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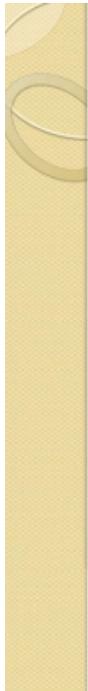
**ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT**

**Development Frameworks of  
Action: Ethics – Part 1**

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This lecture is on developing frameworks for action on ethics, and we will have to see what ethics are about and why they are relevant for sustainability.



## **Ethics**

- In philosophy, ethics is the assessment of arguments concerning the duty or correctness of actions.

In philosophy ethics is the assessment of arguments concerning the duty of correctness of actions, ethics is about how we should live, in philosophy, there are two other domains what is reality it is called ontology and how do we know or what do we know and that is called epistemology. But ethics is about this is also called political philosophy, it is around the question of how we should act or what we should do, and the question is other philosophical ways, other reasons we can attribute to determining how we should act, how we should act in general, how we should act in particular circumstances, it is not, ethics is not a straightforward guide to action, because some questions may have unresolvable conflicts.



## Ethics

- In philosophy, ethics is the assessment of arguments concerning the duty or correctness of actions.
- NOT necessarily a straightforward guide to right conduct because some questions may have unresolvable conflicts.

And so ethics is really about trying to grapple our ways through these questions, trying to understand navigate our ways through these questions, trying to understand what the really difficult challenges are, and then trying to come up with some criteria for what is the best way moving forward. So ethics is, of course, essential because all of us are faced with ethical conundrums at one point or another during our lives, in fact, some of us face ethical conundrums more frequently than others.

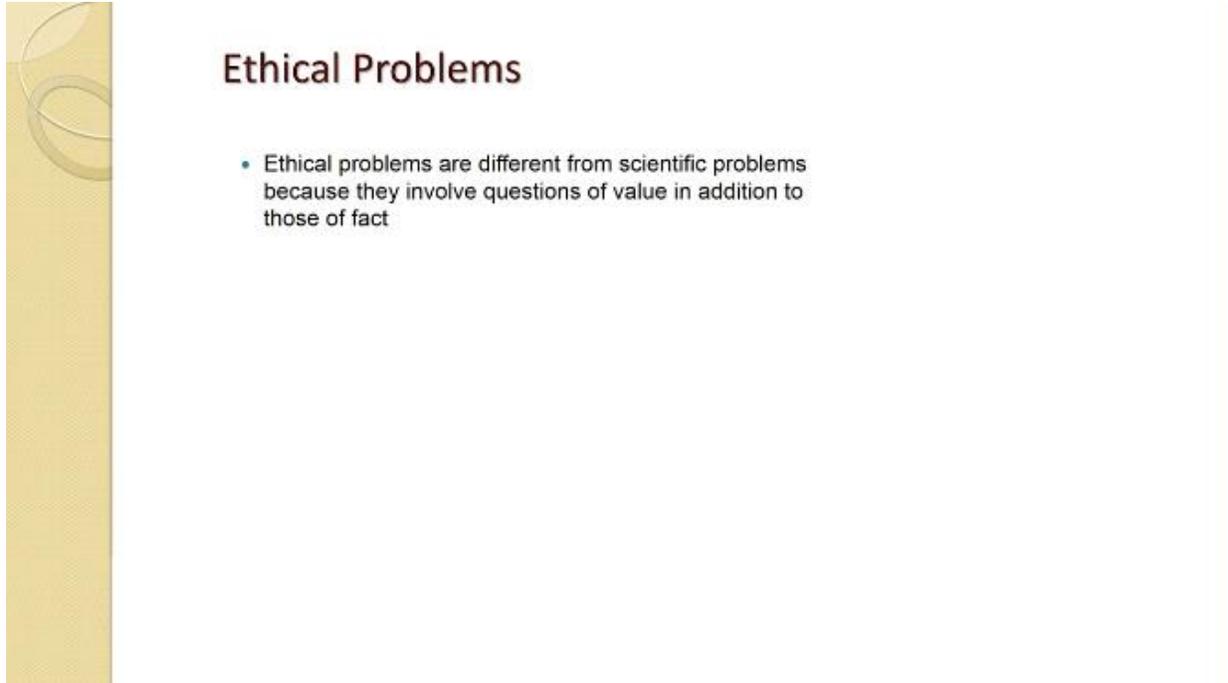


## Ethics

- In philosophy, ethics is the assessment of arguments concerning the duty or correctness of actions.
- NOT necessarily a straightforward guide to right conduct because some questions may have unresolvable conflicts.
- But it is essential and is based on the premise that humans cannot truly rely on any other resource than their own reasoning to evaluate their actions.

