Questions of Value

Part I

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Graduating with highest honors in both anthropology and philosophy from the University of California at Santa Cruz, Professor Grim was named a Fulbright Fellow to the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, from which he received his B.Phil. He received his Ph.D. from Boston University with a dissertation on ethical relativism, spent a year as a Mellon Faculty Fellow at Washington University, and has been teaching at Stony Brook since 1976. In addition to being named SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor, he has been awarded the President and Chancellor's awards for excellence in teaching and has been elected to the Academy of Teachers/Scholars.

Professor Grim has published widely, not only in philosophy but in scholarly journals in other fields: theoretical biology, linguistics, decision theory, artificial intelligence, and computer science. His work spans ethics, philosophical logic, game theory, philosophy of science, philosophy of law, philosophy of language, contemporary metaphysics, and philosophy of religion. He is the author of *The Incomplete Universe: Totality, Knowledge, and Truth*; co-author of *The Philosophical Computer: Exploratory Essays in Philosophical Computer Modeling*; editor of *Philosophy of Science and the Occult;* and founding co-editor of more than 20 volumes of *The Philosopher's Annual*, an anthology of the best articles published in philosophy each year.

Professor Grim is perhaps best known for critical logical arguments in the philosophy of religion and for groundbreaking work in philosophical computer modeling. With this series of lectures, he returns to his abiding interest in values, drawing from a range of disciplines and philosophical traditions.

Acknowledgments

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Dedicated to the memory of Nathan Watkins, who would have loved these lectures.

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Scope:

The really fundamental questions of our lives are not questions of fact or finance but questions of value. What is it that gives something genuine value? What is worth striving for, and what makes life worth living? Are there values that transcend cultural differences? Is ethics possible without religion? If the universe is deterministic, can there be genuine choice? Is all value subjective? Is anyone ever better off dead?

This course offers a philosophical examination of a wide range of questions in ethics and value theory, with an accent on individual choices. Emphasis throughout the course is on contrasting positions: areas of controversy regarding fundamental questions of value and of how life should be lived. Topics include the difference between fact and value, ethical foundations, the possibility of ethical knowledge, subjectivity and objectivity, the influence of culture, life's priorities, theories of justice, and the role of chance. Among the issues examined are questions regarding evolution and ethics, theories of punishment, free will and determinism, images of immortality, how to deal with life's horrors, moralities in conflict, and the search for value.

Conceptual clarification is the core of any philosophical inquiry. Philosophy emphasizes rational argument, with the entire history of thought as a resource. Here, these tools are applied to central questions of value. The lectures are guided by a search for good reasons: good reasons to think of our choices and our actions in one way rather than another, to think of our lives in one way rather than another, and to think of values in general in one way rather than another. The purpose of the lectures is, first and foremost, to open issues for thoughtful consideration. Though particular positions are often defended, the spirit of philosophical examination demands that no stance be assumed dogmatically and that all positions be open for further examination and thought.

The course covers all periods of philosophical history, drawing reflections and arguments from Socrates and Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the Epicureans, Lucretius, Epictetus, Seneca and the Stoics, Sextus Empiricus and the Skeptics, Boethius, Montaigne, Hobbes, Rousseau, Hume, Kant, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and the Utilitarians, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, G. E. Moore, William James, Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, W. D. Ross, Jean-Paul Sartre, R. M. Hare, and the anthropological work of philosophers Richard Brandt and John Ladd. Recent and contemporary thinkers are included in the same way: John Rawls, Alasdair MacIntyre, Robert Nozick, Thomas Nagel, Bernard Williams, Philip Kitcher, and Derek Parfit.

The course also draws from resources beyond philosophy. Questions and answers drawn from anthropology, economics, and psychology appear throughout the lectures, as do issues from sociology, political science, game theory, theoretical biology, and even physics and computer science. Examples are drawn from literary sources, including Jorge Luis Borges, Ursula Le Guin, Mark Twain, John Ruskin, Peter S. Beagle, Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Anne Rice. The application of abstract issues to concrete cases uses examples from business, law, and medical practice, including DNA evidence and the death penalty, the euthanasia case of Dax Cowart, the issue of insanity in the Patty Hearst and John W. Hinckley cases, and the Ford Motor Company's estimate of the value of a human life in cost-benefit calculations regarding the Pinto gas tank.

There are very different kinds of questions regarding very different kinds of values, and the course is structured to take advantage of that variety. Lectures shift from historical questions to contemporary cases, from abstract considerations to concrete decisions, from research in other disciplines back to a philosophical core. Although the course covers the entire history of philosophy, it is arranged in terms of individually intriguing topics rather than chronologically. Although the course covers all major theories of value, it is structured in terms of important questions rather than arranged as a sequential survey of theories. Concepts assumed in later lectures are carefully and clearly introduced in earlier ones.

The purpose of the course is to give an appreciation for the complex concepts that lie just beneath our everyday patterns of evaluation and for some of the bold and insightful reflections that can illuminate them. The student can expect to finish the course with some new and interesting answers and a command of important philosophical arguments and approaches but also with some new and interesting questions about values. The course is designed not to close debate but to open it, not to end controversy but to facilitate reflective thought. It is Socrates who said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." This course offers the tools necessary for examining the values that guide our lives.

Lecture One
Questions of Value

Scope: This lecture outlines the basic structure of the course and the ways in which questions of value will be approached. The focus throughout the course is on questions of value: all kinds of questions, regarding all kinds of value. Though ethical values will be of central importance, the course will also touch on aesthetic, pragmatic, religious, and cultural values. An important component of the course will be the question of what makes a life a good life: What makes life worth living? Although the central examination is a philosophical one, the course will also draw on materials from psychology, anthropology, and economics, using both scholarly and literary sources.

Philosophy calls for the careful examination of alternative positions on issues, the disentangling of complex questions, and the search for rational argument. In this context, controversy is not something to be avoided. It is an inevitable consequence of work on values and a sign that we are pursuing some of the most important questions.

Outline

I. This series of lectures is designed to meet a number of goals.
- **A.** The lectures are aimed at giving you information regarding both abstract theories and concrete issues.
- **B.** They aspire to lay out important patterns of reasoning.
- **C.** They are intended to introduce a range of philosophical strategies.
- **D.** They are meant to provoke and stimulate your own thinking.

II. The really fundamental questions of our lives are questions of value.
- **A.** There are questions of choice in a life. What is it that is really worth striving for? What is it that makes a life worth living?
- **B.** There are deeper questions regarding the nature of value itself. Is all value subjective?
- **C.** There are questions about the particular situation in which we find ourselves. Is value something that is merely culturally defined? How does death affect questions of value?

III. Socrates held that "The unexamined life is not worth living."
- **A.** That quote comes from the *Apology*, Plato's dialogue about the trial of Socrates, who was condemned to death by the people of Athens in 399 B.C.
- **B.** Some have thought the judgment too harsh. But at least this much is true: The unexamined life will never *know* whether it is worth living.
- **C.** The first two objectives of the course are, therefore:

  Objective 1: To develop a deeper understanding of value, in both the abstract and the concrete.

  Objective 2: To apply that deeper understanding toward Socrates's goal of an examined life.

IV. The course is designed to examine all kinds of questions regarding all kinds of value.
- **A.** Philosophy should not be thought of as an isolated discipline.
  1. Materials will be included from psychology, economics, decision theory, and game theory.
  2. Economics is often thought of as a science regarding money, but the central concept of economics is the concept of utilities, an abstract measure of satisfaction in terms of what an individual values.
  3. Materials will be drawn from sociology and criminology, political science, theoretical biology, and even bits of physics and computer science.
  4. Questions of value appear at the core of some of our most serious literature; the course will draw on literary sources, as well.
- **B.** Many of the questions at issue are abstract questions, but the course will also use concrete cases.

C. Drawing from these resources, two further objectives of the course are:

Objective 3: To offer perspectives from a range of disciplines with which to approach questions of value.

Objective 4: To introduce a set of conceptual tools applicable to cases within your own experience.

V. Although ethics will be important to the course, these lectures are better thought of as a course in the broader discipline of *axiology*.

A. Axiology is the study of values in general, including ethical, epistemic, and aesthetic values.

B. The contrast between ethics and axiology is evident in the strange case of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

1. The *Nicomachean Ethics* is universally recognized as one of the landmarks of ethical thought.

2. But it looks strange to a modern eye: It contains treatments of the intellectual virtues, rationality, and friendship—what do those have to do with ethics?

3. The explanation is that the *Nicomachean Ethics* takes a range of values as its subject; it might better be called the *Nicomachean Axiology*.

C. We can then add a fifth objective for the course:

Objective 5: To develop an appreciation for the range and interrelationship between different categories of value.

VI. There is an important further objective as well:

Objective 6: To cultivate conceptual skills and philosophical sensitivities crucial to a serious approach to questions of value.

A. Conceptual clarity is a philosophical hallmark.

1. It might, therefore, seem that the course should start with a definition of *value*.

2. It is impossible, however, to define all terms without circularity.

3. Often, as in the case of ethical and value concepts, we have a cluster of concepts that is indefinable in any other terms.

4. A seventh objective will be:

Objective 7: To obtain a clearer understanding of the nuances of our cluster of value concepts.

B. Philosophy also emphasizes rational argument.

1. The philosopher's search is for rationally compelling reasons for belief.

2. The goal is reasoned, rational, and supportable views, rather than off-the-cuff opinions.

3. The eighth objective of the course is:

Objective 8: To develop a deeper understanding of rational argument regarding questions of value.

VII. It is possible to offer a road map of the course in terms of overlapping strands of thought.

A. One strand is a family of questions regarding the basic nature of value.

B. A second strand is a group of challenges to the very idea of value: relativism, the question of subjectivity, and free will and determinism.

C. The course includes a range of lectures on specific issues, including issues that overlap with economics and the law.

D. The fourth strand of the course is the choice of values in a life: on what makes a life a good life.

Suggested Reading:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I: "The Good for Man," sections 4–9.

Plato, *Apology*, "The Trial of Socrates."

Questions to Consider:

1. If you were limited to just words, how would you define the word *red*? Do you think your definition would get the idea across to someone who was color-blind?

2. What are the things of most value in your life right now?

Lecture Two
Facts and Values

Scope: This lecture focuses on the fundamental contrast between questions of value and questions of fact, drawing from both literary and philosophical sources. It would be possible to have a complete factual picture of the universe without knowing the first thing about value—without even knowing which facts are *important*. The central importance of value is illustrated through thought experiments envisaging a universe without value, using Søren Kierkegaard's parable of the escaped lunatic and Jorge Luis Borges's story "The Garden of the Forking Paths."

The distinction between fact and value is emphasized in philosophers from Plato to Karl Popper, but it occurs most famously in David Hume's claim that one cannot derive an *ought* from an *is*. A careful examination is made of Hume's claim, its limits, and a challenge to the Humean claim by the philosopher John Searle. The lecture closes with reflections on the value of the search for value itself.

Outline

I. This lecture focuses on a major philosophical contrast: between questions of value and questions of fact.

- **A.** There is no denying that questions of fact play a major role in our lives.
  - **1.** As individuals, we want to know particular facts regarding the particular situations in which we find ourselves.
  - **2.** With the "we" taken collectively, we also want to know general facts. Are we alone in the universe?
- **B.** But there is also no denying that there is a basic distinction between fact and value.
  - **1.** The realm of objective fact is discovered at least paradigmatically through scientific exploration.
  - **2.** The realm of value is explored or developed through a different kind of thinking and a different kind of experience.

II. One way of emphasizing the difference is this: One could have a complete factual picture of the universe yet not know the first thing about value.

- **A.** One could know all the facts and not even know which facts are *important*.
  - **1.** The existence of other intelligent life in the universe is of value to us because we value both life and intelligence.
  - **2.** One could know all the facts about the history and methods of execution yet not know whether the death penalty is justified.
  - **3.** It is almost impossible for creatures like us to imagine viewing the world entirely in terms of fact and without a sense of value.
- **B.** Both psychology and neurophysiology underline the point that value pervades our lives.
  - **1.** There does not appear to be any psychological syndrome tied precisely to a world drained of value.
  - **2.** The sense of value in the brain appears to be distributed rather than localized (Patricia Smith Churchland).
- **C.** The contrast between fact and value can be made more personal, as well.
  - **1.** Your life, as you have lived it, has taken one path rather than others. What would have happened if I had taken this job rather than that one, or pursued a different interest, or married my first love?
  - **2.** It would be possible to know all the contingencies of your own history, all consequences of all possible choices, and still not know which branches you *should* have taken.

III. Reflection regarding life's "forking paths" and the importance of value in matters of fact can also be taken a bit further.

- **A.** In "The Garden of Forking Paths," the Argentinean poet Jorge Luis Borges explores the theme of life's alternative choices.
  - **1.** Borges reflected on the irony of his becoming blind when appointed director of the National Library of Argentina.

2. In "The Garden of Forking Paths," the character Ts'ui Pân retires to write a great book and construct a labyrinth. After his death, all that is found is a chaotic manuscript composed of meaningless and disconnected passages.
3. In the denouement of the story, Borges reveals that the manuscript is the labyrinth, but a labyrinth of branching possibilities.
4. There is a different perspective on life's branches when one is young and when one is old.

B. Although there is a deep distinction between facts and values, values are crucial to how we deal with facts.
1. In *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard tells the story of an escaped lunatic.
2. The lunatic attempts to escape recapture by speaking only the truth but is instantly found out.
3. What gives him away is not his mastery of facts but his lunatic handling of the facts, without recognition of when they are of value and when they are not.

IV. The distinction between facts and values has a long philosophical history.

A. Its earliest appearance in Western philosophy is perhaps in Plato's *Euthyphro*, regarding the kinds of disagreements that lead to "hatred and wrath" and those that do not.

B. In the 20th century, philosopher G. E. Moore marks the distinction in terms of what he calls the *naturalistic fallacy*.
1. The naturalistic fallacy, a failure of logical reasoning, is the attempt to deduce values from mere facts.
2. A similar distinction is often drawn between *descriptive* and *normative* approaches.

C. The philosopher Karl Popper offers an eloquent statement of the basic distinction:

> Decisions can never be derived from facts (or statements of facts), although they pertain to facts…It is impossible to derive a sentence stating a norm or a decision from a sentence stating a fact; this is only another way of saying that it is impossible to derive norms or decisions from facts. (*The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 1945)

D. The most famous philosophical passage regarding the distinction appears in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, published in 1739:

> The author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning,…when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of …*is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary…that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.

V. It is important to note qualifications and provisos regarding the "is/ought gap."

A. The distinction between facts and values is a conceptual one, which may not always be marked linguistically.

B. The distinction cannot be defended in precisely Hume's terms.
1. John Searle offers an example of an argument that does seem to derive an *ought* from an *is*:

> Jones said to Smith "I hereby promise to pay you five hundred dollars."
> So Jones promised to pay Smith five hundred dollars.
> So Jones put himself under an obligation to pay Smith five hundred dollars.
> So Jones is under an obligation to pay Smith five hundred dollars.
> So Jones ought to pay Smith five hundred dollars.

2. The move from fact to value here is subtle, involving our practices of making and expressing promises.
3. Searle's argument does seem to show that the deep conceptual distinction between facts and values cannot be captured simply by a distinction between *is* and *ought*.

Suggested Reading:

Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*, "The Garden of Forking Paths"; also in *Collected Fictions*, Andrew Hurley, trans.

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part I, "Of Virtue and Vice in General"; excerpted in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Hume's Ethical Writings*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Although there is a distinction between facts and values, facts do clearly play an important role in our evaluations. Draw on your own experience to provide an example of how facts can be important to values.
2. It is argued in the lecture that it is nearly impossible for beings like us to imagine living in a world of facts but without values. Is it possible to imagine living in a world of values but without facts?

Lecture Three
Lives to Envy, Lives to Admire

Scope: "What makes a life a *good* life?" is a question that is too rarely asked. This lecture emphasizes that question against the background of Plato's *Republic*, Plato's *Philebus*, and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. A basic difficulty hides behind the question: There are two different senses in which a life may be said to be good. A life may be enviable, in the sense of being a life good "from the inside" or "good for its bearer"—a life we might wish for ourselves or our children. Alternatively, a life may be admirable, in the sense of being a life of value beyond the individual.

There is a basic tension between these very different ideals of the good life. An enviable life may not be admirable, and many of the lives we most admire were far from enviable. Plato and Aristotle attempt to resolve the conflict by arguing for a mixed life. This lecture offers reasons to explain why the classical attempt at resolution is unsuccessful—why an essential tension remains. If the issue can be resolved at all, it will be resolved not as an abstract conceptual question but in the course of living.

Outline

I. What makes a life a good life?

- **A.** This is a question too rarely asked.
- **B.** In this lecture, I want to outline a basic difficulty that I think hides in the question.
  - **1.** Crucial themes will be drawn from two dialogues of Plato—the *Philebus* and the *Republic*—and from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.
  - **2.** But both Plato and Aristotle duck the basic problem I want to pose.

II. The crucial difficulty hiding in the question is this: There are two radically different ways in which a life can be thought of as "good."

- **A.** There are, first of all, lives that we envy.
  - **1.** One kind of enviable life would be a life of adventure and accomplishment.
  - **2.** Benjamin Franklin's and Teddy Roosevelt's might be enviable lives.
  - **3.** The life of Abraham Lincoln, in contrast, looks far from enviable "from the inside."
- **B.** There are also lives that we admire—lives of self-sacrifice and dedication, lives well spent.
  - **1.** The lives of Lincoln, FDR, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King might belong on this list.
  - **2.** Though admirable, we do not envy the living of those lives.

III. A passage in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* makes this kind of distinction.

- **A.** "These questions having been definitely answered, let us consider whether happiness is among the things that are praised or rather among the things that are prized" (W. D. Ross translation).
- **B.** Aristotle is talking about happiness rather than lives, but the difference is not ultimately very great.
  - **1.** Aristotle's term is *eudaimonia* (εύδαιμονία), often translated as "happiness."
  - **2.** A better translation is "well-being" or "human flourishing."

IV. In wanting a good life, is it an enviable life that you want or an admirable one?

- **A.** This simple distinction is not ultimately so simple: There are many kinds of enviable lives and many kinds of admirable lives.
- **B.** Much of the classical ethical tradition is an attempt to reconcile these different forms of good in a life.
  - **1.** The admirable lives are "lives of virtue." The enviable lives are lives "good for their bearers."
  - **2.** Plato's attempt in the *Republic* is to argue that they are ultimately the same: that the life of virtue *is* ultimately the life that is good for its bearer.
- **C.** There is something right in Plato's attempt.
  - **1.** An imagined life full of subjective pleasures and nothing else would be merely the life of a supreme spectator.
  - **2.** Real contact with other people, hard work, and achievement all require self-sacrifice.

3. This much is right: A life without elements of the admirable could not be fully enviable.

D. There is also something wrong in Plato's attempt.

1. A truly admirable life can be far from enviable "from the inside."
2. The enviable life cannot, therefore, be simply identified with the admirable life.

V. Our conclusion to this point is that a genuinely good life must be a mixed life: It must have elements of both the admirable and the enviable.

A. In that mixed life, it is the admirable that will be at the core.

B. This conclusion accords with Plato's in another dialogue—*Philebus*—and with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

VI. That pretty picture of the mixed life may still be too good to be true.

A. The mixed life would have the admirable at its core and the enviable at the edges. But then we have to decide where the edges are.

B. The spirit that drives the admirable will always urge that the border be pushed farther out.

C. The values of the mixed life are, therefore, unstable. Paradoxically, then, the best life to live will be one that is constantly struggling to become a different sort of life.

D. As a last attempt at resolution, one might propose a life of self-sacrifice devoted purely to the admirable: the path of sainthood or asceticism.

1. Given that the enviable includes genuinely good things—joys of family, curiosity, and self-expression—such a life would be denying itself genuinely good things (George Orwell).
2. In sacrificing for others, what would it be in other's lives one was sacrificing for? If the enviable, then even in this life, a tension between the two categories of value would remain.

E. The tension between the enviable life and the admirable life can perhaps be resolved not in the abstract but only in the course of living.

Suggested Reading:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.

Plato, *Philebus*, especially passages 11–12, 21–22, and 61–67.

———, *Republic*, Book IX.

Questions to Consider:

1. Name three lives you think of as enviable and three lives you think of as admirable. Precisely what is it about those lives that leads you to put them on those lists?
2. What are the core values that you would include in your vision of a good life overall? Which of those are aspects of an enviable life? Which are aspects of an admirable life?

Lecture Four
Foundations of Ethics—Theories of the Good

Scope: Ethical evaluation is more complicated than simple judgments of "right" and "wrong." We evaluate certain consequences as good and, thus, evaluate actions as good in their outcome. But we also evaluate actions as being right in terms of their motivations and evaluate agents as acting rightly. We evaluate people's characters, virtues, and vices.

What is the foundation of this complicated net of evaluations? There are two pure theories. One is built on the concept of the Good, which will be examined in this lecture. The other is built on the concept of the Right, examined in the next lecture.

This lecture focuses on theories built on the concept of the Good, emphasizing the forms of Utilitarianism that appear in the work of Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, and G. E. Moore. On first consideration, these theories seem clear and precise, founded on a core principle that could not be denied. Closer examination reveals major conceptual difficulties, making Utilitarianism less clear and more difficult to apply than it initially seems. More importantly, no attempt to ground ethics in the Good proves adequate in trying to understand some of our most basic ethical intuitions. Ursula Le Guin's story "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" is used to make the point that Good-based theories are blind to issues of justice. The work of W. D. Ross is used to emphasize the inadequacy of Good-based theories to the ethics of commitment.

Outline

I. What are the foundations of ethics?

- **A.** In *The Right and the Good*, the 20th-century philosopher W. D. Ross addresses the question in the title of a chapter: "What Makes Right Acts Right?"
- **B.** There are two pure theories of the foundations of ethics.
- **C.** Both theories are plausible, both capture something real, but they are diametrically opposed: If one is true, the other cannot be.
  - **1.** One is built on the idea that the core concept of ethics is the concept of the Good.
  - **2.** The other is built on the idea that the core concept of ethics is the concept of the Right.
- **D.** This lecture will concentrate on theories of the Good, with the next lecture devoted to theories of the Right.
  - **1.** One goal will be to present the theory of the Good in a full and compelling form.
  - **2.** A second goal will be to show that no pure theory of the Good can give us the whole truth regarding ethics.

II. The structure of Good-based theories is breathtakingly simple.

- **A.** There are things of positive value in the world. Actions that produce them are good actions. Actions motivated to produce them are ethically right.
- **B.** Any adequate theory of ethics must recognize the complexity of our ethical concepts.
  - **1.** Ethics is not simply a matter of "right" and "wrong," "on" and "off."
  - **2.** There are cases in which people do the right things for the wrong reasons. There are cases in which people do the wrong thing despite pure motives.
  - **3.** We evaluate things ethically at different levels.
- **C.** Good-based theories analyze those complexities as a derivative hierarchy.
  - **1.** At the base are things of genuine value: the good things.
  - **2.** Actions are good in terms of whether they produce good things.
  - **3.** Actions motivated by an attempt to produce the good are right actions.
  - **4.** Traits of character that result in right actions are virtues.

III. Good-based theories characterize much of Greek ethics but appear in a modern guise in the history of Utilitarianism.

- **A.** The first major figure in the history of Utilitarianism is Jeremy Bentham.

1. "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do" (*Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, 1780).
2. Bentham's Principle of Utility is as follows: That action is right that produces the greatest amount of pleasure for the greatest number of people.
3. Bentham "felt as if scales had fallen from his eyes" when he read Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*. The Benthamites became a major force in revising British law.

B. The second major figure is John Stuart Mill.
1. Bentham was godfather to John Stuart Mill, who was trained from infancy to be a philosopher.
2. Mill's form of the Principle of Utility differs somewhat from Bentham's: That action is right that produces the greatest *happiness* for the greatest number.
3. In calculating utility, Mill distinguished classes of pleasure: "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."

C. The third figure in the history of Utilitarianism is G. E. Moore.
1. Moore was not convinced that pleasure or happiness are the only goods.
2. In Moore's formulation, that action is right that produces the greatest good. A good for a greater number of people is itself a greater good.
3. Moore's formulation seems inferior in terms of clarity but is perhaps the best in terms of transparency of structure.

IV. Despite their long philosophical pedigree and their beautiful simplicity, there are compelling reasons to think that no Good-based theory can be correct.

A. A first example can be constructed in terms of great and widespread happiness, bought at the cost of a single individual.
1. If Utilitarianism were right, there would be some payoff for a large number of people, at some cost to the individual, that would be not only ethically right but ethically obligatory.
2. That seems clearly incorrect. Utilitarianism, therefore, leaves out considerations of justice and is, thus, inadequate as a complete theory of ethical foundations.

B. A similar example is offered in Ursula Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas":
1. "In the room a child is sitting. It could be a boy or a girl. It looks about six, but actually is nearly ten. It is feeble-minded. Perhaps it was born defective, or perhaps it has become imbecile through fear, malnutrition, and neglect. It is afraid…'I will be good,' it says. 'Please let me out. I will be good!'"
2. Were the child released, "the prosperity and beauty and delight of Omelas would be destroyed…those are the terms."

