There are two readings for Wednesday. Both are edited versions of Wikipedia articles. The first reading adapted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence_Kohlberg’s_stages_of_moral_development, and the second reading is adapted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethics. You can find the references for the footnotes there. As you read the article about moral development please think about you answered the Heinz Dilemma in class, and in which stage did your justification lie. I do not plan on discussing our answers to the Heinz Dilemma any further in class. As you read the ethic article, please think about which Normative ethic appeals to you, and why. This will be one of the questions we will discuss on Wednesday. My goal for both of these readings is to help you realize what values you bring to your life, and our course in particular.

Lawrence Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development from Wikipedia

Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral development constitute an adaptation of a psychological theory originally conceived by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. Kohlberg began work on this topic while a psychology graduate student at the University of Chicago in 1958, and expanded upon the theory throughout his life.

The theory holds that moral reasoning, the basis for ethical behavior, has six identifiable developmental stages, each more adequate at responding to moral dilemmas than its predecessor. Kohlberg followed the development of moral judgment far beyond the ages studied earlier by Piaget, who also claimed that logic and morality develop through constructive stages. Expanding on Piaget's work, Kohlberg determined that the process of moral development was principally concerned with justice, and that it continued throughout the individual's lifetime, a notion that spawned dialogue on the philosophical implications of such research.

The six stages of moral development are grouped into three levels: pre-conventional morality, conventional morality, and post-conventional morality.

For his studies, Kohlberg relied on stories such as the Heinz dilemma, and was interested in how individuals would justify their actions if placed in similar moral dilemmas. He then analyzed the form of moral reasoning displayed, rather than its conclusion, and classified it as belonging to one of six distinct stages.

There have been critiques of the theory from several perspectives. Arguments include that it emphasizes justice to the exclusion of other moral values, such as caring; that there is such an overlap between stages that they should more properly be regarded as separate domains; or that evaluations of the reasons for moral choices are mostly post hoc rationalizations (by both decision makers and psychologists studying them) of essentially intuitive decisions.

Nevertheless, an entirely new field within psychology was created as a direct result of Kohlberg's theory, and according to Haggblom et al.'s study of the most eminent psychologists of the 20th century, Kohlberg was the 16th most frequently cited psychologist in introductory psychology textbooks throughout the century, as well as the 30th most eminent overall.

Kohlberg's scale is about how people justify behaviors and his stages are not a method of ranking how moral someone's behavior is. There should, however, be a correlation between how someone scores on the scale and how they behave, and the general hypothesis is that moral behaviour is more responsible, consistent and predictable from people at higher levels.

Stages

Kohlberg's six stages can be more generally grouped into three levels of two stages each: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. Following Piaget's constructivist requirements for a stage model, as described in his theory of cognitive development, it is extremely rare to regress in stages—to lose the use of higher stage abilities. Stages cannot be skipped; each provides a new and necessary perspective, more comprehensive and differentiated than its predecessors but integrated with them.

**Level 1 (Pre-Conventional)**

1. Obedience and punishment orientation

   *(How can I avoid punishment?)*

2. Self-interest orientation

   *(What's in it for me?)*
(Paying for a benefit)

**Level 2 (Conventional)**

3. Interpersonal accord and conformity

**(Social norms)**

**(The good boy/girl attitude)**

4. Authority and social-order maintaining orientation

**(Law and order morality)**

**Level 3 (Post-Conventional)**

5. Social contract orientation

6. Universal ethical principles

**(Principled conscience)**

The understanding gained in each stage is retained in later stages, but may be regarded by those in later stages as simplistic, lacking in sufficient attention to detail.

**Pre-conventional**

The pre-conventional level of moral reasoning is especially common in children, although adults can also exhibit this level of reasoning. Reasoners at this level judge the morality of an action by its direct consequences. The pre-conventional level consists of the first and second stages of moral development and is solely concerned with the self in an egocentric manner. A child with pre-conventional morality has not yet adopted or internalized society's conventions regarding what is right or wrong but instead focuses largely on external consequences that certain actions may bring.\(^7\)[8][9]

In **Stage one** (obedience and punishment driven), individuals focus on the direct consequences of their actions on themselves. For example, an action is perceived as morally wrong because the perpetrator is punished. "The last time I did that I got spanked, so I will not do it again." The worse the punishment for the act is, the more "bad" the act is perceived to be.\(^16\) This can give rise to an inference that even innocent victims are guilty in proportion to their suffering. It is "egocentric," lacking recognition that others' points of view are different from one's own.\(^17\) There is "deference to superior power or prestige."\(^17\)

An example of obedience and punishment driven morality would be a child refusing to do something because it is wrong and that the consequences could result in punishment. For example, a child's classmate tries to dare the child to skip school. The child would apply obedience and punishment driven morality by refusing to skip school because he would get punished.

**Stage two** (self-interest driven) expresses the "what's in it for me" position, in which right behavior is defined by whatever the individual believes to be in their best interest but understood in a narrow way which does not consider one's reputation or relationships to groups of people. Stage two reasoning shows a limited interest in the needs of others, but only to a point where it might further the individual's own interests. As a result, concern for others is not based on loyalty or intrinsic respect, but rather a "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours" mentality.\(^9\) The lack of a societal perspective in the pre-conventional level is quite different from the social contract (stage five), as all actions at this stage have the purpose of serving the individual's own needs or interests. For the stage two theorist, the world's perspective is often seen as morally relative.

