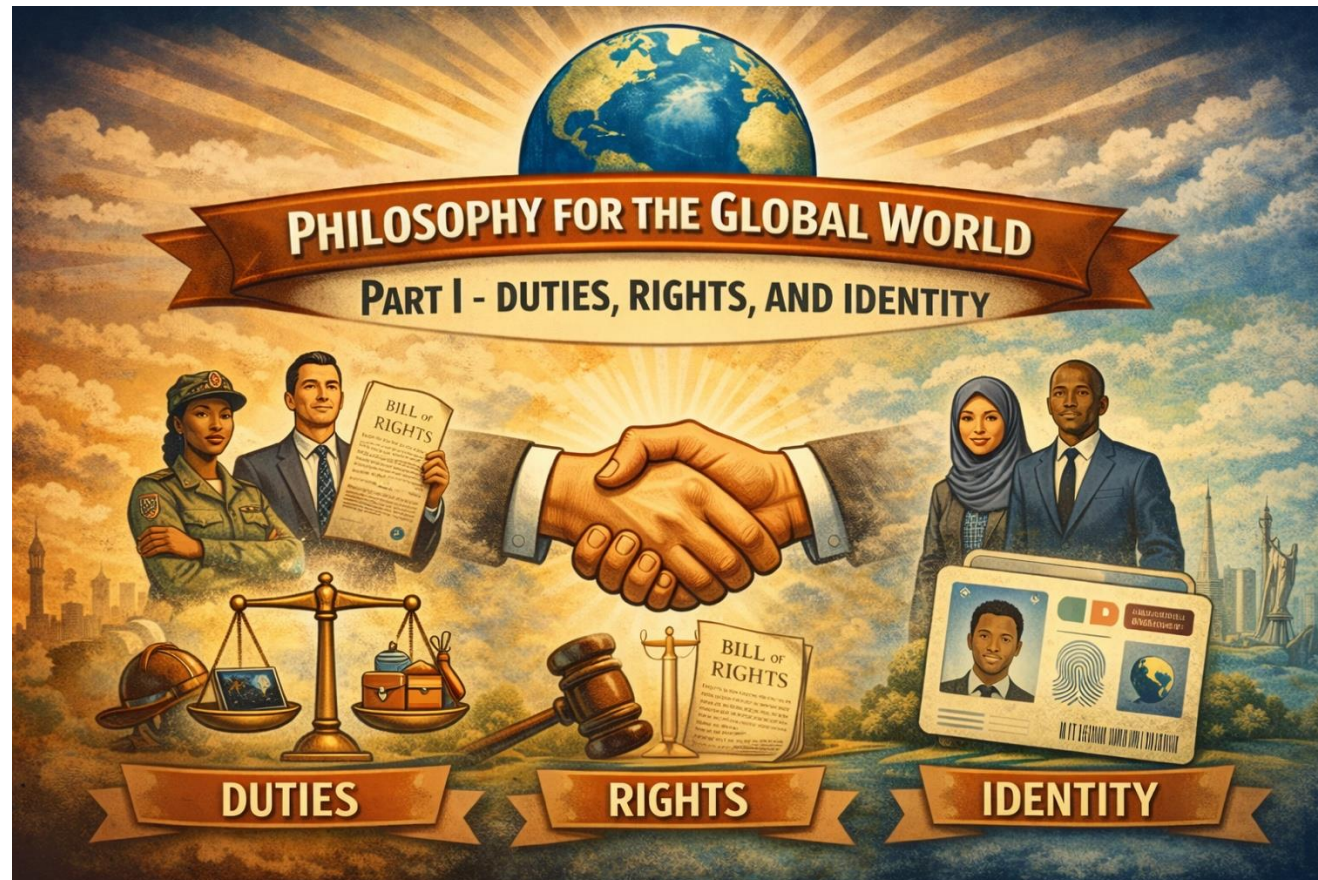


Global Justice

Part I



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What Is Global Justice?

Global justice asks a fundamental question:

What do individuals, states, and institutions owe to one another in an interconnected world?

- Concerns **how we ought to act** toward others on the global stage
- Examines **how international institutions should be structured** to be more just
- Focuses on duties beyond borders: to **foreigners, future generations, and humanity at large**
- Not only about charity, but about **justice and responsibility**

Key idea:

Global justice shifts moral reasoning **from the national to the global level**, without assuming a world government

Morality, Duties , and Justice

Global justice is an inquiry into **what we owe to each other**.

- This is the core subject of **moral and political philosophy**
- Focus on **duties**, not only on rights
- Distinction:
 - **Morality**: what is right or wrong in principle
 - **Ethics**: how we ought to live and act
- Rights are effective **only if corresponding duties are recognized and fulfilled**

Why philosophy matters:

To understand global justice, we must study:

- Moral theories (utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, etc.)
- Theories of justice (Rawls, capabilities, cosmopolitanism)

Key claim:

Justice is not just an ideal — it is an **institutional achievement grounded in moral obligation**

Climate Change as a Test Case of Global Justice

Climate change illustrates the deepest challenges of global justice.

- **Emissions are morally problematic** because they harm others
- Most harms fall on:
 - The global poor
 - Future generations
- Present benefits vs. future costs

Central questions:

- How should the **costs of emission reductions** be shared among countries?
- Who should bear responsibility:
 - Polluters?
 - Beneficiaries?
 - Those most able to pay?
- How should **intergenerational duties** be divided fairly today?

Core dilemma:

What we owe to **future persons** — and how this duty should be distributed **among present states and peoples**

This course uses global issues as test cases to evaluate moral and political theories developed for domestic justice — and to rethink them for a global world

PART I – DUTY, RIGHTS, AND IDENTITY

What is a moral action?

For **Mahatma Gandhi**, morality is defined by **intention**, not outcomes.

“A moral act must be our own act; it must spring from our own will. If we act mechanically, there is no moral content in our act.” [...]

“It is not enough that an act done by us is in itself good; it should have been done with the intention to do good. That is to say, whether an act is moral or otherwise depends upon the intention of the doer. Two men may have done exactly the same thing; but the act of one may be moral, and that of the other the contrary. Take, for instance, a man who out of great pity feeds the poor and another who does the same, but with the motive of winning prestige or with some such selfish end. Though the action is the same, the act of the one is moral and that of the other non-moral.” [...]

Key claim:

- An act motivated by **self-interest**, even if beneficial, **lacks moral worth**
- Egoism fails because it **contaminates moral motivation**

Implication:

- Acting morally and acting selfishly are **conceptually incompatible**

Self-Interest Explain Outcomes, Not morality

Adam Smith and **Bernard Mandeville** show that self-interest can produce **social coordination and social benefit**.
Smith:

“It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest.”

Mandeville goes further :

“Private vices... may turn into public benefits.”

“The Moment Evil ceases, the Society must be spoiled, if not totally destroyed”.

Crucial distinction:

- These arguments explain **how social cooperation in a market contest works**
- They do **not** justify egoism as a **moral principle**
Invisible hand ≠ moral justification

Self-Interest Explain Outcomes, Not morality

Adam Smith's famous quote from the *The Wealth of Nations* explains a fundamental principle of free-market economics: that individuals and businesses act out of self-interest, and this, in turn, benefits society as a whole.

