often perceive him through the Veil of racial bias, attributing his behavior to racial stereotypes rather than seeing him as an individual.

The Talented Tenth. In his essay "The Talented Tenth" (1903), Du Bois proposed that the top ten percent of African Americans should pursue higher education to develop leadership skills to guide the

rest of the black community towards social and economic equality. He argued that an educated elite could help lift all African Americans.

Du Bois's ethical ideas were rooted in his belief in human dignity, equality, and social justice. He championed the cause of **Civil Rights** and fought against racial discrimination. His views clashed with those of Booker T. Washington, who urged African Americans to accept segregation and disenfranchisement in exchange for economic opportunities. Du Bois, in contrast, argued for the necessity of political and civil rights, viewing these as inextricably linked with economic security. He was also one of the co-founders of the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** in 1909. As editor of the NAACP's journal, *The Crisis*, he used his platform to advocate for civil rights, condemn racial violence, and promote African American achievements.

What is Race?

W.E.B. Du Bois viewed race not merely as a biological category, but as a complex social construct that carries both physical and spiritual dimensions. This perspective offered a significant shift from the dominant racial theories of his time, which often emphasized biological determinism.

Social Construction of Race. Du Bois view argued for a **social constructionist** account of race. This means that it is not an inherent or fixed category but is formed and shaped by societal beliefs, attitudes, and structures. Du Bois argued that race, as a construct, is fluid, mutable, and contingent on historical, cultural, and social contexts. This perspective contrasts sharply with the notion of race as a rigid biological category, distinguished by innate, immutable physical characteristics. For DuBois, race was ultimately about shared history, language, culture, religion, etc. and not about superficial similarities (e.g., of skin color). The reason that things like skin color matter is because they affect how other people treat you.

Physical and Spiritual Groupings. Following the (incorrect!) science of his day, Du Bois proposed that humanity could be divided into three broad **physical groupings**: White, Negro, and Yellow, but he stressed that these divisions were not as important as the eight **spiritual groups** he identified: Teutonic, Slav, Latin, Hindu, Semitic, Mongolian, Negro, and Polynesian, with many subgroups and overlaps. He suggested that these spiritual groupings, reflecting shared culture and experiences, were far more significant in defining race than physical attributes. His specific proposals for groups (both physical and spiritual) were based on the existing social science of the day, and shouldn't be seen as "fixed." Instead, they are meant as "examples" to illustrate his idea that what makes a "race" has to do with culture, and not biology.

Consider, for example, the concept of "Blackness." For Du Bois, "Blackness" was not solely (or even mainly) about having a particular skin color or physical features. It also encompassed shared experiences, histories, and cultures that bound people of African descent together, irrespective of their individual ethnicities or nationalities.

Social Sciences vs Hard Sciences. Du Bois saw a clear distinction between the **social sciences** (such as sociology, history, and psychology) and the **hard sciences** (particularly biology) in their approach to understanding race. While hard sciences might focus on genetic or physiological differences, the social sciences, in Du Bois's view, should focus on the societal and cultural dimensions of race, such as shared histories, experiences, and social structures. The social sciences, he argued, offered a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of race that went beyond mere physical characteristics.

Kwame Anthony Appiah's Anti-Realist Alternative

The contemporary philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah has offered an influential critique of traditional concepts of race, including those of Du Bois. He rejected both the biological and social constructionist aspects of race, proposing an alternative perspective known as **racial skepticism** or **racial anti-realism**.

Appiah argued that the concept of race, whether defined biologically or sociologically, lacked coherence and validity. He contended that there were no clear, meaningful criteria for categorizing people into distinct races, either based on physical characteristics or cultural experiences.

Appiah held that racial categories were not real in the way they were commonly understood – they did not reflect fundamental biological or social realities. Instead, they were largely a product of human imagination and perception, shaped by historical and cultural factors. Thus, he proposed that we should abandon the concept of race as misleading and potentially harmful, given its history of misuse to justify discrimination and inequality.

Appiah's perspective can be illustrated by the example of colorism within racial groups. For instance, individuals within the African American community can vary greatly in skin tone. Despite sharing a "racial" identity, they might have vastly different experiences and treatment based on their skin color. This illustrates the ambiguity and subjectivity in racial categorizations, supporting Appiah's contention that race is a vague and flawed concept.

The Talented Tenth as "Philosopher Kings"

W.E.B. Du Bois was one of the most influential African American intellectuals of the 19th and 20th centuries. His political philosophy was shaped by various factors, including the ideas of notable thinkers like Plato and Marx, as well as his ongoing debates with contemporaries like Booker T. Washington. Du Bois's philosophy was not only theoretical but also practical, as he was actively engaged in civil rights issues throughout his life.

Du Bois was influenced by the philosophy of **Plato**, particularly the idea of an educated elite leading society. This is evident in Du Bois's concept of the **"Talented Tenth,"** a term he used to describe the proportion of the African American community that should receive a classical education and lead the race. He believed that this educated elite, like Plato's philosopher-kings, would possess the knowledge and moral character to guide their community.

In Plato's Republic, the philosopher-kings (or philosopher-rulers, as women might be leaders) are the elite group of individuals who are trained in philosophy and have the wisdom to rule the city-state. Du Bois believed that the Talented Tenth could play a similar role in leading the black race to freedom and equality. Both the Talented Tenth and the philosopher-kings are elite groups who are seen as having a special role to play in society. In Plato's cave metaphor, they are the ones who help "break the chains" of ignorance that enslave the masses.

However, it is important to note that Du Bois was not a slavish follower of Plato. He adapted and appropriated Platonic ideas in order to address the specific challenges facing African Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For example, Du Bois was critical of Plato's belief that the philosopher-kings should rule for life. He argued that the Talented Tenth should be accountable to the masses of black people, and that they should step down if they are no longer serving the interests of the race.

The Intersection Between Race and Class

Karl Marx also had a profound impact on Du Bois's political philosophy. Du Bois adopted Marx's critique of capitalism, viewing it as a system that perpetuates inequality. He believed that race and class were intertwined, and that racial justice could not be achieved without addressing economic disparity. This perspective informed his advocacy for economic justice for African Americans.

Karl Marx argued that society was divided into two main classes: the bourgeoisie, who owned the means of production, and the proletariat, who sold their labor to survive. This relationship was inherently exploitative and led to class struggle. Marx believed that this struggle was a driving force in history and could only be resolved through a workers' revolution leading to a classless society.

Du Bois adapted Marx's ideas and asserted that racial disparities in the United States were not solely due to skin color but were also intimately connected to economic and class disparities. He argued that the capitalist system in the United States had led to economic and racial exploitation of African Americans. This exploitation was evident in slavery, where African Americans were treated as commodities, and continued in the post-slavery era through practices such as sharecropping and discriminatory labor practices.

Du Bois contended that the capitalist system relied on the creation of a racial hierarchy to maintain the economic status quo. By pitting white and black workers against each other, the capitalist class could prevent the unity of the working class and continue its exploitation. This perspective led Du Bois to argue that the fight against racial discrimination needed to go hand in hand with the fight against economic inequality.

Du Bois's application of Marx's theories is most apparent in his book, **"Black Reconstruction in America" (1935)**. In this work, he reinterpreted the Reconstruction era, arguing that the period after the Civil War represented an unsuccessful attempt at a Marxist-style revolution. Du Bois suggested that newly emancipated slaves, as part of the proletariat, attempted to seize political and economic power but were eventually suppressed by the white bourgeoisie, who used racism as a tool to divide and conquer the working class. In essence, the failure of white and black workers to "unite" doomed them to failure.

More specifically, he argued that poor whites refused to cooperate with poor blacks because they received a **public and psychological wage from racism** (basically, they liked feeling like they were "above" some other group, even if they were objectively badly off). He describes it as follows:

> It must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent upon their votes, treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect upon their personal treatment and the deference shown them. White schoolhouses were the best in the community, and conspicuously placed, and they cost anywhere from twice to ten times as much per capita as the colored schools. The newspapers specialized on news that flattered the poor whites and almost utterly ignored the Negro except in crime and ridicule."

In the end, of course, the only people who *benefitted* from this sort of racism were the rich, property-

owning whites. (And he thinks this is a main reason why racism is so difficult to get rid of—there are rich, powerful people who benefit from it!).

Big Ideas: Martin Luther King on Civil Disobedience

"History is the long and tragic story of the fact that privileged groups seldom give up their privileges voluntarily. Individuals may see the moral light and voluntarily give up their unjust posture; but as Reinhold Niebuhr has reminded us, groups are more immoral than individuals…We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have never yet engaged in a direct-action movement that was "well timed" according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "wait." It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This "wait" has almost always meant "never."

The civil rights leader **Martin Luther King** was among those influenced by De Bois's work (on both a theoretical and practical level). In the 1963 (the same year that De Bois died), King authored his famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in which defended the use of **civil disobedience** when it came to discriminatory, race-based laws. King's essay also argues for a more general distinction between **legality** and **morality.** He notes that there are plenty of cases (e.g., Nazi Germany, Ancient Rome, Biblical stories, etc.) in which obeying a law could be immoral. He thinks that this can happen even in a democracy. That is, *the mere fact that a majority has voted for a law does not mean that you are morally obliged to obey that law.*

Background to King's Letter

While the history of race relations in the US (and especially in the states like Alabama, where King is writing from) is long and complex, King mentions a number of people and thinkers that are worth noting:

- **Colonial Times and Revolutionary War.** Slavery was an issue from the beginning of the United States (during the Revolutionary War, several British leaders promised to end slavery if it won, which may have helped convince Southern neutrals and loyalists to join the rebels). In the original drafts of the Declaration of Independence, **Thomas Jefferson** (who was himself a slaveholder) outlined a commitment to eliminating slavery in the US (in keeping with "all men are created equal"). This draft was vetoed by the Southern representatives in the Continental Congress. Jefferson apparently hoped that slavery would slowly die of its own accord, but it actually expanded between 1776 and 1861. The UK outlawed slavery in 1833.
- **The US Civil War (1861 to 1865)** led to the end of legalized slavery. After the war, the federal government engaged in a project of "Reconstruction" aimed at, among other things, establishing the rights of African Americans in the southern states. The **13th Amendment** (banning slavery), **14th amendment** (guaranteeing "due process" of law at the state and local level, and not just at the federal level), and **15th amendment** (guaranteeing people of all races the right to vote) were passed soon after the war. All of this was extremely unpopular among southern whites, however, and northern politicians eventually lost the

political will to enforce it. The infamous Supreme Court decision ***Plessy v Ferguson* (1896)** upheld laws instituting racial segregation, so long it was "separate but equal." Southern States implement **"Jim Crow" laws** that basically eliminated the ability of African Americans to vote or hold office. Again, the hope was that southern states would come to equality "on their own," but the decision effectively destroyed the political power of southern African Americans until 1964 (with the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Act).

- ***Brown v Board of Ed* (1954)** held that that state and local laws allowing racial segregation was "inherently unequal" and violated the 14^{th} amendment. It overturned Plessy v Fergusson. Many southern states resisted this ruling, sometimes violently. In Alabama (shortly after King's letter), the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) bombed a church, and killed four girls. The governor (and presidential candidate) **George Wallace** swore that he would support "segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever," and tried his best to block the desegregation of schools. President John F. Kennedy took control of the Alabama National Guard, and ordered it to help enforce desegregation. This is around the same time that King was arrested (in Alabama) for leading nonviolent protests aimed at ending state and city laws that were still in place.
- Note: For those who don't know, the **Ku Klux Klan** is a white supremacist organization founded just after the Civil War, which focused mainly on terrorizing African Americans (and later, immigrants, Catholics, Jews, and labor unionists). In 1963, it had a membership of maybe 30,000 people (so, it was big, but hardly a "majority"). King will argue that KKK simply isn't big enough to be blamed for the problems that confronted African Americans (and instead argues that the "white moderate" shares much of the blame).
- **Afterward.** King's actions in Birmingham (and the subsequent KKK violence) helped build national support for his cause. However, in November 1963, the JFK-supported **Civil Rights Act** was blocked by southern legislators, despite the fact that it had enough votes to pass. JFK was assassinated in Dallas, TX on Nov 22, 1963, and Lyndon Johnson managed to pass the law in 1964, along with the **Voting Rights Act** in 1965. King was assassinated in Memphis, TN on Apr 4, 1968, while supporting a group of union workers. In recent years, the Voting Rights Act has been weakened by a number of Supreme Court Decisions.

When is Civil Disobedience Justified?

Civil disobedience occurs when a person (a) knowingly breaks a law and (b) voluntary accepts the punishment for doing so because (c) he or she believes that the law is unjust. In his letter to the clergy, King proposes a set of criteria for determining whether a particular act of civil disobedience is morally justified:

- **Condition 1: The laws must, in fact, be unjust.** The people who wish to engage in civil disobedience must first provide evidence that the laws they wish to break are actually unjust. In the case of Birmingham (and Southern segregation more generally), evidence is provided that the current situation is manifestly unjust – there is violence against black people, biased law enforcement, and so on. Plus, there is all the harm that segregation itself causes

to both black children and adults.

