

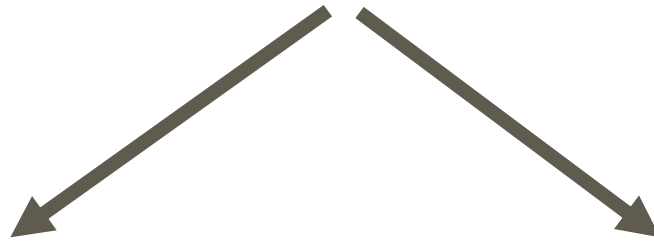
Ethical Theories

Theories about right action

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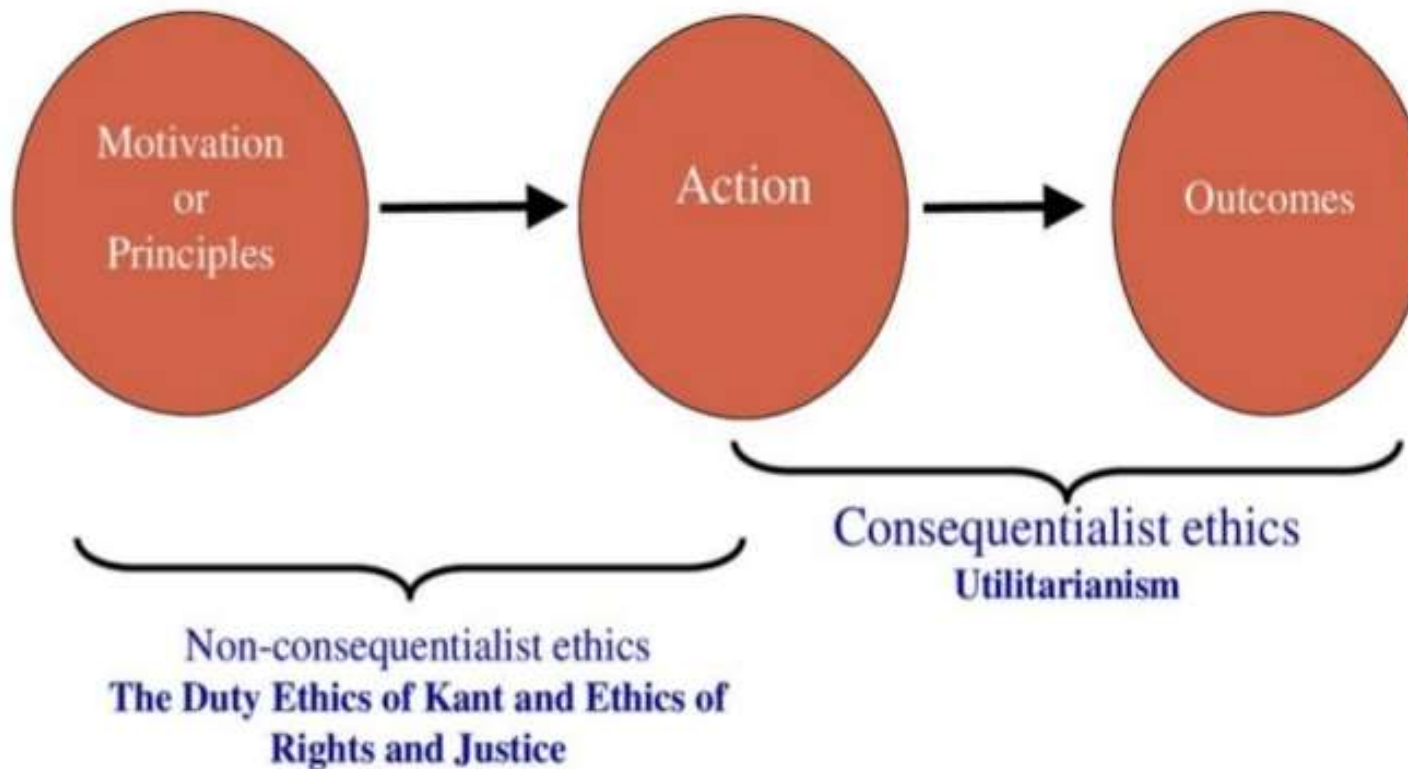
TYPES OF ETHICAL THEORIES



**CONSEQUENTIALIST
THEORIES**

**NON-CONSEQUENTIALIST
THEORIES**

Two Main Types of Ethical Theories



Morality of Actions

Judging morality of an action by the consequences

Consequential Ethics

- *A lie which saves a life, comes under this.
- *A common way to express this is, if something will ultimately be beneficial, the action is moral.
- *The greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Non-consequential Ethics

- *The moral law which states that *a lie is a lie* and shouldn't be done, though it ends in a good deed can be taken
- *Based on accepted rules.

Theories

* **UTILITARIANISM**

* **DUTY ETHICS**

* **RIGHTS ETHICS**

* **VIRTUE ETHICS**

Ethical Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is a theory of moral philosophy that is based on the principle that an action is morally right if it produces a greater quantity of good or happiness than any other possible action.