Meaning:

Self-Interest Drives Economic Activity – The butcher, brewer, and baker do not provide food out of kindness but because they seek profit. They work to earn a living, not purely out of generosity.

Mutual Benefit through Trade – Instead of appealing to their compassion, consumers engage in transactions that benefit both parties. The customer gets food, and the seller makes money.

The Invisible Hand – Though each person acts out of self-interest, the market organizes resources efficiently. This is a key idea in capitalism—individual pursuit of profit can lead to overall prosperity.

Essentially, Smith is arguing that a system based on self-interest, rather than charity, is more effective in meeting people's needs,

Self-interest

A justification?

Bernard Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) is a satirical poem and philosophical commentary that argues that private vices—such as greed, selfishness, ambition and luxury—can lead to public benefits, such as economic prosperity and social advancement.

Mandeville challenges the traditional moral belief that virtue is essential for a thriving society. He suggests that selfish behaviors, like the pursuit of wealth and luxury, drive economic activity, industry, and innovation. He exposes how societies condemn vices while benefiting from them. For example, luxury spending may seem wasteful, but it creates jobs and sustains economies.

His ideas foreshadow Adam Smith's *invisible hand* theory, as they suggest that individuals pursuing their self-interest inadvertently contribute to the common good. In the poem, when the bees become virtuous and abandon their greed and ambition, their once-thriving hive collapses.

This illustrates Mandeville's belief that a society purely based on virtue lacks the energy and motivation to progress. Mandeville's ideas were controversial because they challenged moral and religious doctrines of his time. However, his work influenced economic thought, particularly classical liberalism and capitalism ethics.

The Challenge: Can Self-Interest Be the Basis of Morality?

Ethical egoism claims:

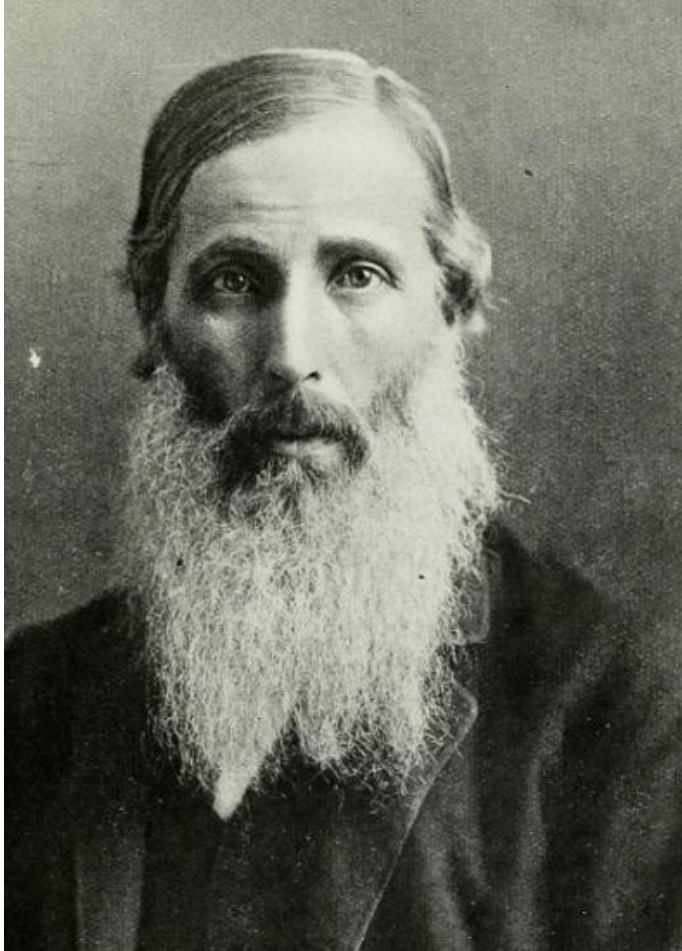
- Each person **ought to pursue their own good**
- Moral action is justified by **self-interest**

Central question:

- *Can morality be grounded in prudence (rationality, self-interest, long-term, not impulsive action) rather than impartial concern?*

Why this matters:

- If egoism were true, morality would reduce to:
 - “What benefits me?”



Henry Sidgwick

Henry Sidgwick (1838–1900) was a British moral philosopher, a central figure in Victorian ethics and one of the most influential interpreters of utilitarianism. A professor at the University of Cambridge, he combined analytical rigor with a liberal moral sensibility, leaving a lasting mark on Anglo-American ethical philosophy and on educational reform.

Key facts

- Born:** 31 May 1838, Skipton (Yorkshire)
- Died:** 28 August 1900, Terling (Essex)
- Major work:** *The Methods of Ethics* (1874)
- Institution:** Trinity College, Cambridge
- Spouse:** Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick

Education and career

Educated at Rugby School and Trinity College, Sidgwick excelled in mathematics and the classics before turning to moral philosophy. In 1869 he temporarily relinquished his fellowship for reasons of religious conscience, yet he remained a prominent figure in Cambridge academic life, becoming Knightbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy in 1883. He was also among the founders of Newnham College, a pioneering institution for women's education.

Philosophical thought

In *The Methods of Ethics*, Sidgwick systematized and critically examined classical utilitarianism, seeking to reconcile it with the principles of common-sense morality. His notion of the “dualism of practical reason”—the conflict between rational egoism and altruism—became a key reference point for later moral philosophy, influencing thinkers from G. E. Moore to John Rawls.

Sidgwick: Why Egoism Fails as Morality

Henry Sidgwick confronts directly the question of whether self-interest can serve as a moral principle. In *The Methods of Ethics*, he distinguishes between **egoistic hedonism**, which holds that each person ought to maximize their own good; **utilitarianism**, which seeks to maximize overall good; and **intuitionism**, which relies on self-evident moral duties.

Sidgwick takes egoism seriously—and rejects it.

Three decisive flaws:

1. **First, it lacks universality:** it issues different and potentially incompatible prescriptions to different agents. No universality.
2. **Second, it provides no rational method for resolving conflicts of interest,** whereas morality aims precisely to regulate such conflicts through shared principles. No impartiality.
3. **Third, it undermines collective rationality,** since actions that are individually rational often produce outcomes that are worse for everyone involved.
 - Conflict between prudence and morality. It undermines collective rationality, since actions that are individually rational often produce outcomes that are worse for everyone involved. (*dualism of practical reason*).

Conclusion:

- Egoism cannot generate **shared moral principles**
- It fails as a **moral method**



Derek Parfit

December 1942 – 1 January 2017) was a British philosopher, among the most influential moral and analytic thinkers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. His work reshaped debates on personal identity, rationality, and moral obligations toward future generations.

Key facts

- Born:** 11 December 1942, Chengdu (China)
- Died:** 1 January 2017, London (United Kingdom)
- Primary institution:** All Souls College, University of Oxford
- Major works:** *Reasons and Persons* (1984); *On What Matters* (2011–2017)
- Awards:** Rolf Schock Prize in Logic and Philosophy (2014)

Life and education

The son of British missionary doctors, Parfit grew up in Oxford. He studied history at Balliol College, then received a Harkness Fellowship that took him to the United States, where he discovered philosophy. In 1967 he became a fellow of All Souls College, a position he held throughout his career, while also collaborating with universities such as Harvard, Rutgers, and New York University.