- **Condition 2: There must be legitimate attempt to change the laws using legally allowed processes.** In a democratic society, one must make a legitimate attempt to change the unjust laws via the process that are provided for in the political/legal system. For example, one must attempt to field candidates in elections, to publish letters to the editor, to organize petition drives, etc. This requirement is fulfilled insofar as one tried to change the laws via these procedures, and one has no reasonable expectation that they will be changed in this way. In the case of Birmingham, the members of the black community had previously negotiated with owners of segregated businesses, participated in local elections, and done everything else that could be reasonably demanded. They even postponed their planned activity until after an election.
- **Condition 3: The group intending to break the laws must prepare through "self-purification."** In civil disobedience, the law-breaking act must of a certain type—only unjust laws (or unjustly applied laws) may be broken and the legal punishment proscribed for these transgressions must be accepted. The intent of breaking the laws must be to draw attention to their injustice (and shouldn't be "because it's fun" or "because I benefit from breaking the law"). "Self-purification" refers to focusing the intent of those who will engage in civil disobedience.
- **Condition 4: Direct action must be carried out appropriately.** If one goes through the above steps, one is justified in breaking a law provided that (a) the law is unjust, (b) one accepts the punishment for breaking the law, and (c) the intent of breaking the law is to help ensure that the law is changed.

The goal of civil disobedience is to change unjust laws. Civil disobedience does this by creating a "crisis", and forcing the community to choose between actively defending the law or changing it. The community no longer has the option of simply "doing nothing." King's defends civil disobedience as a "middle way" between the doing-nothing of the white moderates (and many clergy) and the militaristic black nationalism that had been defended by thinkers like the young **Malcolm X** (though Malcolm X's mature views are much closer to those of King).

One possible objection to civil disobedience might be as follows: *Civil disobedience harms lots of people, and helps no one. It harms those who are arrested for participating in it as well as lots of others (e.g., the white-owned businesses that were the sites of the protests). Surely nothing good can come of harming people.* **King's answer:** It's a fact about human psychology that people will stick with a status quo (even it is inferior to some proposed change) out of fear of the effort it will take to change it. Civil disobedience helps people act in their own long-term best interest (and the interest of justice) by creating immediate negative consequences to maintaining the status quo.

Discussion Questions

- Discuss the concept of "double consciousness" as introduced by W.E.B. Du Bois. How does this concept apply to contemporary racial and ethnic issues?
- What is Du Bois's concept of "The Veil," and how does it relate to modern discussions around implicit bias and systemic racism?

- Du Bois advocated for the education of the "Talented Tenth" as a means of racial uplift. Critically discuss this concept and consider its implications. How might such an idea be received in today's socio-political climate?
- Du Bois argued that race is a social construct, not a rigid biological category. How does this perspective align with or contradict current understandings of race?
- Kwame Anthony Appiah offers a critique of the concept of race. How do his views align with or contradict Du Bois's? What are the implications of Appiah's racial skepticism or anti-realism for racial justice movements today?
- Du Bois claimed that capitalist systems rely on the creation of a racial hierarchy to maintain the economic status quo. Discuss the relevance of this claim in today's economic and social contexts.
- What did Du Bois mean by the term "public and psychological wage" in the context of poor whites? How does this concept relate to current discussions about white privilege and racial disparities?

Glossary

Term	Definition
WEB Du Bois	A prominent American scholar, civil rights activist, and key figure in the development of African-American studies, known for his significant contributions to the study of race, racism, and society in America.
Double Consciousness	A concept introduced by Du Bois referring to the internal conflict experienced by marginalized groups in an oppressive society, where they perceive themselves both from their own perspective and through the lens of a society that views them with contempt and pity.
The Veil	A metaphorical barrier, as coined by Du Bois, that separates African Americans from white Americans, fostering stereotypes and limiting mutual understanding.
Public and Psychological Wage from Racism	A term used by Du Bois to denote the perceived societal benefits enjoyed by white individuals due to their racial status, such as public deference, lenient treatment by law enforcement, and better access to public amenities.
The Talented Tenth	A term coined by Du Bois proposing that the top ten percent of African Americans should pursue higher education and develop leadership skills to uplift the rest of the black community towards social and economic equality.
Black Reconstruction in America	A book by Du Bois that reinterprets the Reconstruction era post-Civil War, arguing that the period represented an unsuccessful attempt at a Marxist-style revolution by the black proletariat.
NAACP	An acronym for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a civil rights organization founded in 1909 to fight prejudice, lynching, and racial discrimination, and to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of minority group citizens.
Civil Rights	Rights that protect individuals' freedom from infringement by governments and private organizations, ensuring one's ability to participate in the civil and political life of society without discrimination or repression.
Social Constructionist (Race)	An approach that views race not as a biological or inherent category, but as a construct formed and shaped by societal beliefs, attitudes, and structures.
Social Sciences	Academic disciplines concerned with society and human behavior, including fields such as sociology, psychology, and history, which focus on societal and cultural dimensions of human life.
Hard Sciences	Disciplines that rely on empirical data, experimental methods, and quantifiable results, such as physics, chemistry, and biology, often distinguished by their ability to predict and explain natural phenomena.
Kwame Appiah	A contemporary philosopher known for his critique of traditional concepts of race and his proposition of racial skepticism or anti-realism, asserting that racial categories lack coherence and validity.
Racial Anti-Realism	A philosophical perspective, proposed by Kwame Anthony Appiah, that rejects the concept of race as representing fundamental biological or social realities, viewing racial categories as a product of human imagination and perception.
Martin Luther King	A pivotal figure in the American Civil Rights Movement known for his advocacy of nonviolent resistance to achieve racial equality.

Letter from Birmingham Jail	A letter written by Martin Luther King Jr. while incarcerated in Birmingham, Alabama, in which he argues that individuals have the moral duty to disobey unjust laws.
Civil Disobedience	A nonviolent form of protest or resistance to government laws or commands that are viewed as unjust, often involving refusal to obey certain laws as a form of political activism.
Jim Crow	A term referring to state and local laws enforced in the United States between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which promoted racial segregation and disenfranchisement of African Americans.
Plessy vs. Ferguson	A landmark 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision that upheld racial segregation under the "separate but equal" doctrine, effectively legitimizing Jim Crow laws.
Brown vs Board of Ed	A landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court case that declared state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional, overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine from Plessy v. Ferguson.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013;

King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)

11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)

12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

11.

CHAPTER 11: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

> "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise." — Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

In this chapter, we'll be exploring the vast and increasingly important field of environmental ethics. As our planet faces mounting ecological challenges, understanding and applying environmental ethics is crucial. By delving into ethical theories and grappling with moral dilemmas presented by climate change, you will be better equipped to critically engage with questions about our relationship with and responsibility towards the natural world.

Our exploration begins with a story, "The Silent Singer: Strings of Eco-Ethics". This tale, set in the ancient kingdom of Aksum, introduces us to Tafari, a musician whose voice seemingly resonates with the Earth itself. As Tafari observes changes in his beloved homeland, he grapples with questions of balance, harmony, and responsibility. This narrative provides a compelling entry point for our examination of environmental ethics, embodying central questions and dilemmas in a relatable, human story.

We will then delve into the core theoretical aspects of environmental ethics. You'll get an overview of the main schools of thought in this field, from anthropocentrism—which views humans as the central factor in considerations of right and wrong—through biocentrism, which extends inherent value to all living things, to ecocentrism and deep ecology, which view ecosystems and the natural world as inherently valuable. We also touch on ecofeminism and social ecology, examining how social structures and inequality intersect with environmental issues.

Next, we zoom in on one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time: climate change. You'll have a chance to reflect on the ethical dimensions of this global crisis, from the unequal impacts of climate change across different communities to the moral quandaries involved in potential responses. By situating climate change within an ethical framework, we can better understand the stakes involved and the imperative for action.

Story: The Silent Singer: Strings of Eco-Ethics

In the vibrant kingdom of Aksum, Tafari, a musician of unmatched talent, weaves stories of love, joy, and sorrow through his enchanting voice. His songs echo through the crowded markets, sail over the clay rooftops, and drift into the imperial court, providing both comfort and delight to listeners. His voice is his identity, a resonant testament to his spirit.

Tafari shares his life's journey with his closest friend, Zenebe, a skilled lyre player, and his beloved Selamawit, who cherishes his melodies more than anyone else. Tafari's music strengthens their bond, his voice serving as a conduit for their shared experiences and dreams.

However, a disquieting shadow creeps over the bountiful kingdom of Aksum. The vibrant fields are fading under the relentless sun, and the mighty Blue Nile slows to a languid crawl. The bustling market's lively exchanges are replaced with whispers of worry, and the once thriving kingdom is held in the grasp of unease. As Aksum grapples with the specter of drought, Tafari feels an ever-growing need to restore balance to his cherished home.

One day, a blind sage, drawn by Tafari's melodies, arrives in Aksum. The arrival of a stranger in Aksum was always a cause for intrigue, but this was no ordinary stranger. This was a sage, an ancient man whose eyes had long since clouded over, but whose wisdom was as clear as a summer's day. He introduced himself as Eyoel, a traveler of far-off lands and a seeker of ancient truths. He'd been drawn to Aksum by Tafari's enchanting voice, a sound he claimed resonated with the heartbeat of the Earth itself.

One evening, under the glow of the moon, Eyoel addressed the people of Aksum. "In my youth," he began, his voice a whispering wind, "I roamed our vast Mother Earth, not just to explore her physical beauty, but to understand her spirit. From the snow-capped mountains to the endless deserts, from the depths of the oceans to the heart of the rainforests, I have ventured far and wide, searching for meaning and balance."

He spoke about the philosophy he had learned and embraced during his travels – Deep Ecology. "All life," he said, his voice resonating in the silent night, "is bound by a complex web of interrelationships. Every creature, every plant, every stone, even the air we breathe, the water we drink – we are all interconnected. We are part of an intricate, balanced network where every component is of intrinsic value."

He let his words sink in before he continued, "Our actions have disrupted this balance. We have taken more than we need, and our Mother Earth is suffering, as is evident in our dying fields and the slowing Nile." His gaze then shifted to Tafari, "We must restore this balance. It's not just an obligation; it's a path to survival."

Eyoel then introduced the lore of the Harp of The Elements. He spoke of its mystical power to control the elements and of its hidden location deep within the Danakil Desert. "The harp could bring balance back to our environment," he said, "but to find and use it would require great courage. It will demand a cost, one not easily paid."

His message sparked hope and fear in the hearts of the listeners. Tafari, inspired by Eyoel's words and touched by the visible distress of his people, decided to embark on the dangerous quest. By dawn, he set out to find the harp, marking the beginning of a journey that wasn't merely physical but also deeply philosophical. As Tafari ventured into the unknown, he would grapple with the teachings of Deep Ecology and the nature of sacrifice, all for the sake of his kingdom's survival.

The Snake

As Tafari ventured into the heart of the Danakil Desert, the harsh sun above and the scorching sands below tested his resolve. One afternoon, a rustle in the sparse shrubs caught his attention. Before him lay a snake, its scales shimmering with an iridescence that seemed almost magical under the sunlight.

Startled and sensing danger, Tafari reached for a stone, intending to kill the snake. As he lunged forward, the snake bit him, releasing a venom that sent him spiraling into a dream-like state.

In this dream state, Tafari found himself face-to-face with the snake, now towering over him and possessing the ability to speak. "Why did you seek to kill me, Tafari?" The snake questioned with a hiss. Her voice held a wisdom and gravity that belied her physical form. "Did you ever consider the moral implications of your action?" The snake, her scales shimmering with an unearthly glow, began to elaborate on her philosophy of utilitarianism.

"As a utilitarian," she began, her voice a hiss that seemed to echo in the limitless desert, "I believe that the rightness or wrongness of an action is determined by its capacity to maximize overall happiness and reduce suffering. Every sentient being is capable of experiencing pleasure and pain. These experiences, Tafari, have intrinsic value, regardless of the being who experiences them."

She explained further, "A human's pleasure or pain isn't inherently more valuable than a snake's, or a gazelle's, or a bird's. The happiness and suffering of each creature should be taken into account equally. This challenges the anthropocentric view that places humans at the center of moral concern, often at the expense of non-human creatures."

Moving on to the complexity of predator-prey relationships, the snake drew a clear distinction between her utilitarian view and Deep Ecology's principles. "The predator-prey dynamic, as cruel as it might seem, is integral to maintaining the balance of an ecosystem. As a utilitarian, the suffering of the prey is a moral concern, which contrasts with the viewpoint of Deep Ecology."

She continued, "Deep Ecology values all entities within an ecosystem, including predators. It considers the survival and flourishing of the entire ecosystem as having intrinsic value. But this can lead to a dilemma: to intervene or not in the predator-prey dynamic. While intervening may reduce the suffering of prey, it could disrupt the ecosystem's balance, thus conflicting with the principles of Deep Ecology."

As the snake concluded her discourse, Tafari was left in silent contemplation. His preconceived notions of ethics and morality were being challenged, deepening his understanding of both utilitarianism and Deep Ecology. He began to appreciate the complexities and nuances of these philosophies, and how they played out in the world's interconnected web of life. This revelation, born out of a venom-induced dream, would profoundly shape his quest and his relationship with the world around him.

The Oasis

After recovering from the magical snakebite and bidding farewell to the wise snake, Tafari journeyed deeper into the Danakil Desert. Days of relentless sun and sand eventually led him to a miraculous sight—an oasis, a sanctuary of life amidst the harsh desert. Overwhelmed with relief and thirst, Tafari rushed to the water's edge and drank deeply.

Suddenly, he felt a profound shift within himself. His vision blurred, his body contorted, and when he opened his eyes, he found himself fluttering above the oasis as a vibrant Kingfisher. This was no ordinary oasis; its waters had the power to shape-shift whoever drank from it into a creature that belonged there.