An example of self-interest driven is when a child is asked by his parents to do a chore. The child asks, "what's in it for me?" The parents offer the child an incentive by giving a child an allowance to pay them for their chores. The child is motivated by self-interest to do chores.

**Conventional**

The conventional level of moral reasoning is typical of adolescents and adults. To reason in a conventional way is to judge the morality of actions by comparing them to society's views and expectations. The conventional level consists of the third and fourth stages of moral development. Conventional morality is characterized by an acceptance of society's conventions concerning right and wrong. At this level an individual obeys rules and follows society's norms even when there are no consequences for obedience or disobedience. Adherence to rules and conventions is somewhat rigid, however, and a rule's appropriateness or fairness is seldom questioned.\(^7\)[8][9]
In **Stage three** (good intentions as determined by social consensus), the self enters society by conforming to social standards. Individuals are receptive to approval or disapproval from others as it reflects society’s views. They try to be a "good boy" or "good girl" to live up to these expectations,\[5\] having learned that being regarded as good benefits the self. Stage three reasoning may judge the morality of an action by evaluating its consequences in terms of a person’s relationships, which now begin to include things like respect, gratitude, and the "golden rule". "I want to be liked and thought well of; apparently, not being naughty makes people like me." Conforming to the rules for one’s social role is not yet fully understood. The intentions of actors play a more significant role in reasoning at this stage; one may feel more forgiving if one thinks that "they mean well".\[2\]

In **Stage four** (authority and social order obedience driven), it is important to obey laws, dictums, and social conventions because of their importance in maintaining a functioning society. Moral reasoning in stage four is thus beyond the need for individual approval exhibited in stage three. A central ideal or ideals often prescribe what is right and wrong. If one person violates a law, perhaps everyone would—thus there is an obligation and a duty to uphold laws and rules. When someone does violate a law, it is morally wrong; culpability is thus a significant factor in this stage as it separates the bad domains from the good ones. Most active members of society remain at stage four, where morality is still predominantly dictated by an outside force.\[2\]

**Post-Conventional**

The post-conventional level, also known as the principled level, is marked by a growing realization that individuals are separate entities from society, and that the individual’s own perspective may take precedence over society’s view; individuals may disobey rules inconsistent with their own principles. Post-conventional moralists live by their own ethical principles—principles that typically include such basic human rights as life, liberty, and justice. People who exhibit post-conventional morality view rules as useful but changeable mechanisms—ideally rules can maintain the general social order and protect human rights. Rules are not absolute dictates that must be obeyed without question. Because post-conventional individuals evaluate their own moral evaluation of a situation over social conventions, their behavior, especially at stage six, can be confused with that of those at the pre-conventional level.

Some theorists have speculated that many people may never reach this level of abstract moral reasoning.\[7\]\[8\]\[9\]

In **Stage five** (social contract driven), the world is viewed as holding different opinions, rights, and values. Such perspectives should be mutually respected as unique to each person or community. Laws are regarded as social contracts rather than rigid edicts. Those that do not promote the general welfare should be changed when necessary to meet “the greatest good for the greatest number of people”.\[8\] This is achieved through majority decision and inevitable compromise. Democratic government is ostensibly based on stage five reasoning.

In **Stage six** (universal ethical principles driven), moral reasoning is based on abstract reasoning using universal ethical principles. Laws are valid only insofar as they are grounded in justice, and a commitment to justice carries with it an obligation to disobey unjust laws. Legal rights are unnecessary, as social contracts are not essential for deontic moral action. Decisions are not reached hypothetically in a conditional way but rather categorically in an absolute way, as in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.\[18\] This involves an individual imagining what they would do in another’s shoes, if they believed what that other person imagines to be true.\[19\] The resulting consensus is the action taken. In this way action is never a means but always an end in itself; the individual acts because it is right, and not because it avoids punishment, is in their best interest, expected, legal, or previously agreed upon. Although Kohlberg insisted that stage six exists, he found it difficult to identify individuals who consistently operated at that level.\[15\]

**Further stages**

In Kohlberg's empirical studies of individuals throughout their life Kohlberg observed that some had apparently undergone moral stage regression. This could be resolved either by allowing for moral regression or by extending the theory. Kohlberg chose the latter, postulating the existence of sub-stages in which the emerging stage has not yet been fully integrated into the personality.\[8\] In particular Kohlberg noted a stage 4½ or 4+, a transition from stage four to stage five, that shared characteristics of both.\[8\] In this stage the individual is disaffected with the arbitrary nature of law and order reasoning; culpability is frequently turned from being defined by society to viewing society itself as culpable. This stage is often mistaken for the moral relativism of stage two, as the individual views those interests of society that conflict with their own as being relatively and morally wrong.\[8\] Kohlberg noted that this was often observed in students entering college.\[8\]\[18\]