Personal identity and “Relation R”

In *Reasons and Persons* (1984), Parfit argued that there is no permanent self and that personal identity can be reduced to chains of psychological connections—memory, intentions, and character traits—between different temporal stages of a person. Through thought experiments such as teleportation, he showed that what matters for survival is not numerical identity but psychological continuity, which he called “Relation R.”

Ethics, rationality, and future generations

Parfit introduced central issues in what is now known as population ethics. He formulated the Non-Identity Problem, according to which many decisions affect who will exist in the future, making it difficult to claim that such decisions harm any particular person. He also analyzed the Repugnant Conclusion, a paradoxical implication of utilitarianism that favors extremely large populations with lives barely worth living over smaller populations with very high quality of life. As an alternative, he proposed the Priority View, according to which benefiting the worse off matters more, even at the cost of lower total well-being.

On What Matters and the “Triple Theory”

In the monumental *On What Matters* (2011–2017), Parfit attempted to unify three ethical traditions—consequentialism, Kantianism, and contractualism—into what he called the “Triple Theory.” According to Parfit, these schools “climb the same mountain from different sides,” converging on objective and rational moral principles.

Parfit: Egoism Is Collectively Self-Defeating

Parfit shows egoism collapses in **collective action problems**:

Polluters: Each benefits for non bearing the costs of non-polluting, if all do so, pollution will prevail.

Commuters: Each benefits personally by driving faster, yet if all do so, traffic congestion worsens.

Fishermen: Overfishing maximizes short-term gain for individuals, but collective overfishing depletes the resource.

Soldiers in the battle: Acting purely in self-interest to save her/his own life may seem rational, but if all follow the same logic, the battle is lost.

The Prisoner's Dilemma.

Core insight:

- In public goods dilemmas, individual rationality often conflicts with collective welfare. Self-interested behavior can undermine outcomes that would be better for everyone. This exposes a paradox: **Egoism is self-defeating in several circumstances at the collective level.**

Egoism is rational at the individual level, Egoism undermines: Cooperation, Trust, Public goods

Conclusion: why Egoism Must Be Rejected

Ethical egoism must be refused because it:

- Lacks universality (Sidgwick)
- Cannot justify impartial concern
- Collapses under collective action (Parfit)
- Reduces morality to self-interest

Positive conclusion:

- Morality begins when we **transcend self-interest**
- Moral reasoning requires:
 - Impartiality
 - Reciprocity
 - Recognition of interdependence

Bridge to global justice:

- In a globalized world, egoism is not only immoral
- It is **structurally catastrophic**

The Prisoner Dilemma

Two political prisoners are brought before a magistrate, who presents them with the following “offer.” If one prisoner confesses and testifies against the other, the informant will go free while the other receives a ten-year sentence. If both betray each other, each will be sentenced to five years. However, if both remain silent, each will serve only one year. The prisoners are then placed in separate rooms to deliberate their decisions. They are assured that their choices will remain secret, that they will never meet again, and that their decisions will have no further consequences beyond the sentences described. This is the so-called *Prisoner’s Dilemma*, a thought experiment much discussed by economists, political scientists, and moral philosophers. Several important insights arise from this thought-experiment (cells identified like directions on a map):

	Prisoner B: Silent	Prisoner B: Confess
Prisoner A: Silent	Both serve 1 year (NW)	A serves 10 years, B goes free (NE)
Prisoner A: Confess	A goes free, B serves 10 years (SW)	Both serve 5 years (SE)

The Prisoner Dilemma

	Prisoner B: Silent	Prisoner B: Confess
Prisoner A: Silent	Both serve 1 year (NW)	A serves 10 years, B goes free (NE)
Prisoner A: Confess	A goes free, B serves 10 years (SW)	Both serve 5 years (SE)

Several lessons emerge from this model:

Interdependence of outcomes: The fate of each prisoner is not solely in his own hands. Each is dependent on the other's choice, and vice versa. An individualistic strategy is self-defeating: if Prisoner B chooses "Confess" (betray), Prisoner A's best option is also to "confess" (betray). If B chooses "silent" (cooperate) A still maximizes his individual gain by choosing "confess" (betray). Thus, regardless of B's decision, A will always betray — and the same reasoning applies to B. This is the so-called *Nash equilibrium*.

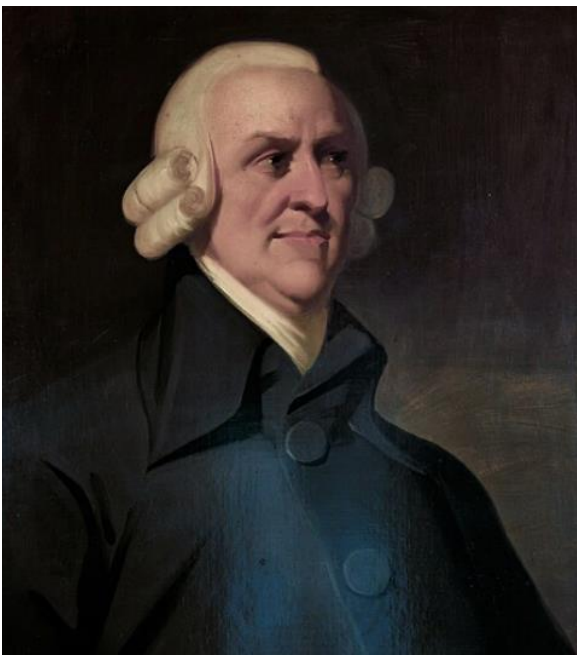
Conflict of rationalities: The optimal individual outcome (cells SW and NE: one prisoner goes free, the other gets ten years) is not the optimal collective outcome (cell SE: two years total, one year each).

The paradox of self-interest: Pursuing one's own maximum benefit leads both to worse results. Egoism, when universalized, becomes self-destructive.

The moral or cooperative outcome: The optimal collective solution (one year each) depends on trust, altruism, and reciprocity — moral dispositions absent from pure egoism.

Social enforcement and moral order: When rules, sanctions, or reputational incentives are introduced, cooperation becomes the rational choice. Law and morality thus function to align self-interest with the common good — a solution Sidgwick sought through rational utilitarianism.

Sidgwick recognized this contradiction at the heart of egoism: while self-interest can justify moral restraint when aligned with long-term benefit, it cannot rationally explain why an individual should sacrifice for others when no advantage can be gained. This is what he called the "dualism of practical reason." The *Prisoner's Dilemma* dramatizes precisely this dualism — the rational egoist's pursuit of self-interest undermines the very conditions that make cooperation and trust possible.



Adam Smith

Adam Smith (1723–1790) was a Scottish moral philosopher and economist, a central figure of the Scottish Enlightenment and widely regarded as the father of modern economics. His works, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), laid the foundations of classical economic theory and of the idea of the free market guided by an “invisible hand.”