C. W. D. Ross uses the ethical importance of promises as an argument against G. E. Moore's Utilitarianism.
1. It would be wrong for me to break a promise to you simply because some slightly greater good could be produced for someone else (me, perhaps) by breaking it.
2. Even Moore's Utilitarianism indicates that would be the right thing to do. It therefore fails to do justice to the ethics of commitment.

D. Good-based theories, then, cannot offer at least the whole truth about the foundations of ethics.

Suggested Reading:

Ursula Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," reprinted in Louis P. Pojman, *The Moral Life: An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature*, pp. 265–271.

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter II, "What Utilitarianism Is."

W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, chapter II, "What Makes Right Acts Right?"

Questions to Consider:

1. From your own experience, can you think of examples in which (a) the ethically right choice to make in a situation might not have been (b) the choice that would have produced the greatest benefit?
2. How would you respond to someone who tried to defend the principle of Omelas—where many benefit at the cost of a single child—as an ethical principle?

Lecture Five

Foundations of Ethics—Theories of the Right

Scope: As outlined in the previous lecture, there are two pure theories of the foundations of ethics: theories built on the concept of the Good and theories built on the concept of the Right. This lecture concentrates on the most famous attempt at a Right-based theory: that of Immanuel Kant. Kant's attempt is to ground ethics entirely in motive, with no considerations of consequences at all. To paraphrase Kant, "nothing could be called good without qualification except a *good will*."

How can an emphasis on motive alone be sufficient to ground *all* ethical evaluation? This lecture traces Kant's reasoning to his Categorical Imperative, designed as a conceptual litmus test for right and wrong. Despite the breathtaking boldness of Kant's attempt, it faces a number of serious difficulties. The description of an action or "maxim" used in the Categorical Imperative can skew its results significantly. Some cases seem to pass Kant's tests but are morally wrong. Although it seems to work in a few limited cases, broader application of the Categorical Imperative requires considerations of consequence and, thus, fails as a pure Right-based theory.

In the end, neither a pure theory based on the Good nor a pure theory based on the Right proves adequate.

Outline

I. In this lecture, as in the last, the issue is the foundations of ethics: What makes something ethically right?

- **A.** One type of pure theory is based on the concept of the Good.
  - **1.** The structure of Good-based theories is hierarchical: Good states of affairs are fundamental, with evaluations of right action, of people, and of virtues in terms of whether they produce good states of affairs or not.
  - **2.** Good-based theories prove inadequate because of conceptual problems regarding justice, individual rights, and the ethical force of commitment.
- **B.** The alternative is a Right-based theory.
  - **1.** Here the foundation is not good results but right actions.
  - **2.** The core concept in Right-based theories is motive.

II. The purest development of a Right-based theory is that of Immanuel Kant.

- **A.** For Kant the foundation of ethics is simply the good will: "Nothing in the world…can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a good will" (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 1785).
- **B.** Kant is a primary example of a philosopher with a rich inner life but with almost no sign of an outer life.
- **C.** Kant's writing is often far from clear, but he is perfectly clear about foundations in his moral theory: "The good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes or because of its adequacy to achieve some proposed end; it is good only because of its willing, i.e., it is good of itself."
- **D.** How can such a theory work? Kant offers a chain of linked ideas, based on the notion that the only thing good without qualification is a good will.
  - **1.** The core of the good will, Kant says, is the concept of duty.
  - **2.** Duty is action on principle. The idea of principle is the idea of something that applies universally, everywhere and to everyone.
  - **3.** Kant thinks that formal condition will be enough to give the theory moral content.

III. Kant's Categorical Imperative is intended as a litmus test of moral action.

- **A.** In considering an action, we are to ask ourselves whether we can "will that the maxim of our action become a universal law," applying everywhere and to everyone. If we can, the act is permissible. If we cannot, it is morally wrong.
- **B.** One example Kant gives is promising: May I make a promise with the intention not to keep it?

1. Kant's answer is a firm "no."
2. Were I to universalize that action, I would have to say it is acceptable in all cases to make a promise with no intention to keep it.
3. But in that case, promising would lose its sense—there could no longer be an institution of promising.
4. In attempting to universalize my action, I reach a contradiction and, thus, the action is wrong.

C. Another example Kant gives is lying.
1. Universal permission to lie would destroy the convention of truth-telling.
2. Lies would, therefore, become impossible.
3. I cannot consistently will that my action become a universal law.

D. A third example is suicide; one cannot universally will people to kill themselves.

E. In such a theory, the good slips in only through the side door. To secure one's happiness is indirectly a duty just because extreme unhappiness can cause one to violate other duties.

IV. Kant's is a valiant attempt at a Right-based theory, but virtually no one working in ethics today thinks it succeeds.

A. A first major problem is the problem of description.
1. In a case in which I am considering discontinuing life support for a parent, I can give two very different descriptions of the action:
   a. Allowing a parent to die with dignity when he or she is beyond all hope of regaining consciousness.
   b. Doing something that will result in the death of a parent from whom I will receive a substantial inheritance.
2. Under one description, the act is universalizable and, therefore, passes Kant's test. Under the other description, it does not.
3. The Categorical Imperative gives us no rule for deciding which is the right description and is, therefore, insufficient as a moral guide.

B. The philosopher R. M. Hare poses a second problem using the example of a fanatical Nazi.
1. The fanatical Nazi thinks all Jews should be extinguished.
2. He may be willing to universalize: "If I were a Jew, I too should be extinguished."
3. If so, he has passed Kant's test, but the action considered is morally monstrous.

C. A third problem is whether Kant's theory is a pure Right-based theory.
1. If pure, the theory is supposed to turn on the good will alone, with no considerations of mere consequences.
2. Kant gives very few examples. Only in those that turn on institutions of promising and truth-telling does universalization give us a true contradiction.
3. In most examples, universalization merely offers a vision of horrible consequences.
4. Despite Kant's attempt, therefore, consequences still appear to be playing a major role: it is not a pure Right-based theory.

V. In these two lectures, we have considered two attempts at pure theories of ethics: theories based on the concept of the Good and theories based on the concept of the Right.

A. Neither pure theory seems adequate.

B. Any better theory will have to incorporate considerations of both the Good and the Right.

Suggested Reading:

Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, first section: "Transition from the Common Rational Knowledge of Morals to the Philosophical."

Questions to Consider:

1. One problem presented for Kant's account was the problem of description. This may be a problem that extends beyond Kant: The same act may look morally acceptable under one description and not under another. Can you draw some examples from your own experience?
2. The last two lectures have argued that neither a pure Good-based theory nor a pure Right-based theory can prove adequate. If you were to build a theory with the best of both, what would it look like?

Lecture Six
Thoughts on Religion and Values

Scope: It may seem strange that questions of value have been raised in previous lectures with little or no mention of religion. This lecture explains why most contemporary philosophers think that values not only *can* be talked about independently of religion but that they *should* be.

The lecture presents and examines an argument from Plato's *Euthyphro* that remains forceful against any Divine Command theory of ethics. The tension between religious belief—at least belief that includes a heaven and hell—and genuinely ethical action is also considered. The final question raised is whether religious belief is rational. Here, a distinction is drawn between *evidential rationality*—whether there is evidence that supports a belief—and *pragmatic rationality*—whether a particular belief has pragmatic benefits. If the current philosophical consensus is right, there is no compelling conceptual argument and no scientific evidence that God exists. Religious belief does not qualify as rational in an evidential sense. The question of the pragmatic rationality of religious belief remains open.

Outline

I. Although questions of value have been addressed in previous lectures, we have not yet talked about religion.
- **A.** That may seem incredibly strange: How can you possibly talk about values without talking about religion?
- **B.** Most contemporary philosophers think that you not only can talk about values independently of religion, but that you should.

II. The view that finds it strange to talk about values without religion is the view that values are grounded in religion.
- **A.** In part, that may be an empirical belief: that people who do not share your religion do not act ethically. If so, the view is eminently contestable.
- **B.** In part, this is a conceptual rather than an empirical claim.
  - **1.** Actions are right, good, and obligatory because God says they are.
  - **2.** A view like this appears in the Declaration of Independence.

III. In the *Euthyphro*, Plato offers an argument against Divine Command theories that is still compelling.
- **A.** Is the holy holy because the gods approve it, or do they approve it because it is holy?
- **B.** Is this action right because God commands us to do it, or does God command us to do it because it is right?
- **C.** Anyone who thinks God himself has moral worth has to take the second option: God commands it because it is right. But then whether something is right is something beyond God—a standard that guides even him.
- **D.** Whatever grounds ethics, it cannot be divine command.

IV. A second argument reveals a tension between ethics and religious belief.
- **A.** For many religions, action in this life is rewarded or punished in the next life.
- **B.** But action for reward or punishment is not genuinely ethical action. Far from grounding ethical action, this form of religious belief would seem to make it more difficult for a believer to act ethically.
- **C.** Does this really show that ethics and religion are incompatible?
  - **1.** Not every religion has a heaven and hell.
  - **2.** A religious believer might do the right thing simply because it is the right thing. But the tension remains: If one is a believer in heaven and hell, how can one be certain that reward is not one's motivation?

V. There are also other value questions regarding religion. Even if there is neither logical proof nor scientific evidence for the existence of God, we can still ask whether religious belief is a good thing.
- **A.** The external question: Has religious belief produced more good or more harm in human history?
  - **1.** In "Ideas That Have Harmed Mankind," Bertrand Russell clearly puts superstition and religion high on the list.

2. Has religious belief produced more good or more harm? It is unclear what the balance is, but it is not wholly positive.
3. There is a catch in this kind of evaluation, however. If one is a believer, souls saved will count in favor of the good benefits of religious belief.
4. On this line of reasoning, there is at least no non-question-begging evidence that religion has been a good thing from an external perspective.

B. One internal question: Is religious belief rational?
1. The argument that religious belief is *not* rational uses an *evidential* notion of rationality.
2. An argument that religious belief *is* rational can be made using a *pragmatic* notion of rationality. It is often proposed that religiously based marriages are longer lasting, for example, or that those with religious belief have fewer illnesses or more rapid recoveries.
3. Here, two different concepts of rationality—the evidential and the pragmatic—are in head-on conflict.
   a. The evidential concept is well represented by the following statement: "It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone, to believe anything on insufficient evidence" (W. K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief").
   b. The pragmatic, or what can be called economic rationality, is based on the notion that you should act so that you maximize expected benefits.

C. Is religious belief (pragmatically) rational after all? Here, some provisos are in order:
1. It is important to know whether the pragmatic benefits claimed for religion truly hold. Results from the Barna Research Group indicate that divorce rates are higher among Christians and Jews than among atheists and agnostics.
2. There are intriguing studies that link regular attendance at religious services with better immunological response and longer survival with AIDS, for example.[*] But religious involvement may offer a clear support community; it may be community rather than religion that we need.
3. Pragmatic considerations cannot themselves produce genuine belief any more than thoughts of heaven and hell can produce genuine ethical action.

Suggested Reading:

Plato, *Euthyphro*.

Bertrand Russell, *Bertrand Russell on God and Religion*, "Ideas That Have Harmed Mankind."

Questions to Consider:

1. It is argued in this lecture that genuinely ethical action involves doing the right thing simply because it is the right thing, without hope for reward or fear of punishment. If so, is there any difference between the character of ethical action in the case of religious and nonreligious people?
2. What do you consider the possible virtues and potential vices of religious belief?

[*] Sephton, Sandra E., et al., "Spiritual Expression and Immune Status in Women with Metastatic Breast Cancer: An Exploratory Study," *The Breast Journal* 7 (2001), 345–353; Ironson, Gail, et al., "The Ironson-Woods Spirituality/ Religiousness Index Is Associated with Long Survival, Health Behaviors, Less Distress, and Low Cortisol in People with HIV/AIDS," *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 24 (2002), 32–48.

Lecture Seven
Life's Priorities

Scope: This lecture is less an abstract investigation than an exercise in figuring out your own priorities: a concrete attempt to figure out what is really of value to you. As Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." A simple method is outlined for examining one's own life and priorities among one's own values. The results can be both insightful and surprising.

The lecture draws from Plato's test in the *Philebus* in considering different kinds of life, the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental goods emphasized in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and the wisdom behind common sayings, such as "Be careful what you want, because you just might get it." The classical sources are always structured as a search for the "highest good." It is argued that a single "highest good" is implausible: Life has too many radically different good things to offer.

Outline

I. If you have something precious, something that must be spent rather than simply held, you will want to spend it well.

- **A.** You *do* have something precious that must be spent rather than held: your life.
- **B.** Just as you would want to choose the best of available books, you will want to choose the best of available lives.
- **C.** Choosing is not all there is to life.
  - **1.** One of the good things in life is a character that allows one to weather its storms. The Stoics took this view to an extreme, attempting to develop a character that would make one impervious to all external threats (Seneca and Epictetus).
  - **2.** Unfortunately, that can also make you impervious to the good things that come by chance.

II. What do you want from life? In the sense at issue here, this is simply a question of priorities.

- **A.** "The unexamined life is not worth living" (Socrates).
- **B.** Figuring out the structure of your values—an exercise in pragmatic psychology—should not be particularly difficult.

III. The goal is a structured list of priorities in a life.

- **A.** We can start with a random list of good things in a life:

Accomplishment	Freedom	Recreation
Intelligence	Fame	Honesty
Love	A good education	Adventure
Fun	A big house	A nice car
Money	Entertainment	Creativity
Contentment	Leisure	Knowledge
A fulfilling sex life	Enjoyment	Wisdom
A good job	Happiness	Generosity
Children	Spirituality	Self-discipline
Long life	Romance	Talent
Travel	Safety	Good health
Recognition	Friendship	Respect
Vacations in the Bahamas		Meaningful work
Contribution to something beyond oneself		

- **B.** The next step is to fill in the gaps: What is important that has been left out?
- **C.** Redundancies and near-redundancies can be consolidated with subcategories:

Recognition
Respect

Fame

D. It is important to include concrete realities as well as abstract ideas.

E. It is important to avoid dangerously vague categories, such as "happiness." What we need to know is precisely what would make you happy.

F. Most people go through their lives without ever determining what they value most. This list enables you to determine what you *do* want in life.

G. With your structured list in hand, focus on the most important things to you.
- **1.** Plato's test in the *Philebus*: Consider love, recognition, and talent. If you could have only one of these, which would it be?
- **2.** A less crude test is to distribute 100 *value points* among these.

H. Some things on the list will have intrinsic value, whereas some will have merely instrumental value.
- **1.** Aristotle's example of something with merely instrumental value is money.
- **2.** The $20-million thought experiment shows that Aristotle is right.

IV. Establishing life priorities is important for three reasons.

A. "Be careful what you want, because you just might get it."

B. People sometimes work very hard for something, then act very peculiarly when they get it.

C. If one knows what one really wants, there may be easier ways to get it.

V. Some things, such as health and freedom, are prerequisite or transparent goods.

A. "If we've got our health, we've got just about everything." Health is a prerequisite to enjoying other goods.

B. Freedom is a fundamental, though "transparent," good. Without freedom, we cannot seek other things we value.

VI. Is there a single "highest good"?

A. Aristotle gives an argument in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that not all goods can be instrumental goods but also assumes a single intrinsic good.

B. Your map of priorities will probably show a rich plurality of things as intrinsic goods.

Suggested Reading:

From the Stoics: Epictetus, *Enchiridion*; Seneca, "On Tranquility of Mind."

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, chapters 1–3.

Plato, *Philebus*, passages 21–22.

Questions to Consider:

1. Take a piece of paper, and work from the list of good things in life above. Add what is missing in terms of what you value, eliminate redundancies, and organize the list into major categories. What does your list of priorities look like?

2. Now distribute 100 value points among your major categories. Which things are most important to you?

Lecture Eight
The Cash Value of a Life

Scope: The Ford Pinto had a rear-mounted gas tank that resulted in hundreds of burn deaths. In the course of litigation, it emerged that Ford had decided not to install an $11 device that would have prevented those deaths. This decision was based on a cost-benefit analysis that estimated the value of a human life at $200,000.

This concrete case raises abstract questions regarding the value of a human life. It cannot be literally true that human lives are of *infinite* value. In light of a series of thought experiments, it appears that there are conceptual difficulties even in the claim that human lives are of *equal* value. It is proposed that a calculation such as Ford's is offensive because the value of human life is *incommensurable* with monetary values. The final question examined is whether human lives are commensurable with other values: Are there things worth dying for?

Outline

I. In this lecture, the concrete case of the Ford Pinto is used to raise a series of abstract questions regarding the value of human life.

- **A.** Manufactured from 1971 to 1980, the Ford Pinto was designed to compete with Volkswagen and Japanese imports. Lee Iacocca's specifications were that the Pinto was not to weigh an ounce over 2,000 pounds nor was it to cost a penny over $2,000.
- **B.** The Pinto's rear-mounted gas tank was an invitation to disaster, resulting in at least 500 burn deaths.
- **C.** In preproduction, a different gas tank placement was considered but rejected because it took up too much trunk space.
- **D.** The problem could also have been solved at the cost of $11 per car with a fire-prevention device in the gas tank. That option too was rejected.
- **E.** Ford's decision not to fix the problem was based on a cost-benefit analysis.

II. Cost-benefit analysis calculates potential benefit and potential cost for each available option.

- **A.** That option is preferred that has higher *expected utility*. For each option, you calculate probabilities of different outcomes times the potential gains given those outcomes, and add them for the expected utility of each option.
- **B.** Shall I buy a lottery ticket or not?
  1. If I do not buy it, I have 100 percent probability of keeping the dollar in my pocket. My expected utility is $1.
  2. If I do buy a ticket, giving me two sets of numbers for $1, I have odds of 2 in 45 million of winning $11 million dollars. My expected utility is 48 cents.
  3. The economically rational thing to do is to maximize expected utility. I do not buy the ticket.

III. The details of Ford's cost-benefit analysis came out in litigation.

- **A.** The potential cost of the $11 fix was expected to come to $137 million over the run of production.
- **B.** The potential benefit was calculated at $49.5 million.
  1. Ford predicted 2,100 vehicles burned without the extinguisher, 180 serious burn injuries, and 180 burn deaths.
  2. Burn injuries were estimated at $67,000. The value of a human life was estimated at $200,000, which was only slightly less than the $200,725 value of a human life used in a 1972 report from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

IV. What is the value of a human life? A standard answer is that each life is of infinite value.

- **A.** That cannot be correct. If every life were of infinite value, it would follow that a single life was worth the same as any number of lives. In choosing between the loss of a single life and the loss of billions, the choice would be arbitrary.

B. Were every life of infinite value, any two lives would be of precisely the same value. We do not seem to believe that either.
  1. If we could save only one life, the life of (a) a healthy 18-year-old or (b) a healthy 80-year-old, it would seem better to save the life of the 18-year-old.
  2. At best, we have to say that any two lives are of equal value if considered as a whole.

C. There are other cases in which we do not seem to consider lives to be equal.
  1. Were you able to save only the life of (a) a drug-addicted pimp or (b) a promising young cancer researcher, which would you save?
  2. One might defend the claim that the two are equal *as lives*—it is the other things in the lives that are of unequal value. But our lives are what they are because of their content.

D. The conclusion seems to be this: The claim that all lives are equal can be defended only if it is reduced to a minimal claim.
  1. Universalizability does entail that one life is not worth more than another just because it is A's rather than B's. Every life is someone's life.
  2. In terms of content, we must face the fact that the value of human lives may be very unequal.

V. What, then, is so horrible about the Pinto calculation?

A. What is horrible may not be placing a value on life but placing a monetary value on life.
  1. The value of (a) lives and (b) money may be incommensurable.
  2. Ford's analysis might also be given a different interpretation. On that interpretation, the company was calculating not the value of a life but merely how much it might be sued for.

B. Is there anything worth dying for?
  1. Most of us think that there are things worth dying for, but it is usually in order to save the life of another person.
  2. Are there other values worth dying for? Possibilities include:
    a. Sacrificing oneself in order to prevent a great deal of pain or suffering for other people.
    b. Sacrificing oneself for the sake of justice or freedom.
    c. Sacrificing oneself for the sake of accomplishment or abstract goals.

C. An important proviso is that it is one's *own* life one is sacrificing in the instances above.
  1. We think very differently about someone who sacrifices *another person's* life to a particular end.
  2. That violation is a violation of quite fundamental rights.
  3. There are many historical cases in which people have slaughtered scores in the pursuit of some greater good or abstract ideal. It is far from clear that *any* such case was justified.

Suggested Reading:

Matthew D. Adler and Eric A. Posner, *Cost-Benefit Analysis: Legal, Economic, and Philosophical Perspectives*.

Douglas Birsch and John H. Fielder, *The Ford Pinto Case: A Study in Applied Ethics, Business, and Technology*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Is there a better way to make the kinds of decision Ford made in the Pinto case? What decision procedure would you recommend to a major corporation?

2. Many people would consider dying in order to save someone they love. Is there anything *other* than saving lives that you think is worth dying for?

Lecture Nine
How Do We Know Right from Wrong?

Scope: This lecture examines a range of positions in the attempt to construct a better theory of ethical knowledge. Reasons are given for thinking that the Skeptic's gambit, which would deny the possibility of any ethical knowledge, is a mere rhetorical flourish. A. J. Ayer's Emotivism claims that ethical judgments are mere expressions of feelings, which would also exclude the possibility of ethical knowledge. Emotivism is essentially a theory of ethical language and is found to be inadequate on that basis.

What kind of knowledge *is* ethical knowledge? A Platonic view of ethical perception, a notion of an innate and infallible conscience, and a Euclidean view of derivations from self-evident ethical axioms are all shown to be inadequate. Much of the apparent contrast between (a) ethical knowledge and (b) scientific and mathematical knowledge, however, relies on outdated views of scientific and mathematical knowledge. With a better understanding of these other forms of knowledge, it can be argued that ethical knowledge is similarly grounded in considerations of consistency and experience. Ethical knowledge may also have an important source in our capacity for empathy.

Outline

I. This lecture broaches a question in the epistemology of ethics.
- **A.** How do we know that human life has such an important value? How do we know right from wrong?
- **B.** The attempt will be to review a range of theories that prove inadequate, with some first steps toward a better theory.
- **C.** The working assumption is that we *do* know things about ethics: that people have rights, for example, and that it is wrong to violate those rights. We know that we have obligations to family, friends, and humanity at large.

II. There are two approaches that would deny the possibility of ethical knowledge.
- **A.** The first is Ethical Skepticism.
  - **1.** Skepticism generally relies on raising some *possibility* that one might be wrong, followed by "So you don't really *know*, do you?"
  - **2.** If converted into a real argument, the Skeptic would have to maintain that if there is any *possibility* of being wrong about something, we cannot claim to know it.
  - **3.** None of our knowledge is infallible in that sense; what knowledge demands is simply that we have hit on the truth and have reasons to think we have.
- **B.** A. J. Ayer's Emotivism would also deny the possibility of ethical knowledge.
  - **1.** According to Emotivism, there are no ethical statements. Ethical terms are merely hoots and hollers, grunts and groans, used to express certain feelings:

    …if I say to someone, "You acted wrongly in stealing that money," I am not stating anything more than if I had simply said, "You stole that money."… I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said "You stole that money," in a peculiar tone of horror, or written with the addition of some special exclamation marks. (A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*)

  - **2.** In such a theory, there is no ethical truth, and thus, there can be no ethical knowledge.
  - **3.** Emotivism is ultimately a theory about ethical language, but it fails to fit the facts regarding ethical language.

III. If we do have ethical knowledge, what kind of knowledge is it?
- **A.** One approach is to see ethical knowledge as somehow analogous to empirical knowledge.
- **B.** The Platonic approach regards both mathematical and ethical knowledge as involving a special kind of perception into a special kind of realm.
- **C.** A related view is that we know right from wrong by listening to our conscience.
  - **1.** The problem with conscience is in believing it offers an infallible guide.

2. Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* makes the point that one's conscience may be simply an echo of one's acculturation.

D. A Euclidean view of ethical knowledge appears in the Declaration of Independence. It is problematic that King George III would have found different axioms "self-evident."

IV. It may be that neither scientific nor mathematical knowledge is as clear cut as the two are often portrayed.

A. The notion that mathematical knowledge involves infallible insight into an abstract realm suffered a number of blows in the 20th century.

1. In the face of non-Euclidean geometries, it is hard to maintain that there is just one realm of mathematical truth.
2. The history of set theory is one in which Frege's "self-evident" axioms led directly to contradiction.
3. On a more contemporary view, mathematics works out patterns of conceptual consistency but does not tap into a separate Platonic reality.

B. The notion of scientific knowledge as a matter of just "looking to see" also fell victim to 20th-century attacks.

1. In looking through a microscope in order to find out something about amoebas, for example, one holds a large number of background assumptions steady—assumptions about optics, light, and the visible world.
2. According to the Quine-Duhem thesis, anything is learned from experience only with background assumptions in place.
3. Any assumption can be tested but only in the context of other assumptions.

C. In the contemporary view of both mathematical and scientific knowledge, we work from an initial set of assumptions and rebuild our ship at sea.