Kohlberg suggested that there may be a seventh stage—Transcendental Morality, or Morality of Cosmic Orientation— which linked religion with moral reasoning.\[20\] Kohlberg's difficulties in obtaining empirical evidence for even a sixth stage,\[15\] however, led him to emphasize the speculative nature of his seventh stage.\[5\]
Theoretical Assumptions (philosophy)

Kohlberg's stages of moral development are based on the assumption that humans are inherently communicative, capable of reason, and possess a desire to understand others and the world around them. The stages of this model relate to the qualitative moral reasoning adopted by individuals, and so do not translate directly into praise or blame of any individual's actions or character. Arguing that his theory measures moral reasoning and not particular moral conclusions, Kohlberg insists that the form and structure of moral arguments is independent of the content of those arguments, a position he calls "formalism".\[^{6,7}\]

Kohlberg's theory centers on the notion that justice is the essential characteristic of moral reasoning. Justice itself relies heavily upon the notion of sound reasoning based on principles. Despite being a justice-centered theory of morality, Kohlberg considered it to be compatible with plausible formulations of deontology\[^{18}\] and eudaimonia.

Kohlberg's theory understands values as a critical component of the right. Whatever the right is, for Kohlberg, it must be universally valid across societies (a position known as "moral universalism");\[^{17}\] there can be no relativism. Moreover, morals are not natural features of the world; they are prescriptive. Nevertheless, moral judgments can be evaluated in logical terms of truth and falsity.

According to Kohlberg, someone progressing to a higher stage of moral reasoning cannot skip stages. For example, an individual cannot jump from being concerned mostly with peer judgments (stage three) to being a proponent of social contracts (stage five).\[^{15}\] On encountering a moral dilemma and finding their current level of moral reasoning unsatisfactory, however, an individual will look to the next level. Realizing the limitations of the current stage of thinking is the driving force behind moral development, as each progressive stage is more adequate than the last.\[^{15}\] The process is therefore considered to be constructive, as it is initiated by the conscious construction of the individual, and is not in any meaningful sense a component of the individual's innate dispositions, or a result of past inductions.

**Formal elements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View of Persons</th>
<th>Social Perspective Lvl</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Sees how human fallibility and frailty are impacted by communication</td>
<td>Mutual respect as a universal principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Recognize that contracts will allow persons to increase welfare of both</td>
<td>Contractual perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 Able to see abstract normative systems</td>
<td>Social systems perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Recognize good and bad intentions</td>
<td>Social relationships perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Sees that a) others have goals and preferences, b) either conform to or deviate from norms</td>
<td>Instrumental egoism</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 No VOP: only self &amp; norm are recognized</td>
<td>Blind egoism</td>
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Progress through Kohlberg's stages happens as a result of the individual's increasing competence, both psychologically and in balancing conflicting social-value claims. The process of resolving conflicting claims to reach an equilibrium is called "justice operation." Kohlberg identifies two of these justice operations: "equality," which involves an impartial regard for persons, and "reciprocity," which means a regard for the role of personal merit. For Kohlberg, the most adequate result of both operations is "reversibility," in which a moral or dutiful act within a particular situation is evaluated in terms of whether or not the act would be satisfactory even if particular persons were to switch roles within that situation (also known colloquially as "moral musical chairs").\[^{6}\]

Knowledge and learning contribute to moral development. Specifically important are the individual's "view of persons" and their "social perspective level", each of which becomes more complex and mature with each advancing stage. The
"view of persons" can be understood as the individual's grasp of the psychology of other persons; it may be pictured as a spectrum, with stage one having no view of other persons at all, and stage six being entirely socio-centric.[6] Similarly, the social perspective level involves the understanding of the social universe, differing from the view of persons in that it involves an appreciation of social norms.

Criticisms

One criticism of Kohlberg's theory is that it emphasizes justice to the exclusion of other values, and so may not adequately address the arguments of those who value other moral aspects of actions. Carol Gilligan has argued that Kohlberg's theory is overly androcentric.[10] Kohlberg's theory was initially developed based on empirical research using only male participants; Gilligan argued that it did not adequately describe the concerns of women.[21] Kohlberg stated that women tend to get stuck at level 3, focusing on details of how to maintain relationships and promote the welfare of family and friends. Men are likely to move on to the abstract principles, and thus have less concern with the particulars of who is involved.[22] Consistent with this observation, Gilligan's theory of moral development does not focus on the value of justice. She developed an alternative theory of moral reasoning based on the ethics of caring.[10] Critics such as Christina Hoff Sommers, however, argued that Gilligan's research is ill-founded, and that no evidence exists to support her conclusion.[23]

Kohlberg's stages are not culturally neutral, as demonstrated by its application to a number of different cultures.[1] Although they progress through the stages in the same order, individuals in different cultures seem to do so at different rates.[24] Kohlberg has responded by saying that although different cultures do indeed inculcate different beliefs, his stages correspond to underlying modes of reasoning, rather than to those beliefs.[1][25]