Education and Career

Smith studied at the University of Glasgow under the moral philosopher Francis Hutcheson, and later at Oxford, where he deepened his knowledge of classical and modern philosophy. In 1751 he became Professor of Logic and then Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow, a period he described as the happiest of his life. His lectures on ethics, law, and politics anticipated the theories he would later systematize in his major works.

Moral Thought

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith analyzed the psychological foundations of moral judgment, introducing the concept of the “impartial spectator”: an internal voice that allows individuals to evaluate and regulate their actions. He argued that sympathy and reason enable human beings to cooperate, thereby providing the moral foundations of society.

Economics and the “Invisible Hand”

The Wealth of Nations extended these ideas into the economic sphere. Smith explained how the pursuit of self-interest, within a competitive system, can produce collective benefits, guided by a spontaneous mechanism of coordination: the “invisible hand.” He defended free competition, division of labor, and the value of international trade, while acknowledging a limited role for the state in education, infrastructure, and justice.

Legacy

Smith’s influence extended far beyond his own time: his theories became the foundation of classical political economy and economic liberalism. Although often associated with laissez-faire, Smith recognized the importance of morality, education, and regulation for the proper functioning of markets. His optimistic vision of progress and human cooperation remains a cornerstone of economic and social thought.

Adam Smith: Morality and Social Psychology

The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759)

Smith is not giving commandments.

He is explaining **how morality emerges**.

“The chief part of human happiness arises from the consciousness of being beloved.” ...

«All the members of human society stand in need of each others assistance, and are like-wise exposed to mutual injuries. When the necessary assistance is reciprocally afforded from love, from gratitude, from friendship, and esteem, the society flourishes and is happy.» TMS

Human beings:

- Desire sympathy from others
- Adjust their behavior to gain approval
- Develop shared standards over time

Key thesis:

Moral norms are not abstract deductions. They evolve through **social interaction**.

Moral Sentiments Evolve in Society

Smith rejects the idea of an isolated moral individual.

Thought experiment:

- A solitary person would lack moral awareness.
- Without others, there is no mirror.

“All the members of human society stand in need of each other’s assistance... society flourishes when assistance is reciprocally afforded.”

Moral development requires:

- Interaction
- Recognition
- Feedback

Conclusion:

Morality is socially constructed but not arbitrary.
It develops through repeated mutual adjustment.

The Impartial Spectator

Central mechanism: the **Impartial Spectator**

We internalize the gaze of society.

«We learn not only to be loved, but to be lovely.»

The impartial spectator:

- Represents the viewpoint of a fair observer
- Allows self-judgment
- Transforms social approval into conscience

This explains:

- Moral self-regulation
- Stability of commercial society



"From now on, maybe we should let somebody else's conscience be our guide"

Justice v. Beneficence: Negative & Positive Duties

Smith distinguishes two types of virtue:

1. Negative virtues (duties of justice)

1. Refrain from injury

“We may often fulfil all the rules of justice by sitting still and doing nothing.”

Justice:

- Is enforceable
- Can be punished
- Is necessary for social survival

“Society may subsist, though not in the most comfortable state, without beneficence; but the prevalence of injustice must utterly destroy it.”

2. Positive virtues (duties of beneficence)

- Active promote others' good
- Charity, generosity

«Beneficence is always free: it cannot be exorted by force»

Beneficence:

- Is praiseworthy
- Cannot be legally enforced

The Three Basic Rules of Justice (“The Three Ps”)

Smith defines justice through three core protections (the 3 Ps):

1. «guard the life and **person** of our neighbor”
 - Do not kill, assault, enslave
2. «guard our neighbor’s **property** and possession
 - Do not steal, trespass, damage
3. «guard what are called our neighbor’s rights or what is due to him from the **promises** of others
 - Keep contracts and agreements

These are negative duties:

- Duties of restraint
- Duties of non-interference

Political implication:

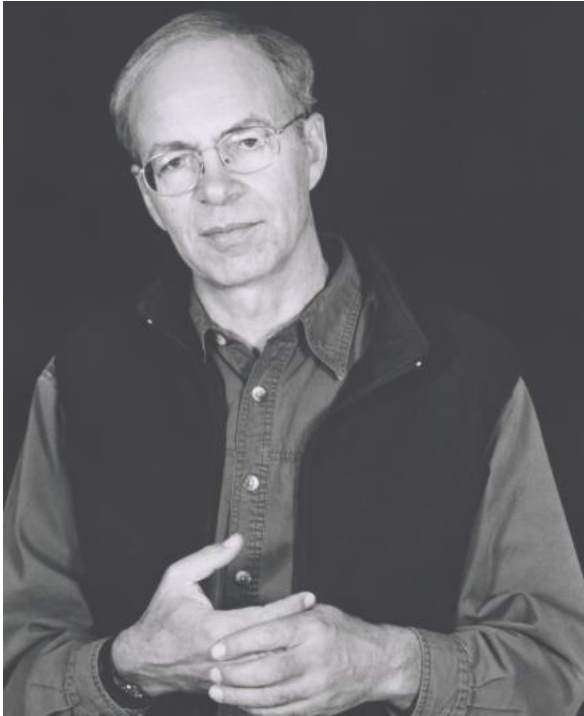
- The state exists primarily to protect these three domains
- Justice is primarily defensive

The Three Basic Rules of Justice (“The Three Ps”)

For Smith:

- Moral sentiments evolve through social interaction
- Justice consists in negative duties necessary for social order
- Beneficence is admirable but not enforceable
- The foundation of justice = protection of person, property, promises

Modern theories of justice expand this framework —
but Smith gives us the basic moral grammar.



Peter Singer (born in 1946 in Melbourne) is an Australian moral philosopher, known for his contributions to bioethics and for founding the modern movements for animal rights and effective altruism. Professor Emeritus of Bioethics at Princeton University, he is among the most influential living thinkers in the world.

Philosophy and Ethical Thought

Singer is the leading advocate of preference utilitarianism, which evaluates the morality of actions according to their capacity to maximize the satisfaction of the preferences of those affected. His strongly consequentialist approach rejects moral systems based on religious dogma or absolute principles, instead proposing rational and universal criteria for determining what is right.

Animal Rights and “Speciesism”

With *Animal Liberation*, Singer launched the modern animal rights movement, introducing the concept of speciesism, the moral discrimination based on species membership. He argues that animal suffering deserves equal moral consideration to human suffering, criticizes factory farming, and promotes vegetarian and vegan diets.

Bioethics and Controversies

In bioethics, Singer has addressed issues such as euthanasia, abortion, and disability. He maintains that moral status depends on the capacity to experience pleasure and pain, not merely on belonging to the human species. These views have generated significant controversy, particularly among religious groups and disability rights activists.

Effective Altruism and Philanthropy

His essay “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (1972) and the book *The Life You Can Save* inspired the effective altruism movement, which promotes the use of empirical evidence and rational reasoning to reduce global suffering as effectively as possible. The organization he founded has directed over \$100 million to high-impact NGOs.