As a Kingfisher, Tafari felt the hot winds, harsher than ever due to the changing climate, disrupt his

flight patterns. He experienced how the depleting fish population, a consequence of warming waters, affected his food availability.

Compelled to explore further, Tafari drank from the oasis again, shape-shifting into a desert fox. The warming climate had extended daylight hours, making the surface too hot to traverse and hunt for long periods. The scarcity of prey had led to fierce competition, threatening his survival.

Each subsequent drink from the oasis transformed Tafari into another creature—a turtle, an ibex, a date palm—and with each transformation, he felt firsthand the effects of climate change. The diminishing flora meant less food and shade for the animals. The altering rain patterns affected the growth cycles of plants. Each creature and plant's struggle was unique yet interconnected, painting a vivid picture of a suffering ecosystem.

These experiences challenged Tafari's understanding of his own species' role in the ecosystem's plight. Humans, too, were a part of this interconnected web, their actions significantly impacting all life forms. The rising temperatures, the changing weather patterns, were all consequences of their disregard for the balance of nature.

Finally, after living through the perspectives of various beings, Tafari returned to his human form. Sitting by the oasis, he reflected on his transformative journey, reminded of the teachings of Deep Ecology—each organism, each entity, whether big or small, has an intrinsic value and plays a crucial role in maintaining the ecosystem's harmony.

His understanding of Deep Ecology deepened, no longer limited to philosophical musings but reinforced by lived experiences. His resolve to retrieve the Harp of The Elements and restore balance to Aksum's environment solidified, he ventured forth from the oasis, carrying with him the echo of each creature's struggle in his heart.

Three Dreams

Upon leaving the transformative oasis, Tafari found himself confronted by a series of vivid dreams. Each night, the spirit of an ancestor visited him, offering lessons that bound the threads of historical injustices to current ecological predicaments.

On the first night, Tafari was visited by his great-grandfather, an old man burdened by the memories of slavery. He spoke of chains, whips, and the cruel trade that tore families apart, replacing human dignity with economic gain. He explained the principles of social ecology, drawing parallels between the slavery system and environmental exploitation. "Just as we were ripped from our homes and forced into servitude, the Earth too is pillaged and plundered for resources," he said. "The inequality and domination intrinsic to slavery echo in our treatment of nature."

The second night brought Tafari's grandmother to his dreamscape. She had been a bold woman,

an activist fighting for women's suffrage and against the colonial powers that saw Africans as lesser beings, even while struggling with own societies' gender-based norms. With passion in her voice, she spoke of ecofeminism, describing how the oppression she and other women faced was deeply intertwined with ecological issues. "Women have long been viewed us as exotic, untamed, much like they viewed our lands. We were seen as entities to be controlled, dominated, much like the nature around us. They stripped us of our rights, just as they stripped our lands of its resources."

On the third night, Tafari's dream was visited by his great-uncle, a man who had been part of the independence movement. He talked about the long-lasting effects of colonial rule, how the colonizers had not only taken away their resources and autonomy but had also imposed their societal structures and economic models, fostering a disconnect from their traditional practices that respected nature. He spoke about the principles of climate justice, emphasizing the responsibility of historically colonizing nations in driving climate change and the disproportionate effects on countries like theirs.

Each dream left Tafari with a profound understanding of how historical injustices and societal structures were entwined with the ecological crisis. The ancestral wisdom helped him see his quest not just as a struggle for ecological balance but also as a fight against the injustices mirrored in their relationship with the environment. With newfound determination and a broader perspective on his mission, Tafari pressed onwards to find the Harp of The Elements.

The Cave of Whispers

Tafari, after enduring a rigorous journey of discovery, finally found himself at the entrance of the Cave of Whispers, where the Harp of The Elements lay. The Oracle, bathed in a soft ethereal glow, awaited him within the cave, her presence exuding ancient wisdom. She was his final test before he could claim the harp.

"You seek the Harp," she intoned, her voice carrying the weight of centuries. "But it will only belong to the one who can grasp the complexities of environmental ethics."

Tafari started explaining his lessons from the journey, his understanding of deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism, and animal ethics. However, the Oracle was not satisfied. "Consider this, Tafari. In the real world, these doctrines often clash. For instance, in managing a national park, deep ecology would advocate for non-intervention, allowing natural predator-prey dynamics to continue, but animal ethics might argue for the protection of a threatened species within the park. How do you balance such conflicts?"

Caught off-guard, Tafari stammered, attempting to retreat into generalities about the harmony of nature. But the Oracle quickly countered, "Your words, while poetic, lack practical guidance. They don't provide a way to weigh these conflicting interests."

Tafari reflected on the Oracle's words. Her challenge was to defend the pluralistic approach in environmental ethics – to reconcile the existence of multiple, often conflicting perspectives and arrive at pragmatic decisions.

Encouraged by this realization, Tafari offered his thoughts. He discussed a scenario of human-animal conflict where expanding human settlements encroached on wild habitats. "Here, the human need for space and resources is at odds with animal ethics. Yet, solutions could include sustainable urban planning and setting aside protected areas, thereby balancing human well-being and animal rights."

He mentioned another case where industrial development threatened a local ecosystem, weighing economic growth against environmental preservation. "A potential resolution could involve clean technology and rigorous environmental impact assessments, ensuring that human progress doesn't come at the cost of environmental degradation."

Addressing the conflict between individual animals and species, he shared, "In the case of invasive species, individual animal ethics might argue against killing the invaders, but from a species perspective, it could be necessary to protect local biodiversity. This dilemma could be approached by exploring humane methods of control and focusing on preventing such invasions."

With each example, Tafari acknowledged the inherent complexities, accepting that decisions often involved intricate negotiations to balance various ethical perspectives. He talked about the importance of considering historical injustices, the needs of local communities, and fair negotiations in the decision-making process.

His discourse with the Oracle, dotted with concrete examples, refined Tafari's understanding of environmental ethics. He began to appreciate the pluralistic approach, demonstrating his readiness to take responsibility for the Harp of The Elements. His thoughts were no longer a loosely connected constellation of philosophies but a complex and nuanced understanding of environmental ethics.

The Harp of Elements

When Tafari had satisfactorily defended the complexities of environmental ethics, the Oracle gestured him towards the Harp of The Elements. As he approached it, a sense of awe washed over him. The harp was beautifully crafted, its body carved from ancient wood, strings shimmering in the dim cave light.

As his fingers brushed over the strings, a sudden understanding flooded him. He would have to sacrifice his voice, his most cherished ability, to awaken the power of the harp. His heart wrenched at the thought of never singing again, of never expressing his soul through melody. The cost was high, much higher than he had imagined.

In this moment of trepidation, he recalled the snake's lesson on weighing pains and pleasures, of considering the welfare of all beings, not just humans. He remembered the oasis' teaching of interconnectedness, of each component's significance in the ecosystem. He heard again the words of his ancestors echoing the themes of social and climate justice, and the Oracle's insistence on the pluralistic approach in environmental ethics.

The magnitude of his task began to dawn on him; he was not just a lover of music but a custodian of Aksum's environment. His passion for music had led him here, but his newfound passion for his land and people, for a world in balance, was what would guide him forward.

With a deep breath, Tafari accepted his sacrifice. He touched the strings of the harp, his heart beating in rhythm with the silent song of his soul. And then, with a strength he didn't know he possessed, he played. The cave reverberated with the music, a melody that resonated with the cries of the earth, the pleas of the animals, and the hopes of his people.

As he emerged from the cave, harp in hand, his voice was silent, but his spirit was louder than ever. He journeyed back to Zenebe and Selmawit, his heart full of sorrow for the personal loss, yet brimming with determination for the arduous task ahead.

Tafari's return was met with mixed emotions. His companions wept for his lost voice but stood proud of the sacrifice he had made for their land. Tafari may have been voiceless, but the harp spoke, its music echoing the promise of change and balance, a testament to a lover who had sacrificed for his deepest passion—his land, his people, and the intricate web of life they were part of.

Discussion Questions: The Harp of the Elements

- Discuss the concept of sacrifice as it is portrayed in the story. How does Tafari's personal

sacrifice compare to the societal sacrifices needed to address climate change?

- Examine the different schools of environmental ethics introduced in the story – deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism, utilitarianism, and pluralism. How does each perspective influence Tafari's understanding of his quest?
- How does Tafari's transformation throughout the story symbolize the collective shift in mindset needed to address climate change and environmental injustices?
- How does the narrative portray the intersection of historical, social, and ecological injustices? Can you provide other real-world examples where these issues intersect?
- Discuss the role of animals in the narrative. How does the snake's argument for utilitarianism shape Tafari's understanding of the moral status of animals?
- How is the idea of interconnectedness emphasized in the story? Discuss the role of this concept in both deep ecology and Tafari's personal journey.
- Analyze the Oracle's challenge to Tafari about balancing conflicting ethical viewpoints. Can you think of current environmental issues that require such balancing of interests?
- Tafari's voice was central to his identity, yet he chose to sacrifice it for the greater good. Discuss the symbolism and significance of this sacrifice in the context of climate action.
- Discuss how the story represents the idea of pluralism in environmental ethics. How does Tafari's final conversation with the Oracle highlight the importance of this idea?
- The story frequently refers to historical injustices and their connection to the current ecological crisis. How can understanding this connection help in devising more just and effective climate solutions?

Big ideas: Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics is a branch of ethics that studies the relationship of human beings to, and also the value and moral status of, the environment and its non-human contents. It emerged as a new sub-discipline of philosophy in the 1970s. Before its advent, the focus of ethical discussions was primarily on human-human interactions, with a significant emphasis on questions of rights, obligations, happiness, and justice.

The advent of environmental ethics heralded a paradigm shift, expanding ethical consideration beyond our fellow humans to include non-human entities in the natural world, like animals, plants, species, ecosystems, and even the planet itself. This shift came about largely due to a growing awareness of the human impact on the environment, spurred by events such as the publication of **Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring"** in 1962, which exposed the devastating effects of pesticides on bird populations. Carson's work catalyzed an environmental movement that eventually led to the establishment of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Environmental ethics intersects with other ethical theories by prompting us to question our moral obligations not just to other people, but also to the non-human world. For example, consider how "traditional" ethical theories might relate to issues of the environment/climate:

- Consequentialist theories, such as utilitarianism, can be extended to consider the

environmental consequences of our actions. Does the greatest good for the greatest number include preserving habitats for future generations? How do we account for the wellbeing of animals or ecosystems?

- Deontological theories, which focus on duty and rights, also come into play. Do we have a duty to protect the environment, irrespective of the benefits it may bring to us? Do non-human entities possess intrinsic rights? If so, what might these rights be and how should they influence our actions?
- Finally, virtue ethics can provide a useful framework in environmental ethics. What virtues should we cultivate in relation to the environment, such as respect for nature, humility, and restraint?

Environmental ethics introduces us to a variety of novel perspectives that expand, challenge, and deepen traditional ethical thinking. It invites us to consider anthropocentrism, which places humans at the center of ethical concern, but also to venture into new territories of ethical consideration, such as biocentrism (life-centered), ecocentrism (ecosystem-centered), and other perspectives like deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism, indigenous perspectives, technocentrism, animal rights perspective, and the rights of nature.

These perspectives inform and shape environmental policy, laws, and the actions of individuals and organizations. They influence how we respond to global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, pollution, and other environmental crises. As we delve deeper into these perspectives, we will examine the principles, impacts, and criticisms associated with each one, and explore how they connect to the ethical theories that have been previously studied. This journey into the heart of environmental ethics will illuminate our relationship with the non-human world, shedding light on the responsibilities and roles we assume within the intricate web of life.

Anthropocentrism

Anthropocentrism, a foundational concept in environmental ethics, originates from the Greek words ‘anthropos’ (human) and ‘kentron’ (center). As its etymology suggests, anthropocentrism is a human-centered view of the world where humans are considered the most significant entities in the universe. This worldview frames all other entities, including animals, plants, and the entire environment, in relation to their utility or value to humans.

One of the earliest proponents of anthropocentrism was **Aristotle,** an ancient Greek philosopher, who proposed a **scala naturae**, or a hierarchy of life, with humans at the top. He argued that because humans possess rationality—a quality that he believed other creatures lacked—they were superior to all other beings. The philosophical underpinnings of anthropocentrism were further solidified in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition of ethics. The book of Genesis in the Bible posits that humans are made in God’s image and have dominion over all living creatures and the Earth. At least historically, this has often been interpreted as a mandate for human superiority and dominion, though many modern theologians argue for a stewardship interpretation that calls for responsible care for creation.

Thomas Aquinas, a prominent medieval Christian philosopher, fused Aristotle’s ideas with Christian thought, maintaining that non-human animals existed solely to serve humans. He proposed that,

because animals lacked rational souls, they were not part of the **moral community** (the set of beings that "matter morally") and, therefore, humans were not morally obliged to them.

This anthropocentric perspective has been significant not only in Western thought but also in several non-Western philosophies and religions. For instance, in Confucianism, an influential philosophy in East Asia, humans are perceived as the center of a moral universe, with a clear hierarchy established between humans and nature. The Confucian worldview encourages humans to transform and utilize nature for their betterment. Again, just as in Christianity, there are other thinkers in the Confucian tradition who have emphasized humanity's duties toward nature.

Debates about anthropocentrism can be found in many other non-Western philosophies. In some cases, such as in certain indigenous traditions (Native American spirituality, Shino, Taoism) or in many sects like Buddhism, more biocentric or ecocentric worldviews have prevailed. However, it is important not to oversimplify—historically, nearly every religion/philosophy has its fair share of people who acted "anthropocentrically", and a fair share of those who did not.