Another criticism of Kohlberg's theory is that people frequently demonstrate significant inconsistency in their moral judgements.[26] This often occurs in moral dilemmas involving drinking and driving and business situations where participants have been shown to reason at a subpar stage, typically using more self-interest driven reasoning (i.e., stage two) than authority and social order obedience driven reasoning (i.e., stage four).[26][27] Kohlberg’s theory is generally considered to be incompatible with inconsistencies in moral reasoning.[26] Carpendale has argued that Kohlberg’s theory should be modified to focus on the view that the process of moral reasoning involves integrating varying perspectives of a moral dilemma rather than simply fixating on applying rules.[27] This view would allow for inconsistency in moral reasoning since individuals may be hampered by their inability to consider different perspectives.[26] Krebs and Denton have also attempted to modify Kohlberg’s theory to account for a multitude of conflicting findings, but eventually concluded that the theory is not equipped to take into consideration how most individuals make moral decisions in their everyday lives.[28]

Other psychologists have questioned the assumption that moral action is primarily a result of formal reasoning. Social intuitionists such as Jonathan Haidt, for example, argue that individuals often make moral judgments without weighing concerns such as fairness, law, human rights, or abstract ethical values. Thus the arguments analyzed by Kohlberg and other rationalist psychologists could be considered post hoc rationalizations of intuitive decisions; moral reasoning may be less relevant to moral action than Kohlberg's theory suggests.[11]

Ethics from Wikipedia

Ethics or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct.[1] The term ethics derives from the Ancient Greek word ἠθικός ethikos, which is derived from the word ἔθος ethos (habit, "custom"). The branch of philosophy axiology comprises the sub-branches of ethics and aesthetics, each concerned with values.[2]

As a branch of philosophy, ethics investigates the questions "What is the best way for people to live?" and "What actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances?" In practice, ethics seeks to resolve questions of human morality, by defining concepts such as good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice and crime. As a field of intellectual enquiry, moral philosophy also is related to the fields of moral psychology, descriptive ethics, and value theory.

Three major areas of study within ethics recognised today are:[1]

1. Meta-ethics, concerning the theoretical meaning and reference of moral propositions, and how their truth values (if any) can be determined
2. Normative ethics, concerning the practical means of determining a moral course of action
3. Applied ethics, concerning what a person is obligated (or permitted) to do in a specific situation or a particular domain of action.[1]

**Defining Ethics**

Rushworth Kidder states that "standard definitions of *ethics* have typically included such phrases as 'the science of the ideal human character' or 'the science of moral duty'". [3] Richard William Paul and Linda Elder define ethics as "a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms sentient creatures". [4] The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy states that the word ethics is "commonly used interchangeably with 'morality' ... and sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual."[5] Paul and Elder state that most people confuse ethics with behaving in accordance with social conventions, religious beliefs and the law and don't treat ethics as a stand-alone concept. [4]

The word "ethics" in English refers to several things. [6] It can refer to philosophical ethics or moral philosophy—a project that attempts to use reason in order to answer various kinds of ethical questions. As the English philosopher Bernard Williams writes, attempting to explain moral philosophy: "What makes an inquiry a philosophical one is reflective generality and a style of argument that claims to be rationally persuasive." [7] And Williams describes the content of this area of inquiry as addressing the very broad question, "how one should live". [8] Ethics can also refer to a common human ability to think about ethical problems that is not particular to philosophy. As bioethicist Larry Churchill has written: "Ethics, understood as the capacity to think critically about moral values and direct our actions in terms of such values, is a generic human capacity." [9] Ethics can also be used to describe a particular person's own idiosyncratic principles or habits. [10] For example: "Joe has strange ethics."

The English word ethics is derived from an Ancient Greek word êthikos, which means "relating to one's character". The Ancient Greek adjective êthikos is itself derived from another Greek word, the noun êthis meaning "character, disposition". [11]

**Meta-ethics**

Meta-ethics asks how we understand, know about, and what we mean when we talk about what is right and what is wrong. [12] An ethical question fixed on some particular practical question—such as, "Should I eat this particular piece of chocolate cake?"—cannot be a meta-ethical question. A meta-ethical question is abstract and relates to a wide range of more specific practical questions. For example, "Is it ever possible to have secure knowledge of what is right and wrong?" would be a meta-ethical question.

Meta-ethics has always accompanied philosophical ethics. For example, Aristotle implies that less precise knowledge is possible in ethics than in other spheres of inquiry, and he regards ethical knowledge as depending upon habit and acculturation in a way that makes it distinctive from other kinds of knowledge. Meta-ethics is also important in G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* from 1903. In it he first wrote about what he called the naturalistic fallacy. Moore was seen to reject naturalism in ethics, in his Open Question Argument. This made thinkers look again at second order questions about ethics. Earlier, the Scottish philosopher David Hume had put forward a similar view on the difference between facts and values.

Studies of how we know in ethics divide into cognitivism and non-cognitivism; this is similar to the contrast between descriptivists and non-descriptivists. Non-cognitivism is the claim that when we judge something as right or wrong, this is neither true nor false. We may for example be only expressing our emotional feelings about these things. [13] Cognitivism can then be seen as the claim that when we talk about right and wrong, we are talking about matters of fact.