Contemporary Influence

Beyond academic and philanthropic recognition, Singer continues to shape debates on animal ethics, global poverty, and environmental responsibility. Through books, lectures, and public talks—including TED presentations—he remains a central figure in defining applied ethics in the twenty-first century.

The “China Earthquake” Example

Smith illustrates the limits of sympathy:

“If the great empire of China... was suddenly swallowed up by an earthquake... when all this fine philosophy was over, he would pursue his business or his pleasure... as if no such accident had happened.”

But:

“The most frivolous disaster which could befall himself would occasion a more real disturbance.”

Insight:

- We feel distant suffering weakly
- We feel personal suffering intensely

Yet Smith adds a crucial moral turn:

If saving millions required losing a finger—
A person “would not be so weak as to prefer himself.”

Why?

Because he must appear worthy in his own eyes.

Partiality vs. Impartiality: A Moral Tension

Moral life contains a tension:

- We recognize **universal negative duties** (do not harm anyone)
- But our **positive duties** seem stronger toward:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Fellow citizens

Common-sense intuition:

- It is natural to save your child before a stranger.
- Allegiance shapes moral motivation.

Yet moral philosophy asks:

Should proximity determine moral weight?

The Expanding Circle (Singer)

Peter Singer - The Expanding Circle (1981)

Evolution (morality has **biological origins**):

- Early altruism → kin and tribe
- Partial, reciprocal concern

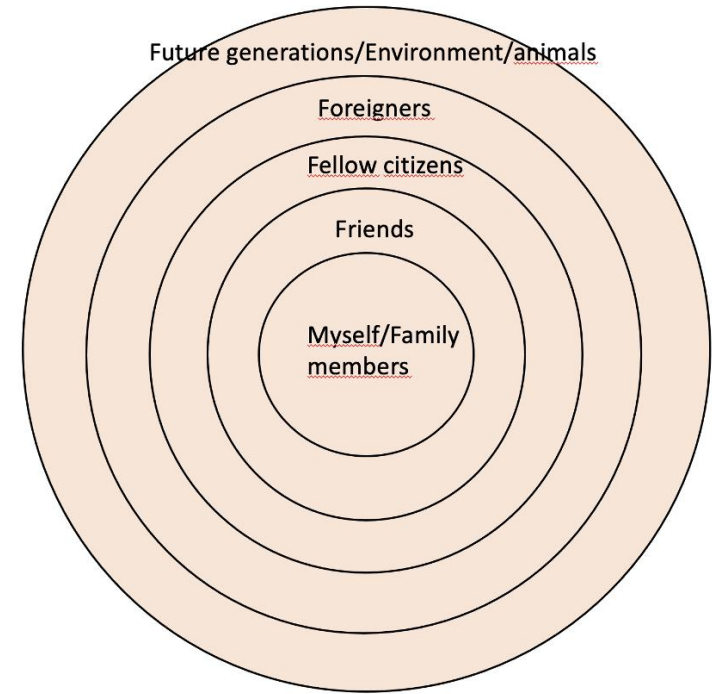
But human beings possess **reason**.
Reason shows:

«The suffering of others matters as much as our own.»

Moral development = expanding concern:

- Family → Tribe → Nation → Humanity → Sentient beings

Impartiality is not against human nature —
it is the rational extension of it.



Partial attachments are not arbitrary:

Family

- Based on reciprocity and dependence
- “Natural communism” of care

Political community

- Citizens share institutions
- Redistribution and solidarity arise internally

However:

Patriotism can become dangerous when:

- It turns into exclusionary nationalism
- It narrows the moral circle

The challenge:

How to value belonging without abandoning universal concern?

Reflective Equilibrium: Reconciling Tension

The solution is not to abolish partiality.

Using reflective equilibrium (Rawls): confront “common sense morality” – moral reasoning

- Revise our intuitions
- Revise our principles
- Seek coherence

- Legitimate partiality:
 - Family care
 - Civic solidarity

- Illegitimate partiality:
 - Ethnic bias
 - Moral exclusion of outsiders

Final insight:

Moral progress means expanding — not erasing — our circle of concern.
Universal obligation must coexist with rooted identities.

Box 1.3 The Drowning Child Analogy

Peter Singer, Famine, Affluence, and Morality (1972)

Premise 1 : Suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care are bad.

Premise 2: If it is in our power to prevent something bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance, we ought to do it.

Premise 3: It is in our power to prevent suffering and death from lack of food, shelter, and medical care, without thereby sacrificing anything of comparable moral significance.

Conclusion: therefore, we are morally required to give far more than we currently do.

Charity is not optional generosity —
it is moral duty.

Box 1.3 The Drowning Child Analogy (2)

In support of Premise 2 Singer presents a vivid thought experiment for illustrating his principle of impartiality and proximity:

You walk past a shallow pond.

A child is drowning.

You can save the child —
but your clothes will be ruined.

Singer writes:

“If I am walking past a shallow pond and see a child drowning in it,
I ought to wade in and pull the child out.”

Common intuition:

Failing to save the child would be morally wrong.

The Moral Principle Behind the Analogy

The key moral principle:

*“If we can prevent something bad from happening,
without sacrificing something morally significant,”*

we ought to do it.

In practice, “morally significant” likely **includes**: basic subsistence, health Security, the well-being of one’s children, Core life projects

It likely **excludes**: luxury consumption, status goods, non-essential lifestyle upgrades

Important features:

- The cost to you is minor
- The benefit is enormous

Physical proximity is morally irrelevant

Saving the child is not heroic it is required.

From Pond to Global Poverty

Singer's radical move:

There is no morally relevant difference between:

- The drowning child in front of you
- A child dying from famine far away

Distance does not reduce moral obligation.

So If:

- You can donate money
- Prevent suffering
- Without major sacrifice

Then failing to do so is morally wrong.
Moral distance $\neq$ geographical distance.

Singer's argument challenges:

- The distinction between charity and duty
- Consumer lifestyles
- National partiality

He suggests we should give:

(Max.) ...until further giving would cause comparable harm to ourselves.

(Minimalist): ...unless, to do so, we had to sacrifice something morally significant

Implications:

- Strong cosmopolitanism
- Demanding moral standard
- Moral evaluation of luxury spending

This is one of the most demanding arguments in modern ethics.

From Pond to Global Poverty

CRITICAL RESPONSE

1 Demandingness Objection
Does morality require near-total sacrifice?

2 Special Obligations
What about duties to family and fellow citizens?

3 Institutional Responsibility
Is global poverty primarily a structural problem?

4 Psychological Realism
Is Singer's standard liveable?

Despite objections, Singer's core principle remains powerful.

1 Demandingness ≠ Refutation
Many moral duties are demanding
The fact that morality requires sacrifice does not make it false
Comfort is not a reliable limit of obligation.

2 Partiality Does Not Cancel Universal Duty
We may prioritize family and community
But we cannot ignore preventable suffering elsewhere
Special duties exist —
but they do not erase general duties.

3 Institutions and Individuals Both Matter
Structural reform is necessary
But individuals still participate in global systems
Personal responsibility does not disappear

If we accept that saving the drowning child is morally required, we must explain why distance changes the principle. The burden of justification lies with those who deny the extension.

