

# **Studies and applications of pure ethics**

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November 2000



# Preface

This document outlines a language for reasoning and communicating about general problems in ethics. Ethics is a set of conceptions drawn from studies of ideal internal and external behaviors of things. Science, on the other hand, is a set of conceptions drawn from studies of practical internal and external behaviors of things. Ethics, together with science, form all human knowledge. Note that only terms crucial to ethics is defined precisely in this document. I rely on the reader's understanding of natural language for deciphering terms such as “time,” “document,” and “self.”



# Part I

## Foundations of pure ethics





# Chapter 1

## Common definitions

pure	denotes the thing in itself.
set	denotes a thing or a collection of things.
subset	denotes a collection of things within a given set.
intention	is any thing that is a goal.
conception	is any thing that is a representation.
subject	is any conceiving thing in itself.
object	is any conceivable thing in itself.
cosubject	is a non-empty set of subjects.
coobject	is a non-empty set of objects conceivable to a cosubject.
will	is the set of all intentions of a subject.
spirit	is the set of all intentions common to a cosubject's members.
knowledge	is the set of all conceptions of a subject.
foundation	is the set of all conceptions common to a cosubject's members.
abstraction	is a subject's conception of an object in itself.
coabstraction	is a cosubject's members' common conception of an object in itself.
idea	is a subject's set of conceptions of an object's intentions.
coidea	is a cosubject's members' common set of conceptions of an object's intentions.



world	is the set of all coabstractions common to members of a cosubject.
philosophy	is the set of all coideas common to members of a cosubject.
universe	is the set of all intentions and conceptions common to members of a cosubject.
context	is the universe at a particular moment of time.
growth	is a change in will or knowledge of a subject with respect to time.
evolution	is a change in spirit or foundation of a cosubject with respect to time.
study	is a subject's intention to change a conception of an object.
application	is a subject's intention to change one of its intentions based on a conception of an object.
cause	is a set of intentions that evokes a change in an object.
practical	pertains to change in conception caused by study.
ideal	pertains to change in intention caused by application.
internal	pertains to a subject in itself.
external	pertains to an object in itself.
action	is a change of a coobject caused by an intention of a subject.
behavior	is a set of actions in time.
definition	is a conception of one or more conceptions.
language	is a subset of the world of a cosubject whose members are common conceptions of conceptions.
truth	any conception that matches the thing conceived or any intention that matches the thing intended.
life	a subject's search for truths by study.



## Chapter 2

### Common foundation

All pure things form a subset of all things.

All things are characterized by their intentions and conceptions of other things.

All things are subjects and objects.



## Part II

### Applications of pure ethics



# Chapter 3

## Our world

Human beings form a cosubject whose members possess differing will and knowledge.

The traditional views of political liberalism and conservatism are different aspects of the general idea of the utilitarian “greatest good.” In liberalism, the utility value associated with fairness is given precedence, and subjects’ need for assurance of justice in John Rawls’ “original position” is given greater utility. In conservatism, the utility value associated with rights is given precedence, and subjects’ need for guarantee of fundamental rights is given greater utility. Note that fairness means that if you do something, its consequences should affect you and your world in the same way, and similarly if another subject does something, it should affect her and you and your world in the same way, i.e. what one should do. Note that right means being able to do what ever you’d like, no matter how contrary, theoretically, i.e. what one can do. The tradeoff between fairness and right depends on value judgments, if the two conflict. The correct thing for each subject to do is to do what is fair, but other subjects are not always fair, but act within their own rights. Conservatism takes into account these rights of cosubjects while liberalism takes into account only fairness maintained by one subject. If the utilities are adjusted based on what other subjects do, then no subject would ever act in a totally fair manner. On the other hand, in a state of total ignorance as pointed out by John Rawls, then fairness should be the only concern. Note that this fairness is not only a universal fairness, it really is an individual fairness as well, because behind a “veil of ignorance,” we have no way of telling what our capabilities are, so we cannot a priori decide that equality of opportunity is what we’d like; instead, we

seek fairness for all, i.e. equality of welfare, up to the point of minimizing inequality. But as soon as we take the rights of other subjects into account, no absolute equality is any longer possible. The utility of an action depends then on both its achievement of something for ourselves and its achievement for others. We no longer live behind a “veil of ignorance.”

The question becomes: if we are all to act so as to do what is fair, will we have an optimal society in terms of utilities. Theoretically, this is possible, however just as we can’t achieve 1.0 probability of any event occurring or determine the position and momentum of a particle with total certainty, society will never behave in this theoretical manner. This theoretical society is even more difficult to achieve than, say, finding out exactly what each part of the brain does. Hence, we must take into account real human emotions, judgments, values, actions, and behaviors into account, and assign utilities based on our best judgment of what others are likely to do. Thus we can think of political liberalism as a theoretical limit for what political conservatism is trying to achieve. The key is to refrain from making judgments about what temperament—idealist or realist—is preferable, because they are manifestations of the same goal of perfect fairness. When liberals ask for certain legislations, they must be prepared to answer what their agendas are, for if the agenda, however beneficial they could be, overall, fails to be cognizant of the inherent bias of the benefited group, then those legislations will not be optimal. Similarly when conservatives ask for certain legislations, they must be prepared to answer how their agenda would benefit everyone, and again, be cognizant of the inherent bias of the benefited group. Thus both political persuasions attempt to achieve the same goals, only lambasting each other would be counter-productive, and would receive negative utility values. The moral: don’t claim that you are thinking with your brain when you are thinking with your heart, especially when it is most difficult to realize which arguments are based on the heart and which are based on the brain; the inability to figure out which is which creates a veil of dishonesty, which, given the complexity of the situation, only creates more utility slots to be filled; i.e. Rawls is preferable to Hegel.



# Chapter 4

## Our selves

My existence is the result of a cause unknown to me. I have no way of finding out what that cause is. The only clues to that cause are my will and the spirit of the people of which I am a part.

I am not the same person from moment to moment, because my universe evolves constantly: 1. My conception of objects in one moment of being may be obscured, forgotten, or violated at another moment of being. 2. The set of intentions that describes me and the set of conceptions that I possess (i.e. what I am) in one moment changes to reflect growth in another moment. 3. My actions differ with time given almost identical context.

Since I must someday perish, I only have a finite number of actions that I can perform. Every action, simple or complex, conscious or unconscious, judicious or rash, transforms me into a different subject. These actions include automatic behaviors such as eating, sleeping, and traveling and goal-directed behaviors such as searching, learning, and writing.

I must now work continuously on various aspects of ideal intentions because the limit to the number of actions I can perform in my life is fast approaching.

I must act when there is no clear immediate reason to act. To act given only immediate causes and consequences is to ignore the information of later or indirect causes and consequences, thus limiting the posterior probability of taking the correct action. For example, to do good when you don't have to makes you feel better and enhances others' perception of you, both indirect consequences. Many choices in life comes down to this action despite lack of cause, e.g. to work to know the minutest detail for a class, to live despite lack of cause for living, to have faith despite the lack of anything to believe,

to choose a life of contemplation instead of pleasure, and to have contact with other subjects despite the self-sufficiency of the self. This is what our idea of God does: to act with no immediate reason in mind to right a wrong or uncover the truth at the end.