For instance, people working in the battlefield, in medical emergencies and so on may find themselves often frequently facing ethical conflicts, should I do this or that, should I save this

person and kill the other person, or should I try to save both persons etcetera. So, the ethical question, of course, is something that also relates to how we should live our lives as a whole, seen as a whole in the course of an extended lifetime and this is best expressed by the philosopher Socrates who said the unexamined life is not worth living.



The slide features a vertical yellow bar on the left side with a decorative circular pattern. The title 'Ethical Problems' is centered at the top in a dark red font. Below the title, a single bullet point is listed in a light blue box, stating that ethical problems differ from scientific ones due to their inclusion of value questions alongside fact-based ones.

So, philosophical ethics is basically a structured way of using reason to examine one's own actions and those of others.

So ethical problems, of course, are different from scientific problems, scientific problems tend to be problems associated with the questions of fact,

is this true or is this untrue? In ethics one is not looking for truths, one is looking for reasons for action, so they consider questions of value that relate to questions of fact, but they are still independent from factual questions.



## Ethical Problems

- Ethical problems are different from scientific problems because they involve questions of value in addition to those of fact
- Solving for the trajectory of a ball thrown at a specific angle is straightforward if certain rules are predetermined: whether or not air friction is considered, whether 2-D or 3-D kinetics are considered, and so on.

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So in physics, for instance, one might ask how do we solve this problem of finding where a ball that is thrown at a certain angle would land, and so questions of fact are associated with trying to determine the answer, but in ethics it is not a question of fact as to you know how we should live, it is a question of what reasons we have for deciding how to live.



## Ethical Problems

- Ethical problems are different from scientific problems because they involve questions of value in addition to those of fact
- Solving for the trajectory of a ball thrown at a specific angle is straightforward if certain rules are predetermined: whether or not air friction is considered, whether 2-D or 3-D kinetics are considered, and so on.
- In ethics, human choice over the types of rules used becomes complicated by the priority we assign different rule systems, i.e., our value systems

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So, questions of value are new questions to those who are only used to asking scientific questions, but in a sense they are also perpetual questions because in our everyday lives we are faced with all sorts of human choices.

In the field of environmental ethics, environmental ethics might be seen as a special branch of ethics, it is also a branch of ethics that has brought up new questions, new philosophical questions for ethics, for those who have been traditionally working on ethical questions and so here is some examples of environmental ethics or questions that are posed to environmental ethics.



### Typical statements explored in environmental ethics

- Reducing the numbers of certain species of animals (e.g., elephants in Southern Africa or rabbits in Australia) and controlling human populations is essential for saving some of the world's ecosystems.

For instance one might assert that reducing the numbers of a certain species of animal, let us say elephants in Southern Africa or rabbits in Australia is important, must be done, all that controlling human populations is essential for saving some of the world's ecosystems, now these may be, these assertions may be sometimes disguised as statements of fact, but they are in fact statements of values, statements involving value and they must be justified on ethical grounds.

Another statement is would might say, all life has intrinsic worth, and humans do not have the right to control populations.

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- All life has intrinsic worth and humans do not have the right to control populations.

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Now that is also a statement of value rather than a statement of fact, and that needs to be recognized. Or take a look at this one a certain degree of pollution is it fine as long as people are compensated for their suffering, or this one promoting social and economic equality should take precedence over the protection of wilderness.



### Typical statements explored in environmental ethics

- Reducing the numbers of certain species of animals (e.g., elephants in Southern Africa or rabbits in Australia) and controlling human populations is essential for saving some of the world's ecosystems.
- All life has intrinsic worth and humans do not have the right to control populations.
- A certain degree of pollution is fine as long as people are compensated for their suffering.
- Promoting social and economic equality should take precedence over the protection of wilderness.

Notice that all of these are value-laden questions or statements and statements that require ethical justification, ethical reasoning to make them persuasive one way or the other.



## Environmental Ethics

- Many feel that it is morally wrong for human beings to pollute and destroy parts of the natural environment and to consume a huge proportion of the planet's natural resources.