The Central Tension: Universal Obligation vs Identity

A central tension in moral philosophy is between :

- *Universal moral obligation (cosmopolitanism)*
- *Identity, belonging, and recognition (politics of recognition)*

Question:

***Can we affirm equal moral concern for all
while recognizing the importance of roots, culture, and identity?***

This is not a choice between:

- Humanity
- Or community

The task is reconciliation.

Simone Weil: Obligation before Rights

Simone Weil - *The Need for Roots*

“A right is not effective by itself, but only by virtue of the obligation to which it corresponds.”

For Weil:

- Obligation is primary
- Every human being is owed unconditional moral concern
- Rootedness is a vital need of the human soul
- In the capitalistic society the individual becomes uprooted

“To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.”

But:

Roots must not become collective egoism.

Universal obligation precedes political identity.

Amartya Sen: The Plurality of identity

Amartya Sen - *Identity and Violence*

“The illusion of destiny... is cultivated by ignoring the many identities that people have.”

Sen rejects singular identity = (you are Western or Islamic or Hindu or Confucian)

“Civilization as destiny” is:

- A form of essentialism
- A denial of human agency
- A collapse of plurality into a single identity
- It treats culture as fate.

“Civilization as destiny” is the belief that a person’s civilizational identity fully determines their values and actions, reducing human beings to a single, overriding category and denying the plurality of identity.

Sen insists instead:

Identities are multiple (a citizen, a professional, a parent, a political thinker, a feminist, etc.)

Individuals can choose which identity to prioritize

Humanity is also an identity

Human beings:

- Have multiple affiliations
- Can reason about which identity matters in context

Danger: Reducing a person to religion, nation, or civilization

Plural identity allows: Rootedness Without abandoning universal humanity

Charles Taylor: The Politics of Recognition

Charles Taylor – *The Politics of Recognition*

Modern societies moved from:

- Honor (hierarchical)

to

- Dignity (universal)

But now:

- Individuals demand recognition of specific identities.

Misrecognition can cause real harm.

Identity is:

- Formed dialogically
- Shaped by how others see us

Recognition becomes:

- A moral necessity
- Not mere tolerance

Challenge:

How to combine recognition with universal equality? *Taylor insists that the politics of recognition must operate within a shared framework of universal respect—what he calls “a fusion of horizons”—where dialogue among diverse identities takes place on the basis of mutual dignity.*

, “our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning picture of themselves” Taylor, 1992.

Appiah: Rooted Cosmopolitanism

Kwame Anthony Appiah – The ethics of Identity (2005)

Rooted cosmopolitanism

We can:

- Be attached to our culture
- Without denying universal moral concern

Cosmopolitanism does not require:

- Abandoning local loyalties
- Becoming culturally neutral

Instead:

- Local identities are the medium
- Universal obligations are the horizon

Identity and humanity are compatible.

“Cosmopolitanism begins with the simple idea that we are citizens of the world. But it doesn’t mean that we have to give up our local identities, our families, our nations, or our cultures” (Appiah, 2005)

Francis Fukuyama: Identity and political Fragmentation

Francis Fukuyama – *Identity* (2018)

Modern politics is increasingly driven by:

- Recognition
- Dignity
- Resentment

Both:

- Progressive movements
- Nationalist movements

are rooted in claims for recognition.

Danger:

Fragmentation of shared civic identity

Solution:

- Inclusive civic identity
- Grounded in democratic principles
- Not ethnicity or exclusion

“People do not just want material goods, they want recognition of their worth” (Fukuyama, 2018, p. xv).

societies must cultivate an inclusive civic identity rooted in democratic values rather than ethnic, religious, or cultural exclusivity. Only such a shared identity can reconcile universal principles of justice with the human need for belonging.

Universalism, Recognition & Rooted Cosmopolitanism

COSMOPOLITAN UNIVERSALISM

Equal moral worth of all persons

- Impartial duties
- Justice beyond borders
- Moral equality

Thinkers:
Kant · Singer · Pogge

Risk: abstraction from lived identity

ROOTED COSMOPOLITANISM

HUMANITY
(Universal obligation)



CIVIC IDENTITY
(Shared democratic space)

CULTURE / COMMUNITY
(Belonging)

Roots provide motivation
Cosmopolitanism provide moral scope

Universalism gives us equality
Recognition gives us identity
Rooted cosmopolitanism provides
moral scope

POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

Identity and dignity matter

- Cultural belonging
- Recognition prevents harm
- Plural identities

Thinkers:
Weil · Taylor · Fukuyama -
Communitarians

Risk: exclusionary nationalism

Expansion of Negative Duties

Traditional moral theory (e.g. Adam Smith), negative duties required only:

- Non-interference
- Avoiding direct harm
- Respecting rights

But in modern interconnected systems:

- Harm is often indirect
- Participation in institutions can generate foreseeable damage

New insight:

**It is no longer enough not to directly harm.
We must also avoid contributing to systemic harm.**

Negative duties have become more demanding.

Environmental Harm: Complicity in Climate Damage

Our carbon-intensive lifestyles illustrate this shift:

- Driving
- Flying
- High energy consumption

These are not morally neutral.

They contribute to:

- Global warming
- Harm to vulnerable populations
- Threats to future generations

Failing to reduce emissions is not mere omission — it may be complicity.

Henry Shue argues:

Those who benefit most from harmful activities bear primary responsibility to prevent them.

Climate ethics becomes:

- A matter of justice
- Not charity

The same logic applies to consumption.

Buying cheap products made in exploitative conditions:

- Sustains harmful supply chains
- Perpetuates injustice

Thomas Pogge calls this:

“Institutional harm.”

Affluent societies participate in global systems that disadvantage the poor.

The negative duty “not to harm” now implies:

- Not benefiting from unjust structures
- Reforming harmful institutions

Justice is structural.

Duties to Future Generations

A deeper expansion concerns time.

Why sacrifice for people not yet born?

We now possess:

- Unprecedented power to shape the future
- Capacity to destroy life-support systems

Doing nothing in the face of foreseeable destruction cannot be morally neutral.

John Rawls

In the “original position”:

If we did not know which generation we belong to, we would ensure that each generation inherits sufficient resources.

Justice requires:

Each generation must pass on at least what it received.

Governmental and Structural Harm

Dereck Parfit - Reasons and Persons (1984)

**Future people matter morally
even though they do not yet exist.**

Our action today:

- Shape the quality of future lives
- Determine which people will exist
- Create irreversible consequences

Justice therefore extends beyond contemporaries

Parfit argues for impersonal principles:

Judge actions by their effects on future well-being
Avoid predictable future suffering

Design institutions that protect the long term

Parfit's Argument about Future Generations

Parfit challenges the idea that:

We only harm someone if we make that person worse off than they would otherwise have been.

The Non-Identity Problem

Many of our actions:

- Affect which people will exist in the future
- Do not harm a particular identifiable person

Example:

If we pollute heavily today, future people may live difficult lives — but they would not have existed under different choices.

So:

They cannot claim to be “worse off” than they otherwise would have been.

Parfit's Key Move

We must move beyond strictly “person-affecting” views of harm.