D. Ethical knowledge may be very much like that. Ethics is a matter of evaluation. We work toward ethical knowledge by evaluating our forms of evaluation themselves.

1. We test our modes of evaluation in terms of consistency but in a wider sense of *consistency* than is used in mathematics.
2. We also test modes of evaluation on the basis of moral experience.
3. John Rawls's *reflective equilibrium*—the idea that we judge specific cases in terms of general principles but also judge general principles in terms of specific cases—applies to both science and ethics.
4. There are also sources of ethical knowledge that are distinct: empathy and the possibility of putting ourselves in another's position.

Suggested Reading:

A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*, Preface; chapter I, "The Elimination of Metaphysics"; chapter VI, "Critique of Ethics and Theology."

Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, chapter 31, "You Can't Pray a Lie."

Questions to Consider:

1. What do you consider to be the most reliable form of knowledge? In what ways is ethical knowledge like it and in what ways is it unlike it?
2. This lecture focuses on the epistemology of ethics. Might there also be an ethics of epistemology? Are there scientific questions that we have an ethical obligation to pursue? Are there forms of scientific knowledge that it would be ethically wrong to pursue?

Lecture Ten
Cultures and Values—Questions of Relativism

Scope: This lecture begins a two-lecture examination of cultures and values. Are values culturally relative? As in earlier lectures, the question turns out to be more complex than it first appears. A central distinction is drawn among the following:

- Descriptive relativism (cultures differ in fundamental beliefs about value)
- Ethical relativism (actions right in one culture may be wrong in another)
- Prescriptive relativism (it is wrong to pass judgment on other cultures)

A standard argument that moves from one of these to the others is traced in the works of Sextus Empiricus, Michel de Montaigne, and the Marquis de Sade.

Drawing examples from both history and anthropology, it is argued that there are *some* actions that are right in one cultural context and not in another. Familiar arguments that move from descriptive relativism as a premise to ethical relativism and prescriptive relativism as conclusions, however, are shown to be fallacious.

Outline

I. This lecture raises a basic question regarding cultures and values: Are values culturally relative?
  A. The question hides a number of different questions that must be carefully disentangled.
  B. When we carefully distinguish questions, we find:
    1. There is a great deal of insight and truth in relativism.
    2. There are some dangerous ethical mistakes as well.

II. There is one form of relativism that is both interesting and true: that an action wrong in one cultural context may be right in another.
  A. This is a claim not merely about what is *believed* to be right and wrong in different cultures but about what *really* is right and wrong in different cultures.
  B. A historical example is that of usury.
    1. It can be argued that usury—borrowing money at interest—was a genuine vice in the context of the medieval seignorial system (Alasdair MacIntyre).
    2. But capitalism, by definition, is built on borrowing money at interest.
    3. What is a vice in one case is not in another because of differing economic contexts.
  C. An anthropological example regards parental obligations.
    1. In the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, the male role model, "parent," and legal guardian for Trobriand children is the mother's brother (Bronislaw Malinowski). A Trobriand male's obligations to his nieces and nephews are very strong, but his obligations to his biological children are relatively weak.
    2. An American male's obligations to his biological children are strong and to his nieces and nephews, relatively weak.
    3. There are genuinely different obligations because of a different social system of care for children.

III. Relativism is not usually introduced in this guarded form.
  A. Ethical relativism is usually put forward not in the guarded form argued for here but as an absolute and universal claim that *all* values are culturally relative.
  B. There are three different positions that are often confused:
    1. Descriptive relativism: The claim that cultures differ in their fundamental beliefs about value.
    2. Ethical relativism: An action right in one culture may be wrong in another; there are no universal moral truths.
    3. Prescriptive relativism: It is wrong to condemn or pass judgment on those with different cultural values.

C. Note that I have simplified standard terminology here. What is called *ethical relativism* is often termed *meta-ethical relativism*. What is called *prescriptive relativism* is often termed *normative relativism*.

IV. There is a standard relativistic argument often offered as a proof.

A. The argument moves from descriptive relativism to ethical relativism and to prescriptive relativism:

Step 1: Different cultures differ in their fundamental ethical beliefs.

Step 2: An action that is right in one culture may, therefore, be wrong in another. There are no universal moral truths; what is right and wrong varies from culture to culture.

Step 3: It is, therefore, wrong to condemn or pass judgment on those with different ethical values.

B. Such an argument appears in the work of Sextus Empiricus (A.D. 200) and in Michel de Montaigne (1500):

There are countries where, except for his wife and children, no one speaks to the king except through a tube…Where they cook the body of the deceased and then crush it until a sort of pulp is formed, which they mix with their wine, and drink it.

In short, to my way of thinking, there is nothing that custom will not or cannot do… (Montaigne, "Of Custom")

C. The move from descriptive to ethical relativism is also central to the violent pornography of the Marquis de Sade's *Justine*.

D. Relativism often represents an important stage in ethical maturity but a stage one must move beyond.

V. How good is the relativistic argument?

A. In order to support a universal ethical relativism in the second step, we would need a universal descriptive relativism in the first step: The claim that there are *no* values that hold across cultures.

1. Neither Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne, nor the Marquis de Sade offers reason to believe that universal claim.

2. It is not true: There is no culture that holds that it is ethical to kill children for sport, that one always ought to harm oneself, that we have an obligation to lie to each other, or that it is wrong to pass on cultural traditions.

3. No culture *could* hold such beliefs because it could not then survive as a culture.

4. The first step of the argument, therefore, fails to get off the ground.

B. Even if the first step held, the second step would not follow.

1. It would demand a fallacious move across Hume's "is/ought gap," from fact to value (Lecture Two).

2. It would also demand a move from statements about belief to statements about how things really are. Such a move is invalid in the ethical case, just as it is in the scientific case.

C. What of the move from ethical relativism in step 2 to prescriptive relativism in step 3?

1. Prescriptive relativism does not follow from ethical relativism.

2. Ethical relativism actually contradicts prescriptive relativism. If nothing is universally right or wrong (ethical relativism), then contrary to prescriptive relativism, it cannot universally be wrong to pass judgment on another culture.

VI. Relativism is a case in which people's standard motivations are often right, though their explicit formulations are almost always wrong.

A. The position defended in this lecture is a qualified form of ethical relativism: *Some* things may be right in one ethical context and not in another.

B. What follows is a qualified form of prescriptive relativism: It is wrong to pass *quick* or *precipitate* judgment on those who have different values. Be careful: Given different cultural contexts, different values *may* be as valid as one's own.

Suggested Reading:

Michel de Montaigne, "Of Custom."

Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Book One, chapters XII and XIII and mode 10 of chapter XIV.

David Wong, "Relativism," in *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer, pp. 442–450.

Questions to Consider:

1. The purpose of this lecture is to separate some important truths of relativism from some dangerous overgeneralizations. What, in your view, are the most important truths of relativism? What are the most dangerous overgeneralizations?
2. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." From your own experience, draw some examples of when that might be good advice and examples of when it might not.

Lecture Eleven
Cultures and Values—Hopi, Navajo, and Ik

Scope: Do different cultures have fundamentally different values? The two most notable attempts to answer that question involved anthropological fieldwork by the philosophers John Ladd and Richard Brandt. Brandt studied the Hopi and found only a small divergence between their values and those of contemporary America. Ladd studied the Navajo and found a radically different moral code.

How did Brandt and Ladd reach such contrary conclusions? One possibility is that Hopi ethics has little in common with Navajo ethics. Another explanation is that Ladd and Brandt use different criteria for what counts as an ethical belief. Descriptive relativism seems to be a simple factual claim but turns out to be far from simple and to involve deep conceptual issues, as well. This lesson is emphasized by a consideration of Colin Turnbull's work on the Ik of central Africa.

Outline

I. The last lecture focused on an apparently simple question that turned out to be far from simple: Are values culturally relative?

- **A.** In the course of that examination, three importantly different positions were distinguished:
  - **1.** Descriptive relativism: The claim that cultures differ in their fundamental beliefs about value.
  - **2.** Ethical relativism: An action right in one culture may be wrong in another; there are no universal moral truths.
  - **3.** Prescriptive relativism: It is wrong to condemn or pass judgment on those with different cultural values.
- **B.** This lecture concentrates on descriptive relativism.

II. The central question is whether there are *fundamental* ethical disagreements across cultures.

- **A.** The appearance of ethical difference may be merely superficial: Valuational deep-structures may be essentially identical.
- **B.** This appears to be true of "the experiment of Darius" in Herodotus, retold in Montaigne.
  - **1.** Darius asks the Greeks how much he would have to pay them to eat their dead. They react in horror.
  - **2.** Darius asks the Callatians of India how much he would have to pay them not to eat their dead but to burn them in the Greek manner instead. They react in horror.
  - **3.** The Greeks and Callatians may simply hold different quasi-factual disagreements about what the spiritual universe is like and, thus, what is an appropriate way of honoring one's dead. The fundamental values of honoring one's dead may be the same.
- **C.** The cases considered in the last lecture may be like this as well.
  - **1.** The prohibition against usury may simply reflect differences in economic context. There may be fundamental agreement that practices that would wreck the economy are to be regarded as serious threats.
  - **2.** The value of caring for children is the same in Malinowski's Trobriands and in contemporary America. It is only the care-delivery system that differs.

III. Are there differences between cultures that can be explained *only* as fundamental differences in ethical belief?

- **A.** The two most notable attempts to answer that question are offered by John Ladd, working among the Navajo (*The Structure of a Moral Code*), and Richard Brandt, working among the Hopi (*Hopi Ethics*).
- **B.** Do the Hopi have fundamentally different values?
  - **1.** Traditional Hopi beliefs are very different from those of most Americans.
  - **2.** Brandt found a number of differences he did not regard as fundamental: a harsher disapproval of intoxication and a disapproval of sexual relations between cousins of the same clan.
  - **3.** Brandt does think there is *one* fundamental ethical difference: the Hopi tolerate cruelty to animals in cases most Americans would not.
- **C.** Do the Navajo have fundamentally different values?

1. In John Ladd's reconstruction, the Navajo code is essentially egoistic: The goal of moral action is promoting the personal welfare of the agent.
2. According to Ladd, the welfare of others, the common good, and general altruism do not appear in Navajo ethics.
3. Ladd's analysis would indicate that Navajo ethics is very different from that of most Americans.

IV. Why is there such a divergence in the anthropological fieldwork of Brandt and Ladd?

A. One possibility is simply that the Navajo and Hopi are very different people.

B. Another possibility is that the different conclusions result from the fact that Brandt and Ladd approached their fieldwork in different ways.
1. Brandt wanted an "average" moral view and, therefore, worked with a range of informants.
2. Ladd picked out a single individual as a Navajo "moralist"—Bidaga, son of Many Beads.
3. Both anthropologists faced the problem of how to identify ethical codes or moral beliefs without confusing them with religious or factual beliefs.

C. Ladd drew his criteria for ethical belief from the work of the pioneering sociologist Emile Durkheim.
1. Durkheim specifies that "All morality appears to us as a system of rules of conduct"; thus, Ladd concentrated on explicit pronouncements of his informant.
2. Ladd interpreted Durkheim's "authority" of ethics in terms of "priority" and "legitimacy": Ethical considerations take priority over others and have a legitimacy intended to bind listener as well as speaker.

D. Brandt used different criteria to identify which beliefs were "ethical."
1. He studied *ethical affective reactions*, rather than just explicit statements.
2. In order to qualify as ethical, for Brandt, a reaction must be disinterested "…in the sense of not being causally dependent on any of the individual's personal desires or attachments for particular persons…"

E. The differences in methodological approaches to what counts as "ethical" go a long way toward explaining differences in Ladd's and Brandt's conclusions.

F. This example indicates that the simple question of descriptive relativism raises conceptual questions regarding our own categories: What counts as fundamental? What counts as ethical?

V. The best candidate for a culture that seems to hold values radically different from ours is the Ik.

A. British anthropologist Colin Turnbull went looking for the Teuso, a group of nomadic hunters and gatherers. He found the Ik instead, a people restricted to the mountains and forced to sustain themselves through subsistence agriculture.

B. The Ik way of life seems to be Thomas Hobbes's state of nature in *Leviathan*: a "time of Warre, where every man is Enemy to every man…"

C. Though the Ik may be the best candidate for a people with an entirely different set of ethical values, conceptual questions remain.
1. Turnbull translates *marang* as "good" and *marangik* as "goodness."

> …there is one common value…to which all Ik hold tenaciously. It is *ngag*, "food."…It is the one standard by which they measure right and wrong, goodness and badness. The very word for "good," *marang*, is defined in terms of food. "Goodness," *marangik*, is defined simply as food, or, if you press, this will be clarified as "the possession of food" and still further clarified as "*individual* possession of food." Then if you try the word as an adjective and attempt to discover what their concept is of a "good man," *iakw anamarang*, hoping that the answer will be that a good man is a man who helps to fill your own stomach, you get the truly Icien answer: a good man is one who *has* a full stomach. (Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People*)

2. Perhaps this translation is a mistake; perhaps *marang* should be not translated as "good" but as "to one's own benefit." On such an approach, *marang* and *marangik* would not be ethical terms at all; the Ik would be interpreted not as having a twisted code of ethics but as having lost a code of *ethics* entirely.

Suggested Reading:

Richard Brandt, *Hopi Ethics*, chapter XVI, "Ethical Relativism and Anthropology."

Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Imagine the possibility of finding a new group of people. What behavior on their part would convince you that there are deep and fundamental differences between their values and your own?
2. The point of this lecture is that the question of descriptive relativism is more complicated than the simple factual question it appears to be. Can you name other questions that appear to be simple factual questions but turn out to be much deeper than that?

Lecture Twelve
Evolution, Ethics, and Game Theory

Scope: Two areas of research promise a better understanding of social ethics than we have had in the past. One of these is sociobiology, introduced in the work of E. O. Wilson and further developed in the eloquent writings of Richard Dawkins. The other area of research is game theory, applied to questions of social dynamics. Interpreted in another way, these may also pose an intellectual threat to the idea of ethics, explaining away our ethical intuitions as nothing more than successful strategies.

This lecture outlines the basic ideas of game theory in some detail, as well as its relation to evolutionary theory and sociobiology. It shows that the apparent threat of these fields to ethics rests on a misunderstanding. What theories like these may be able to explain is the evolutionary history of our capacities for sympathy and ethical conceptualization. What we do with those capacities is still up to us.

Outline

I. In this lecture, I want to talk about two areas of recent work and their application to ethics.
- **A.** Evolutionary theory is applied to social organization in a number of recent thinkers, notably E. O. Wilson's work in sociobiology.
- **B.** Game theory, founded by John von Neumann, can be applied to social issues in similar ways.
- **C.** Both theories may help us to understand social organization and social ethics.
- **D.** Handled in another way, they may offer not a promise of understanding but an intellectual threat.
  - **1.** Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Bentham, Mill, and Moore all try to find an underlying structure that explains and justifies our ethical intuitions.
  - **2.** What if we find an underlying structure that explains our intuitions but fails to justify them?

II. The basic scientific question sociobiology attempts to answer is how to explain cooperation and altruistic behavior (E. O. Wilson, Richard Dawkins).
- **A.** The whole idea of evolution is that those animals that have more successful traits will pass those on through their genes.
- **B.** But in cooperation, you are benefiting someone else. In altruistically sacrificing for someone else, you are decreasing your chances to pass on your genes and increasing theirs.
- **C.** That would make cooperation and altruism look like losing evolutionary strategies. How, then, do we explain the fact that we find altruistic behavior and cooperative behavior in a number of species?
- **D.** The answer that sociobiology gives is still an evolutionary answer: Altruistic and cooperative behavior must be evolutionarily advantageous after all. Explanatory strategies include kin selection and group selection.
- **E.** A successful sociobiology might change our attitudes toward our ethical feelings quite radically.
  - **1.** In such an approach, ethics would appear to be a mere epiphenomenon of evolution.
  - **2.** Michael Ruse makes the implication clear: "Once we see that our moral beliefs are simply an adaptation put in place by natural selection, that is an end to it. Morality is no more than a collective illusion fobbed of on us by our genes for reproductive ends ("The Significance of Evolution").

III. Game theory can be understood as giving similar conclusions.
- **A.** Game theory stems from John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern's *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior* (1944). John Nash, whom you may remember from the book and film *A Beautiful Mind*, was also an important figure in the development of game theory.
- **B.** The goal of game theory is a theory of rational behavior in all situations of competition and cooperation.
  - **1.** Almost all game theory to date has focused on two-person games.
  - **2.** Almost all game theory to date has been on non-zero-sum games: games in which winnings do not have to balance losses.

3. Von Neumann was working for a theory of rational negotiation appropriate in a Cold War between two nuclear powers.

C. The most studied game in game theory is the "Prisoner's Dilemma."
1. Each of two prisoners (players) can confess or stonewall.
   a. If both stonewall, both get two years in prison.
   b. If one confesses and one stonewalls, the one who confesses goes free; the other serves five years in prison.
   c. If both confess, both get four years in prison.
2. The Prisoner's Dilemma has been thought to capture an essential tension between collective good and individual advantage.

D. In the iterated Prisoner's Dilemma, two players play a series of many games.
1. Their options in each game are to cooperate with the other player or to defect against him.
2. In the iterated Prisoner's Dilemma, strategies emerge. For example:
   a. All-Defect: Defects in all situations.
   b. All-Cooperate: Cooperates in all situations.
   c. Tit-for-Tat: Starts off cooperating, cooperates on a round if the other player cooperated on the previous round, defects if the other player defected.

E. Robert Axelrod ran computer tournaments in which game-theoretic strategies were pitted against each other. The winner was determined by the greatest number of points overall.
1. In the first tournament, the winner was tit-for-tat.
2. In the second tournament, despite the fact that tit-for-tat was clearly the strategy to beat, the winner was again tit-for-tat.
3. Axelrod and William Hamilton created a further tournament in which successive strategies reproduced and unsuccessful strategies did not, just as in evolution. Here again, the winner was tit-for-tat.
4. Tit-for-tat wins purely because it gets the most points overall. Yet it resembles the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," a principle that has appeared in one version or another in various cultures for millennia (Egypt, 2000 B.C.; the Zoroastrians, 700 B.C.; Confucius, 500 B.C.; Hinduism, 200 B.C.; the Jewish and Christian traditions).

IV. Game theory and sociobiology can both be read as making an unsettling suggestion regarding ethics.

A. The suggestion is that our ethical intuitions reflect nothing more than successful strategies.

B. Neither sociobiology nor game theory really undercuts our ethics.
1. Dawkins's book is *The Selfish Gene*, but the claim that we always act selfishly is either untrue or has been trivialized.
2. Our feelings have an evolutionary history, but that doesn't suggest we don't have those feelings or that they may not be right.

C. A simple point about choice puts all of this in perspective. Different people make different choices.
1. Evolution cannot explain why we always act selfishly because we do not always act selfishly.
2. Evolution cannot explain why we always act altruistically because we do not always act altruistically.
3. The most any such theory can explain is the fact that we have certain emotional and conceptual resources. Ethics is a matter of what we choose to do with them.

Suggested Reading:

Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, chapter 1, "The Problem of Cooperation."

Philip Kitcher, *Vaulting Ambition: Sociobiology and the Quest for Human Nature*, chapter 11, "The Last Infirmity."

Michael Ruse, "The Significance of Evolution," in *A Companion to Ethics*, edited by Peter Singer, pp. 500–510.

Questions to Consider:

1. Benjamin Franklin said "Honesty is the best policy." A genuinely ethical approach to honesty has to see it as more than merely a profitable policy, doesn't it?
2. Draw examples from your own experience in which people have sacrificed themselves altruistically for others and in which they have acted with a genuine spirit of mutual benefit from cooperation.

3. The point of this lecture was to argue that the understanding of social interaction promised by game theory and sociobiology does not threaten our conviction that we make genuinely ethical choices. Are there possible scientific results that *would* threaten that idea?

Timeline

c. 400–350 B.C.	Plato: Early period: *Apology*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro* Middle period: *Republic* Late period: *Philebus*
335–322 B.C.	Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, *Nicomachean Ethics*
c. 300 B.C.	Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*
c. 60 B.C.	Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*
c. A.D. 50	Seneca, "On Tranquility"
A.D. 135	Epictetus, *Enchirideon,* or *Manual*
A.D. 180	Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*
c. A.D. 300	Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*
A.D. 398	St. Augustine, *Confessions*
A.D. 524	Boethius, *Consolations of Philosophy*
1273	St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*
1588	Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*
c. 1600	William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
1660	Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
1689	John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*
1740	David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*
1762	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*
1776	Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*
1779	Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*
1780	Jeremy Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*
1781	Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*
1785	Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
1788	Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*
1818	Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
1843	Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*
1843	John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*
1844	Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*
1861–1865	American Civil War
1861	John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*
1865	John Ruskin, "Of Kings' Treasuries"
1880	Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov*
1884	Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*
1887	Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*

1889 ..... Beginnings of the Bloomsbury Group

1890 ..... William James, *Principles of Psychology*

1903 ..... G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*

1913 ..... Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead, *Principia Mathematica*

1921 ..... Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

1930 ..... W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*

1933–1945 ..... Rise of Nazi Germany

1938 ..... John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*

1939 ..... A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic*

1941 ..... Jorge Luis Borges, *The Garden of Forking Paths*

1944 ..... John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*

1945 ..... Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*

1946 ..... Bertrand Russell, "Ideas That Have Harmed Mankind"

1946 ..... Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*

1948 ..... Jean Piaget, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*

1949 ..... George Orwell, *1984*

1953 ..... Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

1954 ..... Richard Brandt, *Hopi Ethics*

1957 ..... John Ladd, *The Structure of a Moral Code*

1960 ..... Peter S. Beagle, *A Fine and Private Place*

1962 ..... Thomas S. Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*

1962 ..... Colin Turnbull, *The Forest People*

1964 ..... John Searle, "How to Derive 'Ought' from 'Is'"

1968 ..... Ford Motor Company Pinto Memo

1971 ..... John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*

1972 ..... Colin Turnbull, *The Mountain People*

1974 ..... Kidnapping of Patty Hearst

1975 ..... Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

1975 ..... E. O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*

1976 ..... Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*

1976 ..... Anne Rice, *Interview with a Vampire*

1976 ..... Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck"

1979 ..... Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions*

1981 ..... Assassination attempt on Reagan by John W. Hinckley

1981 ..... Bernard Williams, *Moral Luck*

1984 ..... Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

1984 ..... Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*

1985 ..... Philip Kitcher, *Vaulting Ambition: Sociobiology and the Quest for Human Nature*

1986 ..... Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*

1988 ..... Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*

1989 ..... Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life*

1993 ..... Michael Ruse, "The Significance of Evolution"

2000 ..... Jerry Fodor, *The Mind Doesn't Work That Way*

Glossary

Antebellum: "Prewar"; used in the United States to refer to the pre-Civil War period.

Antinomy: Two equally defensible yet contradictory positions, paired as thesis and antithesis. In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant offers a set of antinomies that he claims represent irresolvable conceptual conflicts in our thinking about the world.

Argument: A set of propositions designed to demonstrate a conclusion. A *valid* argument is one in which the conclusion follows from the premises. A *deductively valid argument* is one in which the connection is logically tight and in which it is logically impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to be false.

Axiology: That field of philosophy devoted to the study of value.

Axiom: A claim accepted as a premise without proof and from which other claims are derived as theorems. Euclid's is a familiar system of geometry in which theorems are derived from a small number of initial axioms.

Axiomatic: Organized in the form of axioms and derivations from them. Euclidean geometry has long been the model of an axiomatic system.

The Bloomsbury Group: Bloomsbury, a suburb of London, was the meeting place of a literary group started in 1899 with several famous members. The group included the writers E. M. Forster; Lytton Strachey; Virginia Woolf and her husband, Leonard Woolf; painters Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant; art critics Clive Bell and Roger Fry; and the economist John Maynard Keynes.

Categorical Imperative: The core moral principle in Kantian moral theory. The Categorical Imperative is intended as a litmus test of morality: Act only such that you could will the maxim of your action to become a universal law. Several different forms of the Categorical Imperative are outlined in Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.

Compatibilist strategy: In the context of the determinism argument, the strategy of challenging the assumption that free will and determinism are necessarily opposed. If they are not, the standard argument is invalid. If the argument merely *assumes* that the two are opposed rather than *proving* that they are, moreover, it merely begs the central question at issue.

Consequentialist: Any theory of ethics that holds that the moral value of an action is determined entirely by the consequences of that action.

Contradiction: Often represented in the form "P and not-P," a statement that both asserts some proposition P and denies P. If either part of a contradiction is true, the other cannot be, and thus, contradictions are treated as universally false.

Cost-benefit analysis: A widely used form of analysis in which a policy is judged by weighing its potential costs (widely defined) against its potential gains.

Counter-example: A single counter-instance offered to refute a generalization. A general statement that all cats are white, for example, can be refuted by the single counter-example of a cat that is not white.

Decision theory: An interdisciplinary field concerning primarily the rational structures of optimal decision-making but also the ways in which people actually make decisions.

Deductive: A pattern of reasoning that deduces a conclusion by strictly logical means. Deductive reasoning is characteristic of mathematics. It is often contrasted with inductive reasoning, characteristic of science generally, which draws a general conclusion on the basis of an experimental sample.