Now, more of this in environmental ethics people might feel that it is morally wrong for human beings to pollute and destroy large parts of the natural environment or to consume a huge portion of the planets, natural resources. Some feel it is wrong because we have an obligation towards present and future generations to maintain natural resources.

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## Environmental Ethics

- Many feel that it is morally wrong for human beings to pollute and destroy parts of the natural environment and to consume a huge proportion of the planet's natural resources.
- Some feel it is wrong because we have an obligation towards present and future generations maintain natural resources.

So, these are questions, these are statements that need to be elaborated upon, they need to be justified, so we need to draw upon factual issues in order to make those kinds of arguments, but those in themselves may not satisfy the philosophical resolution of these kinds of assertions.

## Environmental Ethics

- Many feel that it is morally wrong for human beings to pollute and destroy parts of the natural environment and to consume a huge proportion of the planet's natural resources.
- Some feel it is wrong because we have an obligation towards present and future generations maintain natural resources.
- Others feel such behaviour is wrong because the natural environment and/or its various contents have certain values in their own right so that these values ought to be respected and protected in any case.

Now, another ethical statement might be people feel such behaviors wrong because the natural environment or its various contents have certain values in their own right so that these values ought to be respected and protected in any case, right. So, how should we evaluate these different types of arguments, that is the philosophical question in environmental ethics.

## Environmental Ethics

- On what basis should we evaluate these different types of arguments?



## Environmental Ethics

- On what basis should we evaluate these different types of arguments?
- Some of them may be restated to identify different sets of specific questions within the same broad ethical framework.

So, some of them we might want to restate in order to identify separate specific questions within a broad ethical framework, others might reflect fundamentally different starting points concerning the value and moral standing of the natural environment and its non-human components. So a broad definition of environmental ethics is that it is the application of ethics that is the application of value-based reasoning, philosophical reasoning about values to analyze the human use of the earth's limited resources.



## Environmental Ethics

- On what basis should we evaluate these different types of arguments?
- Some of them may be restated to identify different sets of specific questions within the same broad ethical framework.
- Others reflect fundamentally different starting points concerning the value and moral standing of the natural environment and its nonhuman components.

***Environmental ethics is the application of ethics to analyze human use of Earth's limited resources***

In general in the field of ethics, one can identify three broad approaches, the first is called consequentialism, consequentialism is actually perhaps one of the more familiar ways in which ethical statements are made, or ethical arguments are made.



## Three Approaches in Ethics

- **Consequentialism:** Using the consequences of our action on ourselves and others as the basis for setting ethical standards

And consequentialism essentially amounts to trying to use the consequences of our actions on ourselves and on others, as the basis for setting ethical standards. And I will give you examples of consequentialism and these other two approaches as well soon, but another approach is called deontology.

## Three Approaches in Ethics

- **Consequentialism:** Using the consequences of our action on ourselves and others as the basis for setting ethical standards
- **Deontology:** Arguing that we have duties to ourselves and others regardless of consequences and that these can be determined rationally

Deontological approach is to sort of also develop some universal rules and rather than looking at consequences, deontology tries to say that we have duties to ourselves and to others regardless of consequences and that these can be determined and or found out rationally using rational means.

## Three Approaches in Ethics

- **Consequentialism:** Using the consequences of our action on ourselves and others as the basis for setting ethical standards
- **Deontology:** Arguing that we have duties to ourselves and others regardless of consequences and that these can be determined rationally
- **Virtue ethics:** Articulating various virtues or good habits w ought to acquire in order to lead a harmonious life

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And a third approach is called virtue ethics, and virtue ethics is actually quite different from consequentialism and deontology, in that it does not make universalizing claims drawn from the work of Aristotle, a virtue ethics basically says that we need to try and identify good habits,

virtues that we can cultivate, and we need to acquire them in order to lead a harmonious life. That a harmonious life, the good life is dependent on how we cultivate these various virtues.

## Consequentialism

- Weigh the merit of an action based on its consequences

Now let us take a closer look at consequentialism. Consequentialism, as I defined earlier, is to weigh the merit of an action based on its consequences. So, one way to ask this question is does it maximize benefits to all compared to other possible actions, does it result in the greatest happiness for the greatest number, now this way of doing consequentialism is actually a very familiar one, it is also called utilitarianism.