The ontology of ethics is about value-bearing things or properties, i.e. the kind of things or stuff referred to by ethical propositions. Non-descriptivists and non-cognitivists believe that ethics does not need a specific ontology, since ethical propositions do not refer. This is known as an anti-realist position. Realists on the other hand must explain what kind of entities, properties or states are relevant for ethics, how they have value, and why they guide and motivate our actions. [14]

**Normative Ethics**

Normative ethics is the study of ethical action. It is the branch of ethics that investigates the set of questions that arise when considering how one ought to act, morally speaking. Normative ethics is distinct from meta-ethics because it examines standards for the rightness and wrongness of actions, while meta-ethics studies the meaning of moral language and the metaphysics of moral facts. [12] Normative ethics is also distinct from descriptive ethics, as the latter is an empirical
investigation of people's moral beliefs. To put it another way, descriptive ethics would be concerned with determining what proportion of people believe that killing is always wrong, while normative ethics is concerned with whether it is correct to hold such a belief. Hence, normative ethics is sometimes called prescriptive, rather than descriptive. However, on certain versions of the meta-ethical view called moral realism, moral facts are both descriptive and prescriptive at the same time.\[^{15}\]

Traditionally, normative ethics (also known as moral theory) was the study of what makes actions right and wrong. These theories offered an overarching moral principle one could appeal to in resolving difficult moral decisions.

At the turn of the 20th century, moral theories became more complex and are no longer concerned solely with rightness and wrongness, but are interested in many different kinds of moral status. During the middle of the century, the study of normative ethics declined as meta-ethics grew in prominence. This focus on meta-ethics was in part caused by an intense linguistic focus in analytic philosophy and by the popularity of logical positivism.

In 1971 John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice*, noteworthy in its pursuit of moral arguments and eschewing of meta-ethics. This publication set the trend for renewed interest in normative ethics.

### Virtue ethics

**Socrates**

Virtue ethics describes the character of a moral agent as a driving force for ethical behavior, and is used to describe the ethics of Socrates, Aristotle, and other early Greek philosophers. Socrates (469–399 BC) was one of the first Greek philosophers to encourage both scholars and the common citizen to turn their attention from the outside world to the condition of humankind. In this view, knowledge bearing on human life was placed highest, while all other knowledge were secondary. Self-knowledge was considered necessary for success and inherently an essential good. A self-aware person will act completely within his capabilities to his pinnacle, while an ignorant person will flounder and encounter difficulty. To Socrates, a person must become aware of every fact (and its context) relevant to his existence, if he wishes to attain self-knowledge. He posited that people will naturally do what is good, if they know what is right. Evil or bad actions are the result of ignorance. If a criminal was truly aware of the intellectual and spiritual consequences of his actions, he would neither commit nor even consider committing those actions. Any person who knows what is truly right will automatically do it, according to Socrates. While he correlated knowledge with virtue, he similarly equated virtue with joy. The truly wise man will know what is right, do what is good, and therefore be happy.\[^{16}\]32–35

Aristotle (384–323 BC) posited an ethical system that may be termed "self-realizationism". In Aristotle's view, when a person acts in accordance with his nature and realizes his full potential, he will do good and be content. At birth, a baby is not a person, but a potential person. To become a "real" person, the child's inherent potential must be realized. Unhappiness and frustration are caused by the unrealized potential of a person, leading to failed goals and a poor life. Aristotle said, "Nature does nothing in vain." Therefore, it is imperative for people to act in accordance with their nature and develop their latent talents in order to be content and complete. Happiness was held to be the ultimate goal. All other things, such as civic life or wealth, are merely means to the end. Self-realization, the awareness of one's nature and the development of one's talents, is the surest path to happiness.\[^{16}\]33–35

Aristotle asserted that man had three natures: vegetable (physical/metabolism), animal (emotional/appetite) and rational (mental/conceptual). Physical nature can be assuaged through exercise and care, emotional nature through indulgence of instinct and urges, and mental through human reason and developed potential. Rational development was considered the most important, as essential to philosophical self-awareness and as uniquely human. Moderation was encouraged, with the extremes seen as degraded and immoral. For example, courage is the moderate virtue between the extremes of cowardice and recklessness. Man should not simply live, but live well with conduct governed by moderate virtue. This is regarded as difficult, as virtue denotes doing the right thing, to the right person, at the right time, to the proper extent, in the correct fashion, for the right reason.\[^{16}\]35–37

**Stoicism**

**Epictetus**

The Stoic philosopher Epictetus posited that the greatest good was contentment and serenity. Peace of mind, or Apatheia, was of the highest value; self-mastery over one's desires and emotions leads to spiritual peace. The "unconquerable will" is central to this philosophy. The individual's will should be independent and inviolate. Allowing a person to disturb the mental equilibrium is in essence offering yourself in slavery. If a person is free to anger you at will, you have no control
over your internal world, and therefore no freedom. Freedom from material attachments is also necessary. If a thing breaks, the person should not be upset, but realize it was a thing that could break. Similarly, if someone should die, those close to them should hold to their serenity because the loved one was made of flesh and blood destined to death. Stoic philosophy says to accept things that cannot be changed, resigning oneself to existence and enduring in a rational fashion. Death is not feared. People do not "lose" their life, but instead "return", for they are returning to God (who initially gave what the person is as a person). Epictetus said difficult problems in life should not be avoided, but rather embraced. They are spiritual exercises needed for the health of the spirit, just as physical exercise is required for the health of the body. He also stated that sex and sexual desire are to be avoided as the greatest threat to the integrity and equilibrium of a man's mind. Abstinence is highly desirable. Epictetus said remaining abstinent in the face of temptation was a victory for which a man could be proud.[16]:38–41