Deontological: Any moral theory that holds that morality is determined by moral principles above and beyond the consideration of consequences. Kant's theory is strictly *anti*-consequentialist and, therefore, deontological. Any theory that admits a source of morality beyond (or in addition to) considerations of consequences, however, will also count as deontological.

Descriptive: Used to designate a claim that merely reports a factual state of affairs rather than evaluating or recommending a course of action. Opposed to *normative*.

Determinism: The position that all events are determined and, thus, could not have been otherwise. Truth-and-Falsity Determinism is the view that it was true or false in the past that certain events would occur and, thus, they could not have been otherwise. Causal Determinism is the view that given past events and natural law, current events could not have been otherwise.

Deterrence theory: A position that justifies punishment on the grounds that punishing criminals will deter others from committing similar acts.

Difference principle: In Rawls's political philosophy, the claim that differences in the distribution of wealth in a society are justified only if they benefit the least well off.

Distributive justice: Justice or fairness in the distribution of goods or wealth.

Divine Command theory: The philosophical position that actions are right because commanded by God and wrong because prohibited by God. In a Divine Command theory, ethical value is entirely dependent on the will of God.

Duty *sans phrase*: In the ethics of W. D. Ross, one's final duty or obligation in a situation "all things considered."

Egoism: Psychological Egoism is the position that people act only so as to maximize their own self-interest. Ethical Egoism is the position that it is ethically right to act only so as maximize one's own self-interest.

Egoistic: Focused on maximizing one's own self-interest; self-centered.

Emotivism: The position that ethical utterances are mere expressions of feeling and, thus, make no literal statements at all. A.J. Ayer gives a clear outline of Emotivism in *Language, Truth and Logic*, though the position is further refined in later 20th-century philosophy.

Empirical: Deriving from experience of the world. *Scientific* is a rough synonym. An empirical test is a test based on experience. An empirical claim is a claim based on, or about, experience.

Empiricism: The philosophical movement that claimed that all knowledge about the world comes through experience, that is, through the senses. Prominent Empiricists include Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Mill.

Epicurean: In the line of thought represented by the philosophy of Epicurus, advocating a life that maximizes pleasure.

Epiphenomenon: A secondary or peripheral effect that is not itself part of a further causal chain.

Epistemology: That field of philosophy devoted to the study of knowledge and how we come to know things.

Equal opportunity: In hiring practices and workplace policy, the principle that positions are open without discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, age, and so forth.

Ethics: The field of philosophy that focuses on moral issues: ethically good actions, ethically right actions, rights, and obligations.

Euclidian geometry: Euclid's *Elements*, written around 300 B.C., contains the standard axiomatization of geometry familiar from high school. For millennia, Euclidean geometry has been the model for axiomatization of any body of knowledge.

Evolution: In biology, the theory advanced by Charles Darwin that explains the development and complexity of species through the process of natural selection. In this theory, characteristics that are well suited to the environment of a species are those that the species eventually comes to possess because, over many generations, individuals that possess those characteristics survive better and reproduce more successfully.

Expected utility: In economics, calculated by multiplying the potential benefit of an outcome by its probability. In a choice situation, different alternatives will typically have different probabilities of producing an outcome considered desirable—different expected utilities. Rational choice is defined in the fundamentals of economics as that which maximizes expected utility.

Fallacy: A common but logically fallacious form of argument; one in which premises appear to support a conclusion but in fact do not. The term is often used to refer to familiar types of logical mistakes that may be used to trick or mislead. For example, denial of the antecedent: "If he is a Republican, he must be a conservative. So if he is not a Republican, he must not be a conservative."

Fallacy of ambiguity: The fallacy committed when an argument relies for its plausibility on a term that is used in two different senses. Example: "Socrates is a man. Man covers the face of the globe. Therefore, Socrates covers the face of the globe."

Game theory: Closely related to decision theory, game theory is the mathematically idealized study of rational interaction in competitive and cooperative situations. Game theory was first developed in John von Neumann's and Oskar Morgenstern's *Theory of Games and Decision*s in 1944, with important later developments by John Nash and others.

Genealogy: Literally, the history of biological descent in a family. In Nietzsche's philosophy, the term is applied to the history of words and concepts.

Greater Goods defense: A theistic response to the problem of evil. If an omnipotent and beneficent God created the universe, why is there suffering and evil? The Greater Goods defense is the answer that without evil, a range of "greater goods" could not exist, including the "greater good" of human dignity in the face of adversity.

Guilt culture: In anthropology, the concept of a society whose moral views are based on a notion of individual guilt rather than public shame.

Hypothetical Imperative: The imperative that something be done in order to achieve something else. For example, "Pay your taxes so that you won't have to deal with the IRS." In Kantian moral theory, Hypothetical Imperatives are contrasted with the Categorical Imperative, to be followed for its own sake and taken to be the core principle of ethics.

Immortality: Living forever, either in a worldly existence or beyond.

Incommensurable: Term applied to two entities that are impossible to compare because there is no standard appropriate to both. In the philosophy of science of Thomas Kuhn and Feyerabend, two scientific theories are said to be incommensurable when their concepts are so different that translation between them is impossible and there can be no neutrally described crucial experiment adequate to decide between them.

Inductive: A type of argumentation that arrives at a generalization regarding an entire class of things on the basis of observations regarding smaller samples from that class. Inductive reasoning is characteristic of scientific reasoning in general. It is often contrasted with deductive reasoning, characteristic of mathematics, which deduces a conclusion by strictly logical means.

Instrumental good: Something is an instrumental good if it is good by virtue of some further thing of value that it is used to achieve or bring about.

Intellectual virtues: In Aristotle's philosophy, those virtues associated with rational understanding. Contrasted with moral virtues.

Intrinsic good: Something is an intrinsic good when it is valuable in itself, rather than as a means to some other end.

Intrinsic value: The value that something has in itself, rather than as a means to something else.

Is/ought gap: From Hume, the thesis that an *ought* cannot be derived from an *is*, or more precisely, that an evaluative claim cannot logically be derived form pure statements of fact. The is/ought gap is also referred to as a basic distinction between fact and value or between normative and descriptive claims.

Legal moralism: The view that if something is unethical, that is sufficient to justify making it illegal.

Logic: The study of rational patterns of inference between claims. Formal logic represents the essential structure of claims in symbolic form, codifying logical argument in the form of symbolic derivations. Mathematical logic studies formal properties of systems of logic. Philosophical logic concentrates on philosophical assumptions crucial to different logical systems.

Metaphysics: The most general conceptual investigation into the nature of reality. The question of what kinds of things there ultimately are falls squarely into the field of metaphysics. The name of the field descends from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and concentrates on the kinds of topics that appear in that work, though Aristotle's *Metaphysics* was itself so named only because it came after (*meta*) the *Physics*.

Method of absolute isolation: In Moore's philosophy, a thought experiment in which something is imagined as existing by itself in the universe. Is a universe with that thing better than a universe without it or not? The purpose is to discover whether the thing can be considered an intrinsic good.

Moral luck: In the work of Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel, something is a matter of moral luck if its moral value—how wrong an act is, for example—can depend on mere happenstance.

Moral virtues: In Aristotle's philosophy, those virtues associated with ethical action. Contrasted with intellectual virtues.

Morality: That area of human concern that includes issues of morally good actions, morally right actions, rights, and obligations. In philosophy, *moral* and *ethical* and *morality* and *ethics* are generally taken to be synonymous. It is *ethics* that is taken as the name of that field of philosophy that concentrates on moral issues.

Mortality: The condition of eventually having to die.

Natural evils: Sufferings that occur from sources other than human action, such as disease, famine, and accidental death. The existence of natural evils is one part of the problem of evil.

Natural law theory: The position that laws are valid and social organizations are just if they are in accord with natural law, envisaged as a set of universal moral principles governing the universe. In a standard version, these moral principles are dictated by God.

Naturalistic fallacy: In G. E. Moore's philosophy, the logical error of drawing conclusions about value purely from facts about the natural world.

Negligence: In law, the failure to exercise the degree of care required to avoid foreseeable injury.

Neural net: A computational structure instantiated in software but modeled roughly on the operation of neurons in the brain. Trained by backpropagation of errors, neural nets have shown an impressive ability to generalize, that is, to learn patterns applicable to new cases.

Non-Euclidean geometry: Any of various axiomatizations that differ from Euclid's and generate conflicting theorems. Non-Euclidean geometries include the systems of Lobachevsky and Riemann. In light of Einstein's theory, it is sometimes said that physical geometry is, in fact, Riemannian rather than Euclidean.

Normative: Used to designate a claim that is evaluative in nature or recommends a course of action. Opposed to *descriptive*.

Notion: A concept or idea.

Objective: Genuine or real beyond mere subjective opinion or experience; independent of the mind.

Ontology: The study of existence or being. Ontology is a major category within metaphysics.

Original position: An aspect of a thought experiment central to John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*. As a means to understand the nature of justice as fairness, we are to imagine a group of rational individuals meeting in an *original position* and deciding collectively on social principles that will govern them. In this regard, Rawls's theory is a clear descendant of the social contract tradition that includes Hobbes and Rousseau.

Paradigm: In the philosophy of science of Thomas S. Kuhn, a set of background assumptions and explanatory concepts definitive of a science at a particular time. In its strongest form, Kuhn's statement is that claims made from within one paradigm of thought are incommensurable with claims made from within another.

Philology: The study of literary and linguistic history.

Philosophy: The word comes from ancient Greek, meaning "love of wisdom." Philosophy can be seen as a discipline that includes all reasoning about the world that relies primarily on argumentation and conceptual analysis, particularly that which is not directly amenable to an empirical test.

Platonism: Used to characterize any theory that postulates a realm of abstract existence, as does Plato's theory of the Forms. In mathematics, Platonism is the belief that numbers, although abstract entities, exist independently of us. In arriving at a mathematical theorem, according to such a view, we have discovered something about that abstract realm.

Pragmatism: A school of thought in the American tradition that holds that practical consequence is a core concept of philosophical analysis. One Pragmatist claim, for example, is that "the truth is what works." William James and Charles Sanders Peirce are often seen as foundational figures in Pragmatism.

Prerequisite good: A good required as a necessary prerequisite for obtaining something else of value.

***Prima facie* duties**: In a given situation, I may have a range of different and potentially conflicting obligations: to keep a promise, to prevent an accident, and to see that a child is treated fairly, for example. In the ethics of W. D. Ross, these are my *prima facie* duties. My duty *sans phrase* is my duty overall, or "all things considered," and is arrived at by weighing the importance of conflicting *prima facie* duties.

Principle of organic unities: G. E. Moore's principle in *Principia Ethica* that the value of a whole need not be the sum of the values of its parts and, indeed, need not be proportional to the value of its parts.

Prisoner's Dilemma: In game theory, a two-person game in which each player seeks to optimize his or her advantage. In Lecture Twelve, the Prisoner's Dilemma is outlined in terms of its background story, using years in prison as negative values. The following is a more standard definition in terms of positive values:

> Each player has two choices: to cooperate or defect against the opponent. If both cooperate, each player receives an equal, moderate score. If one defects while the other cooperates, the defector gets a high score, and the cooperator, a low score. If both defect, each receives the low score. Positive payoffs in terms of dollars can be represented in a matrix in which the left number is that which goes to player **B** and the right number is that which goes to player A:

		Player A	
		Cooperate	Defect
Player **B**	Cooperate	**3**, 3	**0**, 5
	Defect	**5**, 0	**1**, 1

In the iterated Prisoner's Dilemma, many of these games are played in a row, and the players can thus see and react to previous moves. In the case of the iterated Prisoner's Dilemma, there are different strategies that can be taken up against an opponent, such as:

- All-Defect, in which a player defects every round, regardless of what his or her opponent plays.
- All-Cooperate, in which a player cooperates in each round.
- Tit-for-Tat, in which a player cooperates in the initial round, then copies the opponent's last move in each succeeding round.

Privileged epistemic access: In the philosophy of mind, this concept refers to the issue of whether a person has a special access to knowledge regarding his or her own thoughts.

Problem of evil: A "problem" for theism, or the belief that a God exists. How can it be that (a) we are surrounded by suffering and evil and (a) the universe was created by an omnipotent, omniscient, and all-perfect being? Hume poses the Problem of Evil in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* in these terms:

> Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil? ...Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive. (Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*)

Procedural justice: The justice or fairness of procedures of decision or reassignment of wealth.

Quantum mechanics: Developed early in the 20th century, quantum mechanics is a sophisticated theory regarding subatomic events. Although the theory is well confirmed experimentally, its interpretation remains an area of controversy. Its implications or claimed implications extend to whether determinism is true, whether every event has a cause, whether conscious measurement is constitutive of the universe, and even the nature of human freedom. The physicist Richard Feynman, who developed the quantum theory of electrodynamics, is reputed to have once said, "Anyone who thinks they understand quantum mechanics should have their head examined."

Quine-Duhem thesis: The claim that no experiment is ever decisive with regard to any theory. Any experiment is performed against a background of a number of assumptions, and thus, one can always save the "disconfirmed" theory by abandoning one of those auxiliary assumptions instead. The Quine-Duhem thesis is closely related to the claim that any empirical data is "underdetermined" in the sense that it could consistently be explained by any number of theories.

Rationality: The quality of being in accord with reason. Evidential rationality is judged in terms of accord with evidence; a belief is evidentially rational if it is supportable on grounds of available evidence. Economic or pragmatic rationality is judged in terms of whether it can be expected to produce benefits; a belief might be economically or pragmatically rational if having that belief could be expected to produce something good for the believer, regardless of whether it was supported by the evidence.

Reflective equilibrium: In the work of John Rawls, the balance between theory and specific cases that is the goal of reflection. We interpret specific cases in the light of theory but alter theory on the basis of our consideration of particular cases.

Regression analysis: A statistical method for predicting the value of a variable by weeding out the influence of confounding variables.

Relativism: Ethical relativism is the position that ethical values are relative to culture and that what is genuinely right and wrong can vary with culture. Descriptive relativism is the position that ethical beliefs vary from culture to culture and that different cultures believe different things are right and wrong. Normative relativism is the claim that one should never judge or condemn those who do not share one's values.

Religion: Any system of thought or belief concerning the nature of a supernatural power, its creation of the universe, and its governance over the world.

Retributive theory: A position that justifies punishment simply on the grounds that punishment is what the criminal deserves.

Risk averse: In economics, an investor is considered risk averse if he or she avoids risk whenever possible.

Seignorialism: The economic system of feudal society, based entirely on land ownership and a hierarchy of protection and reciprocal allegiance.

Serial programming: Despite the appearance of "multitasking," all standard computer programming proceeds step by step, one operation at a time. This is serial programming. It is contrasted with various forms of parallel programming, in which a number of operations are performed simultaneously.

Set theory: In the fields of mathematics and logic, the branch that studies the formal properties of sets or collections.

Shame culture: In anthropology, the concept of a society whose moral views are based on public shame or shaming rather than on a notion of individual guilt.

Skepticism: A family of philosophical positions that holds that it is impossible to obtain knowledge. There was also an ancient school of Skeptics, including Sextus Empiricus, who believed that a skeptical withholding of belief was the route to tranquility and peace of mind.

Social contract theory: A tradition of political philosophy based on the notion of a society formed by original agreement between its members. Classical forms of social contract theory appear in Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. A contemporary form of social contract theory is represented by John Rawls.

Sociobiology: The evolutionary study of social behavior. Primary exponents include E. O. Wilson and Richard Dawkins.

Stoic: The Stoics held that the rational road to tranquility is to control one's emotional reactions to such an extent that one becomes impervious to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Marcus Aurelius was emperor, Epictetus was a slave, but both were noteworthy Roman Stoics.

Subjective: That which is mind-dependent, a matter purely of individual opinion, taste, or internal experience.

Teleological: End-directed; teleological theories evaluate or explain something in terms of the end toward which it is aiming. Aristotle held teleological theories of both biology and ethics.

Theism: The position that God exists.

Theory-laden: In the philosophy of Thomas S. Kuhn and others, an aspect of scientific procedure is said to be theory-laden when its interpretation, form, or legitimacy assumes a particular background theory. Kuhn and others claim that the notion of pure observation is a myth and that all experimentation and all perception are inevitably theory-laden.

Transparent good: A good of value because of what can be appreciated through it or what it can contain.

Universalizability: The possibility of applying a moral rule in all relevantly similar situations. In Kant, a moral principle is universalizable if it can consistently be applied to all people at all times.

Universalization: In Kant and other moral theories, the evaluation of an action by considering the prospect of everyone acting in such a way: What if everyone did that?

Utilitarianism: The position that the ethically right act is that which produces the greatest good for the greatest number. In Jeremy Bentham's formulation, it is that act that produces the greatest *pleasure* for the greatest number that is the ethical act. In John Stuart Mill's formulation, it is the act that produces the greatest *happiness* for the greatest number. Unlike Bentham, Mill distinguishes "higher" from "lower" pleasures in applying such a formulation.

Utilities: In economics, the values of things that satisfy needs or wants.

Valid: An argument is valid if the conclusion follows from the premises. A *deductively valid argument* is one in which the connection is logically tight and in which it is logically impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to be false.

Veil of ignorance: In the thought experiment that is central to John Rawls's theory of justice, a group of rational individuals are imagined as meeting in an original position under a *veil of ignorance*. Their task is to decide the principles of a society under which they will live, without yet knowing anything about the racial, religious, or economic status they themselves will have in that society. The principles of a just society, Rawls claims, are those that would be chosen in such a context.

Questions of Value

Part II

Professor Patrick Grim

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Graduating with highest honors in both anthropology and philosophy from the University of California at Santa Cruz, Professor Grim was named a Fulbright Fellow to the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, from which he received his B.Phil. He received his Ph.D. from Boston University with a dissertation on ethical relativism, spent a year as a Mellon Faculty Fellow at Washington University, and has been teaching at Stony Brook since 1976. In addition to being named SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor, he has been awarded the President and Chancellor's awards for excellence in teaching and has been elected to the Academy of Teachers/Scholars.

Professor Grim has published widely, not only in philosophy but in scholarly journals in other fields: theoretical biology, linguistics, decision theory, artificial intelligence, and computer science. His work spans ethics, philosophical logic, game theory, philosophy of science, philosophy of law, philosophy of language, contemporary metaphysics, and philosophy of religion. He is the author of *The Incomplete Universe: Totality, Knowledge, and Truth*; co-author of *The Philosophical Computer: Exploratory Essays in Philosophical Computer Modeling*; editor of *Philosophy of Science and the Occult;* and founding co-editor of more than 20 volumes of *The Philosopher's Annual*, an anthology of the best articles published in philosophy each year.

Professor Grim is perhaps best known for critical logical arguments in the philosophy of religion and for groundbreaking work in philosophical computer modeling. With this series of lectures, he returns to his abiding interest in values, drawing from a range of disciplines and philosophical traditions.

Acknowledgments

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Dedicated to the memory of Nathan Watkins, who would have loved these lectures.

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Questions of Value

Scope:

The really fundamental questions of our lives are not questions of fact or finance but questions of value. What is it that gives something genuine value? What is worth striving for, and what makes life worth living? Are there values that transcend cultural differences? Is ethics possible without religion? If the universe is deterministic, can there be genuine choice? Is all value subjective? Is anyone ever better off dead?

This course offers a philosophical examination of a wide range of questions in ethics and value theory, with an accent on individual choices. Emphasis throughout the course is on contrasting positions: areas of controversy regarding fundamental questions of value and of how life should be lived. Topics include the difference between fact and value, ethical foundations, the possibility of ethical knowledge, subjectivity and objectivity, the influence of culture, life's priorities, theories of justice, and the role of chance. Among the issues examined are questions regarding evolution and ethics, theories of punishment, free will and determinism, images of immortality, how to deal with life's horrors, moralities in conflict, and the search for value.

Conceptual clarification is the core of any philosophical inquiry. Philosophy emphasizes rational argument, with the entire history of thought as a resource. Here, these tools are applied to central questions of value. The lectures are guided by a search for good reasons: good reasons to think of our choices and our actions in one way rather than another, to think of our lives in one way rather than another, and to think of values in general in one way rather than another. The purpose of the lectures is, first and foremost, to open issues for thoughtful consideration. Though particular positions are often defended, the spirit of philosophical examination demands that no stance be assumed dogmatically and that all positions be open for further examination and thought.

The course covers all periods of philosophical history, drawing reflections and arguments from Socrates and Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the Epicureans, Lucretius, Epictetus, Seneca and the Stoics, Sextus Empiricus and the Skeptics, Boethius, Montaigne, Hobbes, Rousseau, Hume, Kant, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill and the Utilitarians, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, G. E. Moore, William James, Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer, Ludwig Wittgenstein, W. D. Ross, Jean-Paul Sartre, R. M. Hare, and the anthropological work of philosophers Richard Brandt and John Ladd. Recent and contemporary thinkers are included in the same way: John Rawls, Alasdair MacIntyre, Robert Nozick, Thomas Nagel, Bernard Williams, Philip Kitcher, and Derek Parfit.

The course also draws from resources beyond philosophy. Questions and answers drawn from anthropology, economics, and psychology appear throughout the lectures, as do issues from sociology, political science, game theory, theoretical biology, and even physics and computer science. Examples are drawn from literary sources, including Jorge Luis Borges, Ursula Le Guin, Mark Twain, John Ruskin, Peter S. Beagle, Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Anne Rice. The application of abstract issues to concrete cases uses examples from business, law, and medical practice, including DNA evidence and the death penalty, the euthanasia case of Dax Cowart, the issue of insanity in the Patty Hearst and John W. Hinckley cases, and the Ford Motor Company's estimate of the value of a human life in cost-benefit calculations regarding the Pinto gas tank.

There are very different kinds of questions regarding very different kinds of values, and the course is structured to take advantage of that variety. Lectures shift from historical questions to contemporary cases, from abstract considerations to concrete decisions, from research in other disciplines back to a philosophical core. Although the course covers the entire history of philosophy, it is arranged in terms of individually intriguing topics rather than chronologically. Although the course covers all major theories of value, it is structured in terms of important questions rather than arranged as a sequential survey of theories. Concepts assumed in later lectures are carefully and clearly introduced in earlier ones.

The purpose of the course is to give an appreciation for the complex concepts that lie just beneath our everyday patterns of evaluation and for some of the bold and insightful reflections that can illuminate them. The student can expect to finish the course with some new and interesting answers and a command of important philosophical arguments and approaches but also with some new and interesting questions about values. The course is designed not to close debate but to open it, not to end controversy but to facilitate reflective thought. It is Socrates who said, "The unexamined life is not worth living." This course offers the tools necessary for examining the values that guide our lives.

Lecture Thirteen
The Objective Side of Value

Scope: Are values purely a matter of subjectivity, or is there an objective side to value? Do subjective states give the whole story about value, or is there something important beyond them?

Relying in part on concepts proposed in G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*, this lecture gives reasons for thinking that there *is* a source of value beyond the merely subjective. A first argument, using Moore's *method of absolute isolation*, suggests that things of beauty can be of value even if no one sees them. Because this first argument will not convince everyone, two more are given. The second argument uses a thought experiment in which a magic button would convert us all to brains in vats, leading the best possible subjective lives. In the process, however, we become divorced from reality. Would you press that button? A third argument uses Moore's *principle of organic unities* to analyze what is wrong in a case in which someone takes pleasure in another person's pain. The thrust of all three arguments is that there is an objective side to value beyond the purely subjective.

Outline

I. Are values purely a matter of subjectivity, or is there an objective side to value?

- **A.** This is one of the issues—but only one—that falls under the question: "Are values subjective?"
- **B.** Earlier lectures have considered epistemological issues and questions regarding ethical relativism across cultures.
- **C.** Here, the question is one regarding the sources of value: "Is value tied merely to subjective states, or is there an objective side to value as well?"

II. Two examples will be important for the argument.

- **A.** The first example concerns brains in vats and a "magic button":
  - **1.** Your entire sensory input comes through your nervous system. We could, in principle then, hook you up as a brain in a vat with an entirely simulated life. We could give you your best subjective life.
  - **2.** Suppose a button in front of us could do this for all living people and for all generations to come.
  - **3.** Would you press that button?
- **B.** The second example involves a contrast between two cases:
  - **1.** In the first case, someone takes pleasure in someone else's pleasure. A parent, for example, takes pleasure in the small pleasures of his or her child.
  - **2.** In the second case, someone takes pleasure in someone else's pain. A parent, for example, takes pleasure in the small pains his or her child suffers.

III. A first argument for objective values uses an idea from G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica*.

- **A.** G. E. Moore's *method of absolute isolation* is a test for whether something has intrinsic value:

  "What things have intrinsic value, and in what degrees?"…In order to arrive at a correct decision on the first part of the question, it is necessary to consider what things are such that, if they existed by themselves, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good…in order to decide upon the relative degrees of value of different things, we must similarly consider what comparative value seems to attach to the isolated existence of each. (G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, 1903)

- **B.** We can apply Moore's test in asking whether pleasure is intrinsically good:
  - **1.** First, we imagine a universe empty of consciousness.
  - **2.** Then, we imagine a universe in which, for a fleeting second, a fragment of a feeling of pleasure appears.