## Consequentialism

- Weigh the merit of an action based on its consequences
- Does it maximise benefits to all compared to other possible actions?
- Does it result in the greatest happiness for the greatest number?

## Consequentialism

- *Utilitarianism* is the major instance of consequentialism,
- It regards pleasure (or, more broadly understood, the satisfaction of interest, desire, and/or preference) as the only intrinsic value in the world, whereas pain (or the frustration of desire, interest, and/or preference) is the only intrinsic disvalue

And utilitarianism is one of the major instances of consequentialism it regards pleasure or more broadly understood the satisfaction of interest, desire, preference, as the only intrinsic value in the world, whereas pain or frustration of desire, interest and of preference is the only intrinsic disvalue, so utilitarianism is an approach where you try to maximize pleasure and minimize pain, and so it certainly is a type of consequentialism it maintains the right actions are those that would produce the greatest balance of pleasure over pain.

## Consequentialism

- *Utilitarianism* is the major instance of consequentialism,
- It regards pleasure (or, more broadly understood, the satisfaction of interest, desire, and/or preference) as the only intrinsic value in the world, whereas pain (or the frustration of desire, interest, and/or preference) is the only intrinsic disvalue
- It maintains that right actions are those that would produce the greatest balance of pleasure over pain.

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So what is an example of a consequentialist type of argument?

## Consequentialism

- Example: “Even if punishment of a criminal causes pain, a world with both the crime and the punishment is better than a world with the crime but not the punishment.”

So, somebody might say is that even if punishment of a criminal causes pain, a world with both the crime and the punishment is better than a world with the crime but not the punishment, in other words let us try to make sure that because criminals cause a lot of pain to humans at large, trying to minimize that pain would mean reducing the number of criminals and the only way to do that is by through some form of deterrence which makes sure that the criminal is punished. So, even if the criminal himself or herself feels pain that the world at large would be slightly better off because they would have less pain on the whole.

## Consequentialism

- Example: “Even if punishment of a criminal causes pain, a world with both the crime and the punishment is better than a world with the crime but not the punishment.”
- Example: “It may be necessary to sacrifice one or more innocent lives if it means that society at large will benefit over the long-term from this action.”

Another example it may be necessary to sacrifice one or more innocent lives if it means that society at large will benefit from the long-term consequences of this action. So, for instance let us say you have a classic example, you have 5 men on a boat and 2 of them are obese and overweight, and the other 3 are not, and the boat might be sinking and unless 1 or 2 of the obese people were thrown overboard and a consequentialist, utilitarian, might say well let us let us make sure that 3 lives are saved and even if 2 are not saved that is because you end up with greater happiness, greater pleasure rather than losing all 5 individuals.



## Deontology

- Adherence to moral rules or duties that are independent of consequences.

Now deontology, as we will see, has a very different take on all this, and it tries to draw its inspiration from moral rules or duties that are independent of consequences. So to make the correct moral choices, we have to understand what our moral duties are, and what correct rules exist to regulate those duties.



## Deontology

- Adherence to moral rules or duties that are independent of consequences.
- To make the correct moral choices, we have to understand what our moral duties are and what correct rules exist to regulate those duties.
- Deontological moral systems typically stress the reasons why certain actions are performed. Simply following the correct moral rules is often not sufficient; instead, we have to have the correct motivations .

Deontological moral systems would typically stress the reasons why certain actions are performed, simply following some correct moral rules is not sufficient instead we have to have the correct motivations.



## Deontology

- **Rights Theories:** an action is morally right if it adequately respects the rights of all humans (or at least all members of society). Humans should be treated as “ends in themselves” not “means to an end.”

So, deontology itself has some variants, one of them is called rights theories, an action is morally right if it adequately respects the rights of all humans or at least all human members of that society and humans should be treated as ends in themselves and not as means to an end.



## Deontology

- **Rights Theories:** an action is morally right if it adequately respects the rights of all humans (or at least all members of society). Humans should be treated as “ends in themselves” not “means to an end.”
- **Contractarianism:** an action is morally right if it is in accordance with the rules that rational moral agents would agree to observe upon entering into a social relationship (contract) for mutual benefit.