Anthropocentrism has greatly influenced environmental policy and attitudes toward nature. It often underlies exploitative attitudes and actions towards the environment, viewing it merely as a resource to be used for human benefit. This has led to widespread environmental degradation, including deforestation, species extinction, and climate change. However, many philosophers, religious leaders, and ethicists have critiqued anthropocentrism. They argue that this human-centered perspective is both ethically flawed and ecologically unsustainable, asserting that other life forms and ecosystems have intrinsic value beyond their utility to humans. These critiques form the basis of other perspectives in environmental ethics, such as biocentrism, ecocentrism, and deep ecology, which we will explore in subsequent sections.

Biocentrism

Biocentrism, also known as life-centered ethics, is a moral perspective that extends inherent value to all living beings regardless of their utility to human needs. This ethical perspective contrasts with anthropocentrism, which values the environment based on its usefulness to human beings.

Biocentrism in its modern form owes much to the work of **Albert Schweitzer**, a theologian, philosopher, and physician who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. Schweitzer's principle of "**Reverence for Life**" asserts that all life—human and non-human—has value and should be respected. He believed that humans should live in ways that affirm and sustain the complex web of lif**e**, emphasizing compassion and care for all living entities. **Paul Taylor**, another prominent figure in biocentrism, elaborated on Schweitzer's ideas in his influential work "Respect for Nature" (1986). Taylor suggested that every being has a **'good of its own'**, which should be respected, and he proposed a biocentric equality principle, stating that all organisms, as members of the Earth's community of life, are to be considered morally equal.

One vivid example of biocentric thinking can be seen in the **Endangered Species Act** in the U.S., where the protection of species is justified not just based on their utility to humans but their inherent right to exist. The Act, with its intention to preserve biodiversity, reflects the acknowledgement of intrinsic value in all forms of life, even those that might seem insignificant or detrimental from an anthropocentric viewpoint, such as certain insects or predators.

However, the application of biocentric principles often brings complex dilemmas. For instance, how do we navigate situations where the interests of different life forms conflict? If a certain insect species

is causing significant crop damage, resulting in human starvation, do we still uphold the principle of biocentric equality?

Moreover, critics often question the assignment of equal moral consideration to all life forms. Is it reasonable, critics ask, to equate the moral value of a human with that of a bacterium? Also, some argue that biocentrism could lead to inaction or paralysis because any human activity invariably harms some life forms, leading to a sort of "lifeboat" dilemma.

Despite these challenges, biocentrism provides a critical counterpoint to anthropocentric views. By acknowledging the inherent value of all life, biocentrism pushes us to reconsider and reform our relationships with the non-human world, encouraging attitudes and practices that respect and sustain the intricate web of life on Earth.

Ecocentrism and Deep Ecology

Ecocentrism and Deep Ecology are both environmental ethical perspectives that challenge anthropocentrism and expand the circle of moral concern to encompass ecosystems and the planet itself. Both perspectives argue for the intrinsic value of nature, independent of its utility to human beings. However, they differ in scope and emphasis, with Deep Ecology calling for more profound societal and philosophical changes.

Ecocentrism, as an ethical perspective, asserts that ecosystems and their constituent parts—both living and non-living—have moral value. The concept is grounded in the belief that the Earth's ecosystems are complex, interconnected webs that function as holistic entities. **Aldo Leopold**, often credited with articulating the ecocentric worldview, promoted a "**Land Ethic**" that saw humans as members of the same biotic community, advocating for actions that preserve the "integrity, stability, and beauty" of that community.

Deep Ecology, founded by **Arne Næss**, also argues for the intrinsic value of all life, but it places greater emphasis on radical societal transformation. It contrasts itself with "shallow" ecology, which Næss considered a short-term, anthropocentric approach focused on environmental management for human welfare. Instead, Deep Ecology calls for deeper self-realization of our connection with the planet, promoting changes in consciousness that recognize the inherent worth of all life forms and ecosystems.

Both perspectives can be seen influencing real-world environmental policy and conservation efforts. For instance, the designation of large protected areas, such as national parks or marine reserves, embodies an ecocentric or deep ecological viewpoint, recognizing the intrinsic value of these places beyond their utility for human recreation or resource extraction. The preservation of the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, for example, can be seen as a manifestation of these perspectives, preserving an entire ecosystem not only for its biodiversity but also for its intrinsic value.

Both ecocentrism and Deep Ecology have faced criticisms. Detractors argue that these perspectives can sometimes downplay individual welfare (including both human and animal) in favor of the larger ecosystem, leading to potential ethical conflicts. For example, predator reintroduction programs—while valuable for restoring ecosystem health—can result in suffering for individual prey animals. Critics also question the practicality of implementing deep ecological principles, given their call for profound societal changes.

Despite these challenges, ecocentrism and Deep Ecology represent pivotal shifts in environmental ethics. They invite us to consider the moral value of nature in its own right and to see ourselves as

interconnected parts of a complex and intricately balanced global ecosystem. These perspectives are particularly relevant today, as we grapple with global challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental degradation.

Ecofeminism and Social Ecology

Ecofeminism and Social Ecology are two perspectives that connect social issues, particularly gender and societal hierarchy, with environmental concerns. Both assert that environmental degradation is closely linked to social structures and injustices, although they emphasize different aspects of this relationship.

Ecofeminism emerged in the late 20th century as a response to perceived androcentric (male-centered) biases in environmental thinking and policy. Ecofeminists argue that the domination and exploitation of nature in many societies parallels the oppression of women, both stemming from patriarchal structures that value masculine traits like control and domination while devaluing feminine traits like nurturing and cooperation. One of the leading figures in ecofeminism**,** the Indian thinker **Vandana Shiva**, has argued that a more feminine approach to nature—emphasizing care, respect, and symbiosis—could help remedy environmental degradation. She has also highlighted the critical roles that women play in many societies as custodians of biodiversity and traditional ecological knowledge.

Ecofeminism can be seen in action in movements such as the Chipko Movement in India, where women in rural communities physically embraced trees to prevent their felling. It has also informed campaigns against genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and patents on life forms, with activists arguing that such practices represent an unjust 'colonization' of life by powerful corporations.

Social Ecology, pioneered by **Murray Bookchin**, links environmental issues directly to hierarchical and oppressive social structures. According to social ecology, the domination of nature arises from the domination of human by human. Therefore, to address ecological crises, we must also address social inequalities and hierarchies.

Social Ecology promotes a decentralized, community-based approach to ecological management, emphasizing direct democracy and mutual aid. It has significantly influenced movements for democratic confederalism, such as the Kurdish resistance in places like Rojava, Syria, where principles of social ecology have guided the establishment of a democratic, gender-equal, and ecologically sustainable society.

Despite their critical insights, ecofeminism and social ecology face some criticisms. Some critics argue that ecofeminism risks essentializing women as more 'naturally' nurturing or ecologically-minded, reinforcing gender stereotypes. Critics of social ecology, on the other hand, may argue that it places too much emphasis on societal structures, potentially downplaying other factors like technological change or individual responsibility.

One main area of criticism (by ecologically interested scientists, philosophers, and others) has focused on the association of these ideas with the pseudoscientific anti-GMO crops movement. In particular, many ecofeminists and social ecologists have opposed genetically modified crops, including **Golden Rice** (a type of rice that has been modified to include vitamin A, whose proponents argue could save millions of lives). They do so mainly because they worry that this could (in the long run) lead to corporate ownership of seeds, where farmers would be at the mercy of corporations to buy seeds for each year (even though Golden Rice is itself not owned by a corporation). There is a large

body of scientific research supporting the safety of GMO crops such as these for both humans and the environment.

Big Ideas: The Ethics of Climate Change

Climate change presents a multitude of ethical puzzles and dilemmas. These are grounded in the science of climate change and the broad societal implications of this global crisis. The varied approaches in environmental ethics – including utilitarianism, deontology, virtue ethics, biocentrism, and deep ecology – provide different perspectives for understanding and addressing these challenges. Let's explore each aspect in turn.

Climate change refers to significant long-term shifts in global weather patterns and average temperatures. This phenomenon is primarily driven by human activities that emit greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide and methane. When released into the atmosphere, these gases create a 'greenhouse effect' that traps heat, causing the planet to warm. This scientific understanding of climate change is widely accepted and supported by robust empirical evidence.

The potential harms of climate change are vast. They include more frequent and severe weather events (like hurricanes and heatwaves), sea-level rise threatening coastal communities, disruption of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity, and negative impacts on agriculture and freshwater supplies. These effects can also exacerbate social inequalities, as vulnerable and marginalized communities often bear the brunt of climate change impacts.

Ethical Approaches to Climate Change

Each ethical theory offers a unique lens through which we can analyze and respond to the climate crisis.

- **Utilitarianism** is a consequentialist theory emphasizing the greatest good for the greatest number. In terms of climate change, utilitarians like Peter Singer would argue for policies that minimize overall harm and maximize benefits, even if these measures are costly or inconvenient in the short term. This could include aggressive emissions reductions to prevent long-term damage.
- **Deontology**, or duty-based ethics, prioritizes moral rules over outcomes. Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative, for example, might compel us to reduce our carbon footprint because it's simply the right thing to do, irrespective of the outcomes. Deontologists could argue that we have a duty not to harm others (including future generations), and therefore a duty to mitigate climate change.
- **Virtue ethics**, which focuses on character and virtue, would ask what a virtuous person would do in the face of climate change. Virtue ethicists such as Rosalind Hursthouse might suggest that traits like temperance and wisdom could guide us towards sustainable practices and respect for nature.
- **Biocentrism** is an ethical perspective that extends inherent value to all living beings, not just humans. In this framework, philosophers like Paul Taylor might argue that we should combat climate change to respect the intrinsic worth of all life forms threatened by this crisis.

- **Deep Ecology**, a philosophy advocated by Arne Naess, goes further by valuing the natural environment and ecosystems as a whole, recognizing the intrinsic worth of all parts of nature, including inanimate objects and processes. From this perspective, climate change is a profound violation of the integrity of the Earth, and radical systemic changes are needed to rectify this.

How Can We Respond? Some Moral Dilemmas

Climate change is both a personal and a collective ethical issue. At the individual level, our lifestyle choices (such as travel, diet, and consumption patterns) can significantly contribute to GHG emissions. Ethical frameworks can inform these decisions: a utilitarian might seek to minimize their personal carbon footprint due to the potential harm it could cause, while a deontologist might see reducing emissions as a moral duty, regardless of its overall impact.

At the societal level, climate change raises questions about justice and equity. For example, the nations and communities that have contributed least to climate change often suffer its worst effects – a situation many ethicists view as morally unacceptable. Utilitarians might argue for climate policies that redress these inequities, while de ologists might demand justice as an inviolable principle, regardless of potential benefits some nations might gain from not addressing climate change.

Determining the best response to climate change can be challenging, as it raises a number of **moral dilemmas** (situations in which morality pulls us in two different ways).

- **The Prevention vs. Adaptation Dilemma**: Should we focus our efforts on preventing further climate change, or should we concentrate on adapting to changes that are already unavoidable? These two goals may compete for the same limited resources.
- **The Present vs. Future Generations Dilemma**: How do we balance the needs and desires of the present generation against the rights and needs of future generations? This is especially relevant given that the consequences of our actions today will predominantly affect those living in the future.
- **The Wealthy vs. Poor Nations Dilemma**: Developed nations have historically contributed the most to climate change, while developing nations suffer the most from its effects. Should wealthier nations bear more responsibility for mitigation and adaptation measures?
- **The Economic Growth vs. Environmental Protection Dilemma**: To what extent should we curtail economic growth or consumption to protect the environment? For instance, should we cease fossil fuel use immediately, despite the economic implications?
- **The Individual vs. Collective Action Dilemma**: What is the individual's responsibility in mitigating climate change compared to the responsibility of nations or corporations? How can individual efforts align with larger-scale actions?
- **The Human Interests vs. Non-human Interests Dilemma**: How do we reconcile human needs and interests with the interests of non-human species threatened by climate change? This question becomes increasingly relevant in discussions about conservation and biodiversity.
- **The Technological Innovation vs. Lifestyle Change Dilemma**: Should we rely on

technological solutions (like carbon capture and geoengineering) to mitigate climate change, or should we focus on promoting substantial changes in our lifestyles and consumption patterns?

- **The Climate Justice vs. Political Feasibility Dilemma**: Comprehensive climate action may require radical socioeconomic changes and could disrupt power structures, potentially causing political instability. How do we navigate the tension between achieving climate justice and maintaining political stability?
- **The Sustainability vs. Immediate Survival Dilemma**: In many low-income regions, immediate survival needs may seem to justify environmentally damaging practices (like deforestation for agriculture). How do we balance the urgency of meeting immediate human needs against the importance of sustainable practices for the long-term health of the planet?

These dilemmas underline the intricate complexity of climate change as an ethical issue. To navigate these challenges, it is critical to engage with diverse ethical perspectives and strive for solutions that respect human rights, protect the intrinsic value of all life, and preserve the integrity of our shared planet for generations to come.