3. If the universe with pleasure is better than the universe without it, feeling pleasure is something that is intrinsically valuable.

C. We can also apply Moore's test in asking whether beauty is intrinsically good, even if unperceived:

1. First, we imagine a universe with planets that have the beauty of sunrise over the Grand Canyon.
2. Then, we imagine a universe with nothing but smog in the dark.
3. If the first universe is better than the second, beauty itself has intrinsic value—even if unperceived.

IV. The second argument for an objective side to value uses the "magic button" example.

A. Pressing the button will convert us and all our descendants into brains in vats, living our best possible pseudolives.

B. Would you press the button?

1. A Utilitarian would have to answer, "Yes." On Utilitarian grounds, pressing the button would be obligatory; indeed, it would be the best thing anyone could ever do.
2. Most people answer, "No."

C. What you lose when you press the button is contact with reality.

D. Whether our subjective states have contact with reality is itself an objective matter. If there is something wrong with pressing the button, then, value is grounded at least in part in something beyond subjective states.

V. A third argument uses Moore's *principle of organic unities*.

A. Two things may have intrinsic values. The value of a "complex," involving a relationship between those things, however, may be different than the sum of the value of its parts: "The principle is that the intrinsic value of a whole is neither identical with nor proportional to the sum of the value of its parts" (Moore, *Principia Ethica*).

B. The two cases of pain and pleasure fall under this principle.

1. In the case in which one person takes pleasure in another person's pleasure, the value of the whole is *at least* the sum of the two pleasures.
2. In the case in which one person takes pleasure in another person's pain, the value of the whole is not just the pleasure minus the pain.
3. In the second case, the fact that it is pleasure taken in someone else's pain taints the pleasure. That kind of pleasure, in that kind of context, becomes negative rather than positive.

C. Here, again, what matters is not just the subjective states but the relationship between them.

D. That relationship is an objective matter beyond the subjective states themselves. Here, again, there is an objective side to value.

VI. In summary, all three arguments suggest an objective side to value.

A. The Grand Canyon argument relies on Moore's method of absolute isolation. Would not a universe with that kind of beauty be better than a universe without it?

B. The "magic button" argument suggests that what is important is not merely the character of subjective states but whether they fit an objective reality. That fit is an objective matter beyond the subjective states themselves, and thus, there is an objective side to value.

C. The "taking pleasure in someone's pain" argument suggests that what is important is not merely subjective states but their relationship, which is an objective matter beyond the subjective states themselves. This, again, suggests an objective side to value.

VII. The strangest biographical note regarding G. E. Moore is that he was adopted as the "prophet of Bloomsbury."

A. The Bloomsbury Group included the economist John Maynard Keynes; the writer Virginia Woolf and her husband, Leonard Woolf; Virginia's sister, Vanessa, a painter married to the art critic Clive Bell, who together with Roger Fry, brought the French Impressionists to England; the painter Duncan Grant; and the writer Lytton Strachey.

B. The Bloomsbury Group was devoted to the arts and to each other—"All the couples were triangles."

C. This group took up Moore's *Principia Ethica* as a bible because of its emphasis on aesthetic values and friendship and because of its antitraditionalist tone.

D. G. E. Moore, a quiet academic and a very un-Bloomsbury guy, became the "prophet of Bloomsbury."

Suggested Reading:

G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, chapter VI, "The Ideal," pp. 183–225.

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, "The Experience Machine," pp. 42–45.

Questions to Consider:

1. What exactly is wrong with pressing the "magic button"? Might certain forms of drug abuse be wrong for the same reason?

2. G. E. Moore's point regarding the value of organic complexes is meant to apply generally. From your own experience, can you think of a case in which the relationship between two good things was somehow worse than just adding them together?

Lecture Fourteen
Better Off Dead

Scope: This lecture concentrates on conceptual issues regarding life and death. Against a background drawn from Epicurus and Lucretius, it is argued that the idea of someone being literally "better off dead" rests on a conceptual confusion, as does much of our thinking about death.

The Epicurean conclusion that death is not to be feared seems too strong. Attempting to figure out what we do fear about death, and how it affects two different categories of value, has much to teach us about values in life. The lecture concludes with a consideration of the rationality of suicide, arguing that the knowledge demanded for any rational suicide is almost never available.

Outline

I. Could someone literally be "better off dead"?

A. If taken literally, the question implies an impossible comparison.

1. Death is not like the experience of being in a dark room; what it represents is the absence of experience.

2. One cannot compare the experience of living with the experience of not-living, simply because there is no experience of not-living.

B. An ancient argument attempts to show on this basis that there is nothing to fear in death.

1. In about 300 B.C., Epicurus argues that "death is nothing to us":

> For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation…So death, the most terrifying of all ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist, death is not with us, but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not then concern either the living, or the dead, since the former it is not, and the latter are no more. (Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus")

2. In about 50 B.C., Lucretius bases much the same argument on a proof of the mortality of the soul in *De Rerum Natura*. One could put two ancient arguments together:

> The soul is either mortal or immortal.
>
> If the soul is immortal, there is no death, and thus, there is nothing to fear. If it is mortal, there is no experience of death, and again, there is nothing to fear.

C. We might fear the pain of dying, but that is not a fear of death itself.

D. Lucretius also argues that it is irrational to regret missing out on what will happen after one's death, because no one regrets missing out on what happened before one's birth.

II. What *is* so bad about death?

A. If we value experience at all, death must be seen as the loss of that aspect of value.

B. Death affects different values in different ways.

1. There are things that are of value because they are of value to us—our own pleasures, for example. That value is lost with our death.

2. There are also things that are of value in themselves, independently of us. That value need not be lost in death.

C. If everything you value is part of the pleasures or experiences of your life or is something you value purely because it is of value *to you*, death will be the death of everything you value.

D. If there are things that you value because they are of value in themselves, there are values that death cannot touch.

III. A different form of comparison regarding quality of life may lie behind the idea of "better off dead."

A. There are two different ways to picture quality of a life over time.

1. In one picture, all qualities of life are positive, with zero on the left of the scale.
2. In an alternative picture, some qualities of life are negative and some are positive, with zero in the middle of the scale.
3. Both approaches may agree on the relative ranking of lives but disagree as to whether there are lives of negative quality overall.

B. In our culture, there are topics of disagreement that are fundamental and some that are less fundamental.

1. Less fundamental issues of controversy may be resolved by empirical data. At least some of the controversy regarding the death penalty is sensitive to empirical data.
2. Some areas of controversy reflect bedrock disagreements that no empirical data could resolve.
3. The radically different perspectives on quality of life represented by the two scales appear to be a fundamental disagreement of this sort.

C. There is one point of agreement between the two views: that zero corresponds to the unconsciousness of permanent coma.

IV. The abstract issue becomes real in a case like that of Dax Cowart.

A. At the age of 26, a propane explosion left Cowart blind, partially deaf, and with third-degree burns over 65 percent of his body.

B. The medical treatments involved saline baths so excruciating that morphine could not block the pain. Cowart saw no future prospects that would justify the torture.

C. Cowart demanded that treatment be stopped and that he be allowed to go home to die, but his demands were refused.

D. Cowart is now a successful attorney, married and with a family. He still insists that his right to die was violated.

V. Does the picture in which quality of life can be genuinely negative entail that suicide is sometimes rational?

A. We can image the course of lives over time graphed in terms of quality.

B. On the view that includes negative values, there will be a "zero-value" line: a quality of life to which dying would be preferable.

C. Some graphs would indicate a life that would have been far better overall had it been shorter.

D. If these reflections are correct, there would seem to be cases of rational suicide. But a number of qualifications must be added:

1. Suicides have an impact on other lives: It is not just one life at stake.
2. Real suicides are rarely rational; they are typically acts of despair or vengeance, self-pitying and self-absorbed, often performed under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
3. In order for a suicide to be justified, we would have to *know* the future shape of a life's graph.
4. Almost never can anyone be certain of the future course of his or her life.

Suggested Reading and Viewing:

Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus."

Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things—De Rerum Natura*, Book III.

David Anderson, Robert Cavalier, and Preston K. Covey, *A Right to Die: The Dax Cowart Case—An Ethical Case Study on CD-ROM*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Which of these pictures of quality of life do you think is right?
   - **a.** One in which all qualities of life are positive, and death or unconsciousness represents a zero on the extreme left, or
   - **b.** One in which quality of life can be either positive or negative, with death or unconsciousness as a zero somewhere in the middle?
2. What things that you hold to be of value will continue after your death? What things that you hold to be of value will not?

Lecture Fifteen
A Picture of Justice

Scope: Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) is the classic source in social contract theory, with other major contributions by John Locke in the 1600s and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in the 1700s. In the second half of the 20th century, social contract theory took on a new form in John Rawls's *Theory of Justice*, an important work both for contemporary political theory and for ethics in general.

Building on a historical review of the social contract tradition, this lecture examines the promise of Rawls's picture of justice and some of the specific conclusions he draws. The guiding principles of a just society, Rawls says, are those that would be chosen by rational participants in an "original position" and under a "veil of ignorance." Potential criticisms are also considered, including Robert Nozick's counterarguments and doubts regarding the assumptions Rawls builds into the original position.

Outline

I. Many of these lectures have focused on individual decisions in individual lives. This lecture emphasizes a wider image of ethics in society.

- **A.** The purpose of this lecture is to outline a picture of justice that appeared in the work of John Rawls in the 1970s.
- **B.** Rawls's work is part of a much older tradition of social contract theory.

II. Social contract theory flourished in the 1600s and 1700s with the work of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

- **A.** The primary question is what justifies the existence of political states and what a just political organization would be like.
- **B.** Social contract theory is a reaction against what came before: the natural law tradition of political justification.
  - **1.** Our contemporary notion of *natural law* is a general description of the way the world works.
  - **2.** In an earlier conception, natural laws were conceived as having a normative force as well as a descriptive content: They were God's commands.
  - **3.** If you wanted to know what justified political organizations, on such an approach, you would look to natural law (or God's law) for the answer.
- **C.** Social contract theory is a reaction against that tradition.
  - **1.** Maybe social arrangement is conventional rather than a matter of natural law.
  - **2.** Perhaps societies are as they are not because God makes them that way but because we do.

III. There are hints at a social contract theory in Plato's *Crito*, but the classic source is Thomas Hobbes.

- **A.** Hobbes lived through the English Civil War, raging from 1642 to 1648, and that conflict is visible in his work.
- **B.** Hobbes envisages a state of nature, before any social organization, as hideous:

  …during the time men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and such a warre, as is of every man, against every man… [an environment of] continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short. (Hobbes, *Leviathan*)

- **C.** It is reason, Hobbes says, that allows man to escape from the state of nature. Reason leads to the conclusion:

  That a man be willing, when others are so too, as farre-forth, as for Peace, and defence of himself he shall think it necessary, to lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himselfe.

D. In Hobbes's theory, men resign their individual rights to form a leviathan—a collective power or political state.

E. Locke and Rousseau are other major sources for the contract view.

1. Each envisages people coming together to form a social contract in a state of nature, guided by self-interest and self-advantage.

2. They differ in (a) what the state of nature is thought to have been, (b) what the social contract is like, and therefore, (c) what form of government is justified.

IV. There are some obvious objections to classical social contract theory.

A. If social obligations are in place only *after* the contract, how can I be putting myself under an obligation at the moment when I sign it?

B. When did the social contract supposedly happen?

1. If signed by my ancestors, why would it bind me?

2. If it is hypothetical, how can it bind me at all?

3. If it is an "implicit" contract, where is the possibility of opting out?

V. In a different form, social contract theory is very much alive.

A. In contemporary form, the social contract becomes a thought experiment. It is intended to give us a picture of what a just society would ideally be like.

B. John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) continues to have an important influence on contemporary work.

1. The core idea is that rational self-interested agents meet in "the original position" in order to decide on the fundamental principles of a society.

2. Although well informed, they are under a "veil of ignorance" as to their position or social status in the society to be formed:

> Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class or social status nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their concepts of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. (John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*)

3. Rawls thinks two basic principles of justice would be chosen in the original position:

a. The first is a principle of liberty: Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

b. The second is a principle of economic distribution: Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage and attached to positions and offices open to all.

4. Rawls emphasizes that the two principles are prioritized. Liberty is more important than economic distribution. Never is the first to be sacrificed for the second.

5. "To everyone's advantage" in the second principle is interpreted in terms of the *difference principle*. Inequalities can be justified, but only if they improve the condition of the least well off.

VI. Although Rawls paints a compelling picture of a just society, there have been a number of objections to the theory.

A. Why should we think that people in the original position would be as risk-averse as Rawls assumes?

B. Robert Nozick is known for his Wilt Chamberlain counterexample, an argument against Rawls's second principle.

1. In a theory like Rawls's, Nozick says, you can judge the justice of distribution in a society from a single time-slice.

2. Choose any distribution you think is just, and suppose it changes along the following lines:

…suppose that Wilt Chamberlain is greatly in demand by basketball teams, being a great gate attraction…He signs the following sort of contract with a team: In each home game, twenty-five cents from the price of each ticket of admission goes to him…people cheerfully attend his team's games; they buy their tickets, each time dropping a separate twenty-five cents of their admission price into a special box with Chamberlain's name on it…Wilt Chamberlain ends up with $250,000, a much larger sum than the average income and larger even than anyone else has. (Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*)

3. If the original distribution was just, this redistribution will make it unjust. "But is this new distribution unjust?" Nozick asks. "If so, why?"
4. Nozick's point is that Rawls's theory cannot give the whole story regarding justice. What makes a distribution just is not merely its form at a particular time but its history.

Suggested Reading:

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapter XIV, "Of the first and second Naturall Lawes, and of Contracts."

Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, chapter 7, section I, fourth topic, "How Liberty Upsets Patterns."

John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* chapter I, 3. "The Main Idea of the Theory of Justice," 4. "The Original Position and Justification"; chapter II, 11. "Two Principles of Justice," 13. "Democratic Equality and the Difference Principle."

Questions to Consider:

1. It is often said that participation in society involves a kind of implicit contract. What kind of contract could that be?
2. The distinction between Rawls and Nozick is sometimes characterized as follows: What Rawls is talking about is *distributive justice*—fairness in how economic advantages are distributed. What Nozick is talking about is *procedural justice*—whether certain methods of transfer are fair. From your own experience, draw some examples of each kind of justice or injustice.

Lecture Sixteen
Life's Horrors

Scope: Life is filled with arbitrary and freakish horrors: the natural evils of earthquakes, floods, and disease and the man-made evils of rape, slaughter, torture, and war. Two different traditions—the religious and antireligious—draw different lessons from life's horrors.

The religious tradition points out the importance of higher-order goods that would not be possible without life's evils. It is argued that higher-order goods are real, but Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* is used to challenge the idea that they can *justify* life's horrors.

The antireligious *problem of evil* is strong evidence that the universe is not directed toward some inevitable good by an omnipotent, omniscient, and beneficent God. Optimism is found in that pessimistic conclusion: A universe directed toward an inevitable good would undercut the things we value by making human choice impossible or human striving pointless.

Outline

I. Life is filled with horrors. One cannot look unblinkingly at life and miss seeing its hideous aspects.

- **A.** This lecture is about two categories of conclusions that have been drawn from life's horrors.
  - **1.** One set of conclusions characterizes a religious reaction to catastrophe.
  - **2.** Another approach is to see life's horrors as offering a clear argument against standard forms of religious belief.
  - **3.** There are important lessons to be learned from each.
- **B.** There are two traditional categories of life's horrors.
  - **1.** Natural evils include earthquakes, floods, and disease.
  - **2.** The second category of evils—*un*natural evils—includes voluntary victimizations, such as rape, plunder, slaughter, torture, and war.
- **C.** Justice has nothing to do with human suffering on these scales.
  - **1.** Were one to pick a human being at random from the contemporary world, what are the chances that his or her life would be as good as yours?
  - **2.** Were we to pick a human being at random from history, what is the probability that his or her life would be as good as yours?
- **D.** We are tempted by a picture of a "normal life" that rarely exists.
  - **1.** We picture a normal life as one of development in childhood, joys in marriage and child-rearing, reflection in retirement, and death in our sleep at the published life expectancy.
  - **2.** We think that is what a life is supposed to be; if we get anything else, we feel that our rights have been violated.
  - **3.** Most lives do not fit that pretty picture at all.

II. One conclusion drawn from life's horrors appears in many traditions of religious belief.

- **A.** The core observation is that there are things of value that could not exist without certain evils: courage, for example, or human dignity in the face of adversity.
  - **1.** Examples of dignity in the face of adversity include Stephen Hawking and Christopher Reeve.
  - **2.** One form of religious tradition emphasizes the character-building possibilities of suffering.
- **B.** There are also stronger claims often made in the religious tradition.
  - **1.** It is claimed that these higher-order or "greater" goods—those goods that could not exist without suffering—*justify* the horrors that make them possible.
  - **2.** It is claimed that the sum total of higher-order goods justifies the sum total of suffering.

C. It is debatable in each case whether greater goods are genuinely "greater": whether they outweigh the evils without which they could not exist.

1. Consider a case in which one person is in pain and another acts out of sympathy.

2. If a genuinely sympathetic person were given the option of extinguishing the pain and the possibility of sympathy with it, he or she would certainly take that option.

3. The very character of sympathy shows that it does not regard its value as greater than the disvalue of the pain.

D. Were one to take higher-order goods as justifying the suffering on which they are built, the justification would be in the wrong place.

1. Why is *my* pain justified by *your* sympathy?

2. The only context in which such a tradeoff would constitute a justification would be one in which a creator God chooses a situation with both.

3. That would be a God who is somehow outrageously judged in Utilitarian terms. We have established in previous lectures that Utilitarianism fits poorly with considerations of justice.

4. Dostoevsky addresses this problem in literary form in *The Brothers Karamazov.* Ivan says:

> I believe like a child that suffering will be healed and made up for, that all the humiliating absurdity of human contradictions will vanish like a pitiful mirage,…that in the world's finale, at the moment of eternal harmony, something so precious will come to pass that it will suffice for all hearts, for the comforting of all resentments, for the atonement of all the crimes of humanity, of all the blood they've shed; that it will make it not only possible to forgive but to justify all that has happened with men—but though all that may come to pass, I don't accept it. I won't accept it. (Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*)

5. Ivan tells the story of the child torn apart by dogs:

> …I renounce the higher harmony altogether. It's not worth the tears of that one tortured child who beat itself on the breast with its little fist and prayed in its stinking outhouse, with its unexpiated tears to "dear, kind God!" It's not worth it…

E. There appears to be no reason to believe that the sum total of higher-order goods justifies the sum total of horrors.

III. The other conclusion drawn from life's horrors is an antireligious one.

A. The central claim is that the catalog of suffering shows that ours is not a universe created and controlled by an omnipotent, omniscient, and beneficent being.

B. This is the traditional *problem of evil*. It is a "problem" only for a particular form of theism: the belief in an omnipotent, omniscient, and all-perfect being who guides all things to the good.

C. The problem of evil is an argument that no such God can exist. One of the most elegant statements comes from Hume:

> Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?... Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive… (Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*)

IV. There is a great deal of sophisticated work on the issue in philosophy of religion, but life's evils appear to present clear evidence against the belief that our universe is governed by an omnipotent, omniscient, and beneficent creator, guiding all things toward the good.

A. Such a belief is often taken to support our notions of value. But there are many ways in which it is a threat to our notions of value.

1. A ruler who guided everything to the good would have to manipulate our choices.

2. A good that is ultimately inevitable is one that no one need strive for. If God is going to make everything come out right no matter what I do, it doesn't matter what I do.

B. The picture of a universe guided toward inevitable goodness does not give it value from on high but robs it of value from below.

V. Both traditions have something of value to offer.

A. From the religious tradition comes the observation that there are things of value that are possible only in the context of suffering.

B. From the antireligious tradition comes an argument that ours cannot be a universe geared inevitably toward the triumph of the good.

C. Even that pessimistic conclusion has its consolations. It is the fact that good is not guaranteed to triumph that gives value to our efforts to make things better.

Suggested Reading:

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, chapter 4, "Rebellion."

David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts X and XI.

Questions to Consider:

In theological literature, a *defense* is an attempt to explain the existence and extent of suffering despite the postulation of an omnipotent, omniscient, and beneficent God.

1. The "greater goods" defense is the explanation that suffering is justified because it makes greater goods possible. Without suffering, we would not have the possibility of sympathy or human dignity in the face of suffering. How good do you think that is as an explanation of the existence and extent of suffering?

2. The "free will" defense is the explanation that suffering comes from free human choices and that a universe with free will is better than a universe without it. How good do you think that is as an explanation of the existence and extent of suffering?

3. What forms of religious belief might avoid the problem of evil entirely?

Lecture Seventeen
A Genealogy of My Morals

Scope: In *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche traces the history of "good" and positive ethical terms to words applied by a ruling aristocracy to themselves. "Bad" and its cognates are traced to terms for the common people. If this theory is correct, it raises doubts about our ethical concepts. The lecture begins with an attack on Nietzsche's theory as both poor history and poor philosophy.

It is argued, however, that the *spirit* of Nietzsche's argument is right. Knowledge of the history of our ethical conceptions can make us rethink and reevaluate them and may even lead us to change them. The lecture surveys the literature of the pre-Civil War South in order to see how people convinced themselves that slavery was permissible. Should they have known better? The lecture concludes with the question of whether there are current ethical conceptions that will eventually be seen in a similar light. Should *we* know better?

Outline

I. This lecture borrows a strategy from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* (1887).

- **A.** Nietzsche's strategy is important for thinking about values, but it appears almost nowhere else in the history of ethics.
- **B.** Nietzsche was born in 1844, was appointed to the chair in classical philology at Basle at 24, retired 10 years later, and died insane in 1900.
- **C.** His influence has been extensive: on existentialism, on psychoanalysis, and as an inspiration for many in the development of their own values.

II. There is also a very negative side to Nietzsche.

- **A.** Nietzsche's work contributed central concepts to Nazism.
- **B.** Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* is a racist work.
  - **1.** The core thesis is that positive ethical terms originated as terms for the aristocracy:

    …the judgment "good" did *not* originate with those to whom "goodness" was shown! Rather it was "the good" themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian. (Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*)

  - **2.** On the basis of that thesis, Nietzsche writes an anti-Semitic pseudohistory in which the Jews invert these values:

    It was the Jews who, with awe-inspiring consistency, dared to invert the aristocratic value-equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God) and to hang on to this inversion with their teeth, the teeth of the most abysmal hatred… saying "the wretched alone are the good; the poor, impotent, lowly alone are the good; the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly alone are pious, alone are blessed by God, blessedness is for them alone—and you, the powerful and noble, are on the contrary the evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity; and you shall be in all eternity the unblessed, accursed, and damned!" …with the Jews there begins *the slave revolt in morality*…

III. The core claim of *The Genealogy of Morals* is pseudoscientific, and the central linguistic claim is false.

- **A.** The only evidence given for the Jewish inversion of values is a claim regarding the derivation of positive and negative ethical terms:

…what was the real etymological significance of the designations for "good" coined in the various languages? I found they all led back to the *same conceptual transformation*—that everywhere "noble," "aristocratic" in the social sense, is the basic concept from which "good" in the sense of "with aristocratic soul," "noble," "with a soul of high order," "with a privileged soul" necessarily developed: a development which always runs parallel with that other in which "common," "plebeian," "low" are finally transformed into the concept "bad."

B. Nietzsche's claim is a universal generalization: that all positive ethical terms in all languages derive from terms for the aristocracy, all negative ethical terms derive from terms for the common people.

1. His only support is bits and pieces, such as the German term *schlecht* (bad), which he states, "is identical with *schlicht* (plain, simple)."

2. Nietzsche's claim is one about all ethical terms in all languages. If true, it should hold for 62 English terms taken randomly from a thesaurus:

Admirable	Appropriate	Bad
Beneficial	Benevolent	Benign
Blameworthy	Blasphemous	Charitable
Correct	Corrupt	Cruel
Dependable	Depraved	Detrimental
Diligent	Dutiful	Ethical
Fair	Forgiving	Generous
Giving	Good	Greedy
Harmful	Heinous	Helpful
Heroic	Honorable	Infamous
Integrity	Just	Kind
Lazy	Legitimate	Licit
Loyal	Malevolent	Malignant
Meritorious	Moral	Notorious
Obedient	Permissible	Perverse
Praiseworthy	Prohibited	Proper
Reliable	Reputable	Right
Sinful	Sinister	Traitorous
Trustworthy	Valid	Villainous
Vindictive	Virtuous	Wicked
Worthy	Wrong	

3. Of the 447 senses of these 62 words traced through the *Oxford English Dictionary*, only 18 senses have some plausible connection with social hierarchy. Another 6 have some marginal connection.

4. Neither *ethical* nor *moral* fits the thesis in any of their senses, nor does *bad* or *wrong*. The single best candidate for the negative side of Nietzsche's thesis is *villainous*, which does trace to a term for peasants. But *malignant* seems to contradict the thesis, being tied to a derogatory term for the aristocratic cause in the English Civil War.

5. Even with marginal cases included, only 5 percent of the senses of these ethical terms accord with Nietzsche's thesis; 95 percent show no etymological tie to social hierarchy.

