"Yes, yes, I know that, Sidney ... everybody knows that! ... But look: Four wrongs squared, minus two wrongs to the fourth power, divided by this formula, do make a right."
Ethics
Ethics is Practical!

“But men must know, that in this theatre of man’s life, it is reserved only for God and angels to be lookers on.”

Francis Bacon (1561-1626)
Advancement of Learning, xx.8.
Morality and Ethics

**Morality**: How I think I should live and get on with those around me, and my understanding of the Good.

**Ethics**: The science of morality.

Ethics is a **Normative Science**: ethics concerns how we *should* behave, not how we *in fact* behave.
Ethics and Metaethics

**Normative ethics**: the study of goodness, virtue, and right action.
- What is intrinsically good?
- What is the good life?
- What traits of character do we value?
- What rules or principles should we follow?

**Metaethics**: the study of these moral concepts and their grounding.
- What is the scope and status of moral values?
- What does it mean to say that “$X$ is good”?
- Do moral claims have a truth-value?
- Do moral values exist in the world independently of human beings?
Ethical Preliminaries

What is the source of my conscience?

What do I want?
   1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} order desires

The Good Life vs The Good Society
   What I want for myself vs What we need in order to live in community with each other
Moral Classification

An Action is...

**Morally Required**: if not doing it is **blameworthy**.
**Morally Prohibited**: if doing it is **blameworthy**.
**Supererogatory**: if doing it is **praiseworthy**.
**Morally Neutral**: if it elicits neither **praise** nor **blame**.
What is Ethics Good For?

Resolving moral disagreement with others. Mediating differing conceptions of the good.

Deciding what to do... when my moral intuitions are weak, vacillating, or in conflict.

Justifying past actions to others and to myself. I need to be able live and get along with these others, and I need to be able to live with myself and with what I’ve done.

Unifying my actions into a single self. As best I can, I hope to see my life as a coherent whole that is the sum of my many actions.
Three Dimensions of the Moral Universe

We speak of the moral worth or value of …

(1) A Person’s Character (as *virtuous* or *vicious*)
   [> Aristotle’s virtue ethic]

(2) The Way the World Is (as *good* or *bad*)
   [> Mill’s utilitarian ethic]

(3) An Action (as *right* or *wrong*)
   [> Kant’s deontological ethic]
Rules for Playing
Prisoner’s Dilemma

(1) You may either confess to the crime or stay silent.
(2) If one of you confesses and the other is silent, the one confessing goes free, while the silent one gets three years in jail.
(3) If you both confess, you both get two years in jail.
(4) If you both are silent, you both get one year in jail.
(5) Your partner is being told these same things.
Prisoner’s Dilemma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Confess</th>
<th>Silent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bob</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confess</td>
<td>A = 2</td>
<td>A = 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B = 2</td>
<td>B = 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent</td>
<td>A = 3</td>
<td>A = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B = 0</td>
<td>B = 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1/2(2+0) = 1 yr
1/2(3+1) = 2 yrs.

Best for the Group
Worst for the Group

Rules
(1) You may either confess to the crime or remain silent.
(2) If one of you confesses but the other is silent, then the one who confesses will go free and the other one will go to jail for three years.
(3) If both of you confess, then you will both go to jail for two years.
(4) If both of you are silent, then you will both go to jail for just one year.
(5) Your partner is being told these same things.
When it Pays to Play Along

Small groups of people are likely to be very cooperative, but as numbers increase so will cheating. If people are allowed to punish cheats, cooperation will persist in larger groups. If they can also punish those who do not punish cheats, then cooperation flourishes in groups with hundreds of members.

- Blue line: No punishment possible
- Orange line: Punishment of cheats possible
- Red line: Punishment of cheats and those who don’t punish cheats possible

**Graph:**
- X-axis: Group size (2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512)
- Y-axis: Average cooperation rate (%)

Source: Nature
"From a purely business viewpoint, taking what doesn’t belong to you is usually the cheapest way to go."
How are you doing on your New Year's resolutions?

I didn't make any.

See, in order to improve oneself, one must have some idea of what's "good." That implies certain values.

But as we all know, values are relative. Every system of belief is equally valid and we need to tolerate diversity. Virtue isn't "better" than vice. It's just different.

I don't know if I can tolerate that much tolerance.

I refuse to be victimized by notions of virtuous behavior.
“Are you telling me that just because something is against the law, that makes it illegal?”