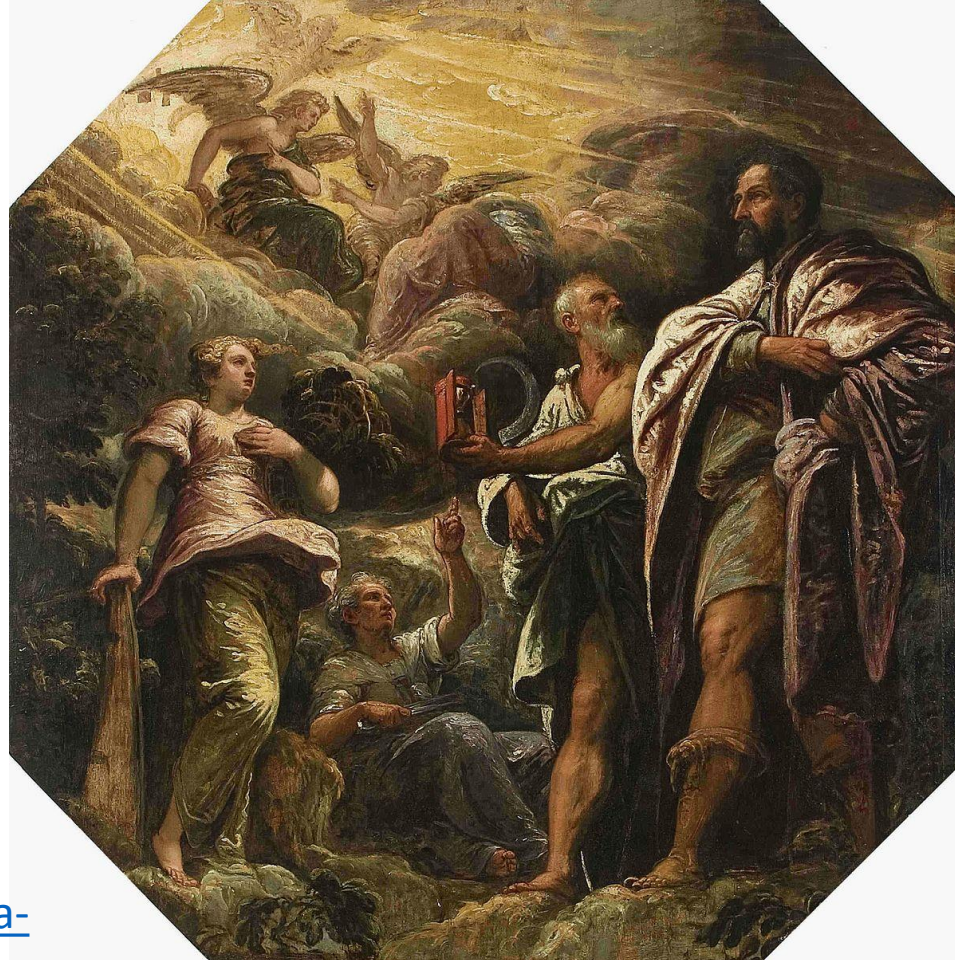# The End of Ethics

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November 19, 2021

The End of Ethics

- What is the goal or objective of ethics?

- How or why do we conclude our discussion of ethics?

One Ethics to Rule them All?

THE INEQUALITY VIRUS

It took just NINE MONTHS for the fortunes of the top 1,000 billionaires to return to their pre-pandemic highs, while for the world's poorest, recovery could take MORE THAN A DECADE.

FEBRUARY 100% MARCH 70.3% NOVEMBER 99.9%

% change in top 1,000 billionaires' wealth (2020)

THE INCREASE in the wealth of the 10 richest billionaires since the crisis began IS MORE THAN ENOUGH to prevent anyone on Earth from falling into poverty because of the virus and to pay for a COVID-19 vaccine for all.

In the US, CLOSE TO 22,000 LATINX AND BLACK PEOPLE would have still been alive as of December 2020 if these communities' COVID-19 mortality rates were the same as WHITE PEOPLE'S.

112 MILLION FEWER WOMEN would be at high risk of losing their incomes or jobs if women and men were equally represented in sectors negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

Oxfam's survey of economists on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on inequality found that:

87% of respondents think that coronavirus will lead to an increase or a major increase in INCOME INEQUALITY in their country.

56% of respondents think that coronavirus will likely or very likely lead to an increase in GENDER INEQUALITY in their country.

For more on the sources and methodology for these figures, see R. Espinoza Revollo, (2021). The Inequality Virus: Methodology note, Oxfam.

"Universalist arguments apply across lines of social and economic class, but their generality is not well suited to combating unequal and particular harms. Members of our most disadvantaged communities have long asserted that they fall under heavier and more hostile scrutiny, and empirical research supports them." (Gellman and Adler-Bell, 2017)

https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621149/bp-the-inequality-virus-250121-en.pdf

Character?