Whether an action is morally right or wrong depends entirely on its consequences. An action is right if it brings about the best outcome of the choices available. Otherwise it is wrong.

Ethical Utilitarianism

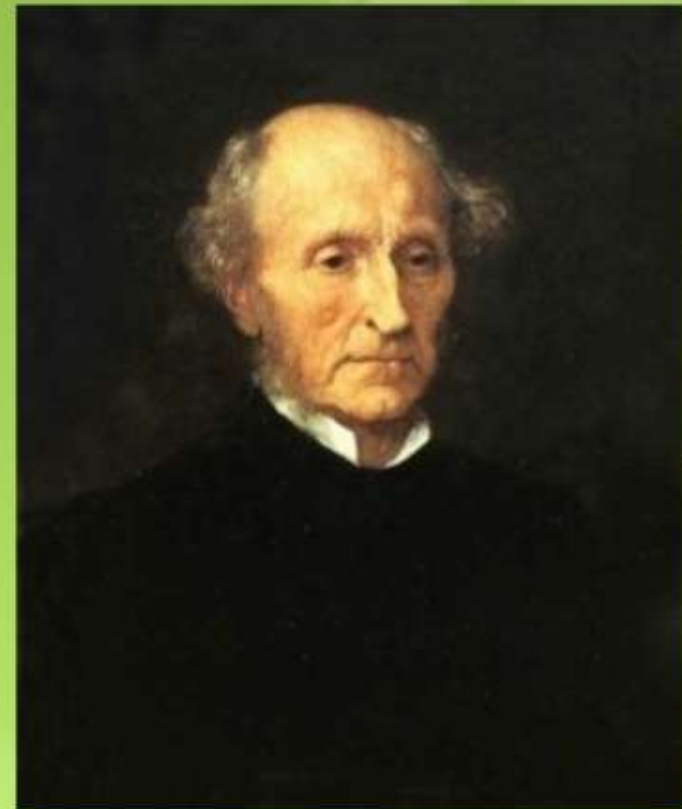
- *Consider the cost-benefit analysis in engineering.
- *This analysis identifies the good/bad consequences of some action/policy.
 - *It weighs the total good against total bad,
 - *Compares the results to similar tallies of the consequences of alternative actions or rules.
- *Supports the idea of maximizing benefits against cost,
 - *Proposed by J.S. Mill,
 - *Focuses on actions, rather than on general rules,
- *An action is right, if it generates the most overall good for the most people involved.

What is "Good"?

- **Happiness**
- **Pleasure, freedom from pain**
- **Utility**

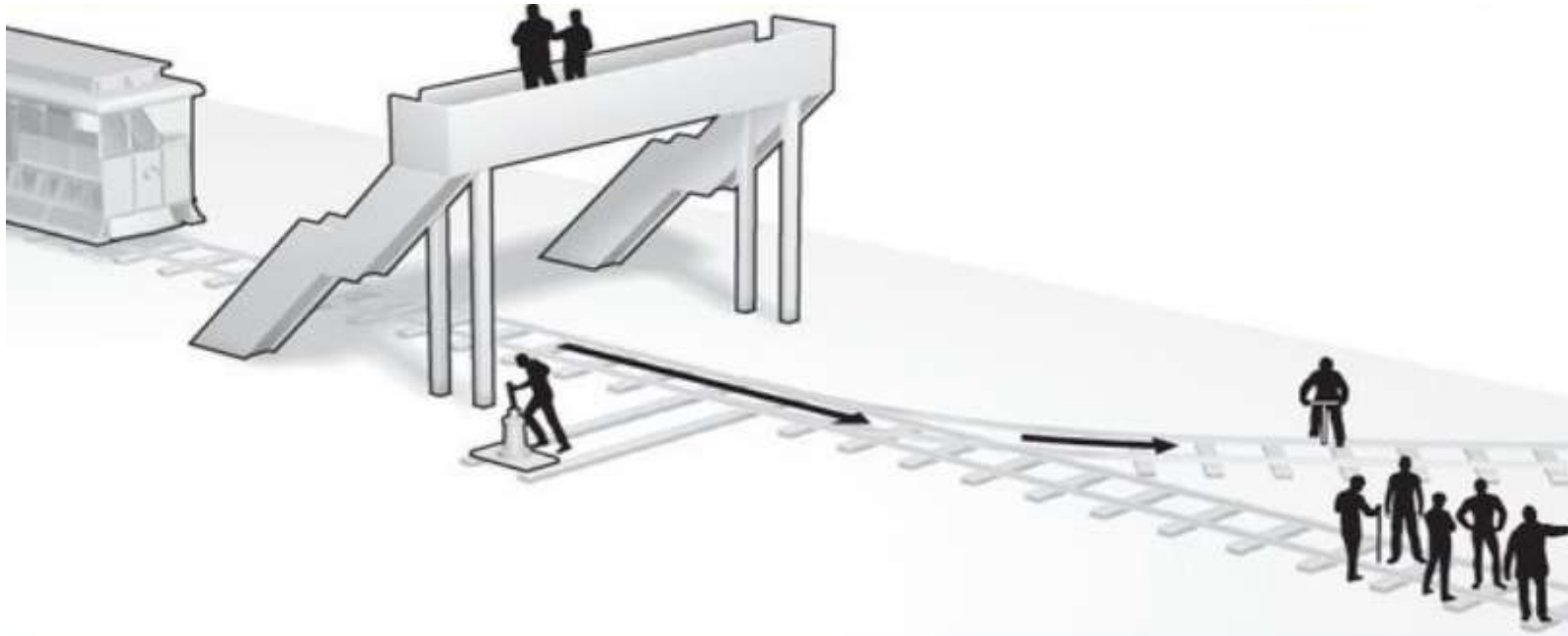
- **The motive is irrelevant to goodness**

