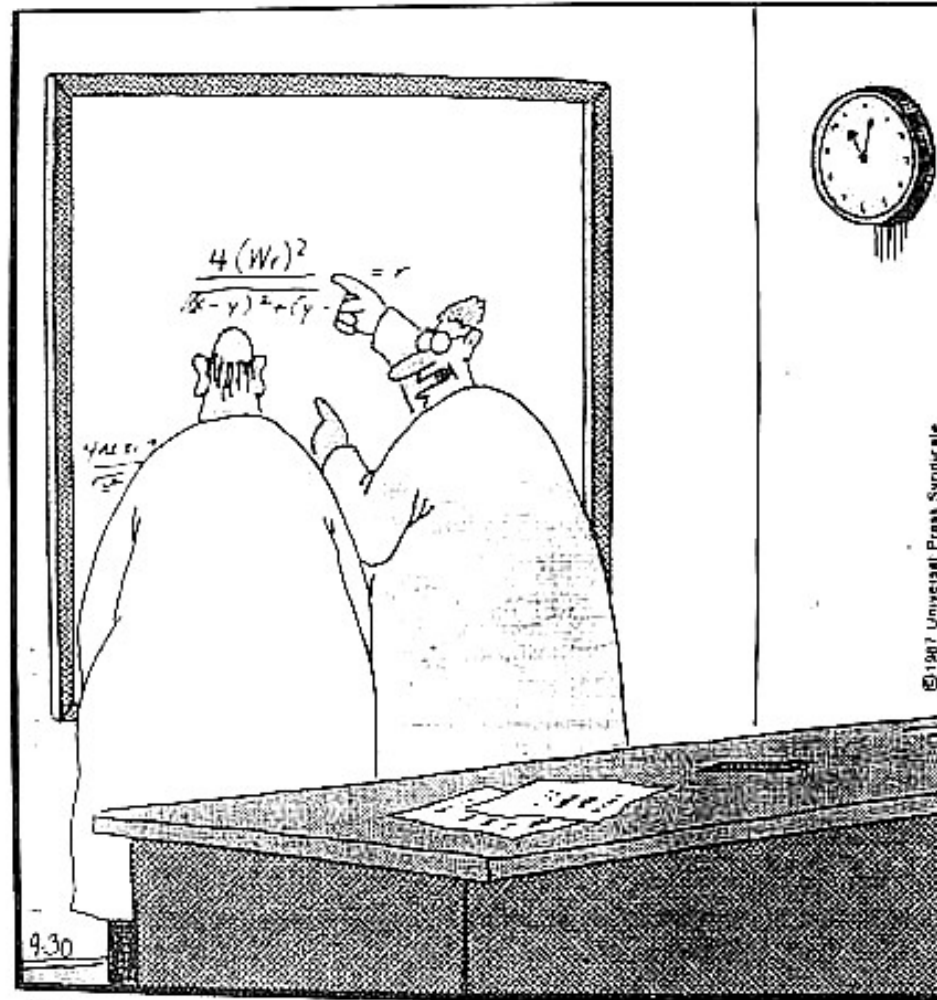


The Arithmetic of Moral Reasoning



"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!



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

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

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?

God? Nature? Nurture? ...

What do I want?

1st and 2nd 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

		Bob	
		Confess	Silent
AI	Confess	A = 2 B = 2	A = 0 B = 3
	Silent	A = 3 B = 0	A = 1 B = 1