Discussion Questions

- Contrast anthropocentrism and biocentrism. How might these perspectives lead to different decisions in a real-world environmental dilemma, such as deforestation for agriculture?
- How do ecocentrism and Deep Ecology challenge traditional human-centric views on the environment? Discuss the implications of considering ecosystems or the Earth itself as a morally significant entity.
- How does ecofeminism link environmental degradation with social issues, particularly gender? Discuss with examples.
- Consider the variety of perspectives discussed in this chapter. Which resonates with you most, and why?
- Discuss how each of these perspectives might approach the issue of climate change. What unique insights or solutions might they offer?
- Consider the possible criticisms of each perspective. How could proponents of each perspective respond to these criticisms?
- How do individual actions contribute to or mitigate climate change? Can individual actions alone solve the climate crisis, or is systemic change necessary?
- How can we balance immediate human needs with the long-term health of the planet? Discuss possible solutions to this dilemma, citing one or more ethical theories.
- In the future, what new perspectives or ideas do you think could emerge in environmental ethics? What current trends or developments could influence these new perspectives?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Anthropocentrism	A viewpoint that considers human beings as the most significant entities in the universe, assessing the world in terms of human values and experiences.
Scale Naturae	Also known as the Great Chain of Being, it refers to a hierarchical structure of all matter and life, with humans typically at the pinnacle.
Moral Community	Refers to the group of entities deemed worthy of ethical consideration or to have moral rights.
Silent Spring	A book by Rachel Carson published in 1962 that raised awareness about the harmful environmental impacts of pesticides, particularly DDT, marking a turning point in the modern environmental movement.
Biocentrism	An ethical perspective that recognizes the inherent value of all living entities, not just humans, suggesting that all life deserves moral consideration.
Albert Schweitzer	A theologian, organist, writer, humanitarian, philosopher, and physician who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. He proposed the idea of "Reverence for Life" as a fundamental principle of morality.
Reverence for Life	A principle articulated by Albert Schweitzer that advocates respect and care for all forms of life.
Paul Taylor	A philosopher known for his work in environmental ethics, particularly for advocating biocentric egalitarianism, which assigns equal worth and moral standing to all organisms.
Good of its own	A concept often used in environmental ethics referring to the inherent worth or interests that an entity might have, independent of its utility to others.
Endangered Species Act	A U.S. law enacted in 1973 designed to protect critically imperiled species from extinction, recognizing the "esthetic, ecological, educational, recreational, and scientific value to our Nation and its people."
Aldo Leopold	An American author, philosopher, scientist, ecologist, forester, conservationist, and environmentalist best known for his book "A Sand County Almanac" and his idea of a "Land Ethic".
Land Ethic	A concept introduced by Aldo Leopold, suggesting an ethical, caring relationship between people and nature, where the land is viewed as a community to which we belong.
Arne Naess	A Norwegian philosopher who founded the deep ecology movement, an environmental philosophy which emphasizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and aims for harmony between humans and nature.
Deep Ecology	An environmental philosophy that advocates for the inherent worth of living beings, regardless of their instrumental utility to human needs, and argues for a radical restructuring of modern human societies in line with such ideas.
Vandana Shiva	An Indian scholar, environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate, and leading figure in the ecofeminist movement.
Ecofeminism	A philosophical and political movement that combines ecological concerns with feminist ones, regarding both as resulting from male domination and exploitation.

Social Ecology	An environmental philosophy and social theory that suggests hierarchical relationships and social domination lead to the domination and degradation of the natural environment.
Golden Rice	A genetically modified variety of rice that produces beta-carotene, aiming to combat vitamin A deficiency in populations heavily dependent on rice for nutrition.
Climate Change	Long-term alterations in average weather patterns, notably a rise in global temperatures, often attributed largely to increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by human activities.
Moral Dilemma	A situation in which a difficult choice must be made between two or more alternatives, often involving a conflict of moral principles.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)
10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015;

Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

12.

CHAPTER 12: BIOETHICS

In this chapter, we'll be diving into the fascinating and multifaceted world of bioethics. As we progress into an era marked by rapid scientific advancements and new medical technologies, ethical questions regarding health, biology, and life itself are growing more complex. These questions touch all aspects of life, from the beginning to the end, and even beyond. Understanding the ethical dimensions of these issues is critical to navigate this ever-evolving landscape.

We begin our exploration with a story, "The Undying Oath: Bioethics in the Night." This narrative features Esther, a doctor who is also a vampire—a twist that allows us to explore the clash of ethical issues in healthcare, personal beliefs, and societal expectations. Through Esther's experiences and dilemmas, the story will expose you to various bioethical challenges, serving as a foundation for the subsequent discussion.

In the next section, we delve into the big ideas in bioethics, beginning with the Four Principles Approach, which includes respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. We will then explore cutting-edge topics in bioethics such as genetic engineering and CRISPR, and confront challenging questions about their ethical implications.

Following this, we address the controversial topic of euthanasia, discussing various perspectives on its ethical implications. We then explore research ethics, touching on key issues like informed consent, exploitation, and the use of human subjects in research. We also delve into the increasingly relevant topic of AI in healthcare, probing ethical questions about privacy, decision-making, and the role of AI in clinical settings. Next, we tackle the contentious topic of abortion, exploring various ethical perspectives on the rights and interests involved.

Lastly, we turn our attention to public health ethics, exploring the ethical dimensions of disease prevention, health promotion, and the allocation of resources. These discussions are intended to spark thought and dialogue about the complex and often conflicting ethical considerations that arise in public health practice.

By the end of this chapter, you will have a solid understanding of the key ethical issues in biomedicine and public health, preparing you to think critically about these topics and to engage in informed discussions about the ethical dimensions of health and healthcare in today's world.

Story: The Undying Oath: Bioethics in the Night

I.

Esther's clinic was situated in the heart of the city, amidst a community that mirrored the colorful quilt of the old world – Jews, Roma, and a variety of Christian and Islamic sects making up the threadwork of its resilient fabric. She was a Jewish doctor, upholding the traditions and teachings of her faith amidst a city that seemed to have forgotten the essence of humanity.

She treated patients from all walks of life, tending to their physical ailments and often lending an empathetic ear to their sorrows and fears. Her calm demeanor and compassionate approach endeared her to many. To the young Anabaptist mother, Hannah, with her newborn baby girl, she offered a warm smile along with her medical advice. To Ibrahim, the old Roma patriarch, who was battling arthritis and the weight of countless years, she was a comfort, her presence soothing the ache that medications could not. The clinic was more than a place of healing; it was a haven of acceptance and warmth in a city steeped in dread and discrimination.

Then there was the other part of her existence. Esther was also a vampire, an unnatural state of her birth, but the unfortunate result of a blood-borne infection she'd gotten while treating a patient. It was a paradoxical existence, her compassionate nature constantly at odds with the inherent predatory instincts of her vampiric state. As a vampire, she was viewed as an ally by the ruling class, the powers of the city that bore an uncanny resemblance to the oppressors of Jewish history. The laws of the vampire overlord, Abaddon, echoed the discriminatory laws of the 17th century. Restrictions on movements, curfews, and even dress codes that made the human populace easily identifiable were not dissimilar to the demeaning Jewish badges of that dark era.

However, for all its unnatural attributes, Esther's vampiric existence did not rob her of her faith or her commitment to the principles of bioethics she had sworn to follow as a doctor. In fact, her unorthodox state of being forced her to seek solutions that would respect both her Jewish beliefs and her ethical commitment as a doctor. Esther needed blood to survive, an unavoidable fact of her vampiric state. But the thought of preying upon others, violating their autonomy, and causing harm was abhorrent to her. She couldn't, wouldn't, become a creature of the night that victimized the very people she had pledged to heal. And so, she found an alternative way to sustain herself.

Using her medical knowledge, she devised a method to extract plasma from donated blood, the part that she could safely consume without causing harm. The blood she used came from the local hospital's supply, leftovers from the transfusions and surgeries, which otherwise would have been discarded. In doing so, she adhered to the principle of non-maleficence, ensuring her survival did not come at the expense of another's health.

Esther was also deeply conscious of autonomy, the right of individuals to make informed decisions about their own bodies. She was careful to make sure that the donated blood was freely given, not coerced or forcibly extracted. Her vampiric nature would not be an excuse to trample upon another's right to choose.

The principles of beneficence and justice guided her actions as well. She used her medical skills not only to treat her patients but also to mitigate the effects of her vampiric existence. Her respect for life and dedication to justice meant she would not exploit the vulnerable or marginalized for her needs. Instead, she strived to act in ways that would benefit others and uphold the equitable ideals she held dear.

Esther's faith, too, provided a moral compass in this uncharted territory. The Jewish teachings of Tikkun Olam, repairing the world, and Pikuach Nefesh, saving a life, became guiding tenets as she navigated her dual existence. She saw her vampirism not as a curse but as a challenge to live her

faith more fully, to uphold the sanctity of life and respect for individuals even in the most trying circumstances.

Esther's life revolved around her clinic, an island of tranquility amidst the city's rising tide of despair. It was here that she found herself reflecting on the four principles of bioethics she held dear: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. In each patient she treated, she saw these principles defied by the vampire lord's oppressive rule.

There were whispers in hushed tones about the experimental procedures being performed on humans in Abaddon's lair, a monstrous fortress that loomed over the city. Unwilling human subjects were allegedly taken to endure unthinkable processes, their bodies serving as a playground for Abaddon's vile experiments. It reminded Esther of stories from history, of unspeakable atrocities committed in the name of pseudoscience. Each rumor struck a blow against the principle of beneficence, the ethical commitment to act in the best interest of the patient.

Then there was the ominous 'Blood Tax', a monthly tribute required from every human, where blood was extracted and offered to the vampire elite. This harrowing procedure, performed with little regard for the health of the individual, flagrantly violated the principle of non-maleficence, the commitment to 'do no harm'. The signs of this tax were often visible in her patients – frail bodies, pale complexions, and a deep-seated dread that no medicine could alleviate.

The principle of autonomy, the right for individuals to have control over their own bodies and decisions, was being trampled upon, too. Abaddon's guards roamed the streets, enforcing his decrees with a brutal hand. Any refusal to comply with the Blood Tax, or participation in the experiments, was met with brutal punishment. The autonomy Esther had always strived to respect in her practice was being systematically eroded by the vampire lord's rule.

Finally, there was no semblance of justice under Abaddon's rule. The minorities, already on society's fringes, suffered the most. The Roma and Jewish citizens were often the first to be chosen for the experiments or forced to pay heavier Blood Taxes. It was a perverse inversion of justice, the principle she believed should be fundamental to society.

Each day, as Esther treated her patients and bore witness to their suffering, she felt a growing disquiet. Her profession's principles stood in stark contrast to the reality of her world. Each ethical violation committed by Abaddon's regime felt like a personal affront, further deepening the fissure between her faith, her professional duty, and her involuntary vampiric existence. It was a dissonance that started to grow into an urgent question: How long could she merely treat the symptoms of the city's disease, without addressing the root cause?

Navigating the complex crossroads of bioethics was a daily struggle for Esther. Two cases in particular were imbued with echoes of classic moral dilemmas, yet they bore unique stamps of the city's oppressive vampiric rule and the patients' personal predicaments.

The first case concerned Yitzhak, an old man who had lived through the oppressive regime's rise to power. Time and illness had withered Yitzhak's body, leaving him barely clinging to life. Yitzhak had once been a vampire like Esther but had rejected the necessary intake of blood, leading to a prolonged, painful deterioration. His family pleaded with Esther to convince him to drink, but Yitzhak held steadfast, seeing his refusal as an act of defiance against the regime that had forced vampirism upon him. It was an unusual case of passive euthanasia, bound up with Yitzhak's autonomy and desire to die on his own terms. For Esther, it was an ethical minefield. Beneficence and non-maleficence were blurred lines here, teetering between aiding in prolonging a life of suffering and respecting Yitzhak's wish to die as a form of resistance.

In the second case, Esther was presented with Sarah, a woman in the early stages of pregnancy. Sarah had been forcibly bitten by one of the regime's soldiers, a cruel act of domination that was becoming all too common. The bite meant that Sarah was now beginning a horrific transformation into a vampire herself, a fate that also awaited her unborn child. Fearful for her unborn child's future and unwilling to raise a child in a world ruled by tyranny, she asked Esther to terminate the pregnancy.

This situation brought to mind the debates around abortion, layered with the complexities of their vampiric world. Sarah's autonomy meant she had the right to decide about her body and her unborn child. But the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence were murkier to navigate. Could termination be seen as an act of beneficence, saving the unborn child from a life of potential suffering? Or would it be considered harm, an interruption of an unborn life? Esther's vampirism added another layer of complexity as she grappled with the ethical implications of her potential actions.

These cases drew Esther into a deep contemplation of her principles. As she balanced the scales of bioethics against the backdrop of tyranny and vampirism, she grew increasingly aware of the systemic injustice that her patients faced. It was a stark reminder of the pressing need for change and the crucial role she could play in bringing it about.

Illustration of a woman vampire doctor from 1700s Prague, her expression gentle and compassionate. She is carefully bandaging a patient's wound, showcasing her dedication. The setting is a well-organized clinic, with her medical tools meticulously arranged, reflecting her hardworking nature.

II.

In the shadows of the night, under the hushed whispers of rebellion, a new type of patient began to frequent Esther's clinic. They were members of the Reclaimers, an insurgent group that had taken it upon themselves to challenge the tyrannical regime. Treating these rebels was a dangerous act; discovery would undoubtedly lead to severe consequences. Yet, Esther found herself drawn to their cause, their fight echoing her own internal struggle against the inherent injustice she encountered every day.

As she cleaned wounds and treated fractures under the veil of darkness, Esther's mind often turned to the virtues that underpin the practice of medicine. She contemplated the principles of patience, diligence, empathy, and the importance of putting the patients' well-being above all else. These were the principles she believed made a good physician, the virtues she sought to cultivate within herself.