- **Only the outcome matters**



John Stuart Mill (1806-1873)

A TOUGHT EXPERIMENT



The Trolley Problem:

“There is a runaway trolley barreling down the railway tracks. Ahead, on the tracks, there are five people; the trolley is headed straight for them. There is no way that they can get off the track before the train hits them. You are standing some distance off in the train yard, next to a lever. If you pull this lever, the trolley will switch to a different set of tracks. Unfortunately, you notice that there is one person on the side track. If you divert the trolley, it will hit this other person for sure.”

A Tough Experiment

You have two options:

(1) Pull the lever, diverting the trolley onto the side track where it will kill one person.

(2) Do nothing, and the trolley kills the five people on the main track.

What do you do?

What are right actions ?

Right actions are the ones that produce the greatest satisfaction of the preferences of the affected persons.

In analyzing an issue in this approach, we have to:

- (a) Identify the various courses of action available to us.
- (b) Ask who will be affected by each action and what benefits or harms will be derived from each.
- (c) Choose the action that will produce the greatest benefits and the least harm. The ethical action is the one that provides the greatest good for the greatest number.

Duty or Deontological Ethics

- Deontological (duty-based) theories are of the view that morality of an action is solely dependent on the quality of action. i.e., whether it follows a rule, irrespective of the consequences of that action.
 - Consequences do NOT matter!
- Morality depends only on the intension behind the act.
 - When faced with an ethical situation, the process is simply one of identifying one's duty and making the appropriate decision.
- Example of deontological theory is Kant's Duty Ethics proposed by Immanuel Kant (1724 - 1804)

Duty or Deontological Ethics

Kant showed that it isn't correct to connect the foundation of morality to a concept that changes from person to person, from situation to situation, like happiness.

Kant developed the concepts of "Wishing for Good (Goodwill)" and "Moral Code" by saying that something that remains the same for everyone is the basis of morality.

As rational beings we must follow certain maxims and rules.

Ethics of Justice

- ❑ Each person is entitled to the most extensive amount of liberty compatible with an equal amount for others,

and

- ❑ Differences in social power and economic benefits are justified only when they are likely to benefit every one, including members of the most disadvantaged groups.

Virtue Ethics

- * According to Aristotle virtues are derived internally,

- * Virtue Theory, what character traits make a person a virtuous person,

- * Actions are considered right

if they support good character traits (virtues)

and wrong if they support bad character traits,

- * For example, if the virtue of honesty is the of utmost importance to a good public relations professional, then all decisions should be made ethically to ensure honesty is preserved.

Virtue Ethics

A moral person is someone who possesses virtue and shows it in his/her actions.

For Aristotle, a person is good if they have virtues and lack vices.

Virtue Theory concentrates on how you can become a better person.

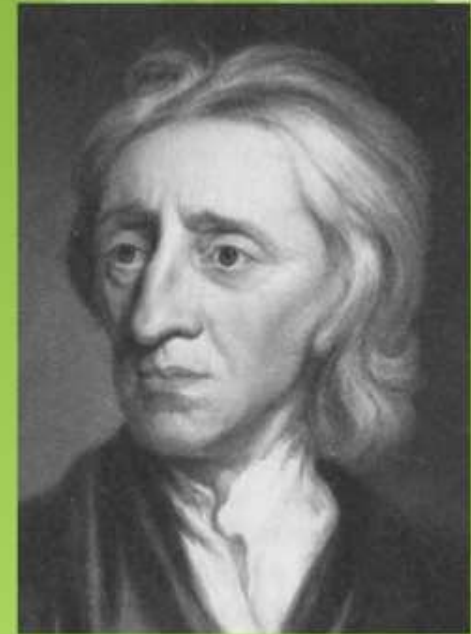
Rights and duties

- * A right can be understood as a legal or moral claim to something

- * Rights are relational
If a person possesses a claim, he/she can demand something from another person who has a duty to provide whatever is demanded.

Natural Rights

- **Natural Rights theories simply posit everyone has certain rights that must not be violated simply by virtue of being human**
- **For example, John Locke argued that humans (by their very nature) have a right to life, liberty and property, and thus, that we all have a duty to respect these rights with regard to others (and have our rights, in turn, respected)**



John Locke (1632-1704)