Contemporary virtue ethics

Modern virtue ethics was popularized during the late 20th century in large part as a response to G. E. M. Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy". Anscombe argues that consequentialist and deontological ethics are only feasible as universal theories if the two schools ground themselves in divine law. As a deeply devoted Christian herself, Anscombe proposed that either those who do not give ethical credence to notions of divine law take up virtue ethics, which does not necessitate universal laws as agents themselves are investigated for virtue or vice and held up to "universal standards", or that those who wish to be utilitarian or consequentialist ground their theories in religious conviction.[17] Alasdair MacIntyre, who wrote the book After Virtue, was a key contributor and proponent of modern virtue ethics, although MacIntyre supports a relativistic account of virtue based on cultural norms, not objective standards.[17] Martha Nussbaum, a contemporary virtue ethicist, objects to MacIntyre's relativism, among that of others, and responds to relativist objections to form an objective account in her work "Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach".[18] Complete Conduct Principles for the 21st Century[19] blended the Eastern virtue ethics and the Western virtue ethics, with some modifications to suit the 21st Century, and formed a part of contemporary virtue ethics.[19]

Hedonism

Hedonism posits that the principal ethic is maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. There are several schools of Hedonist thought ranging from those advocating the indulgence of even momentary desires to those teaching a pursuit of spiritual bliss. In their consideration of consequences, they range from those advocating self-gratification regardless of the pain and expense to others, to those stating that the most ethical pursuit maximizes pleasure and happiness for the most people.[16]:37

Cyrenaic hedonism

Founded by Aristippus of Cyrene, Cyrenaics supported immediate gratification or pleasure. "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Even fleeting desires should be indulged, for fear the opportunity should be forever lost. There was little to no concern with the future, the present dominating in the pursuit for immediate pleasure. Cyrenaic hedonism encouraged the pursuit of enjoyment and indulgence without hesitation, believing pleasure to be the only good.[16]:37

Epicureanism[edit]

Epicurean ethics is a hedonist form of virtue ethics. Epicurus "presented a sustained argument that pleasure, correctly understood, will coincide with virtue".[20] He rejected the extremism of the Cyrenaics, believing some pleasures and indulgences to be detrimental to human beings. Epicureans observed that indiscriminate indulgence sometimes resulted in negative consequences. Some experiences were therefore rejected out of hand, and some unpleasant experiences endured in the present to ensure a better life in the future. To Epicurus the sumnum bonum, or greatest good, was prudence, exercised through moderation and caution. Excessive indulgence can be destructive to pleasure and can even lead to pain. For example, eating one food too often will cause a person to lose taste for it. Eating too much food at once will lead to discomfort and ill-health. Pain and fear were to be avoided. Living was essentially good, barring pain and illness. Death was not to be feared. Fear was considered the source of most unhappiness. Conquering the fear of death would naturally lead to a happier life. Epicurus reasoned if there was an afterlife and immortality, the fear of death was irrational. If there was no life after death, then the person would not be alive to suffer, fear or worry; he would be non-existent in death. It is irrational to fret over circumstances that do not exist, such as one's state in death in the absence of an afterlife.[16]:37–38

State consequentialism

State consequentialism, also known as Mohist consequentialism,[21] is an ethical theory that evaluates the moral worth of an action based on how much it contributes to the basic goods of a state.[21] The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy describes Mohist consequentialism, dating back to the 5th century BC, as "a remarkably sophisticated version based on a plurality of intrinsic goods taken as constitutive of human welfare".[22] Unlike utilitarianism, which views pleasure as a
moral good, "the basic goods in Mohist consequentialist thinking are ... order, material wealth, and increase in population". During Mozi's era, war and famines were common, and population growth was seen as a moral necessity for a harmonious society. The "material wealth" of Mohist consequentialism refers to basic needs like shelter and clothing, and the "order" of Mohist consequentialism refers to Mozi's stance against warfare and violence, which he viewed as pointless and a threat to social stability.

Stanford sinologist David Shepherd Nivison, in The Cambridge History of Ancient China, writes that the moral goods of Mohism "are interrelated: more basic wealth, then more reproduction; more people, then more production and wealth ... if people have plenty, they would be good, filial, kind, and so on unproblematically." The Mohists believed that morality is based on "promoting the benefit of all under heaven and eliminating harm to all under heaven". In contrast to Bentham's views, state consequentialism is not utilitarian because it is not hedonistic or individualistic. The importance of outcomes that are good for the community outweigh the importance of individual pleasure and pain.

**Consequentialism/Teleology**

Consequentialism refers to moral theories that hold that the consequences of a particular action form the basis for any valid moral judgment about that action (or create a structure for judgment, see rule consequentialism). Thus, from a consequentialist standpoint, a morally right action is one that produces a good outcome, or consequence. This view is often expressed as the aphorism "The ends justify the means".