Late into the night, with the echo of the Reclaimers' whispered thanks in her ears, Esther would reflect upon the Hippocratic Oath she had internalized. 'First, do no harm,' the oath dictated, an instruction that became increasingly challenging to interpret in the face of a system that seemed to perpetuate harm at every turn. She questioned how to uphold the integrity of her profession while living within a society that seemed hell-bent on undermining it.

Esther found solace and inspiration in the tales of Florence Nightingale, a contemporary figure whose name had traversed across oceans and found its way into the oppressed city. Nightingale, like Esther, had chosen to devote her life to healing, serving as a beacon of hope and compassion amidst the horror of war. Nightingale's commitment to improving sanitary conditions and her emphasis on preventive care resonated deeply with Esther, reminding her of the fundamental goal of medicine – to ease suffering, promote health, and preserve life.

As Esther treated the Reclaimers, she became increasingly aware of her role within the broader struggle for justice. The Hippocratic Oath, the principles of bioethics, the virtues of care, and the

example set by figures like Nightingale all coalesced into a guiding force. They offered her a moral compass, a beacon of light in a world darkened by tyranny and exploitation. They served as a reminder of her commitment, not just to her patients, but also to a future where justice and empathy could thrive. The nights became a testament to her resilience and a promise of the resistance that was slowly beginning to stir within her.

One night, several leaders of the Reclaimers approached Esther. In the dim light of her clinic, they presented her with a request that carried profound ethical implications. They asked her to turn them into vampires, to give them the strength, speed, and immortality inherent to her kind, which they believed would enable them to overthrow the oppressive regime. They couched their request within the framework of utilitarianism, arguing for the greater good that such an act could accomplish.

Mikael, the eldest among them, reasoned that vampirism could increase their lifespans, allowing them to continue their fight indefinitely and pass on their knowledge to new generations of Reclaimers. He reminded her of the young warriors who had lost their lives too soon, like Daniel, a brilliant strategist who had fallen in a skirmish, his promising future snuffed out prematurely. As a vampire, Daniel could have continued his contributions to their cause, his brilliance not lost but preserved.

Rahel, a fierce fighter and respected leader, argued that the enhanced strength and speed of vampires could turn the tide of battles in their favor. She painted vivid images of confrontations where Reclaimers were overpowered by vampire soldiers, like the ambush at the city's outskirts where they were outnumbered and outmatched, resulting in unnecessary casualties. If they, too, were vampires, they could stand their ground more effectively, reducing the loss of lives.

Finally, David, a compassionate mediator, suggested that becoming vampires could help bridge the gap between the oppressed humans and the ruling vampires, helping to break down barriers and build understanding. He recounted instances where they had been unable to gain the trust of vampire sympathizers because of their human status. As vampires, they could better empathize with the vampire populace, drawing them towards their cause.

Their arguments were compelling, wrapped in a utilitarian logic that suggested a greater good could be achieved. But Esther felt a disquieting churn of emotions. Their request brought her face-to-face with the core of her own ethical dilemma: the reconciliation of her vampiric nature with her principles of bioethics. She was being asked to willingly convert humans into vampires, an act she had never before contemplated. She found herself teetering on the brink of a profound decision, one that could either reshape the city's future or mire her deeper into moral quandary.

Esther spent a sleepless night evaluating the rebels' request. Their arguments echoed through her thoughts, underlining the weight of the decision she had to make. As dawn broke, she had reached a resolution. She wouldn't transform them, a decision rooted in both the principle of paternalism and the broader social consequences.

When she met the rebel leaders in her clinic, Esther began by acknowledging the autonomy behind their request. However, she expressed doubt about whether they fully understood the long-term implications of vampirism. "Vampirism isn't simply about gaining strength and speed," she said. "It's a complete transformation – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The eternal thirst, the inability to walk in sunlight, the isolation from society – these are burdens I carry every day."

Esther clarified that her concern was not simply about the individual's suffering. It was about the potential for harm they could inflict on others and the societal imbalance their transformation could create. As a vampire, the constant thirst for blood could make it difficult to adhere to non-maleficence

– the commitment to doing no harm. "The thirst is potent, relentless," she warned them. "Even with the best of intentions, the risk of harming innocents is very real."

Furthermore, she expressed her concern about the potential inequality within the rebellion and the society at large. "If only some of you become vampires, it will create a divide within our ranks. It will lead to a new kind of social stratification based on power and immortality. It will infringe upon the principle of justice – the equal distribution of benefits and burdens."

In essence, Esther's decision was grounded in a form of justified paternalism. She was acting in what she believed to be their best interests, based on her personal experiences and professional judgement. She did not believe they fully grasped the magnitude of the transformation, and she held reservations about the potential ripple effects it could have on their society.

But it wasn't just paternalism guiding her; it was also a forward-thinking concern for their community. Transforming them could undermine their cause, leading to more harm and inequality in the long run. It was a complex and fraught decision, but she hoped they would come to see the wisdom behind it. "There are other ways to resist," she concluded. "Ways that do not require us to forsake our humanity."

Her words hung in the air as she finished, her decision laid bare before the rebel leaders. Their expressions mirrored their struggle to accept her stance, but Esther stood her ground, hoping they would understand her choice to uphold the principles she held dear.

III

Over time, the rebel leaders came to terms with Esther's refusal to turn them into vampires. The division and potential harm that she had outlined slowly sunk in, and they reluctantly acknowledged the wisdom in her decision. Her clinic continued to be a haven, treating their wounds and offering a sense of hope amid the turmoil.

However, the peace was short-lived. Several months later, Esther's quiet acts of rebellion – treating wounded insurgents, providing a sanctuary for the oppressed – drew the attention of the regime. Her clinic, once a beacon of hope, became a subject of scrutiny.

Despite their best efforts to remain discreet, one of Esther's patients was captured by the regime and under duress, disclosed her clandestine aid to the rebels. In an instant, her world came crashing down around her. The regime's soldiers stormed her clinic, seizing Esther and arresting her for treason.

In the cold, dark confines of her prison cell, Esther was subjected to relentless interrogations. The regime demanded the names and medical conditions of her patients, especially those suspected of rebel affiliations. Yet, Esther held steadfast to her principles. She refused to breach the trust her patients had placed in her, to violate the sanctity of patient-doctor confidentiality.

She was denied sustenance, her vampiric nature slowly withering away in the absence of blood. But Esther held onto her humanity, her dignity. She would not become the monster the regime expected her to be, she would not compromise her ethics, her principles.

As her body grew weaker, her spirit remained unbroken. Esther died in her prison cell, a victim of starvation and the regime's tyranny. Yet, her legacy lived on. In the aftermath of her death, her story spread across the city and beyond. Medical textbooks began to chronicle her commitment to patient care, her unwavering adherence to bioethical principles, and her sacrifice in the face of tyranny. Esther, the doctor and vampire, became a symbol of resistance and ethical responsibility, inspiring generations of medical practitioners in the years that followed.

Discussion Questions

- **Autonomy and Paternalism:** Consider Esther's decision to refuse the rebel leaders' request to be turned into vampires. Discuss whether her actions can be justified under the principle of autonomy. Did Esther's paternalistic approach infringe on the rebels' autonomy or was it a necessary form of 'justified paternalism'?
- **Non-maleficence and Beneficence:** How did the principles of non-maleficence and beneficence factor into Esther's decision to refuse the rebels' request? Discuss the potential harms and benefits she considered.
- **Justice:** Evaluate how Esther's decision considered the principle of justice. Did the potential for social stratification and inequality influence her decision appropriately?
- **Confidentiality:** Discuss Esther's commitment to patient confidentiality, even at the cost of her life. Was she right to uphold this principle, considering the broader socio-political context?
- **Role of the Physician:** What virtues did Esther exhibit as a physician? How do these align with historical examples, like Florence Nightingale and the Hippocratic Oath?
- **Ethics of Vampirism:** Given the nature of vampirism and the associated predatory instincts, can a vampire truly abide by the principles of bioethics? Discuss the moral dilemmas presented in this story and the ethical implications for Esther as a vampire doctor.
- **Resistance and Ethics:** How do you think bioethical principles can guide resistance movements in the face of oppressive regimes? Reflect on the decisions made by Esther and the implications of her actions for the rebellion.
- **Ethical Dilemmas:** Explore the ethical dilemmas Esther encountered in her work, specifically regarding the cases of euthanasia and the 'violinist' situation. How did she navigate these complex situations using the four principles of bioethics?
- **Consequences of Ethical Decisions:** Discuss the outcomes of Esther's ethical decisions. How did they affect her personal life, her professional life, and the larger community?
- **Legacy:** Consider Esther's legacy as portrayed in the story. How do her actions and decisions serve to educate and inspire future generations of medical practitioners? How does her story contribute to the broader discourse on medical ethics?

Reading: Hippocratic Oath (Modern Version)

I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant:

I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.

I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures [that] are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism.

I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug.

I will not be ashamed to say "I know not", nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery.

I will respect the privacy of my patients, for their problems are not disclosed to me that the world may know. Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life and save life wherever possible within reason; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God.

I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being, whose illness may affect the person's family and economic stability. My responsibility includes these related problems, if I am to care adequately for the sick.

I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure.

I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm.

If I do not violate this oath, may I enjoy life and art, respected while I live and remembered with affection thereafter.

Big Ideas: Bioethics

Bioethics is the study of the ethical and moral implications of new biological discoveries and biomedical advances, as in the fields of genetic engineering and drug research. Bioethics is a multidisciplinary field that combines elements of philosophy, theology, history, and law with medicine, nursing, health policy, and the biomedical sciences. It addresses the moral, ethical, and societal issues that arise in health care, medical technology, and the biological sciences. The term "bioethics" was coined in the 1960s and has since been used to refer to the ethical implications of developments in healthcare, life sciences, and biotechnology.

Bioethics spans many issues, from those arising in the beginning of life to the end of life, and everything in between. It includes questions about professional ethics, the relationship between healthcare professionals and patients, the rights of patients, the source of knowledge in medical and scientific research, and the potential consequences of new technologies. Here are a few examples that illustrate different areas of bioethics:

- **Genetic Engineering**: With advancements in genetics, it's now possible to manipulate the genes of living organisms, including humans. This raises questions such as: Is it ethical to genetically modify embryos to prevent disease? What about for non-medical reasons, like selecting for certain physical traits?
- **End-of-Life Decisions**: Bioethics also addresses issues related to end-of-life care. For example, when should life-sustaining treatment be withheld or withdrawn? What constitutes a "good death"? Who has the right to make these decisions?
- **Research Ethics**: Bioethics plays a big role in shaping the ethics of research involving human participants. For instance, it guides how to secure informed consent, how to balance potential harms and benefits of the research, and how to ensure privacy and confidentiality.
- **Artificial Intelligence and Medicine**: The advent of AI in healthcare also brings ethical challenges. For instance, how do we ensure the fair use of AI in patient care? What happens if an AI makes a mistake?

- **Abortion:** Debates over the morality and legality of abortion are emotional and long-standing. However, healthcare providers must figure out how to work in society where patients, coworkers and others disagree about this issue. They must also figure out how to balance matters of personal "conscience" versus their professional duties.
- **Public Health Ethics**: Issues like the distribution of scarce resources (like vaccines during a pandemic), the balance between individual rights and collective health, and the responsibilities of governments to protect public health are all part of bioethics.

In all of these examples, the principles of bioethics, such as autonomy (respecting the decision-making capacities of autonomous persons), beneficence (doing good), non-maleficence (avoiding harm), and justice (fair distribution of benefits, risks, and costs), guide the discussions and decisions. These principles serve as a basis for both professional codes of ethics and practical decision-making in healthcare settings.

The Four Principles Approach to Bioethics

the Four Principles Approach to bioethics was popularized by **Tom Beauchamp** and **James Childress** in their book "Principles of Biomedical Ethics." The four principles are often used as a framework for analyzing ethical issues in health care and are universally applicable across different cultures and traditions. They include:

- **Autonomy**: Autonomy is the principle that individuals have the right to make informed decisions about their own health care. It emphasizes respect for the decision-making capacities of autonomous persons and their right to self-determination. It's why **informed consent** is necessary – patients need to know the risks, benefits, and alternatives before they can make an informed decision about their treatment.
- **Beneficence**: Beneficence refers to the obligation to act in the best interests of the patient or to promote the well-being of others. This could involve providing effective treatments, preventing harm, or promoting the patient's health. It requires health care professionals to consider their actions and choose those that will result in the most benefit for the patient. It is closely tied to utilitarianism and ideas of **cost-benefit analysis** (basically, we want to use the limited resources we have to do the "most good" we can).
- **Non-Maleficence**: Non-maleficence means "do no harm." Healthcare professionals must strive not to harm their patients, either intentionally or unintentionally. It is closely related to beneficence, but while beneficence asks healthcare providers to actively contribute to the patient's health, non-maleficence asks them to avoid causing harm. For example, if a proposed treatment could potentially cause significant harm that outweighs the potential benefits, the principle of non-maleficence would dictate that the treatment should not be provided.
- **Justice**: Justice in healthcare often refers to fairness in the distribution of healthcare resources. It concerns the equitable distribution of benefits, risks, and costs. In a healthcare context, it could involve considerations of who should receive treatment when resources are scarce, or how to ensure access to healthcare for all segments of the population, regardless of

their socio-economic status.