Worst for the Group

$1/2(2+0) = 1 \text{ yr}$

$1/2(3+1) = 2 \text{ yrs.}$

Best for the Group

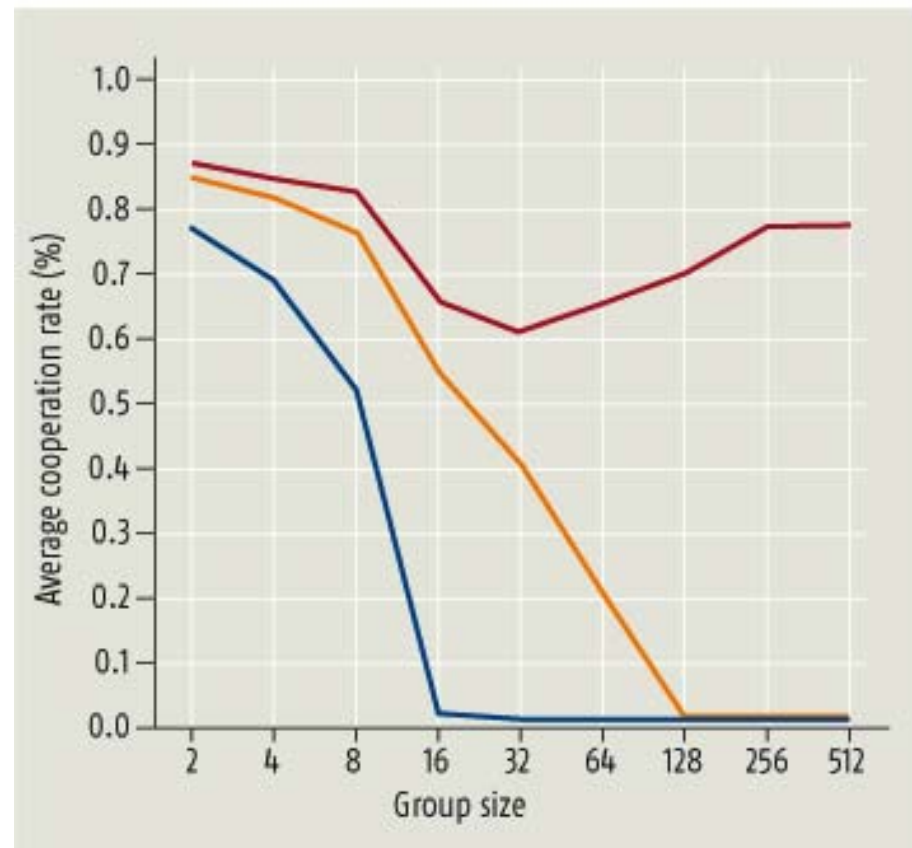
Rules

- (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

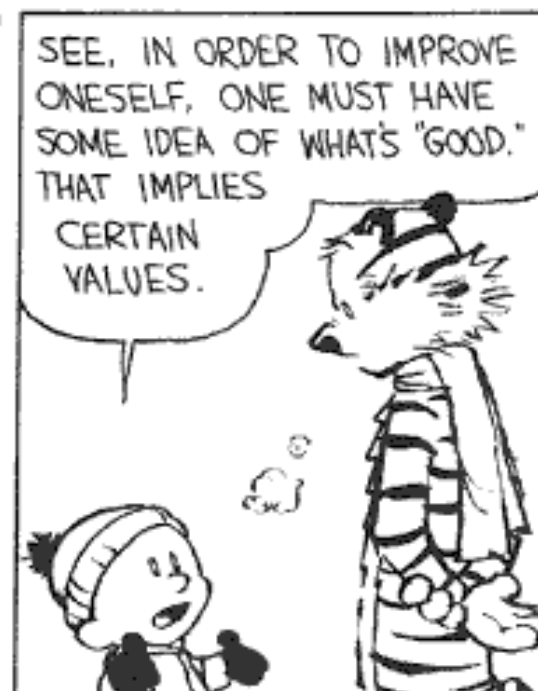
- No punishment possible
- Punishment of cheats possible
- Punishment of cheats and those who don't punish cheats possible