6. The linguistic claim offered as support for Nietzsche's myth of a Jewish inversion of values is clearly disconfirmed.

IV. The strategy of *The Genealogy of Morals* is nonetheless important for our thinking about our own moral values.

A. The central idea is that the history or cultural context of our moral concepts may give us reasons to revise those concepts.

B. Apologetics for slavery before the Civil War offer an instructive case of comparison.

1. Few ethical judgments are clearer to us than this: Slavery was deeply and horribly wrong. How could anyone ever have thought otherwise?
2. One of the basic themes in apologetics for slavery is that slaves have racial characteristics that make slavery appropriate or beneficial for them.
3. Another theme is that slavery is justified by the Bible or the history of great civilizations.
4. A third theme is that American slavery was a benefit to the slaves in comparison with the lives they would have lived in Africa.
5. Evidence was offered in the attempt to argue that life in slavery was better for the slaves than life in liberty.

   …the slave population at the South increased during the decade ending in 1860 no less than 23.39 per cent, while the free blacks increased only 12.33 per cent. The women, at times when their health is delicate, are not required to labor, being taken about as good care of as a member of the white family under similar circumstances. (Appeal signed by 95 Protestant ministers in Richmond, Virginia, 1863)

C. What are we to make of the proslavery literature?
1. It appears that these claims were actually believed by many white Southerners.
2. Should they have known better? It can be argued that they should have, that a glimpse at their own history and cultural situation should have made them suspicious of moral beliefs tailored to their personal advantage.

V. If our moral concepts coincide all too well with our personal advantage, we should perhaps be suspicious of them as well.

A. The fact that the world matches our moral conceptions may indicate that we have succeeded in making the world good. On the other hand, it may indicate that our situation has biased our moral conceptions.

B. What elements of our moral concepts should we mistrust now? Suspicious candidates may include the following:
1. Our treatment of animals as food is clearly to our economic advantage, and we go to great lengths to remain ignorant of the process.
2. We tend to regard obligations to those spatially close to us as of greater importance than obligations to those starving on the other side of the world.
3. We are quick to regard our own advantages as things we have earned and others' disadvantages as things they had coming.
4. We accept a strong notion of rights, overriding the wrongness that can be done by people acting on those rights.

C. None of this proves that our ethical concepts are wrong in these cases, but it may be grounds for suspicion. Perhaps we, too, should know better.

D. A genealogy of our morals is important, but it is important that it be built on fact. A false genealogy, like Nietzsche's, can be ethically dangerous.

Suggested Reading:
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay: "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad."
"The Nineteenth Century American 'Conversation' on Slavery: Arguments in Support of Slavery," available at www.assumption.edu/users/lknoles/ douglassproslaveryargs.html.

Questions to Consider:
1. We are sometimes shocked by views that were common 50 years ago. We look at television shows from the 1950s and are dismayed at the racial perspectives presented, for example. When society looks back on our views 50 years from now, what do you think they will find most appalling?
2. Under what circumstances is it appropriate to say, "They should have known better?" Under what circumstances are people responsible for holding the moral views they have inherited, and under what circumstances are they not responsible for those views?

Lecture Eighteen
Theories of Punishment

Scope: What justification is there for the death penalty? What justification is there for punishment in general? This lecture focuses on the ethical issues that lie beneath the legal controversies.

There are two competing theories regarding the justification of punishment: *retributive theory* and *deterrence theory*. Both theories are examined with an eye to the death penalty, and both are found wanting. Retributive theory is entirely backward-looking in ways that seem short-sighted and irrational. Deterrence theory is entirely forward-looking in ways that would allow for injustice.

The lecture suggests that there are two questions at stake rather than one. One question asks what gives us a right to punish, and it is retributive theory that gives us the answer to that question. A different question is whether we *should* punish and in what ways. It is deterrence theory that gives us the answer to that question. Either theory alone gives us a distorted view, but together, they offer a better understanding.

Outline

I. This lecture focuses on ethical questions regarding punishment, with an eye to the ethics of the death penalty in particular.

- **A.** There are legal issues at stake: Is the death penalty constitutional?
  - **1.** Those who argue that it is unconstitutional cite the Eighth Amendment: "Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."
  - **2.** Those who argue that it is constitutional point out that the Constitution itself invokes the notion of a death penalty.
- **B.** This lecture emphasizes the ethical issues, rather than just the legal issues.
  - **1.** Ethics and the law are not the same, but the legal system of a society invariably reflects the ethical and moral views of that society.
  - **2.** As members of society, we regard the law as subject to ethical review. If something is an ethically bad law, we have an ethical reason to change it.
- **C.** In the name of punishment, we take away people's resources, deprive them of their liberty, and in some cases, even kill them.
  - **1.** Doing these kinds of things to people clearly calls for some kind of ethical justification. The question is what that justification is.
  - **2.** It is easiest to phrase the question as "What is the ethical justification for punishment?" The real question, however, is what our ethical justification is for treating people in the ways we do.
- **D.** There are two basic ethical theories of punishment: the *retributive theory* and the *deterrence theory*.

II. The retributive theory is the "vengeance" theory. Why do these things to criminals? Because they are wicked and they deserve punishment.

- **A.** "An eye for an eye" is a retributive theory.
- **B.** The core of retributive theory is the claim that people should be punished just because they deserve it. The standard of how much to punish ("an eye for an eye," for example) is incidental.
- **C.** Kant holds that someone should be put to death for murder regardless of the consequences. Even if people had to desert a sinking island,

  …the last murderer remaining in prison must first be executed, so that everyone will duly receive what his actions are worth and so that the bloodguilt thereof will not be fixed on the people because they failed to insist on carrying out the punishment; for if they fail to do so, they may be regarded as accomplices in this public violation of legal justice. (Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*)

D. In retributive theory, the impact of our treatment on the criminal does not matter. The impact on society does not matter. Even the possibility that what we do to a criminal might affect society *negatively* does not matter.

E. Because it is entirely backward-looking, retributive theory seems unacceptable.

III. Deterrence theory is entirely forward-looking. What justifies treating people in these ways? The prevention of future harm.

A. What people generally mean by *deterrence* is punishing one person to deter future crimes by others.

B. A simple form of the theory follows from Utilitarianism. Bentham was a deterrence theorist and designed the architecture for a prison, called the Panopticon, that would allow for surveillance of prisoners at any time.

C. Deterrence theory is vulnerable to the facts: If a punishment does not deter, the theory would have to say that punishment is not justified.

D. There is a strong theoretical objection to the theory even if the way we treat a person does deter crime.

1. Lots of things may prevent future crime, including executing without trial those who are merely suspected of committing a crime. Those measures would clearly not be justified.

2. The prevention of future crime is, therefore, not enough to justify a practice and, thus, cannot be the *whole* justification for putting people in prison, for example.

IV. Does the death penalty deter murder?

A. The ideal empirical test would require two populations identical except for the death penalty. If the population without the death penalty has a higher murder rate, we have evidence for deterrence.

B. The ideal empirical test cannot be performed, but we have a history of tests in which people try to simulate this model.

C. One of the most impressive attempts to show deterrence is that of Isaac Ehrlich.

1. Ehrlich used *regression analysis*, a statistical method of weeding out the influence of confounding variables.

2. Ehrlich studied execution and murder rates between 1933 and 1969 and concluded that "an additional execution per year…may have resulted in 7 or 8 fewer murders."

D. Ehrlich's study has come in for telling criticism.

1. It is sensitive to the 1960–1969 period: If that is left out, the study shows no deterrent effect of the death penalty.

2. Ehrlich's study does not control for the fact that crime goes up in all categories between 1960 and 1969, both in states that have a death penalty and in states that do not.

3. Ehrlich's results seem to depend on a coincidental relation between decreasing executions and increasing homicide in that particular period, rather than a general causal connection.

E. The lesson from the literature as a whole is that if the death penalty does have a deterrent effect on murder, it is complicated and hard to detect.

F. This finding does not show that other forms of punishment do not deter other crimes.

1. Deterrence would operate by rational influence, but murder is often a crime of passion.

2. Some punishments clearly deter some crimes. One reason you don't cheat on your taxes is that you don't want a call from the IRS.

3. In areas where there is suddenly no police control, there is often looting. One clear explanation is that the deterrent is removed.

V. On the basis of conceptual problems, neither deterrence theory nor retributive theory seems adequate.

A. Retributive theory's problem is that it is entirely backward-looking. Deterrence theory's problem is that it is entirely forward-looking. Is there an alternative?

B. Our original question was: "What justification is there for punishment?" But perhaps we should distinguish two questions:

1. What gives us a right to punish?

2. When (and how much) should we punish?

C. Retributive theory offers an answer to the first question, while deterrence theory offers an answer to the second question.

D. With regard to the death penalty, we would look to retributive theory to see whether we have a right to kill. If we have established such a right, we would look to deterrence theory to answer the further question of whether we should kill.

VI. This discussion is based on an assumption of ideal knowledge: If we *know* someone is guilty of murder, do we then have a right to kill him or her?

A. Much of the current debate is epistemic (regarding knowledge) rather than ethical. At least 12 people have been released from death row because DNA evidence showed that they were wrongly convicted.

B. If we are unsure of our fact-finding procedures in practice, we might be unwilling to apply an irreversible punishment, such as the death penalty, even if we knew it could be justified in principle.

Suggested Reading:

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, chapter 3 of Part III, "Panopticism."

Furman v. Georgia, United States Supreme Court, 408 U.S. 238 (1972).

Immanuel Kant, "Of the Right to Punish and to Grant Clemency," section E of "The Right of a State" in Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, Part I, *The Doctrine of Right*.

Questions to Consider:

1. An argument that is given against the death penalty is that it reduces us to the murderer's level. We disapprove of killing, but we express that disapproval by killing. In what ways are murder and state execution the same and in what ways are they different?

2. An argument that is given in favor of the death penalty is that it allows closure for the victim's family. How important do you think that consideration is in deciding whether to kill someone or not?

Lecture Nineteen
Choice and Chance

Scope: The law treats the crime of murder much more stringently, and with significantly harsher punishments, than the crime of attempted murder. But there are cases in which the difference between murder and mere attempted murder is a matter of chance. Two people may have precisely the same motives and intentions. One is found guilty of murder. The other misses or has a gun that misfires and is guilty only of attempted murder. Can that be just?

This is the core of a contemporary debate over the role of *moral luck*. In this lecture, a number of examples are offered in which we assign greater blame in one case than another, but in which the difference between them is a mere matter of luck. Does that reveal a fundamental self-contradiction in our moral values?

When law is considered as a social mechanism and when the difficulty of establishing intent is taken into account, the legal distinction between murder and attempted murder is more rational than it appears. It is argued that a parallel analysis of the social mechanisms of morality helps us make sense of the apparent conflicts in our moral intuitions.

Outline

I. The topic of this lecture is the role of luck in morality.

A. The concepts of luck and morality do not seem to go together; it seems that morality cannot be a mere matter of luck.

B. At that level, our intuitions accord with Kant's.

1. The core of ethics, for Kant, is the good will.

2. The value of the good will is independent of its consequences.

3. The core of morality, then, is immune to luck.

> The good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes or because of its adequacy to achieve some proposed end; it is good only because of its willing, i.e., it is good of itself…Even if it should happen that, by a particular unfortunate fate or by the niggardly provision of a stepmotherly nature, this will should be wholly lacking in power to accomplish its purpose…it would sparkle like a jewel in its own light… (Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*)

C. There are cases in which it looks like the moral value of an action can depend on mere luck. The philosophical aim is to understand those cases.

II. Murder and attempted murder are treated quite differently in the law.

A. Murder and attempted murder, assault and attempted assault, robbery and attempted robbery appear in the statute books as separate crimes that carry very different penalties. Some states have the death penalty for murder. No state has a death penalty for attempted murder.

B. How can it be that there is such a disparity between the treatment of successful and attempted crimes?

1. In some cases, the murder may be unsuccessful because of something to do with the perpetrator: His hand shakes or he forgot that he had run out of bullets.

2. But in some cases, the murder may be unsuccessful because of pure happenstance: The clerk at the gun store sold you blanks by mistake. The intended victim slipped on a banana peel, and your bullet missed him. A bird flew between you and the intended victim and took the bullet.

C. Intent in real cases is often murky. An angry drunk shouts, "I'll kill you" and shoves the man next to him with all his strength. The victim falls, hits his head on the bar rail, and dies. Did the first man *intend* to kill him?

1. Whether the case counts as murder or manslaughter depends on whether the intent was to kill or merely to harm.

2. We cannot look inside the angry man's head to see if the "intent to kill" or merely the "intent to harm" switch was on.
3. He cannot look inside to see the switch either.
4. In many cases, there simply aren't two little switches in our heads, though the legal distinction between murder and manslaughter seems to rest on the assumption that there are.

D. Even when intent is clear, we can imagine cases in which the difference between murder and attempted murder is a mere matter of chance. Doesn't that mean that the legal distinction between the two is wrong?

III. Thomas Nagel and Bernard Williams argue that the difference noted in the law appears in our ethical evaluations, too.

A. Consider the truck driver who accidentally runs over a child:

> …if the driver was guilty of even a minor degree of negligence—failing to have his brakes checked recently, for example—then if that negligence contributes to the death of the child…He will blame himself for the death…Yet the negligence is the same in both cases, and the driver has no control over whether a child will run into his path. (Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck")

B. Consider, again from "Moral Luck," the case of a parent who leaves the child in the bath in order to answer the phone: "If one negligently leaves the bath running with the baby in it, one will realize, as one bounds up the stairs toward the bathroom, that if the baby has drowned, one has done something awful, whereas if it has not, one has merely been careless."

C. Nagel's view is that these cases reveal an inherent and fundamental contradiction in our moral values.

1. In the abstract, Nagel says, we favor the Kantian view that the moral status of an action cannot depend on luck.
2. In the concrete, we return to judgments that can be right only if morality *does* depend on luck. "…Kant's conclusion remains intuitively unacceptable. We may be persuaded that these moral judgments are irrational, but they reappear involuntarily as soon as the argument is over" (Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck").

IV. Another analysis of these cases is possible. In the legal case, there are good reasons to treat murder and attempted murder differently.

A. The difficulty of establishing intent is one reason for the distinction.

1. A murder attempt may have been unsuccessful because it was not fully intended.
2. With an eye to that possibility, we may be giving the perpetrator the benefit of the doubt.

B. The law is a cumbersome and costly institution. Social costs of the legal machinery, including error costs, may be a further reason for the distinction.

1. We try to sketch rules that apply to a broad range of cases and to construct a social machinery that is cost effective in terms of our goals.
2. All legal control comes with social costs: costs in terms of dollars, social resources, and the possibility of error.
3. The social cost of some measures may be unjustified; they may cause more harm than good. For example, imagine legalizing library thugs to assault people who fail to return their books on time.
4. Error is all too easy in the attempt to distinguish murders that fail because of incomplete intent from those that fail from mere happenstance. The social costs of trying to enforce a distinction finer than attempted murder may be too great.

C. It may, therefore, make sense for a legal system to handle murder and attempted murder in different ways.

V. The same reasoning can be applied in the case of moral principles.

A. Morality has a sort of social mechanism, too.

1. Some moral principles may be too difficult to frame, promulgate, or apply.

2. The moral principles we are taught by our parents and pass to our children may, therefore, be socially tailored much as legal principles are.

B. This goes a long way to explain the tension that Nagel and others have noticed.

C. The analysis leaves us with a conceptual difficulty, however.

1. In this view, some of our moral intuitions are deeper and truer than others. Others are of a form that, although not quite right, is more socially manageable.
2. The difficulty is to tell them apart.

Suggested Reading:

Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck," in *Mortal Questions*.

Bernard Williams, "Moral Luck," in *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers, 1973–1980*.

Questions to Consider:

1. Are there cases for which you blame yourself that have turned on issues of moral luck?
2. Are there cases that you would have blamed yourself for if they had turned out badly?
3. Are there moral principles that you were taught as a child, or that you teach your children, but that do not really apply in absolutely every case?

Lecture Twenty
Free Will and Determinism

Scope: The age-old question of free will and determinism is one of philosophy's really hard problems. Everything we do seems to be determined by two factors: (1) our biological makeup, for which we are not responsible, and (2) our environment, for which we are not responsible. How, then, can we be held responsible for the things we do?

This lecture does not attempt to prove that we have free will, but it does outline a strategy for defusing the Determinist argument that we do not. The Patty Hearst and John W. Hinckley cases are used to clarify distinctions regarding responsibility that the Determinist misrepresents. From Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* to contemporary forms incorporating quantum mechanics, it is argued, the Determinist's reasoning relies on a confusion of concepts hidden behind the word *determined*.

Outline

I. This lecture is about the problem of free will and determinism.

- **A.** If the universe operates entirely in terms of causality and natural law, how can we really make choices? How can there be free will?
- **B.** The core of the problem is two clusters of intuitive considerations that collide head on.
  - **1.** One group of considerations forms the core of our ethical thinking about choice and responsibility.
  - **2.** The other forms the core of our general understanding of events in the universe.
- **C.** The question of free will and determinism is one of the really *hard* conceptual problems.
  - **1.** In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, it appears as one of the antinomies—a conceptual conflict that is rationally irresolvable.
  - **2.** William James comes down on the side of freedom but renounces any attempt to prove free will.
  - **3.** Jean-Paul Sartre builds his Existentialism around a commitment to freedom but gives no explanation of how it is possible.

II. Determinism is usually presented in the form of an argument—a line of reasoning intended as a logical proof of a conclusion.

- **A.** The argument moves from compelling premises to a conclusion we could not possibly live with.
- **B.** Some accept the argument in its entirety and try to make the unlivable conclusion livable.
- **C.** Most contemporary philosophers think there must be something wrong with the argument. The problem is to figure out what.
- **D.** This lecture lays out one strategy that attempts to defuse the argument; to show at least that it does not compel us to abandon concepts of responsibility and choice that are at the core of our values.

III. It is important to remind ourselves of our everyday concepts of freedom and responsibility. These are what the Determinist argument attacks.

- **A.** If Patty Hearst had not been kidnapped by the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) in 1974, she would not have been part of the later bank robbery, nor would she have shot out the windows of Mel's Sporting Goods with a machine gun. Was she responsible for her actions or not?
- **B.** John W. Hinckley attempted to kill Ronald Reagan in 1981. His brain shows widened sulci, which correlate with schizophrenia. Is he responsible for his actions or not?
- **C.** There are two grounds on which we excuse people in ethics and the law.
  - **1.** We excuse them on the basis of mental condition (*mens rea*).
  - **2.** We excuse them on grounds of coercion (*actus reus*).
- **D.** "Brainwashing" would combine both aspects of responsibility-reduction but was offered unsuccessfully as a defense in the Patty Hearst case.

IV. The Determinist argument is intended to convince us that there can be no free will.

A. We are biochemical conglomerates that react to our environments. Everything we do, therefore, is determined by two factors:

1. Our biochemical makeup, for which we are not responsible.

2. Our environment, for which we are not responsible.

B. But if everything I do is determined, how can you say I ever act freely? If everything I do is determined, how can you hold me responsible?

C. The Determinist argument as it appears in Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* relies on the "once true, always true" principle: If something happens, it is true after the fact that it did happen and it was true before the fact that it was going to happen.

D. The Aristotelian argument can be presented in three steps:

Step 1: If Martin killed his mother today, then it was true 500 years ago that he was going to kill his mother today.

Step 2: So it was determined that he'd kill her.

Step 3: So how can you say that he acted freely? How can you hold him responsible?

V. What is wrong with that argument?

A. The argument relies on a principle of "once true, always true."

1. One strategy is to deny that principle, holding that statements about the future are not yet true.

2. But there are also reasons to believe that the "once true, always true" principle is correct. If I write on one slip of paper: "In the year 2050, there will be a president of the United States with the initials R. D." And I write on another slip of paper: "In the year 2050, there will *not* be a president of the United States with the initials R. D." One of the things I have written must be true. We just don't know which.

B. There is also a different strategy for defusing the argument.

1. The core of the strategy is to ask what *determined* means in Step 2: "So it was determined that he would kill her."

2. If *determined* meant "coerced," then Step 3 would follow from Step 2. If Martin was coerced, he did not act freely.

3. But then Step 2 would not follow from Step 1. The fact that it was true before it happened that Martin killed his mother does *not* show that he was coerced in any way.

C. A thought experiment shows that "it was true 500 years before" does not entail that an act was not done freely:

1. In one case, Martin *was* forced by Al Capone to kill his mother. It was, therefore, true 500 years before that Martin would be forced to kill his mother.

2. In another case, Martin carefully gathers the needed arsenic and plans his mother's death. It was, therefore, true 500 years before that Martin would deliberately choose to kill his mother.

3. "Once true, always true" applies in both cases and, thus, fails entirely to distinguish cases of coercion from cases of free choice.

4. What this thought experiment shows is that we are working with two different concepts:

a. One is the concept of whether it was true before the fact that Martin would kill his mother.

b. The other is the concept of free and unfree action; the distinction between whether Martin freely chose to kill his mother or not.

5. The Determinist argument proceeds as if these two different concepts were the same.

D. This is what philosophers call the *compatibilist strategy*.

1. If the Determinist argument were valid, these two things would be contradictory:

a. It was true 500 years ago that Martin would kill his mother today.

b. He acted freely.

2. The compatibilist strategy simply denies that: They could both be true.

E. The compatibilist strategy also works against a theological form of the argument that appears in Boethius, writing about A.D. 500.

VI. There are also contemporary forms of the Determinist argument.

A. One form invokes causal laws. The first step is "Everything that happens does so because of earlier events in accord with causal laws of nature."

B. We might attack the first premise using quantum mechanics.

1. On the standard outline of quantum mechanics, there are events that occur with no cause.

2. This would not offer a loophole for free will. I am no freer if my actions are a result of random phenomena than if they are brought about by exterior forces.

C. The argument can simply be reformulated as follows:

Step 1: Everything that happens is a result either of quantum randomness or earlier events in accord with scientific laws.

Step 2: So if Martin killed his mother today, that was a result of quantum randomness, earlier events, and the necessities of natural law.

Step 3: So it was determined that he would kill his mother today.

Step 4: So how can you say that he acted freely, and how can you hold him responsible?

VII. The compatibilist strategy can be used here, too.

A. Again, the argument depends on the weasel word *determined*.

B. Here, again, the word *determined* disguises a switch between two very different concepts:

1. One is the concept of something being in accord with the laws of the universe.

2. The other is the concept of free and unfree action; the distinction between whether Martin acted freely or was coerced.

VIII. The compatibilist strategy is intended to defuse the Determinist argument.

A. It does not prove that we have free will.

B. It does not explain how free will works in a universe governed by natural law.

C. It does show, however, that the Determinist argument fails as any kind of proof that we do *not* have free will. We can freely choose not to buy it.

Suggested Reading:

Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, chapter 9.

William James, "The Dilemma of Determinism."

Questions to Consider:

1. The compatibilist strategy emphasizes the difference between:

a. Whether an action is *coerced*, and

b. Whether an action has antecedent *causes*.

Draw from your own experience an action that was freely chosen. Are there previous events without which it would not have occurred?

2. What would you want to know about the Patty Hearst case in order to decide whether her participation in the bank robbery was a matter of free choice or not? What would you want to know about John W. Hinckley in order to decide whether he should be held responsible for his attempt on Reagan's life?

Lecture Twenty-One
Images of Immortality

Scope: Would you like to be immortal? Immortality under just *any* conditions is not necessarily desirable. Time plays a variety of roles in the things we value. Not everything of value can last forever, and some things would lose the kind of value they have if they did last forever.

The personal conditions that we would place on a desirable immortality also tell us about what we value here and now. This lecture draws on ghosts in Charles Dickens and Peter S. Beagle and on the vampires in the novels of Anne Rice as a means for reflection on the values that guide our temporary existence. Philosophical reflections are drawn from Bernard Williams's discussion of *The Makropulos Case* and Derek Parfit's thought experiments involving teleportation.

Outline

I. Would you like to be immortal?

A. Immortality is the ultimate reward in the Christian tradition, but it is also an aspect of the ultimate punishment.

B. Standard caricatures of heaven carry a general promise of eternal bliss but seem tedious when described in detail.

1. The idea of constant eternal ecstasy may simply be impossible.

2. An unchanging eternity of a subjective bliss state would be of dubious value in terms of anything else.

3. The joys of curiosity, exploration, discovery, learning, and growth demand the possibility of limits overcome and personal change.

C. Bernard Williams discusses the tedium of immortality in terms of *The Makropulos Case*, drawing on the play by Karel Capek.

1. Elina Makropulos is 342, and all life is joyless: "in the end it is the same…singing and silence."

2. Makropulos is frozen at the age of 42, and "everything that could happen and make sense to one particular human being of 42 has already happened to her."

D. Immortal beings continuing on Earth also appear in Anne Rice's novels, starting with *Interview with the Vampire*.

1. Like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Rice's novels are more than horror stories because they are told from the monster's perspective.

2. Rice's vampires are both physically and culturally derivative.

3. One theme that returns in Rice's novels is the distortions that come from living among creatures with a significantly different lifespan.

E. Other literary sources reflect on conditions of human interaction in immortality.

1. In *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens, the ghosts are in torment because they are impotent to help others: "The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power forever" (Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*).