It is worth noting that these principles often need to be balanced against each other, as they can sometimes conflict. For instance, respecting a patient's autonomy might conflict with a doctor's notion of beneficence. For example, a patient might refuse a life-saving treatment due to personal beliefs, leading to a conflict between the patient's autonomy and the healthcare professional's desire to do what's best for the patient's health. In such cases, it becomes necessary to negotiate and balance these principles to resolve the ethical dilemma.

In the following sections, we'll consider how these four principles apply to current debates within bioethics.

Genetic Engineering and CRISPR

Genetic engineering is a set of technologies used to change the genetic makeup of cells, including the transfer of genes within and across species boundaries to produce improved or novel organisms. **CRISPR** (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) is a more recent and revolutionary tool in genetic engineering that has made the process quicker, cheaper, and more accurate. The CRISPR-Cas9 system, the most commonly used, works like a pair of molecular scissors, allowing scientists to cut the DNA at precise locations. This cut can disable a problematic gene, or it can create a spot to insert new genetic material. The medical applications for genetic engineering and CRISPR are vast:

- **Gene Therapy**: Genetic engineering can be used for gene therapy, which involves inserting, altering, or removing genes within an individual's cells to treat or prevent disease. A few gene therapies have already been approved for use in humans, such as Luxturna, which treats a rare form of inherited vision loss, and Zolgensma, for spinal muscular atrophy.
- **Disease Research**: CRISPR can be used to create models of human diseases in animals, leading to a better understanding of these diseases and how to treat them.
- **Drug Development**: Genetic engineering can help create more effective and personalized medications.
- **Cancer Treatment**: CRISPR can be used to modify immune cells to fight cancer more effectively, a treatment known as CAR-T cell therapy.
- **Preventing Genetic Diseases**: In the future, CRISPR might be used to edit embryos to prevent inherited genetic diseases. However, this is ethically controversial and currently highly regulated.

However, these tools also raise several ethics issues. Let's use the four principles to explore these.

- **Autonomy**: In the context of genetic engineering, autonomy raises questions such as: Who has the right to decide if a genome should be edited? If parents opt for gene editing to prevent their child from developing a genetic disease, what happens if the child, when grown up, disagrees with the decision? The principle of autonomy also suggests that individuals should be fully informed about potential risks and benefits before making a decision about genetic interventions. However, the science behind genetic engineering and gene-editing

tools like CRISPR is complex, and ensuring truly informed consent is challenging.

- **Beneficence**: Genetic engineering and CRISPR have the potential to prevent or cure diseases, aligning with the principle of beneficence. For example, scientists could potentially edit out genetic mutations that cause conditions like cystic fibrosis or Huntington's disease. However, determining what is "beneficial" can be tricky. Is it beneficial to modify genes for non-medical enhancements, such as to increase intelligence or athletic ability?
- **Non-Maleficence**: While gene editing has tremendous potential benefits, it also carries risks. Unintended off-target effects could occur, where other parts of the genome are inadvertently modified, potentially causing harm. There's also concern about "germline" editing, where changes are made to sperm, eggs, or embryos. These changes would be passed on to future generations, with potential unforeseen consequences. Balancing beneficence and non-maleficence involves careful evaluation of the potential benefits against the potential risks.
- **Justice.** If CRISPR and other gene-editing technologies become standard medical procedures, who will have access? Will these technologies only be available to those who can afford them, thereby increasing existing health and social inequalities? And considering justice on a global scale, how do we ensure that guidelines and regulations about the use of genetic engineering are fair across different countries and cultures?

Balancing these principles against each other is a complex task. For example, the principle of beneficence might support the use of gene editing to prevent disease, but the principle of non-maleficence might argue against it due to the risk of off-target effects or unknown long-term consequences. The principle of autonomy suggests that individuals should have the right to decide whether to use gene-editing technologies, but this must be balanced against the principle of justice, which might argue for restrictions to prevent misuse and ensure fair access.

An example of a situation where these principles might conflict is the case of editing embryos to prevent a heritable disease. From an autonomy perspective, prospective parents might have the right to make this decision. However, there are concerns of non-maleficence if the editing inadvertently causes harm, and issues of justice arise if only those who can afford the procedure have access to it.

Engaging in public discussion and carefully crafted policy-making is essential in navigating these complex ethical landscapes. This would involve not just scientists, ethicists, and policymakers, but also the public, including individuals who might be affected by these technologies, to ensure that all perspectives are considered in the decision-making process.

Questions

- How should society balance the potential benefits of genetic engineering (such as preventing disease) with potential risks (such as off-target effects or unintended consequences)?
- Who should have the right to decide if and when to use gene-editing technologies, especially when changes could affect future generations?
- How can we ensure equitable access to gene-editing technologies and prevent their misuse or exploitation?

Euthanasia

Euthanasia, sometimes known as assisted dying, refers to the practice of intentionally ending a life to relieve pain and suffering. It includes both **passive euthanasia** (stopping treatment and letting a patient die "naturally", and perhaps very painfully) and **active euthanasia** (actively killing a patient by administering a drug). It is a topic that raises substantial ethical concerns, and it can be explored through the lens of the Four Principles Approach to bioethics: Autonomy, Beneficence, Non-Maleficence, and Justice.

- **Autonomy**: Respecting the principle of autonomy implies that competent adults should have the right to make decisions about their own lives, including the decision to end their life, particularly if they are suffering from a debilitating or terminal illness. However, this principle can be challenging to apply in practice. For instance, what happens if a patient's ability to make decisions is impaired due to their condition, like severe depression or dementia? Furthermore, ensuring informed consent is critical, which means the patient fully understands their medical condition, prognosis, and the consequences of euthanasia.
- **Beneficence**: Beneficence refers to the obligation to act in the best interests of the patient and promote their wellbeing. In the context of euthanasia, this principle can be interpreted as a reason to relieve a patient's suffering, even if this means hastening their death. If a patient is suffering from unbearable pain or has a poor quality of life due to an irreversible condition, euthanasia may be viewed as a way to act beneficently by relieving their suffering.
- **Non-Maleficence**: The principle of non-maleficence, or "do no harm," is central to the medical profession. Opponents of euthanasia often appeal to this principle, arguing that deliberately ending a life is a fundamental harm, regardless of the circumstances. However, others argue that prolonging suffering or denying a patient's wish for a dignified death can also be a form of harm.
- **Justice**: Justice, in the context of euthanasia, encompasses issues like fair access to end-of-life care and potential abuses of euthanasia legislation. It raises questions such as: Who should have access to euthanasia? Should it be available only to terminally ill patients, or also to those suffering from chronic, non-terminal conditions? Could vulnerable individuals be coerced into euthanasia? How can we ensure a fair and just system that respects individual rights while also protecting those at risk?

Balancing these principles can be complex and often depends on the specific circumstances. For example, the autonomy and beneficence principles might support a person's right to choose euthanasia to alleviate unbearable suffering. Still, the principle of non-maleficence might argue against it, particularly if there are concerns about coercion, mental health, or the sanctity of life. Furthermore, justice considerations require the creation of robust legislation and systems to ensure fair access and protect vulnerable individuals.

Consider the case of a terminally ill patient with severe, unmanageable pain who requests euthanasia. Respecting their autonomy and acting beneficently might support their right to choose a dignified death. However, the principle of non-maleficence would require careful assessment to ensure that the patient is making a clear, informed decision, free of coercion. Finally, justice would require

that the patient has had access to high-quality palliative care and that their request for euthanasia is not driven by inadequate pain management or lack of support.

Questions

- Is the principle of autonomy absolute in the context of euthanasia, or should it be limited to protect individuals who may be vulnerable or under duress?
- How should society balance the relief of suffering (beneficence) with the potential harms (non-maleficence) of euthanasia, particularly in cases where the patient's condition might improve?
- How can laws and regulations ensure fair and equitable access to euthanasia while protecting those at risk of coercion or abuse?

Research Ethics

Research ethics is a fundamental aspect of scientific research involving human subjects, designed to protect their dignity, rights, safety, and well-being. The Four Principles Approach to bioethics – Autonomy, Beneficence, Non-Maleficence, and Justice – offers a framework to examine ethical issues in research.

- **Autonomy**: Respecting the autonomy of research participants is crucial. This is typically ensured through informed consent, which means participants must be fully informed about the research purpose, methods, risks, benefits, and alternatives, and their participation must be voluntary. They also have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. An infamous breach of this principle was the **Tuskegee Syphilis Study**, conducted between 1932-1972, in which African-American men with syphilis were not informed about their disease, were denied treatment, and were not given the option to withdraw.
- **Beneficence**: Beneficence in research ethics means that research should contribute to advancing knowledge and potentially lead to the betterment of society. The potential benefits of the research must be significant enough to justify any potential risks. The **Willowbrook Hepatitis Experiments** in the 1960s, which involved deliberately infecting children with intellectual disabilities with hepatitis, raised substantial concerns about beneficence, as the harms inflicted on the vulnerable subjects were considerable and the direct benefits to them were minimal.
- **Non-Maleficence**: This principle, meaning "do no harm," requires that researchers avoid causing harm to participants and minimize potential risks. In the infamous case of the **Guatemala Syphilis Study** (1946-1948), U.S. researchers intentionally infected people with syphilis without their consent, leading to many suffering harm, which was a direct violation of this principle.
- **Justice**: The principle of justice in research ethics involves equitable selection of research participants and fair distribution of the burdens and benefits of research. It is unjust to target vulnerable populations (such as prisoners or economically disadvantaged people) for risky research because they are easier to recruit or less likely to decline participation.

> Similarly, it is unjust if groups bearing the burdens of research (e.g., through participation) do not also stand to benefit from the research. An instance of such injustice was seen in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, where disadvantaged African-American men bore the risks and harms of the research, but did not stand to benefit from it.

Balancing these principles can present ethical dilemmas. For instance, a research study might have the potential to significantly advance medical knowledge (beneficence), but it might also carry potential risks to participants (non-maleficence). Ensuring informed consent (autonomy) can be challenging in certain populations (such as children or those with cognitive impairments), and issues of justice arise if certain groups are disproportionately recruited for research or stand to benefit less from it.

Careful ethical oversight is needed to manage these dilemmas. Research ethics committees or institutional review boards review research proposals to ensure they adhere to ethical guidelines. These bodies ensure that the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice are respected, thereby helping to prevent unethical practices and protect research participants.

Moreover, the historical breaches of research ethics have led to the development of ethical guidelines and regulations for research involving human subjects. For instance, the Declaration of Helsinki and the Belmont Report are seminal documents that provide guidance on conducting ethical research. The atrocities committed during these historical breaches serve as a grim reminder of the need for stringent ethical standards in research.

Questions

- Given the historical breaches of research ethics, how can we ensure that such abuses are not repeated?
- How should we balance the potential societal benefits of research with the potential risks to individual participants?
- How can we ensure justice in the selection of research participants, especially in populations that might be vulnerable or unable to give fully informed consent?

AI in Healthcare

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in many sectors, including medicine. AI-based technologies are revolutionizing healthcare, improving diagnostics, streamlining treatments, and predicting patient outcomes. However, as AI continues to expand in healthcare, several ethical concerns arise. These include issues of data privacy, algorithmic bias, transparency, accountability, and the physician-patient relationship. Using the Four Principles Approach to bioethics – Autonomy, Beneficence, Non-Maleficence, and Justice – we can explore these concerns:

- **Autonomy**: Autonomy refers to respecting individual self-determination, often assured through informed consent. In the context of AI in medicine, patients should understand how AI is used in their care and be able to make informed decisions about it. However, AI systems can be complex and difficult for patients (and even some healthcare providers) to understand. Ensuring truly informed consent for the use of AI in healthcare poses a significant challenge. Additionally, AI can potentially infringe on patients' autonomy by

leveraging personal health data in ways that patients might not fully comprehend or agree with.

- **Beneficence**: The principle of beneficence suggests an obligation to act in the best interests of the patient. AI has the potential to enhance beneficence in healthcare by improving diagnostic accuracy, predicting patient outcomes, and personalizing treatments. For instance, AI can analyze vast datasets to identify subtle patterns not easily recognized by humans, potentially leading to earlier and more accurate disease diagnosis.
- **Non-Maleficence**: Non-maleficence, or "do no harm," is a fundamental principle in both medicine and AI ethics. AI systems should not cause harm to patients, whether through errors, misuse, or bias. One concern here is algorithmic bias, where the AI system's predictions are systematically skewed due to biases in the training data. For example, if an AI system is trained mostly on data from one racial or ethnic group, it might not perform well for other groups, potentially leading to harmful medical errors or disparities in care.
- **Justice**: Justice involves fairness in the distribution of benefits and burdens. As AI continues to advance in healthcare, we must consider who has access to these benefits. Will AI-enhanced healthcare be available to all, or only to those who can afford it? Additionally, justice requires attention to potential disparities caused by AI, such as those arising from algorithmic bias.
- **Explicability**. In the context of AI Ethics, researchers have proposed that we might add a "fifth principle" of **explicability.** This principle requires that humans (such as doctors, nurses, and patients) be able to *understand* the reasons that AI makes the decisions that it does.

Balancing these principles in the context of AI in healthcare presents unique challenges. For example, while the use of AI has the potential to greatly improve patient care (beneficence), it must be implemented in a way that respects patient autonomy, does not cause harm (non-maleficence), and ensures fair access to benefits (justice).

Consider a situation where an AI system is used to diagnose a rare condition. The AI system could potentially identify the condition more quickly and accurately than a human doctor, thereby acting in the patient's best interest (beneficence). However, if the AI system was trained on biased data or the patient does not fully understand how the AI system works, this could infringe on the principles of non-maleficence and autonomy.