What matters is not:

- Whether a specific person is harmed

But:

- Whether our actions make the future worse overall

Parfit argues for impersonal moral principles:
We have strong reasons to ensure that future lives go well, even if no particular person is harmed.

Parfit's Argument about Future Generations (2)

Implication

Our duties include:

- Avoiding predictable future suffering
- Preserving conditions for flourishing
- Designing institutions that protect long-term well-being

Intergenerational justice is not optional benevolence —
it follows from rational moral consistency.

Core Insight

Future people matter morally
not because they can complain,
but because their well-being counts.

Reinforcing Arguments

1 Overlapping Generations

Concern for present people naturally extends forward.

If we care about our children, consistency requires caring about their children.

Moral concern unfolds across time.

2 Stewardship

We did not create:

The climate

Biodiversity

Natural resources

We are temporary custodians, not owners.

Exhausting or poisoning shared goods violates a negative duty.

3 Inheritance of Public Goods

Each generation inherits:

Infrastructure

Scientific knowledge

Cultural achievements

Justice requires preservation and renewal — not depletion.

4 Self-Transcendence

Acting for the future fulfills a deep human need:

To contribute to something lasting

To participate in a continuity beyond one's lifespan

Caring for the future is not only altruistic — it gives meaning to the present.

Intergenerational justice is not charity toward the unborn.
It is the logical extension of the duty not to harm
in a world where our power spans centuries.

Basic Rights and Institutional Duties: Shue's Framework

Henry Shue (Basic Rights, 1980)

Basic Rights = Preconditions of All Other Rights

Shue identifies two fundamental rights:

- **Security rights**
→ Protection from murder, torture, assault, arbitrary violence
 - **Subsistence rights**
→ Access to food, water, shelter, healthcare, minimal economic security
- Without security and subsistence, no other rights can be meaningfully exercised.

Rights Require Institutions

Security is not just non-interference → requires police, courts, enforcement.

Subsistence is not charity → requires employment systems, healthcare, social protection.

Key Insight:

All basic rights depend on organized, sustained institutional duties.

Three Types of Duties

1. **Duty to avoid depriving (negative duty)**
2. **Duty to protect from deprivation**
3. **Duty to aid the deprived**

Even “negative” rights require all three.

Climate Change: From Charity to Justice

The Priority of the Duty to Avoid Depriving

- Stronger than duties of assistance.
- Prohibits causing or contributing to harm.
- Violation constitutes wrongdoing.
- Does not depend on benevolence.

Responsibility Principles

1. Those who **contribute most to harm** bear special responsibility.
2. Those who **benefit most from harmful structures** bear primary responsibility.

Application to Climate Change

- Industrialized states:
- Contributed most to historical emissions.
- Benefited most from fossil-fuel development.
- Possess greater mitigation capacity.
- Vulnerable states suffer disproportionate impacts.

Therefore:

Climate mitigation and adaptation are not charity —
they are the discharge of a negative duty not to deprive others of security and subsistence.

Global Scope

Emissions and harms cross borders.

Institutions enabling fossil economies are global.

Justice tracks the structure of harm, not state boundaries.

The Priority of Duties over Rights

- Human rights are often framed as entitlements (liberty, security, subsistence, political participation).
- But rights do not secure themselves — they depend on corresponding duties and institutional enforcement.

Duties Give Rights Practical Meaning

- A right exists only if someone is obligated to act (or refrain from acting).
- Without clearly assigned duties, rights remain moral aspirations, not enforceable claims.

Rights Generate Multiple Layers of Obligation

Every right requires:

1. **Duties to avoid violating it (negative duties)**
2. **Duties to protect against third-party interference**
3. **Duties to assist when deprivation occurs**

Institutions Make Rights Real

Law, taxation, regulation, and enforcement allocate responsibilities.

Justice concerns the organization of these duties within stable systems.

Key Insight:

Rights are effective only when embedded in institutional structures — a point developed by Henry Shue in his theory of basic rights.

From Domestic to Global Justice: The Scope Question

If Basic Rights Depend on Institutions...

The next question is:

Which institutions bear responsibility for securing them?

Within the Modern State

- Duties specified through law
- Enforced by public authorities
- Justified through political processes

→ Responsibility largely coincides with national borders

But Shue's Framework Is Not Territorial

Duties to:

- Avoid depriving
- Protect from deprivation
- Aid the deprived

arise wherever institutional schemes systematically shape access to security and subsistence.

Principle:

Justice tracks structured institutional power — not geography.

Global Institutional Structures and Basic Rights

In an Interdependent World

Domestic institutions operate within global rule-based systems:

- Trade regimes
- Financial governance
- Intellectual property frameworks
- Environmental and migration regulation

Transnational institutions such as:

- International Monetary Fund
- World Bank
- World Trade Organization

These institutions shape:

- Fiscal autonomy
- Debt sustainability
- Trade access
- Patent regimes affecting medicines and technology

Where such systems systematically and avoidably affect security and subsistence → **questions of justice arise.**

This does not deny domestic responsibility,
but it rejects reducing global harm to mere humanitarian concern.

The Debate: Sovereignty or Institutional Power?

Thomas Pogge

- Severe poverty linked to institutional design.
- Participation in unjust structures violates negative duties.
- Justice arises from institutional harm — not charity.
- Coercion is not required; structured constraint is sufficient.

Thomas Nagel

- Justice requires shared sovereign coercion and political authorship.
- Without collective self-legislation → only humanitarian duties apply.
- Justice is inseparable from sovereign authority.

Core Disagreement

Does justice track:

Sovereignty and collective authorship?

or

Institutional power over basic rights?

Conclusion:

The move from domestic to global justice is a structural implication of the institutional dependence of basic rights. Wherever institutional schemes — domestic or transnational — systematically and avoidably shape access to security and subsistence, duties of justice arise in proportion to participation and capacity.

Justice follows institutional power, not state borders.

Global Economic Institutions

Economic Governance Beyond the State

International Monetary Fund

- Crisis lending
- Conditional reforms
- Voting power weighted toward wealthy states

World Bank

- Development finance
- Infrastructure and poverty programs

World Trade Organization

- Global trade rules
- Dispute settlement system

Justice Concerns

- Democratic deficit
- Unequal bargaining power
- Agricultural subsidies harming developing farmers
- Debt dependency

These institutions shape:

- Poverty levels
- Market access
- Development trajectories

Global justice requires reform where institutions foreseeably entrench inequality.

Climate & Environmental Governance

Institutions Regulating the Planet

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

- Oversees global climate agreements
- Coordinates Paris Agreement commitments

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

- Scientific assessment authority

United Nations (UN system)

- Environmental coordination and global negotiations

Justice Concerns

- Weak enforcement of emissions commitments
- Disputes over burden-sharing
- Climate finance gaps
- Disproportionate harm to vulnerable populations

Climate governance illustrates:

Negative duties not to harm

→ require coordinated institutional enforcement.