The term "consequentialism" was coined by G. E. M. Anscombe in her essay "Modern Moral Philosophy" in 1958, to describe what she saw as the central error of certain moral theories, such as those propounded by Mill and Sidgwick. Since then, the term has become common in English-language ethical theory.

The defining feature of consequentialist moral theories is the weight given to the consequences in evaluating the rightness and wrongness of actions. In consequentialist theories, the consequences of an action or rule generally outweigh other considerations. Apart from this basic outline, there is little else that can be unequivocally said about consequentialism as such. However, there are some questions that many consequentialist theories address:

- What sort of consequences count as good consequences?
- Who is the primary beneficiary of moral action?
- How are the consequences judged and who judges them?

One way to divide various consequentialisms is by the types of consequences that are taken to matter most, that is, which consequences count as good states of affairs. According to utilitarianism, a good action is one that results in an increase in a positive effect, and the best action is one that results in that effect for the greatest number. Closely related is eudaimonic consequentialism, according to which a full, flourishing life, which may or may not be the same as enjoying a great deal of pleasure, is the ultimate aim. Similarly, one might adopt an aesthetic consequentialism, in which the ultimate aim is to produce beauty. However, one might fix on non-psychological goods as the relevant effect. Thus, one might pursue an increase in material equality or political liberty instead of something like the more ephemeral "pleasure". Other theories adopt a package of several goods, all to be promoted equally. Whether a particular consequentialist theory focuses on a single good or many, conflicts and tensions between different good states of affairs are to be expected and must be adjudicated.

**Utilitarianism**

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that argues the proper course of action is one that maximizes a positive effect, such as "happiness", "welfare", or the ability to live according to personal preferences. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill are influential proponents of this school of thought. In A Fragment on Government Bentham says 'it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong' and describes this as a fundamental axiom. In An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation he talks of 'the principle of utility' but later prefers "the greatest happiness principle".

Utilitarianism is the paradigmatic example of a consequentialist moral theory. This form of utilitarianism holds that what matters is the aggregate positive effect of everyone and not only of any one person. John Stuart Mill, in his exposition of utilitarianism, proposed a hierarchy of pleasures, meaning that the pursuit of certain kinds of pleasure is more highly valued than the pursuit of other pleasures. Other noteworthy proponents of utilitarianism are neuroscientist Sam Harris, author of The Moral Landscape, and moral philosopher Peter Singer, author of, amongst other works, Practical Ethics.

There are two types of utilitarianism, act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism. In act utilitarianism the principle of utility is applied directly to each alternative act in a situation of choice. The right act is then defined as the one which brings
about the best results (or the least amount of bad results). In rule utilitarianism the principle of utility is used to determine the validity of rules of conduct (moral principles). A rule like promise-keeping is established by looking at the consequences of a world in which people broke promises at will and a world in which promises were binding. Right and wrong are then defined as following or breaking those rules.[32]

Deontology

Deontological ethics or deontology (from Greek δέον, deon, "obligation, duty"; and -λογία, -logia) is an approach to ethics that determines goodness or rightness from examining acts, or the rules and duties that the person doing the act strove to fulfill.[33] This is in contrast to consequentialism, in which rightness is based on the consequences of an act, and not the act by itself. In deontology, an act may be considered right even if the act produces a bad consequence,[34] if it follows the rule that "one should do unto others as they would have done unto them",[35] and even if the person who does the act lacks virtue and had a bad intention in doing the act. According to deontology, people have a duty to act in a way that does those things that are inherently good as acts ("truth-telling" for example), or follow an objectively obligatory rule (as in rule utilitarianism). For deontologists, the ends or consequences of people's actions are not important in and of themselves, and people's intentions are not important in and of themselves.

Immanuel Kant's theory of ethics is considered deontological for several different reasons.[36][37] First, Kant argues that to act in the morally right way, people must act from duty (deon).[38] Second, Kant argued that it was not the consequences of actions that make them right or wrong but the motives (maxime) of the person who carries out the action. Kant's argument that to act in the morally right way, one must act from duty, begins with an argument that the highest good must be both good in itself, and good without qualification.[39] Something is 'good in itself' when it is intrinsically good, and 'good without qualification' when the addition of that thing never makes a situation ethically worse. Kant then argues that those things that are usually thought to be good, such as intelligence, perseverance and pleasure, fail to be either intrinsically good or good without qualification. Pleasure, for example, appears to not be good without qualification, because when people take pleasure in watching someone suffer, they make the situation ethically worse. He concludes that there is only one thing that is truly good:

Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond the world—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a good will.[39]

Pragmatic ethics

Associated with the pragmatists, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and especially John Dewey, pragmatic ethics holds that moral correctness evolves similarly to scientific knowledge: socially over the course of many lifetimes. Thus, we should prioritize social reform over attempts to account for consequences, individual virtue or duty (although these may be worthwhile attempts, provided social reform is provided for).[40]