Questions

- How can we ensure informed consent when using AI in healthcare, given the complexity of these systems?
- How can we prevent or mitigate potential harms from AI, such as those arising from algorithmic bias or data misuse?
- How can we ensure that the benefits of AI in healthcare are distributed equitably and do not exacerbate existing health or social disparities?

Abortion

Abortion, the termination of a pregnancy before the fetus can live independently, is one of the most contentious ethical issues in healthcare. It involves complex questions about the rights of the woman, the rights of the fetus, and the role of society in determining these rights. Exploring abortion through the Four Principles Approach to bioethics — Autonomy, Beneficence, Non-Maleficence, and Justice — can provide an insightful perspective:

- **Autonomy**: Autonomy refers to the capacity and right of individuals to self-govern and make decisions about their own lives. In the context of abortion, autonomy often emphasizes the woman's right to decide whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy. However, some argue that the fetus has its own potential for autonomy that must also be considered, which can complicate how this principle is applied.
- **Beneficence**: Beneficence in healthcare involves acting in the best interests of the patient and promoting their well-being. Supporters of the right to abortion argue that women should have the right to terminate a pregnancy if it is in their best interests, for example, if the pregnancy poses health risks or if the woman is unprepared to become a parent. On the other hand, those who oppose abortion argue that beneficence should extend to the fetus, thereby preserving its life.
- **Non-Maleficence**: The principle of non-maleficence, or "do no harm," can be interpreted differently in the context of abortion. Those who support the right to abortion might argue that forcing a woman to continue an unwanted or risky pregnancy can cause harm. Conversely, opponents of abortion might argue that the termination of a pregnancy harms the fetus.
- **Justice**: Justice involves fairness and equality in healthcare. In the context of abortion, justice considerations might include the fair and equitable access to abortion services, ensuring that women from all socioeconomic backgrounds have the right to make choices about their reproductive health. Additionally, justice also encompasses societal considerations, such as the potential societal consequences of unwanted or unsupported children.

Balancing these principles can be complex. For instance, respecting a woman's autonomy might support her right to choose an abortion, but the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence might be invoked to argue both for and against this right. The principle of justice may require considering not only individual rights and needs but also broader societal implications.

Consider, for example, a case in which a woman with a high-risk pregnancy chooses to have an abortion to protect her own health (a decision supported by autonomy and, potentially, beneficence). However, if you consider the fetus as a patient, the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence could be interpreted as protecting the fetus, thereby opposing the abortion. The justice principle could further complicate this case, as it might raise questions about societal responsibilities to both the woman and the potential child.

Questions

- How might one navigate the tension between the autonomy of the pregnant woman and the potential autonomy of the fetus in the context of abortion? Should potential autonomy be weighed equally to current autonomy, why or why not?
- How might the principle of beneficence be interpreted differently in the context of abortion, particularly in cases where the pregnancy poses a significant risk to the woman's health or wellbeing?
- In terms of justice, how can we ensure equitable access to abortion services across different socio-economic groups without exacerbating social disparities? Additionally, how should societal responsibilities towards the woman and the potential child be balanced, particularly in cases of unwanted or unsupported children?

Public Health Ethics

Public health ethics is a subfield of bioethics that explores the moral dimensions and implications of policies, programs, and overarching issues associated with public health. It extends beyond the traditional domain of bioethics, which primarily engages with individual moral concerns in patient-provider relationships. Instead, public health ethics addresses broader societal matters related to the health and welfare of communities and populations. When navigating public health ethics, it's valuable to utilize a well-established ethical framework such as the Four Principles Approach, encompassing autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice.

- **Autonomy**: Autonomy underscores the importance of individuals' capacity and right to make informed and voluntary decisions about their health and well-being. However, within the realm of public health, initiatives often necessitate measures that may encroach upon individual autonomy for the collective good. This potential infringement elicits complex ethical debates. To what extent should public health measures restrict individual choices? How do we balance individual rights with collective responsibility for public health?
- **Beneficence**: The principle of beneficence obligates actions that promote health and well-being. In a public health context, beneficence often bolsters policies and interventions aimed at enhancing health outcomes at the population level. This could be manifest in preventive measures such as vaccinations or public health campaigns promoting healthier lifestyles.
- **Non-Maleficence**: The maxim "do no harm" encapsulates the essence of non-maleficence. In the context of public health, non-maleficence signifies ensuring that public health interventions do not cause unwarranted harm to individuals or communities. This principle compels careful evaluation of any potential adverse effects of public health policies and strategies, requiring that they not outweigh their benefits.
- **Justice**: Justice in public health focuses on the equitable distribution of health resources and opportunities to achieve optimal health. This principle underlines the moral imperative to confront and redress health disparities that stem from social determinants of health.

In the context of these principles, paternalism, a concept that is often contentious, comes to the fore.

Paternalism refers to the act of authorities making decisions on behalf of individuals or communities for their purported benefit, potentially overriding individual autonomy in the process. A few examples of public health matters that involve a degree of paternalism include health insurance mandates, vaccination policies, and drug laws:

- **Health Insurance**: Mandated health insurance can be regarded as a paternalistic policy. Such a policy curtails individual autonomy by requiring people to have health insurance. The justification often draws on the principle of beneficence, arguing that this mandate ensures access to necessary healthcare services, promoting both individual and societal welfare. Nevertheless, it may conflict with principles of autonomy and justice, particularly if penalties are levied against those unable to afford insurance. Most public health scholars agree there is a **right to health care** (that is, we shouldn't let people die on the street from preventable conditions), but there is widespread disagreement on how to respect this right.
- **Vaccination Policies**: Mandatory vaccination policies also possess a degree of paternalism. Such policies impinge on individual autonomy to advance community health. The principles of beneficence (preventing disease) and justice (safeguarding individuals who can't receive vaccinations, such as immunocompromised persons) often support such mandates.
- **Drug Laws**: Laws that maintain the illegality of certain drugs (such as opiates) represent another instance of paternalism. These laws aim to guard individuals and society from the potential harms associated with drug use, invoking the principles of beneficence and non-maleficence. However, they may be viewed as limiting individual autonomy, and justice issues can arise when the enforcement of these laws disproportionately affects certain societal groups.

Navigating public health ethics involves a delicate balance of individual and collective interests, often requiring a nuanced negotiation of tensions between autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. Paternalistic policies illustrate these tensions, revealing the complexities inherent in ethical decision-making.

Questions

- How can public health authorities balance the principle of autonomy with paternalistic policies intended to protect community health?
- In the context of mandatory health insurance and drug laws, how can the principle of justice be better upheld?
- Considering vaccination policies, how can public health officials better navigate the tension between beneficence (preventing disease spread) and non-maleficence (preventing harm to individuals who may experience adverse effects)?

Glossary

Term	Definition
Hippocratic Oath	An ancient vow taken by physicians traditionally swearing to practice medicine ethically and honestly. Its provisions include the commitment to treat patients to the best of one's ability and to maintain patient privacy.
Bioethics	A field of study that investigates ethical, legal, and societal issues arising in healthcare and life sciences. It addresses dilemmas including end-of-life care, genetic modification, and the fair distribution of healthcare resources.
Four Principles Approach	An approach in bioethics that offers a broad consideration of moral issues by focusing on four key ethical principles: autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice.
Autonomy	The ethical principle that individuals should have the freedom and capacity to make informed decisions about their own lives, including decisions about their health and medical care.
Informed Consent	A process by which healthcare providers disclose information to patients about the risks, benefits, and alternatives of a proposed medical intervention, ensuring that patients are able to make knowledgeable and voluntary decisions about their care.
Nonmaleficence	The ethical principle that obligates healthcare providers to avoid causing harm to patients, encapsulated by the phrase "do no harm."
Beneficence	An ethical principle that requires promoting well-being and doing good for others. In healthcare, this involves acting in the best interest of patients and taking steps to improve their health outcomes.
Cost-Benefit Analysis	A method of weighing the potential risks and benefits of a decision, policy, or intervention. It involves quantifying costs and benefits and then determining if the benefits outweigh the costs.
Genetic Engineering	A scientific technique that involves manipulating an organism's genetic material, including the creation, deletion, or modification of genes. It has applications in medicine, agriculture, and a variety of other fields.
CRISPR	A molecular tool that allows for precise, targeted changes to the genome by utilizing a naturally occurring mechanism found in bacteria. It has revolutionized genetic engineering with its ease of use and precision.
Justice	The ethical principle requiring fairness and equality in healthcare. It encompasses the equitable distribution of health resources, addressing health disparities, and ensuring all individuals have equal opportunities to achieve good health.
Euthanasia	The act of intentionally ending a person's life to alleviate their suffering or pain. This practice raises numerous ethical and legal questions about patient rights, the role of healthcare providers, and societal values about life and death.
Research Ethics	A field of study that addresses the ethical issues involved in conducting research, including the protection of human subjects, ensuring informed consent, and balancing potential benefits against risks.
Tuskegee Syphilis Study	A notorious research study conducted between 1932 and 1972 by the U.S. Public Health Service. The study is known for its ethical violations, including deception of participants, withholding treatment, and a lack of informed consent.

Willowbrook Experiments	A series of hepatitis studies conducted in the 1950s and 1960s on residents of the Willowbrook State School in New York. The studies have been criticized for ethical violations, including informed consent issues and exploiting a vulnerable population.
Public Health Ethics	A branch of bioethics that focuses on the ethical dimensions of public health policies and practices, including the balance between collective health benefits and individual rights, and how to address health disparities in a population.
Paternalism	An approach or policy in which authorities make decisions on behalf of individuals, communities, or society for their supposed benefit, potentially infringing on individual autonomy. This often comes up in discussions about public health measures, healthcare policies, and other areas where authorities make decisions impacting people's lives.
Explicability	An aspect of artificial intelligence (AI) ethics which refers to the ability to explain how and why an AI system made a particular decision or action.
Right to healthcare	The ethical and often legal recognition that individuals should have access to healthcare services. This principle is central to discussions about health policy, healthcare distribution, and health equity, among others.

1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)
2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)
3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)
4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)
5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)
6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)
7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)
8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)
9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)

10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)
11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)
12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)

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1 I've tried to minimize the use of academic-style referencing in the chapter text. An annotated bibliography of important sources can be found at the end of the book. If you're interested in learning more about the material covered in this chapter, some sources of particular interest include: (Plato, Cooper, and Hutchinson 1997; Brown 2011; Goldstein 2014; Dimmock and Fisher 2017; Sayre-McCord 2014; Fiester 2019; 2019; Rachels and Rachels 2014; Peter Singer 2023; Anthology 2023b; 2022b)

2 Good readings on utilitarianism for beginners include: (Driver 2014; John Stuart Mill 1879; Greene 2013; Smart and Williams 1973; Williams 1973; Kuhse and Singer 1988; Singer 2011; Epicurus and

Robert Hicks n.d.; Stephen Nathanson 2019; Singer 2009; Waal 2015; Sebo 2020; Singer 1972)

3 Recommended readings include (Schwitzgebel 2019; Kant 2004; Korsgaard 1986; O'Neill and White 1986; Madigan 1998; Alexander and Moore 2016; Ross 2002; Skelton 2022; Bill Puka 2023; Cahn and Krista Thomason 2020)

4 Recommended readings include: (Athanassoulis 2019; Hursthouse 2013; 1991; Crisp 1992; Solomon 2003; Aristotle 1999; Riegel 2013; Siderits 2015; Anthology 2022a; 2019; Fainos Mangena n.d.; Shea 2016b)

5 Recommended readings include: (Finnis 2021; Jenkins 2014; Brugger 2021; Anthology 2023a; McIntyre 2019; Foot 1967; Kockler 2007; Thomson 1985; Moseley 2022; Walzer 2006; Anscombe 1958; Wiland and Driver 2022; Walzer 1977)

6 Recommended readings include: (Celeste Friend 2023; D'Agostino, Gaus, and Thrasher 2021; Hobbes and Tuck 1996; Apperley 1999; Homan 2019; Locke 1764; Tuckness 2018; Shea 2016a; 2021; Edmonds and Eidinow 2011; Rawls 2009; 2005; Wenar 2017; Lamont and Favor 2017; Nozick 1974; Mack 2018)

7 For further reading: (Marx and Engels 1978; Dan Lowe 2015; Taylor 2022; Archive n.d.; Matt Qvortrup 2019; Wolff and Leopold 2021; Qvortrup 2023; Hayek 1942; Schmidtz and Boettke 2021)

8 For further reading: (Nietzsche 1977; Anderson 2022; Eva Cybulska 2011; Harper 2016; Helen Small 2019; Justin Remhof 2018; Leiter 2021; Swenson 2021)

9 For further reading: (Mikkola 2019; Anja Steinbauer 2015; Beauvoir 1989; Bergoffen and Burke 2023; Cleary 2019; Sartre 2005; Annaleigh Curtis 2014; Curtis 2014; McAfee 2018; Burns 2019)

10 For further reading: (A. Appiah 1985; Donald J. Morse 2023; Gooding-Williams 2020; Bois 2013; King Jr 1992; K. A. Appiah 2020; Andreasen 2005; Haslanger 2000; Andreasen 2000)

11 For further reading: (Kingsolver 2020; Næss 2016; Attfield 2019; Cochrane 2023; Caney 2021; Various 2015)

12 For further reading: (Arras 2016; Beauchamp TL 2004; Beauchamp and Childress 2012; Shea 2015; Gert, Culver, and Clouser 2006; R. Gillon 1994; Raanan Gillon 2015; Savulescu 2001; Harris 2011)