2. William James discusses the undesirability of being a ghost unable to participate in human life.

3. The ghosts in Peter S. Beagle's *A Fine and Private Place* must constantly remind themselves of what it was like to be the physical creatures they once were.

II. Immortality per se is not necessarily desirable. What conditions would you put on immortality?

A. My personal conditions require an existence of trying and learning new things. Existence as a limiting being that occasionally fails is, therefore, necessary to make immortality acceptable for me.

B. Contact with at least one other individual would also be important for me.

C. The thought experiment of immortality is important because the conditions a person places on immortality will reflect the things he or she most values in a mortal existence as well.

III. Our different values have a complex relationship to time.

A. Permanent existence is clearly not the only value.

B. Some things, were they to last forever, would not have the value that they do. Examples include a lover's smile and the feeling of freshness on a winter's morning.

> There is no desirable or significant property which life would have more of, or have more unqualifiedly, if we lasted forever. In some part, we can apply to life Aristotle's marvelous remark about Plato's Form of the good: "nor will it be any the more good for being eternal: that which lasts long is no whiter than that which perishes in a day." (Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos Case")

C. There are also things that have the value they do because of their relative position in time. Examples include a lover's first kiss and a parent's last farewell.

D. There are values we can participate in only because we are mortal. Examples include the value we place on the young and the value of a love late in life.

E. Immortality, which would have some gains, would also have some costs.

IV. What about immortality and the meaning of life?

A. In a central Christian tradition, this life is merely a portal to the next, from which it gets its significance.

B. In the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein responds critically to the idea.

1. What gives *that* life its significance?

> …this assumption completely fails to accomplish the purpose for which it has always been intended. Or is some riddle solved by my surviving forever? Is not this eternal life itself as much of a riddle as our present life?

2. Those things that would give an eternal life its meaning will also give a temporary mortal life meaning.

C. The standard heaven is a place without unfulfilled needs. But then other things we value—such as self-sacrifice—would lose their meaning in heaven.

D. Whether or not it exists, philosophical reflection on immortality can teach us about what we ultimately value in our mortal lives.

V. Derek Parfit has argued that philosophical reflection has another lesson regarding what really matters to us.

A. I am a particular person, and I want that person to continue to exist. Parfit argues, however, that it is *not* personal continuance that we ultimately care about.

B. Parfit's thought experiment involves "teleporters"—machines of science fiction that record our bodies atom by atom, then send that information across space, where a duplicate is assembled.

C. Here is what happens in standard teleportation:

1. The person reconstituted at the other end is me.

2. There are links of psychological continuity—memory, for example—between that person and me.

D. Parfit says we can also imagine cases in which these concepts come apart.

1. If *two* people are reconstituted at the other end, they are two different people and so cannot *both* be me. Any reason to assert that *this* one is me is countered by an argument that the *other* one is me. Neither of them, Parfit argues, is literally me.

2. Both, however, may carry my memories. Both may be psychologically continuous with me.

E. We don't react in horror at the idea of this "double-tailed" transportation. What matters to us, Parfit concludes, is not the personal continuity that does not hold in such a case but the psychological continuity that does.

F. That psychological continuity is something we can also have in the lives of other people.

G. Parfit finds this conclusion consoling:

> I find it liberating, and consoling…There is still a difference between my life and the lives of other people. But the difference is less. Other people are closer. I am less concerned about the rest of my own life, and more concerned about the lives of others…my death seems to me less bad. (Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*)

Suggested Reading:

Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, chapter 12, "Why Our Identity Is Not What Matters."

Bernard Williams, "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality."

Questions to Consider:

1. What conditions would you put on immortality? What kind of life would you be willing to live forever?
2. If you suddenly knew you would live on Earth forever, what things would seem to change in value? What things would not?

Lecture Twenty-Two
Ethical Knowledge, Rationality, and Rules

Scope: Is ethics essentially a matter of rules or something else? This lecture starts with a brief survey of psychological work in moral development by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. W. D. Ross's theory of *prima facie* rights is offered as a theory that moves beyond rules, characterizing ethical deliberation as a process of weighing competing values and considerations. Similar approaches appear in Aristotle and in the work of Thomas Nagel.

If there are reasons why one consideration outweighs another in a particular case, shouldn't it be possible *in principle* to make those explicit? The nature of our ethical knowledge—rational but without rules—is further explored with analogies from linguistics and computer science.

Outline

I. Is ethics fundamentally a matter of following rules or something else?

A. People tend to think of ethics as a list of dos and don'ts, much in the style of the Ten Commandments.

B. Jean Piaget's studies on moral development in children indicate a change in moral thinking in the early teens.

1. Before that point, children are moral rule-followers.

2. After that point, they begin to see moral rules as conventions that facilitate social cooperation.

3. Younger children are also more likely to judge actions in terms of consequences; older children are more likely to judge actions in terms of intent.

C. Lawrence Kohlberg divides moral development into three levels, each with two stages.

1. The first level is *Pre-Conventional* and includes a first stage structured in terms of obedience to rules.

2. The second level is *Conventional*. Rules play a role here, too, but are understood as conventions for the maintenance of social order.

3. Kohlberg's *Post-Conventional* level includes notions of rights against the majority, justice, and appeal to universal principles.

4. In Kohlberg, rules appear in different senses at each level.

II. W. D. Ross offers a picture of ethics that is not conceived in terms of rules.

A. Unlike Kant, Ross thinks consequences *do* matter. He still qualifies as a deontologist because he thinks consequences are not *all* that matter.

B. Ross's criticism of Utilitarianism is that it offers too simple a picture of our ethical lives.

> [Utilitarianism] says, in effect, that the only morally significant relation in which my neighbors stand to me is that of being possible beneficiaries of my action. They do stand in this relation to me, and this relation is morally significant. But they may also stand to me in the relation of promisee to promiser, of creditor to debtor, of wife to husband, of child to parent, of friend to friend, of fellow countryman to fellow countryman, and the like…; and each of these relations is the foundation of a *prima facie* duty, which is more or less incumbent on me according to the circumstances of the case. (W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*)

C. In any situation, there are a number of demands on you: your *prima facie* obligations. Your obligation *sans phrase* is what you should do *all things considered*. Again, Ross writes in *The Right and the Good:*

> When I am in a situation, as perhaps I always am, in which more than one of these *prima facie* duties is incumbent on me, what I have to do is to study the situation as fully as I can until I form the considered opinion (it is never more) that in the circumstances one of them is more incumbent than any other; then I am bound to think that to do this *prima facie* duty is my duty *sans phrase* in the situation.

D. The inevitable metaphor for decision in such cases is "weighing."

E. Is there a rule for how to weigh competing *prima facie* obligations? In *The Right and the Good,* Ross is pessimistic about the existence of such a rule:

> For the estimation of the comparative stringency of these *prima facie* obligations no general rules can, so far as I can see, be laid down. We can only say that a great deal of stringency belongs to the duties of "perfect obligation"—the duties of keeping our promises, of repairing wrongs we have done, and of returning the equivalent of services we have received. For the rest, ἐν τῇ αίσθήσει ἡ κρίσις. ["The decision rests with perception," from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*].

III. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle outlines a related view of ethical deliberation.

A. Science, for Aristotle, is a reasoned capacity for acquiring knowledge.

B. Art, for Aristotle, is the reasoned capacity to make things.

C. The intellectual virtue appropriate to ethics is Practical Wisdom: a reasoned capacity for action.

D. For both Aristotle and Ross, Practical Wisdom is a form of ethical perception rather than a set of rules.

IV. The idea of balancing competing considerations also appears in the work of Thomas Nagel.

A. Nagel lists different types of value that can come into conflict:

1. Obligations to other people or institutions.

2. Constraints deriving from rights everyone has.

3. Effects on other people's welfare.

4. Perfectionist ends or values.

B. Nagel thinks there are right and wrong ways of balancing these values and a rational capacity for doing so.

C. Like Ross, he is pessimistic about an overarching rule regarding them: "To look for a single general theory of how to decide the right thing to do is like looking for a single theory of how to decide what to believe" (Nagel, "The Fragmentation of Value").

V. How can there be reasons and rationality without rules?

A. Aristotle, Nagel, and Ross agree that ethical deliberation is rational but that we have no rules.

B. There is an argument that it must be possible *in principle* to formulate our knowledge in terms of rules.

1. There are reasons why ethical situations have the ethical values they do.

2. We are often able to see the value of ethical situations.

3. It must, therefore, be possible in principle to identify the important features in terms of rules.

C. Our knowledge of our own language is a similar case in which rules are extremely difficult to formulate.

1. A child picks up knowledge of the language by the age of 3 or 4.

2. Hundreds of linguists have been working decades to formulate that knowledge in terms of rules and are still a long way from success.

D. We learn language, blacksmithing, music, and ethics by mastering bodies of practice rather than by learning rules.

E. From computer science, the training of *neural nets* offers a further analogy to knowledge and rationality without rules.

F. Even if it is possible in principle to formulate ethics in terms of rules, our ethical knowledge is not merely a matter of rules.

Suggested Reading:

Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Psychology of Moral Development: The Nature and Validity of Moral Stages*, chapter 2, "Moral Stages and Moralization: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach."

Thomas Nagel, "The Fragmentation of Value," from *Mortal Questions*.

W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, chapter 2, "What Makes Right Acts Right?"

Questions to Consider:

1. Think of a real case in which you balanced competing moral considerations—a case in which you had to balance obligations to one person against obligations to another, for example. What were your reasons for deciding as you did in that case?
2. Could those reasons be formulated as a rule for that case? Could similar reasons be formulated as a rule for every case?

Lecture Twenty-Three
Moralities in Conflict and in Change

Scope: If two moral worldviews are in conflict, how is any resolution between them possible?

This lecture examines the question using John Ford's classic western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. The theme of the movie is a conflict of precisely this kind, between moral worldviews, each of which is complete, consistent, and self-contained. The suggestion made in the movie is that change from one morality to another is possible only through the action of individuals who are willing to violate *both* moral codes.

The conceptual problem of moral change is similar to a problem in philosophy of science regarding change from one scientific paradigm to another. If perception is theory laden, how is scientific progress possible? In this lecture, it is argued that the conceptual problem regarding both morality and science stems from philosophical abstraction. In the case of science, an example from Jerry Fodor is used to show that perception is not as theory laden as it is assumed to be. In the case of morality, moral worldviews are neither as consistent nor as complete as they are sometimes painted. It is because moral worldviews fall short of the philosopher's abstraction that resolution between them is at least *possible*.

Outline

I. It is no surprise that questions of value play a major role in our literature.

- **A.** It is easy to find moral questions addressed in Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky.
- **B.** In American literature, it is easy to find moral questions in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd*, and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.
- **C.** Literature is not our only popular media; questions of value appear in movies as well.

II. How does one moral code replace another? That is a question raised in John Ford's classic western, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*.

- **A.** Liberty Valance, played by Lee Marvin, represents an individualistic cowboy code that emphasizes loyalty, honesty, and personal courage. A man settles his own disputes. The John Wayne character is also part of this background.
- **B.** The Jimmy Stewart character is a young lawyer trying to bring a new moral code to the West—the rule of law. The Jimmy Stewart character and the John Wayne character become friends.
- **C.** The Jimmy Stewart character eventually faces Liberty Valance in a showdown in which Liberty Valance is killed.
  - **1.** The Jimmy Stewart character rises to prominence, serving as governor and then as a senator and brings law to the West as the man who shot Liberty Valance.
  - **2.** But Liberty Valance was actually shot by someone else: the John Wayne character, with a rifle, hidden in an alley.
- **D.** How does one moral code replace another? John Ford's answer seems to be through the action of people willing to violate *both* codes.
  - **1.** The only person who did not violate his code was Liberty Valance.
  - **2.** The Jimmy Stewart character violated both his and the cowboy code by:
    - **a.** Bowing to a form of conflict resolution that was illegal in his code.
    - **b.** Keeping silent about the murder.
    - **c.** Taking credit for something he was not—the man who shot Liberty Valance.
  - **3.** The John Wayne character also violated both codes. His act was:
    - **a.** Cowardice in the cowboy code.
    - **b.** Murder in either code.
    - **c.** Violation of both codes by hiding the truth.

III. In full philosophical garb, problems of changing codes can seem irresolvable.

A. A complete moral worldview would entail a normative view of everything: all human actions, actors, and events.

B. Could a complete moral worldview be refuted? How?

1. In our second lecture, we emphasized Hume's is/ought gap: no statement of value will follow from purely factual premises.

2. Because this is a moral worldview, no factual considerations will be sufficient to refute it.

3. Because it is a complete moral worldview, no contrary moral considerations could get a foothold against it.

4. Moral claims in accord with the code would reinforce it. If a moral claim were made contrary to the code, both the claim and the person who made it would be rejected as immoral or even crazy.

C. If two complete moral worldviews were in conflict, no resolution would be possible.

1. No factual claim could resolve the dispute.

2. No moral claim could resolve the dispute.

D. There is a parallel in philosophy of science.

1. In an older picture of the history of science, science is cumulative.

2. Thomas S. Kuhn is famous for challenging such a view. Science does not appear to be cumulative; theories *replace* other theories entirely.

3. Kuhn presents a holistic picture of scientific paradigms, which influences how we train scientists, how we judge scientists, and how we interpret all experiments.

4. In the full Kuhnian view, all perception is theory laden.

5. In that picture, no rational transition from one paradigm to another is possible. No scientific progress would be possible.

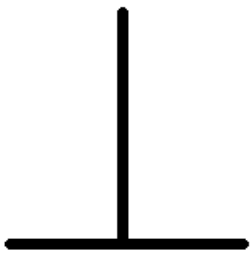
IV. The problem in these views of morality and science is their holism.

A. One of the powerful aspects of philosophy is abstraction, but it can also create the illusion of irresolvable conceptual difficulties.

B. Problems of moral and scientific change are irresolvable only given the abstract myth of complete scientific paradigms and complete moral worldviews.

C. Part of the Kuhnian picture is that all perception is theory laden—that belief colors all aspects of all perception. Jerry Fodor offers a simple counterargument.

1. In a familiar optical illusion, a vertical line looks longer than a horizontal line.



2. We can measure the lines and know they are the same length.

3. But the vertical line continues to *look* longer. Our change in belief has not changed our perception.

4. Our cognitive organization thus seems to have separate belief and perception modules. Not all perception is theory laden.

D. The consistency and completeness of moral systems have been similarly exaggerated in philosophical abstraction.

1. It is not clear that moral systems are always consistent because they may embody a range of conflicting values (as considered in the previous lecture).
2. Analogy is often used within a moral code to produce change.
3. To the extent that moralities are hermetically sealed, there *is* a problem in resolution. There are groups in conflict that are trapped in this way: Each sees itself as a victim and interprets each event in terms of its long narrative of victimization.
4. The ground for hope is that moralities in conflict are not consistent and complete—that they are not sealed off from outside input.
5. There is also a mechanism for change that is not fully conceptual, included in both *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Personal friendship can sometimes be a force for change.

Suggested Reading and Viewing:

Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Introduction: "A Role for History"; chapter V, "The Priority of Paradigms."

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance, Paramount, 1962.

Questions to Consider:

1. The fact that moral codes are not complete and consistent leaves open the *possibility* for resolution between them but does not tell us how to obtain it. Jimmy Stewart calls for trial by jury to settle disputes. Liberty Valance says disputes should be settled man to man. If you were trying to resolve the conflict between them, where would you start?
2. The optical illusion offered in the lecture is a case in perception that is not theory laden. In that case, change in belief does not change how things look. Can you think of cases in which change of belief *does* affect how things are perceived?

Lecture Twenty-Four
Summing Up

Scope: This lecture summarizes the course in several ways. Overlapping themes of the course are revisited with an emphasis on the contribution of particular lectures. A number of lectures explored the nature of values, while others answered Skeptical, Determinist, and Relativist challenges. Some of the lectures have been devoted to specific issues, both abstract and concrete. A guiding theme throughout, however, has been an emphasis on values in a life.

The course is also summarized in terms of the philosophical sources used, from Plato and Aristotle, through Kant and Hume, to philosophers working today. The course has relied on work drawn from economics, theoretical biology, physics, history, anthropology, psychology, and a range of literary sources. Lectures throughout have been designed as examples of the methodological approach and techniques characteristic of doing philosophy.

Several conclusions emerge from considering the lectures as a whole. One is that our values form an irreducible plurality: There is not one central thing we value. A second conclusion is that we have much to learn from Skepticism, Determinism, Relativism, and evolutionary challenges, but that none offers any ultimate threat to value. A third conclusion concerns where we stand with respect to value. Because of the kinds of creatures we are, value is inescapable. Because we are rational creatures, reflection on our own particular values is inescapable as well.

Outline

I. Immanuel Kant's closing words in *The Critique of Judgment* are appropriate in summarizing this course as well:

A. "Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the more often and intensely reflection is drawn to them: the starry heaven above me and the moral law within me" (Kant, *Critique of Judgment*).

1. Kant had a right to cite the "starry heavens above," as well as the "moral law within": In 1755, he was the first to propose that our solar system formed by gravity from a gaseous nebula.

2. A core focus in these lectures has been on ethics, with a wider emphasis on value in general.

B. Kant adds that the questions at issue need not be treated as if they are obscure or beyond our reach: "I see them before me and connect them immediately with my existence."

II. This course can be summarized in terms of the philosophical strands outlined in the first lecture.

A. One strand has been a family of questions regarding the basic nature of value.

B. A second strand has been a set of challenges to the very idea of value: Skepticism, Determinism, and Relativism.

C. A third strand is composed of lectures on specific topics—issues in the real world—both concrete and abstract.

D. An emphasis throughout has been on values in a life: What makes life worth living?

III. The course has drawn on philosophical sources and work from other disciplines where appropriate.

A. The philosophical sources used constitute a surprisingly thorough survey of the history of ethical thought:

Plato	Hume	Ross
Aristotle	Kant	Sartre
Epicurus	Bentham	Ladd
Lucretius	Mill	Brandt
Seneca	Kierkegaard	Rawls
Epictetus	Nietzsche	Nozick
Sextus Empiricus	James	Nagel

Boethius	Moore	Williams
Montaigne	Russell	MacIntyre
Hobbes	Wittgenstein	Partfit
Rousseau	Ayer	Fodor
Augustine	Kitcher	Ruse
Aquinas		

B. It is hoped these will continue as a resource. John Ruskin writes: "…there is a society continually open to us, of people who will talk to us as long as we like, whatever our rank and occupation; —talk to us in the best words they can choose, and of the things nearest their hearts…" (John Ruskin, "Of Kings' Treasuries").

C. We have also drawn from other disciplines: history, theoretical economics, theoretical biology and sociobiology, physics, anthropology, and psychology.

D. We have drawn from literature and movies as well:

Charles Dickens	Jorge Luis Borges	Anne Rice
Fyodor Dostoevsky	Peter S. Beagle	John Ford
Mark Twain	Ursula Le Guinn	

IV. The lectures have also been intended as exercises in doing philosophy.

A. Although it is not formalized in terms of stock procedures, philosophy does have established techniques and does emphasize a characteristic methodology.

B. Philosophy's focus is on concepts.

1. Because our concepts are at issue, philosophers often talk of the ordinary language used to express those concepts.

2. There is nothing "mere" about the semantics at issue: What philosophers want to explore and expand are the fundamental ways in which we conceive the world.

C. The emphasis is often on conceptual problems because these promise a deeper conceptual understanding.

D. Thought experiments are intellectual probes, often analogous to testing the extremes in mathematics and science.

E. Crucial to all philosophical work is the role of argument.

1. The goal is the *truth* regarding deep questions about concepts.

2. The search is for reasons to think one claim rather than another is true.

3. When formulated as tightly as possible, these reasons take the form of arguments.

4. It is because arguments are so important that critical analysis of arguments is equally important.

V. Looking back, there are a number of conclusions that might be drawn from the lectures as a whole.

A. In both ethics and our lives in general, our values are irreducibly pluralistic.

1. There is no one single thing we value.

2. Every attempt we have considered to unify our values into one has failed.

B. The plurality of values doe not entail any abandonment of them.

1. There are important questions about human choice and freedom, but the Determinist argument is not ultimately coercive.

2. There are important questions about the role of culture in values, but the Relativist argument does not go through.

3. There are important questions about the character of ethical knowledge, but the same is true of other kinds of knowledge.

4. There are important questions about evolution and ethics, but any reduction of ethics to evolutionary forces proves inadequate.

C. A third set of conclusions involves reflections on where we stand with respect to values.

1. Values are inescapable for creatures like us: A life guided by some form of value is inescapable.
2. The fact is that we do hold strong positions regarding value—regarding the value of commitments and justice, for example.
3. One of our values is a commitment to truth. As rational creatures, reflecting critically on our own values is also inescapable.

VI. The conceptual inquiry should continue in your own thinking.

A. It is hoped that models and techniques introduced in these lectures will aid in further reflections on the concrete value questions that are inevitable in trying to live a decent and fulfilling life.

B. John Dewey warns that once you start to think critically about ideas, you can no longer be certain what conclusions you will reach.

Suggested Reading:

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Conclusion.

John Ruskin, "Of Kings' Treasuries."

Questions to Consider:

1. It was impossible to cover all questions of value in this series of lectures. Write down two further questions that you wish had been addressed.
2. How are you going to start thinking about those questions?

Biographical Notes

St. Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274): Aquinas was a prolific and influential writer who attempted to reconcile Christian theology with Aristotle's philosophy. This project met enough success that his writings became the official position of Roman Catholic theology in his day. Through the appropriation and criticism of Aristotelian philosophy, Aquinas offered a sophisticated treatment of issues regarding natural law and the nature of God.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.): Considered one of the greatest philosophers of all time, Aristotle was a student of Plato and tutor of Alexander the Great. He is known for foundational contributions to fields as diverse as logic, physics, ethics, metaphysics, rhetoric, and social and political philosophy. Referring to the death of Socrates, Aristotle eventually fled Athens, "lest Athens sin twice against philosophy."

St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430): Converting to Christianity in his 30s, Augustine went on to become the bishop of Hippo. Dedicated to solving the academic questions of his day through Christian teachings, Augustine developed a system of morality, politics, and religion based on the philosophy of Plato. In such works as his *Confessions* and *City of God*, Augustine theorizes about the relationship between human agency, God, and the political community.

A. J. Ayer (1910–1989): In his *Language, Truth and Logic*, the young British philosopher A. J. Ayer brought the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle to an English-speaking audience. In ethics, Ayer is known for the early development of Emotivism, influential through much of the 20th century. His long philosophical career included a range of contributions in epistemology and philosophy of language.

Peter S. Beagle (b. 1939): Author of *The Last Unicorn* and *A Fine and Private Place*, Beagle is also an accomplished American poet, playwright, and folk singer.

Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832): Jeremy Bentham was the founder of Utilitarianism, arguing that an action is right *if and only if* it results in the greatest pleasure for the greatest number. His efforts at political reform during his lifetime made a major impact on British law, and his personal and intellectual influence continued through his godson, John Stuart Mill. Bentham's major work is *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*. Bentham's "Panopticon" design for a prison system, in which prisoners know that they are being watched by guards they cannot see, has also been much discussed.

Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986): Born and working for the most part in Buenos Aires, Jorge Luis Borges was a creative and prolific writer, most famous for his short stories. Rich in fantasy, myth, and literary allusions both real and imagined, his works might be thought of as a form of philosophical fiction, on the analogy of science fiction. A primary source for his work is *Collected Fictions*, edited by Andrew Hurley.

Richard Brandt (1910–1997): Brandt was an important ethical thinker, known particularly for his anthropological work in *Hopi Ethics*, his defense of a form of rule-utilitarianism, and his outline of rationality in *A Theory of the Good and the Right*. In that work, Brandt identified as rational those preferences that survive "cognitive psychotherapy" in terms of all relevant information and logical criticism.

Patricia Smith Churchland (b. 1943): Churchland, currently teaching at the University of California, San Diego, is a philosopher working in close contact with neurophysiology. Major works include *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind/Brain* and *The Computational Brain*, with Terrence Sejnowski.

Dax Cowart (b. 1948): Severely burned and blinded in an accident, left physically deformed and in pain, Texan Dax Cowart struggled for the right of physician-assisted suicide. Years later, he lives happily with a family of his own and a degree in law but still claims it was wrong not to afford him the right to die.

Richard Dawkins (b. 1941): In the tradition of E. O. Wilson, Dawkins has developed the theory of evolutionary explanation for social behavior and emphasized the gene rather than the individual as the significant unit of evolutionary selection. Dawkins has also proposed *memes* as units of culture, the spread of which can be given an explanation analogous to that of biological evolution. This British biologist is best known for *The Selfish Gene*.

John Dewey (1859–1952): As an American philosopher, Dewey wrote on such topics as epistemology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics but also had a wider influence in psychology and education. Dewey is usually included with William James among the Pragmatists. Major works include *Democracy and Education*, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, and *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*.

Charles Dickens (1812–1870): Novelist and journalist Charles Dickens was a celebrity in his own day and remains a landmark figure in the history of English literature. His novels include *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*. As an essayist, he wrote in favor of the abolition of slavery, against child labor, in favor of copyright laws, and against the fad of chewing tobacco.

Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881): One of the greatest Russian authors of all time, Dostoevsky explored the human experience of hardship and moral struggle in his works. His own life was filled with tragedy. Dostoevsky was condemned to death in 1849 for revolutionary activities but was reprieved at the last moment and sent to hard labor in Siberia. His major novels include *Crime and Punishment* and the *Brothers Karamazov*.

Pierre Duhem (1861–1916): Duhem was a French physicist who made important contributions to thermodynamics. He was also a philosopher of science and a distinguished historian of science. He is remembered for the thesis that every experiment is performed against a background of assumptions, and thus, no single experiment can conclusively refute a theory; it is always possible to abandon background assumptions instead. This thesis and the holistic approach to science it represents were later developed in the work of W. V. O. Quine; for that reason, it has become known as the *Quine-Duhem thesis*.

Isaac Ehrlich (b. 1938): Isaac Ehrlich is a widely influential economic theorist whose research involves deploying the insights of economics for research in social policy and the social sciences. Currently teaching at the University of Buffalo, Ehrlich is noted in particular for his work on whether capital punishment deters crime and for his conclusion that it does.

Epictetus (c. 50–130): Born a Roman slave and educated while still a slave, Epictetus went on to teach philosophy after receiving his freedom. Teaching in the Stoic tradition, he lectured on the relationship between natural law and society and emphasized the need to maintain equanimity in the face of a troubled fate. Epictetus's *Handbook* comes down to us through the notes of his student Arrian.

Epicurus (341–270 B.C.): Epicurus was the leader of a community that advocated pursuit of a life of pleasure and contentment. This Greek philosopher was extremely prolific, writing on a variety of subjects and inspiring many students, but only a small portion of his work has survived.

Euclid (365–275 B.C.): Euclid taught in ancient Alexandria in Egypt, but not much is known about his life. The impact of his writings, however, clearly shows Euclid to be one of the most influential mathematicians ever, often called "the father of geometry." For a long time, Euclid's geometry was the only geometry studied. In the last 200 years, other geometrical systems have been developed, referred to as *non-Euclidian geometries*.

Jerry Fodor (b. 1935): Fodor is a contemporary American philosopher of mind and language, currently teaching at Rutgers University, who has written a number of works influential in psychology, linguistics, and philosophy. His books include *The Mind Doesn't Work That Way* and *Concepts: Where Cognitive Science Went Wrong*.

Gottlob Frege (1848–1925): A German-born mathematician and philosopher, Frege's invention of predicate calculus is widely regarded as the most important contribution to logic since Aristotle. Frege's goal of showing that mathematics reduced to logic was of major importance for philosophy of mathematics throughout the 20th century and his approach to symbolic systems in general are evident in all formal logic today. The conceptual distinctions drawn in Frege's philosophical work, which set the stage for a great deal of later work in philosophy of language, are still regarded as a touchstone today.

Patty Hearst (b. 1954): Heiress to publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst, Patricia Campbell Hearst was kidnapped in 1974 by a terrorist group calling itself the Symbionese Liberation Army. She was later found to have eventually joined the organization voluntarily and was photographed as a participant in a bank robbery. After her arrest, she pleaded that her actions were the result of Stockholm syndrome, in which an abused kidnapped person develops sympathy for his or her captors. The defense failed and she was convicted. Her sentence was later commuted by Jimmy Carter, and she was pardoned by Bill Clinton.

John W. Hinckley, Jr. (b. 1955): When stalking actress Jodie Foster proved insufficient to gain her attention, Hinckley decided that an attempt on the life of then-president Ronald Reagan might do the trick. Firing five shots from a revolver, he hit the president, who recovered after surgery. A police officer and a secret service agent were injured, and Press Secretary James Brady was left permanently disabled. Hinckley was found not guilty by reason of insanity.

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679): Living through the English Civil War under Cromwell and Charles II, Hobbes developed a distaste for human conflict and rebellion. In his most famous work, *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that men in a state of nature will face a "warre of every one against every one" and, therefore, an existence that is "nasty, brutish, and short." Rationality will dictate that they bind themselves by social contract to a single ruler over them, the Leviathan.

David Hume (1711–1776): Hume's epistemological work is often regarded as the culmination of the empiricist tradition represented also by Locke and Berkeley. His work in ethics is closely related, as are his skeptical attacks on religion. The historical works of this Scottish philosopher are often viewed as conservative or "Whiggish," though his contemporaries regarded his views on religion as radical threats to the foundations of his culture. Primary among Hume's works are the *Treatise of Human Nature*, the *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

Aldous Huxley (1894–1963): British novelist and essayist Huxley is known for his science fiction and cultural criticism. He is best known for *Brave New World*, in which he warns of dehumanization in a technological utopia.

William James (1842–1910): William James is a major figure in the history of psychology as well as philosophy. As a psychologist, he is known for his *Principles of Psychology*. As a philosopher, he is regarded as one of the major figures in the American Pragmatist tradition. Masterfully reducing traditional philosophical debates to discussions of the practical consequences of philosophical positions, James offered novel arguments concerning topics in ethics, epistemology, and philosophy of religion. His brother was the novelist Henry James; it has been said that Henry wrote like a psychologist and William, like a novelist.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804): Immanuel Kant is often regarded, with Plato and Aristotle, as one of the most important philosophers of all time. His contributions span epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy of religion, and they have been influential in all these fields. Kant's major works include the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Living his entire life in Königsberg, Germany, Kant never traveled or married. It is said that the townsfolk of Königsberg could set their watches by his daily walk.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855): Søren Kierkegaard's father provided him wealth and a good education, as well as a deep sense of religious guilt. This guilt permeates this Danish philosopher's works, which can be understood as a religious form of pre-Existentialist thought. Questioning what it would mean to be truly faithful to God, he wrestled with such concepts as absurdity and the leap of faith. Much of Kierkegaard's authorship is "pseudonymous," written under the names of fictitious authors criticizing one another's works. Kierkegaard's major works include *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Philosophical Fragments*, and *Stages on Life's Way*.

Philip Kitcher (b. 1947): A contemporary American philosopher of science, Kitcher has produced influential work in the philosophy of biology, mathematics, and scientific method. His books include *Science, Truth, and Democracy*; *In Mendel's Mirror*; and *Vaulting Ambition: Sociobiology and the Quest for Human Nature.*

Lawrence Kohlberg (1927–1987): Building on the work of Piaget, American psychologist Kohlberg conducted a more extensive and systematic series of studies in moral development. He argued for three basic levels of moral development: the *Pre-Conventional*, in which moral understanding is structured in terms of obedience to rules; the *Conventional*, in which morality is conceived in terms of social relationships; and the *Post-Conventional*, in which an understanding of rights against the majority and of universal principles emerges. Kohlberg's sample was entirely male; the work of Carol Gilligan, influential but not nearly as methodologically sophisticated, claims a different pattern of development for females.

Thomas S. Kuhn (1922–1996): Kuhn's work in the history of science had a major impact on 20th-century philosophy of science. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn, an American philosopher, argues that science proceeds not cumulatively but by the revolutionary overthrow of previous paradigms. Between revolutions, paradigms are not tested but assumed in guiding all aspects of "normal science." In its strongest form, Kuhn's claim is that paradigms are incommensurable, prohibiting translation or rational comparison.

John Ladd (b. 1917): Ladd is an American philosopher known for his anthropological work in *The Structure of a Moral Code* and for his later work on related issues in *Ethical Relativism*.

Ursula Le Guin (b. 1929): Ursula Le Guin is considered one of the finest contemporary American science-fiction and short-story writers, but she also has accomplished much as a children's book author, poet, lecturer, essayist, and translator. Her award-winning fiction is known for addressing social and political themes.

John Locke (1632–1704): John Locke, a British philosopher, is a major figure in the history of political philosophy, epistemology, and philosophy of mind. The political philosophy of his *Two Treatises of Government* represents one form of the social contract tradition and was a major influence on the thought of the rebelling colonists in the American Revolution. His philosophy of mind, captured in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, is a primary example of empiricism. According to Locke, the mind is a *tabula rasa*, or "blank slate," at birth, filled in exclusively by one's experiences over a lifetime.

Lucretius (c. 99–55 B.C.): A Roman, Titus Lucretius Carus wrote *De Rerum Natura* ("*On the Nature of Things*") as a poem that expands on the philosophy of Epicurus. Lucretius explains nature as composed only of atom-like particles and the void. He takes these ideas far enough to offer an explanation of human beings, mind, and behavior. Book III of *De Rerum Natura* contains an argument that it is irrational to fear death based on the interesting premise of the mortality of the soul.

Alasdair MacIntyre (b. 1929): MacIntyre is a prolific contemporary American writer known for major contributions in political, religious, historical, and ethical philosophy. A prominent proponent of the "virtue ethics" position, he argues for a revival of Aristotelian ethical notions, abandoning the post-Kantian understanding of ethics as centering on the duties of individuals. MacIntyre's books include *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*

Marcus Aurelius (121–180): Adopted by the emperor of Rome, Marcus Aurelius went on to become emperor himself. He continued to write philosophy through the course of a political life that involved wars with barbarians, plagues, and challenges to his authority. His *Meditations* is in the Stoic tradition, emphasizing control over oneself despite the trials that fate brings us.

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873): London-born John Stuart Mill was raised from infancy to be a philosopher. By the age of 3, he was reading ancient Greek, and by the age of 8, he had read the whole of Herodotus, Xenophon, Diogenes Laertes, and the major dialogues of Plato in Greek. At 8, he started Latin, later working in mathematics, logic, and with his father, political economics. He suffered a breakdown in his early 20s but went onto become a major exponent for Utilitarianism and an extremely prolific writer on a range of topics in logic, philosophy of science, and political philosophy. Mill's major works include *Utilitarianism*, *On Liberty*, and *The Subjection of Women*.

Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592): Born into a wealthy French family, Michel de Montaigne traveled much throughout his life and served several government posts. Devoting the free time afforded to him by his wealth, Montaigne wrote colloquially on a range of philosophical topics, collecting his thoughts into a book of essays. "I have no more made my book than my book has made me," he wrote.

G. E. Moore (1873–1958): Moore was one of the most influential of 20th-century British philosophers, both in terms of his particular contributions to ethics and epistemology and the general example of his philosophical methodology. In *Principia Ethica*, he defends the irreducibility of ethical language and the primacy of values of aesthetic appreciation and friendship. In his epistemological work, he bases a rejection of skepticism and idealism on an appeal to common sense. Because of his influence on the Bloomsbury group, including Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, and Lytton Strachey, Moore has also been referred to as the "Prophet of Bloomsbury."

Oskar Morgenstern (1902–1977): With John von Neumann, Morgenstern was one of the founders of game theory. Morgenstern, an Austrian, is known for applications of game theory to issues of economics and national defense, but his major work remains the *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*, co-authored with von Neumann.

Thomas Nagel (b. 1937): Nagel is a contemporary American philosopher of importance in both ethics and philosophy of mind. In philosophy of mind, he is known for the position that the subjective character of experience is beyond scientific explanation. In ethics, his work also emphasizes what Nagel takes to be an irreducible contrast between subjective and objective perspectives. Both themes are represented in his *View from Nowhere*.

John Nash (b. 1920): John Nash's contributions to mathematics and game theory have had a major impact on those fields and have revolutionized the field of economics. Suffering from schizophrenia since early in his career, this American mathematician was incapacitated by the disease for nearly 30 years. With symptoms now under control,

he has returned as a major contributor to the field and was awarded the Nobel Prize for economics in 1994. John Nash is the subject of the book and movie *A Beautiful Mind*.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900): Born near Leipzig to a family of Lutheran ministers, Friedrich Nietzsche was appointed to the chair in classical philology at Basel at the extremely young age of 24. He left Basel after 10 years on grounds of poor health and spent the rest of his life writing in boarding houses in France, Italy, and Switzerland. In 1889, he collapsed into insanity, an invalid for the remaining 11 years of his life. Nietzsche is regarded as a precursor of Existentialism and is known for works with a literary flair challenging the norms and institutions of his society, especially the Christian religion. His works include *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Genealogy of Morals*.

Robert Nozick (1939–2002): Although most famous for his critique of John Rawls's liberal analysis of justice, Nozick wrote on a variety of subjects in ethics, politics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Renowned for his teaching ability and clear, approachable writing style, he also wrote philosophical short stories. The works of this American philosopher include *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*; *Philosophical Explorations*; and *The Examined Life*.

George Orwell (1903–1950): George Orwell was the pen name of Eric Arthur Blair, an influential British novelist and political essayist. His novels so vividly describe the results of the abuse of power that his name has become an adjective to describe a dystopian future in which the government holds a totalitarian control over the population (*Orwellian*). Orwell is best known for his novels *Animal Farm* and *1984*.

Derek Parfit (b. 1942): Parfit's work deftly combines questions of identity, philosophy of mind, and ethics. British-born and educated, Parfit is known for systematic, subtle, and clever arguments, often exhibiting intricacies of ethical issues that standard ethical positions appear ill-equipped to handle. Primary among Parfit's works is *Reasons and Persons*.

Jean Piaget (1896–1980): Piaget was an influential and prolific Swiss research psychologist specializing in human cognitive development. His studies indicate definite stages of development; certain cognitive tasks can be performed only if a child has reached the necessary stage. In moral development, Piaget's postulates an earlier stage in which rules are thought of as inflexible and authoritative and a later stage in which teenagers see rules as conventional devices that facilitate social cooperation. Piaget's experimental designs still provide the model for much developmental research today.

Plato (428–348 B.C.): Plato wrote philosophy in the form of play-like dialogues, most often with Socrates as the main character. These dialogues cover the range of philosophical topics and do so with such depth that Plato is often considered one of the greatest thinkers of all time. He founded a school in Athens called the Academy, sometimes characterized as the world's first university.

Karl Popper (1902–1994): Karl Popper's works are classics in the field of philosophy of science. In opposition to the demand of logical positivism that scientific theories must be verifiable, Popper's claim is that they must, rather, be falsifiable. Popper, born in Vienna, is also known for major works in social and historical criticism. His works include *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, *The Poverty of Historicism*, and *The Open Society and Its Enemies*.

W. V. O. Quine (1908–2000): American philosopher and logician Willard Van Orman Quine productively questioned some of the central conceptual distinctions of traditional philosophy. He argued for a holistic interpretation of scientific theories, which "impinge on experience only at their edges." Quine defends the thesis that every experiment is performed against a background of assumptions, and thus, no single experiment can conclusively refute a theory—it is always possible to abandon background assumptions instead. That thesis, anticipated in the work of Pierre Duhem, is now known as the *Quine-Duhem thesis*.

John Rawls (1921–2002): One of the most important American political philosophers of contemporary times, Rawls revived interest in forms of social contract theories and provided a new spin on philosophical considerations of rights. The central thought experiment in his *Theory of Justice* is the image of rational agents meeting in an original position under a veil of ignorance. They know a great deal about the principles of psychology, sociology, and economics but nothing about the racial, religious, or class positions they will have in society. The basic social principles that rational agents meeting in such a position would decide on, Rawls argues, are those characteristic of just societies.

Anne Rice (b. 1941): Rice is a popular contemporary American writer who specializes in supernatural tales of vampires. Several of her novels, starting with *Interview with the Vampire*, have been the basis for films and television series. She has also written under the pseudonyms Anne Rampling and A. M. Roquelaure.

William David Ross (1877–1971): An important British translator of Aristotle, W. D. Ross is known primarily for his work in ethics. According to Ross, we have a plurality of conflicting *prima facie* duties in any situation: duties to keep promises, for example, to avoid harm, and to see that justice is done. Our obligation *sans phrase*, or all things considered, is a result of the competing strengths of these obligations. In trying to establish our obligations all things considered, we are forced to use a form of practical reason in weighing these competing considerations. In the development of such a view, Ross makes a number of pointed arguments effective against Utilitarianism, including what he characterizes as the "Ideal Utilitarianism" of G. E. Moore. Ross's primary work is *The Right and the Good*.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778): In his political writings, such as his *On the Social Contract* and *Emile*, Rousseau's goal is to understand how people may enter into a social contract without losing personal freedom and authority. Though he was born in Geneva, Rousseau spent most of his adult life in France, and his works were a guiding inspiration for the French and American Revolutions as well as for representative governments that followed. The often-misunderstood opening words of *The Social Contract* are: "Man was born free, and yet everywhere he is in chains."

Michael Ruse (b. 1940): A philosopher and zoologist currently teaching at Florida State University, Michael Ruse has written extensively on topics regarding evolution. Major works include *Darwinism Defended, A Guide to the Evolution Controversies* and *Taking Darwin Seriously*.

John Ruskin (1819–1900): Known primarily as a writer and art critic, Ruskin first made his name in championing the works of J. M. W. Turner in *Modern Painters*. His positions on art became the prevailing thought of the day. As a social critic, he attacked capitalist cultural ideas, condemning the greed capitalism produced and advocating, instead, a revised form of socialism. The essays of this British writer's *Unto This Last* are said to have influenced Gandhi.

Bertrand Russell (1872–1970): Russell, an influential British thinker, made landmark contributions to logic, foundations of mathematics, and methodologies of analytic philosophy. His work also included epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, and ethics, and he was a renowned peace and anti-nuclear activist. Russell received the Nobel Prize for literature. The core of his logical work comprises the *Principles of Mathematics* and *Principia Mathematica*, written with Alfred North Whitehead. Anthologies of his articles include *Unpopular Essays* and *Bertrand Russell on God and Religion*, edited by Al Seckel.

Marquis de Sade (1740–1814): Jailed by his mother for sexual scandals in his youth, the Marquis de Sade was sentenced to death at Aix in 1772 for his cruelty and sexual perversions. He escaped, only to be imprisoned later in the Bastille, from which he was released during the French Revolution. De Sade was later arrested for publication of pornography and spent the final 11 years of his life in an asylum. It is from his title that we get the term *sadism*.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980): A French writer of plays, novels, and political pamphlets, as well as philosophical texts, Sartre was a major proponent of Existentialism. Expanding the phenomenological tradition, Sartre argued that freedom is the fundamental character of human experience.

John Searle (b. 1932): Searle, an American, is a major contributor to the fields of philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. *Speech Acts* is an early work regarding the nondescriptive force of utterances, also relied on in "How to Derive an Ought from an Is." His later work in philosophy of mind, including *The Rediscovery of the Mind* and *The Mystery of Consciousness*, centers on a critique of artificial intelligence efforts to identify mental states with forms of computation.

Sextus Empiricus (c. 200 A.D.): This Greek physician represents the Skeptics. His *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* summarizes and extends the thought of Pyrrho, a philosopher whose own teachings have been otherwise lost. Sextus argues that we can never find truth, but that realization is meant to bring peace of mind.

William Shakespeare (1564–1616): Perhaps the most famous and influential English writer in history, William Shakespeare was an extremely prolific playwright and poet. Shakespeare worked with a London acting troupe called the Lord Chamberlain's Men and established the Globe Theatre. His poems were written as sonnets and his

plays in iambic pentameter, with their themes ranging from comedy to tragedy. Shakespeare's plays include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Mary Shelley (1797–1851): Daughter of philosophers Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, Mary Shelley was an English novelist, essayist, and biographer. A challenge to write the scariest ghost story was posed among a group of friends, including Lord Byron and Mary's husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. Mary's contribution became her novel *Frankenstein*, an enduring and iconic work about an abominable creature created by an obsessed scientist.

Adam Smith (1723–1790): Adam Smith was a Scottish philosopher and political theorist, best known as a founding father of the discipline of economics. Smith argued for laissez-faire free markets; the power of capitalism to generate wealth, he claimed, far exceeded the ability of the generosity of citizens to make the community a better place for all. Smith's major work is *The Wealth of Nations*.

Socrates (470–399 B.C.): Although Socrates did not write philosophy, his teachings are represented in the works of Plato and Xenophon. He considered himself a "gadfly," conversing philosophically with his fellow citizens in Athens and challenging their claims to knowledge and authority. At the age of 70, Socrates was convicted of impiety and corrupting the young and was condemned to death by drinking hemlock. The trial and death of Socrates are represented in Plato's dialogues the *Apology* and *Crito*.

Colin Turnbull (1924–1994): Controversial as an anthropologist, Scottish-born Turnbull presented his work on African tribes in such a way as to praise some and criticize others. Turnbull's books include *The Forest People*, about the BaMbuti Pygmies of the Congo, and *The Mountain People*, about the Ik.

Mark Twain (1835–1910): One of the first major American celebrities as a writer, the endlessly quotable Samuel Clemens went by the pen name Mark Twain. Twain's books and essays were often humorous and satirical. They have been a major influence in American literature and have been banned on numerous occasions for controversial content. Twain is perhaps best known for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

John von Neumann (1903–1957): Born in Hungary, John von Neumann made major contributions to many mathematical and scientific fields, including quantum mechanics, set theory, computer science, and economics. He is regarded as the founder of game theory. A participant in the Manhattan project, von Neumann continued as an advocate of the development of the hydrogen bomb and advisor to the Atomic Energy Commission.

B. A. O. Williams (1929–2003): British philosopher Sir Bernard Williams was a major contributor to ethical thought in the 20th century, often exploring aspects of ethical conflict. Williams's emphasis on the subtleties and perplexities of moral predicaments led him to sharply criticize both Kantian and Utilitarian positions. A representative sample of his essays can be found in *Moral Luck* and *Making Sense of Humanity*.

E. O. Wilson (b. 1929): American scientist and conservationist Edward Osborne Wilson's work in entomology led him to wider evolutionary theories of social behavior to which he gave the title *sociobiology*. Coining the term *biodiversity*, Wilson has also argued that the focus of evolution is the perpetuation of genes rather than individuals. Wilson has won two Pulitzer Prizes for his popular books and is best known for *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* and *On Human Nature*.

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951): After early study with Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore, Wittgenstein joined the Austrian army and was captured during World War I. While imprisoned, he wrote much of his first major philosophical work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, of major influence in the history of logic and philosophy of language. Taking himself to have solved all the major problems in philosophy, Wittgenstein left philosophy and worked as a gardener and schoolteacher. When he returned to philosophy, the target of Wittgenstein's attack was all previous philosophy of language, including his own. Wittgenstein's later work was gathered posthumously in *The Philosophical Investigations* and other collections.

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Singer, Peter, ed. *A Companion to Ethics*. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1991. A collection of medium-length articles by various authors who summarize major areas of research but also express their own points of view. Despite some unevenness in quality, the wide scope of articles makes it a good introduction.

Turnbull, Colin M. *The Mountain People*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972. The story of the Ik, this is a work of anthropology that reads like a novel.

Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. New York: Random House, 1996. Well worth rereading.

Williams, Bernard. *Moral Luck: Philosophical Papers, 1973–1980*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1981/1885. A collection of Williams's creative and thoughtful philosophical essays, including, of course, "Moral Luck."

———. *Problems of the Self*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1973. A collection of Williams's earlier essays, including "The Makropulos Case: Reflections on the Tedium of Immortality."

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; New York: The Humanities Press, 1921/1961/1969. Famous for its obscurity, as well as its historical importance. When it was completed, Wittgenstein took this book to say all that could sensibly be said in philosophy. He later changed his mind.

Wong, David. "Relativism," in *A Companion to Ethics*, pp. 442–450. Edited by Peter Singer. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1991. A fairly simple but interesting outline of different forms of ethical relativism, some plausible and some not.

Additional Resources:

Bedau, Hugo Adam. *The Death Penalty in America: Current Controversies*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. A complete compendium of cases and essays, with a distinct leaning against the death penalty.

Cavalier, Robert, Preston Covey, Elizabeth A. Style, and Andrew Thompson. *The Issue of Abortion in America*. London/New York: Routledge, 1998. A multimedia CD-ROM devoted entirely to the issue of abortion.

Concise Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. London: Routledge, 2000. The full *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is enormous and enormously expensive. This version is smaller and more affordable. Even better, though slightly out of date, are the four volumes of the Macmillan and Free Press *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. This was given as a premium to join a book club, so used copies should be available.

Hare, R. M. *Freedom and Reason*. London/Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1963/1967. Influential in its day, though less frequently cited now. Hare's discussion of universalizability and the fanatical Nazi is still worth returning to.

Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty and Other Essays*. Edited by John Gray. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. Mill scholars wrestle with the apparent inconsistencies in his thought. *On Liberty* represents the "other" Mill, arguing against paternalistic government in strong and stimulating passages. Mill tries valiantly to reconcile these views with Utilitarianism, but the general consensus is that he fails.

Regan, Tom. *Bloomsbury's Prophet*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986. A biography of G. E. Moore and the Bloomsbury Group that reads like a novel.

Internet Resources:

Classic Texts in Ethics. http://ethics.acusd.edu/books.html. Maintained by Larry Hinman, this site is an extensive collection of classic texts in ethics. Many of the major works in the history of philosophy listed in this bibliography are available in online versions here. Hinman's site also includes links to other philosophical sources online.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. http://plato.stanford.edu/. Created by Ed Zalta, the encyclopedia is as yet incomplete. Entries are of varying quality, but the intention is to have articles updated continuously by experts in the field.