Role ethics

Role ethics is an ethical theory based on family roles.[41] Unlike virtue ethics, role ethics is not individualistic. Morality is derived from a person's relationship with their community.[42] Confucian ethics is an example of role ethics.[41] Confucian roles center around the concept of filial piety or xiao, a respect for family members.[43] According to Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, "Confucian normativity is defined by living one's family roles to maximum effect." Morality is determined through a person's fulfillment of a role, such as that of a parent or a child. Confucian roles are not rational, and originate through the xin, or human emotions.[42]

Anarchist ethics

Anarchist ethics is an ethical theory based on the studies of anarchist thinkers. The biggest contributor to the anarchist ethics is the Russian zoologist, geographer, economist and political activist Peter Kropotkin. The anarchist ethics is a big and vague field which can depend upon different historical situations and different anarchist thinkers, but as Peter Kropotkin explains, "any “bourgeois” or “proletarian” ethics rests, after all, on the common basis, on the common ethnological foundation, which at times exerts a very strong influence on the principles of the class or group morality."

Still, most of the anarchist ethics schools are based on three fundamental ideas, which are: "solidarity, equality and justice". Kropotkin argues that Ethics is evolutionary and is inherited as a sort of a social instinct through History, and by so, he rejects any religious and transcendental explanation of ethics.[44] Kropotkin suggests that the principle of equality which lies at the basis of anarchism is the same as the Golden rule:

This principle of treating others as one wishes to be treated oneself, what is it but the very same principle as equality, the fundamental principle of anarchism? And how can any one manage to believe himself an anarchist unless he practices it? We do not wish to be ruled. And by this very fact, do we not declare that we ourselves wish to rule nobody? We do not
wish to be deceived, we wish always to be told nothing but the truth. And by this very fact, do we not declare that we ourselves do not wish to deceive anybody, that we promise to always tell the truth, nothing but the truth, the whole truth? We do not wish to have the fruits of our labor stolen from us. And by that very fact, do we not declare that we respect the fruits of others' labor? By what right indeed can we demand that we should be treated in one fashion, reserving it to ourselves to treat others in a fashion entirely different? Our sense of equality revolts at such an idea.[45]

**Postmodern ethics**

The 20th century saw a remarkable expansion and evolution of critical theory, following on earlier Marxist Theory efforts to locate individuals within larger structural frameworks of ideology and action.

Antihumanists such as Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault and structuralists such as Roland Barthes challenged the possibilities of individual agency and the coherence of the notion of the 'individual' itself.[clarification needed] As critical theory developed in the later 20th century, post-structuralism sought to problematize human relationships to knowledge and 'objective' reality. Jacques Derrida argued that access to meaning and the 'real' was always deferred, and sought to demonstrate via recourse to the linguistic realm that "there is nothing outside context" ("il n'y a pas de hors-texte" is often mistranslated as "there is nothing outside the text"); at the same time, Jean Baudrillard theorised that signs and symbols or simulacra mask reality (and eventually the absence of reality itself), particularly in the consumer world.

Post-structuralism and postmodernism argue that ethics must study the complex and relational conditions of actions. A simple alignment of ideas of right and particular acts is not possible. There will always be an ethical remainder that cannot be taken into account or often even recognized. Such theorists find narrative (or, following Nietzsche and Foucault, genealogy) to be a helpful tool for understanding ethics because narrative is always about particular lived experiences in all their complexity rather than the assignment of an idea or norm to separate and individuated actions.

Zygmunt Bauman says Postmodernity is best described as Modernity without illusion, the illusion being the belief that humanity can be repaired by some ethic principle. Postmodernity can be seen in this light as accepting the messy nature of humanity as unchangeable.

David Couzens Hoy states Emmanuel Levinas's writings on the face of the Other and Derrida's meditations on the relevance of death to ethics are signs of the "ethical turn" in Continental philosophy that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Hoy describes post-critique ethics as the "obligations that present themselves as necessarily to be fulfilled but are neither forced on one or are enforceable" (2004, p. 103).

Hoy's post-critique model uses the term ethical resistance. Examples of this would be an individual's resistance to consumerism in a retreat to a simpler but perhaps harder lifestyle, or an individual's resistance to a terminal illness. Hoy describes Levinas's account as "not the attempt to use power against itself, or to mobilize sectors of the population to exert their political power; the ethical resistance is instead the resistance of the powerless"(2004, p. 8).

Hoy concludes that

The ethical resistance of the powerless others to our capacity to exert power over them is therefore what imposes unenforceable obligations on us. The obligations are unenforceable precisely because of the other's lack of power. That actions are at once obligatory and at the same time unenforceable is what put them in the category of the ethical. Obligations that were enforced would, by the virtue of the force behind them, not be freely undertaken and would not be in the realm of the ethical. (2004, p.184)

In present-day terms the powerless may include the unborn, the terminally sick, the aged, the insane, and non-human animals. It is in these areas that ethical action in Hoy's sense will apply. Until legislation or the state apparatus enforces a moral order that addresses the causes of resistance these issues will remain in the ethical realm. For example, should animal experimentation become illegal in a society, it will no longer be an ethical issue on Hoy's definition. Likewise one hundred and fifty years ago, not having a black slave in America would have been an ethical choice. This later issue has been absorbed into the fabric of an enforceable social order and is therefore no longer an ethical issue in Hoy's sense.