Another variant of deontology is called contractarianism; here an action is morally right if it is in accordance with the rules that rational moral agents would agree to observe upon entering into a social relationship or contract for mutual benefit. So it is a sort of a hypothetical contract, the idea is to try and imagine how would individuals behave if they came together and agreed to live together, what sorts of rules would they form and what would these rules look like. So this is rather slightly more complicated way compared to say consequentialism that deontology operates. So, one of the most famous examples of deontology is Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative, which states, always act in such a way that you can also will that the maxim of your action should become a universal law.



## Deontology

- **Kant's Categorical Imperative:**
- Always act in such a way that you can also will that the maxim of your action should become a universal law.
- Act so that you treat humanity, both in your own person and in that of another, always as an end and never merely as a means.

Act so that you treat humanity both in your own person and in that of another always as an end, and never merely as a means. So Kant's version of deontology is to say that human beings are ends in themselves and one ought to act in such a way that one would want one's own action to become some kind of universal rule and so if you decide to act in that manner then you will ensure, and if everybody decides to act in that manner then it becomes a duty to follow the categorical imperative.

For example, if you have a duty, to tell the truth, it may be necessary to follow this duty even if it causes some harm to others. So, in the classic example if you are harboring somebody whose, who might suffer but if you feel that there is a if he or she is caught but if you feel that you have a duty to tell the truth it may be necessary to inform the police that you are harboring such a criminal or such a person who is wanted by the police.

## Deontology

- Example: “If you have a duty to tell the truth, it may be necessary to follow this duty even if it causes harm to others.”

Now if it turns out that that person, person who you are harboring is a Jew or somebody in a Nazi regime, and the Nazi's are at your door, then your duty might be to actually protect that person. So, deontology is actually, really refers to one knowing the right motivation, it is not a simple rule following, a universal rule-following kind of action.

## Deontology

- Example: “If you have a duty to tell the truth, it may be necessary to follow this duty even if it causes harm to others.”
- Example: “Not even one innocent life should be sacrificed, no matter what benefits the sacrifice may impose on society.”

Another example might be not even one innocent life should be sacrificed no matter what benefits the sacrifice might impose on society, and so rather than what the consequentialist says the deontologists would really try to evaluate every action that involves you know the loss of someone's life or the injury to someone's personhood and see whether this is something that

would be some kind of universal law, would it deploy if such a rule were to be implied universally, and if it does not or if it causes undue harm then deontologists would say do not carry out such an action.



## Virtue Ethics

- Emphasises the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to the approach which emphasises duties or rules (deontology) or that which emphasises the consequences of actions (consequentialism).

Now virtue ethics as I mentioned a third type of approach and here virtue is a moral character, are what is emphasized and in contrast to duties and rules or something that focuses on consequences. So, deontology and consequentialism focus on sort of more or less one might say universal approaches whereas virtue ethics tries to develop moral character habits, good habits in particular circumstances.

## Virtue Ethics

- Emphasises the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to the approach which emphasises duties or rules (deontology) or that which emphasises the consequences of actions (consequentialism).
- It identifies those habits and behaviours that will allow a person to achieve a good life

It identifies those habits and behaviors that will allow a person to achieve the good life. So, suppose it is obvious that someone in need should be helped and utilitarian will point to the fact that the consequences of doing so will maximize well-being, a deontologist will point to the fact that in doing so the agent will be acting in accordance with a moral rule such as do unto others as you would be done by and the virtue ethicist might point to the fact that helping the person would be charitable or benevolent and would cultivate good habits in the person carrying out such an action.

## Comparison

- Suppose it is obvious that someone in need should be helped.
- A **utilitarian** will point to the fact that the consequences of doing so will maximise well-being
- A **deontologist** will point to the fact that, in doing so the agent will be acting in accordance with a moral rule such a "Do unto others as you would be done by"
- A **virtue ethicist** will point to the fact that helping the person would be charitable or benevolent.

So, you see an example where all of these three different approaches actually converge in terms of what action is recommended. So, even though these are three different ways of doing ethics it is not always the case that they might be in conflict with each other, you do have some of the border cases, some of the more interesting philosophical questions where you have deontologists and consequentialist disagreeing with each other or both of them, for instance, disagreeing with a virtue ethicist, but this is not always the case. And so these three different ethical forms of ethical reasoning are actually ways of trying to decide what should be done in particular circumstances and whether they are universal rules or particular circumstances that need to be evaluated, it is useful to have these guidelines.

Thank you