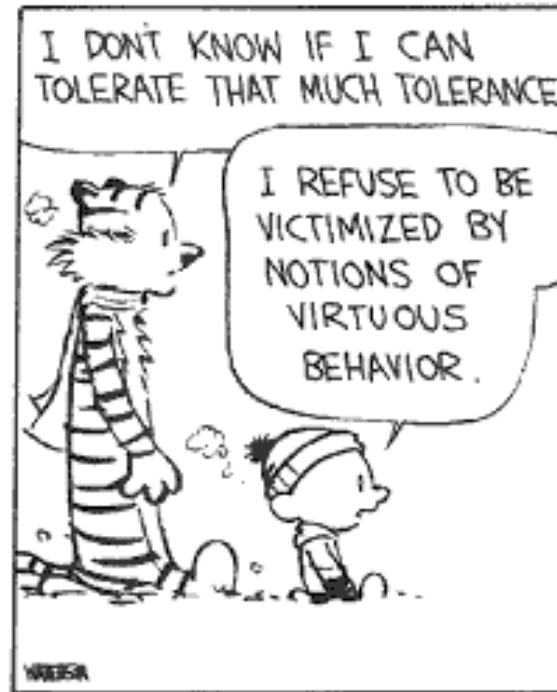
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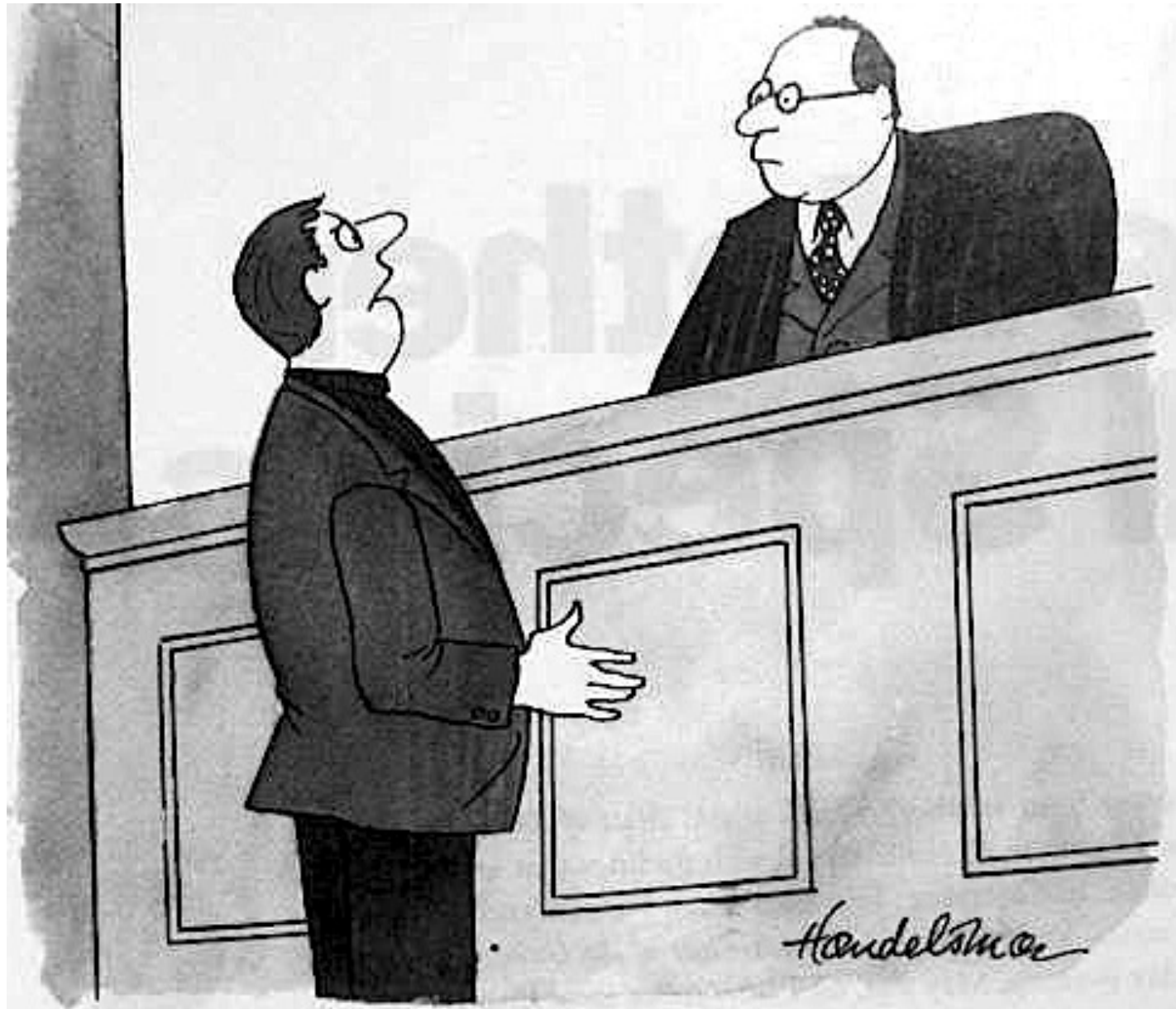


"From a purely business viewpoint, taking what doesn't belong to you is usually the cheapest way to go."



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.





*"Are you telling me that just because something is
against the law, that makes it illegal?"*