Human Rights, Health & Structural Power

Political & Legal Institutions

International Criminal Court

- Prosecution of genocide, crimes against humanity

World Health Organization

- Global health coordination

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

- Refugee protection

Structural Governance Systems

- Intellectual property regimes (TRIPS)
- Sovereign debt structures
- Migration control systems

Justice Question

These institutions:

- Shape access to security and subsistence
- Constrain life chances globally
- Exercise rule-making power

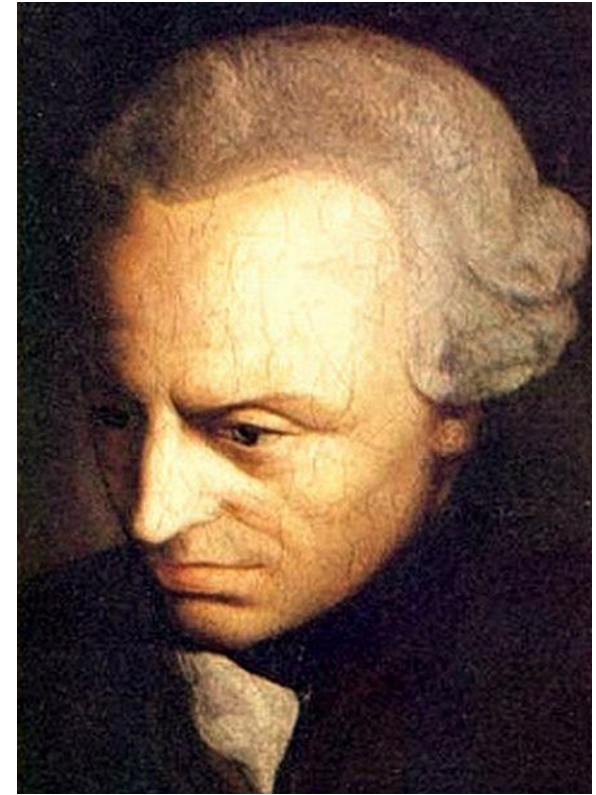
If basic rights depend on institutional duties (Shue), then global institutions generate duties of justice.

*Global justice does not begin with a world state.
It begins with reforming the institutions that already govern global life.*

KANT

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)

- Central figure of modern philosophy – the human experience is structured by the necessary features of the human mind, morality is based on reason and the world in itself is unknowable.
- Politically, he had the idea that perpetual peace could be secured through universal democracy and international cooperation. (Kant's prophecy)
- His mayor work is the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). It is a theory of perception. Relation between human esperienze and reason. He is showing a way beyond the impasse of the debate between rationalists and empiricists and a critique to the skepticism of Hume.
- The other important work is the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) where he develops his moral theory. His earlier work on moral theory is the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* which is a devastating critique of utilitarianism . Morality is not about maximizing happiness but respecting people.
- He was born in 1724 in Konigsberg in Prussia and died there at the age of 80. He had a simple life as lecturer and University professor.



Kant's Moral Revolution

Kant proposes a radically different foundation for morality:

- Not happiness
- Not virtue
- Not consequences
- Not social outcomes

But:

Rational autonomy and moral duty.

Moral law must arise from pure practical reason.

Every rational being possesses intrinsic dignity as a self-legislating agent.

Kant's Moral Revolution

To understand Kant, contrast him with:

1 Utilitarianism

Right action = maximizes happiness
Consequences determine morality

2 Libertarianism

Emphasizes property rights
Justice = protection of negative liberty

3 Communitarianism

Justice promotes virtue
Moral desert shapes distribution

Kant rejects all three as foundations of morality.
Why?

- Consequences are contingent
- Desires are subjective
- Social ideals vary

Moral principles must be:

Universal, unconditional, and binding on all rational agents.

Moral worth comes only from acting from duty.

Freedom as Autonomy

Autonomy vs. Heteronomy

For Kant, freedom is not:

- Doing what one wants
- Acting on inclination
- Following impulse

That would be heteronomy (rule by external forces).

True freedom = autonomy:

Self-legislation by reason.

To act freely is:

- To act according to a principle
- One could rationally will as a universal law

Autonomy gives rise to obligation:

I

If reason gives the law,
the rational will is bound by it.

Freedom and duty are inseparable.

Duty, Moral Intention, and Moral Worth

The moral quality of an action depends on:

- Its maxim (the principle guiding it)
- Its motivation

An action may:

- Conform to duty
- But lack moral worth

Example:

- Giving to charity for praise or pleasure

Only actions done:

Because they are morally required

have genuine moral worth.

For Kant:

Morality lies in intention, not in outcome.

The Categorical Imperative

Kant distinguishes:

Hypothetical Imperatives

- Conditional rules
- “If you want X, do Y”

Categorical Imperative

- Unconditional
- Applies to all rational beings

Two central formulations:

1 Formula of Universal Law

“Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”

Test:

Can I will everyone to follow this rule?

If universalizing destroys the practice (e.g., lying),
the maxim is impermissible.

2 Formula of Humanity

“Act so that you treat humanity... always as an end and never merely as a means.”

Because rational beings are self-legislating,
they possess dignity.

No one may be used merely as an
instrument.

MORAL LAW
(Unconditional & Universal)

- Not based on desire
- Not based on consequences
- Binding on all rational agents

Act only on maxims
you could will
as universal law

- What if everyone acted on this principle?
- Would the practice collapse?
- Is there a contradiction?

Universalizability
+
Respect for Persons
=
Moral Obligation

Treat humanity,
in yourself and others,
always as an end,
never merely as a means.

- Am I respecting rational agency?
- Am I manipulating or exploiting?

The Categorical Imperative tests whether a maxim can be universalized and whether it respects rational agents as ends — both derive from autonomy.

“When it is convenient,
I will lie to achieve my goal.”

Formula of Universal Law

Everyone lies when convenient
↓
Trust collapses
↓
Promises & communication lose meaning
↓
Lying becomes impossible

Result:
Contradiction in conception.
The practice of lying depends on general truthfulness.
If universalized, the maxim destroys itself.
→ Morally impermissible.

Cannot be universalize
+
Uses others merely as means
=
Morally wrong

Lying fails both structurally and relationally:
It cannot be universal law, and it disrespects rational agency.

Formula of Humanity

When I lie:
I manipulate their decision-making
I use them as a tool for my goal
I bypass their rational agency

Result:
I treat them merely as a means.
→ Violates their dignity.

Respect, Dignity, and Human Rights

Kant grounds moral equality in:

- Rational agency
- Not utility
- Not property
- Not virtue

Respect follows from autonomy.

To be a person is:

- To be capable of moral law
- To possess intrinsic worth

This framework underlies modern human rights:

- Universal validity
- Independent of culture
- Independent of consequences

Human rights = institutional recognition of dignity.

Kant as an Alternative Moral Paradigm

Kant offers a systematic alternative to:

- Consequentialism
- Libertarianism
- Communitarian virtue theory

Morality is grounded in:

- Rational self-legislation
- Universalizability
- Respect for persons

To act morally is:

To act from respect for a law one gives to oneself through reason.

Justice and rights arise not from outcomes or preferences,
but from the universal structure of rational agency.

Kant's ambition:

***To ground morality in something
valid beyond history, culture, and contingency.***