- The 12 Guiding Principles of Exceptional Character
  - adaptability, compassion, contemplation, courage, honesty, initiative, loyalty, optimism, perseverance, respect, responsibility, and trust-worthiness
    - developed by the International Center for Leadership in Education www.leadered.com/guiding_princ.html

- The Seven Universal Ethical Attributes
  - courage, loyalty, justice, respect, hope, honesty, and love
    - developed by the Heartwood Institute http://heartwoodethics.org/1-approach/framework.asp

https://kidscreen.com/2020/08/21/in-photos-how-to-create-a-character/

Character Education for the Digital Age, Jason Ohler, 2011, ASCD http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb11/vol68/num05/Character-Education-for-the-Digital-Age.aspx
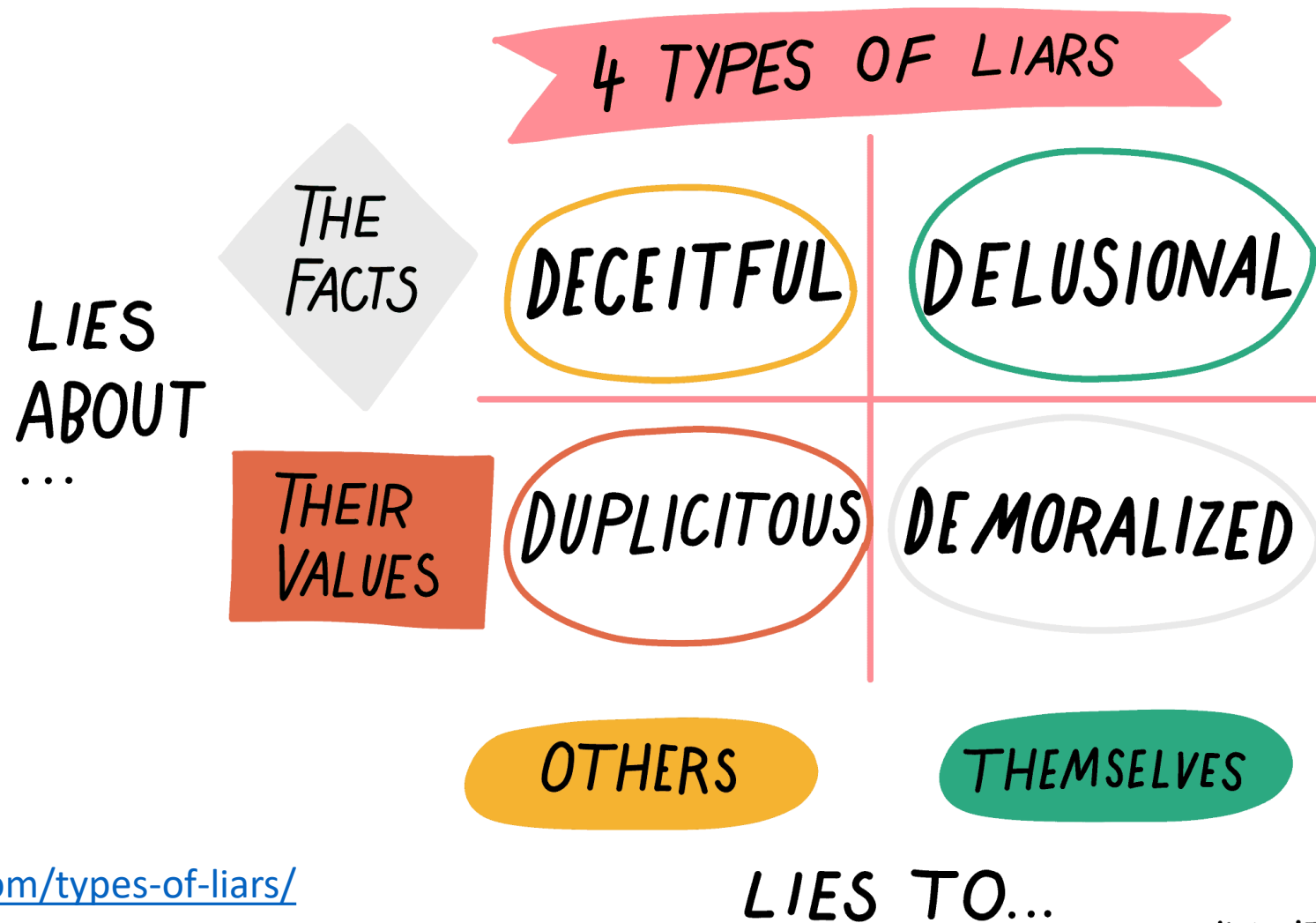
Killing

- Vs murder
- For self-defense
- In war
- Euthanasia

Lying

4 TYPES OF LIARS

THE FACTS

LIES ABOUT ...

THEIR VALUES

DECEITFUL   DELUSIONAL

DUPLICITOUS   DEMORALIZED

OTHERS   THEMSELVES

LIES TO...

NirAndFar.com

https://www.nirandfar.com/types-of-liars/
https://daily-philosophy.com/is-lying-ethical/
https://journals.sfu.ca/jalt/index.php/jalt/article/view/293/253

Spying

- "If you haven't done anything wrong, you have nothing to fear.“
- “Covert activity aimed at protecting yourself from others' wrongdoing is often both lawful and ethical.”

https://archive.law.upenn.edu/institutes/cerl/conferences/cyberwar/papers/reading/Allen.pdf

https://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/cs181/projects/ethics-of-surveillance/ethics.html

Axiology

- Axiology (from Greek ἀξία, axia: "value, worth"; and -λογία, -logia: "study of") is the philosophical study of value. It includes questions about the nature and classification of values and about what kinds of things have value. …

    - intrinsic and extrinsic value
    - Substantive theories of value try to determine which entities have intrinsic value – monist vs pluralist
    - Nihilists – nothing has value

Ethics as a Branch of...

By analogy – 'natural philosophy' was eventually resolved into physics, chemistry, biology, etc.
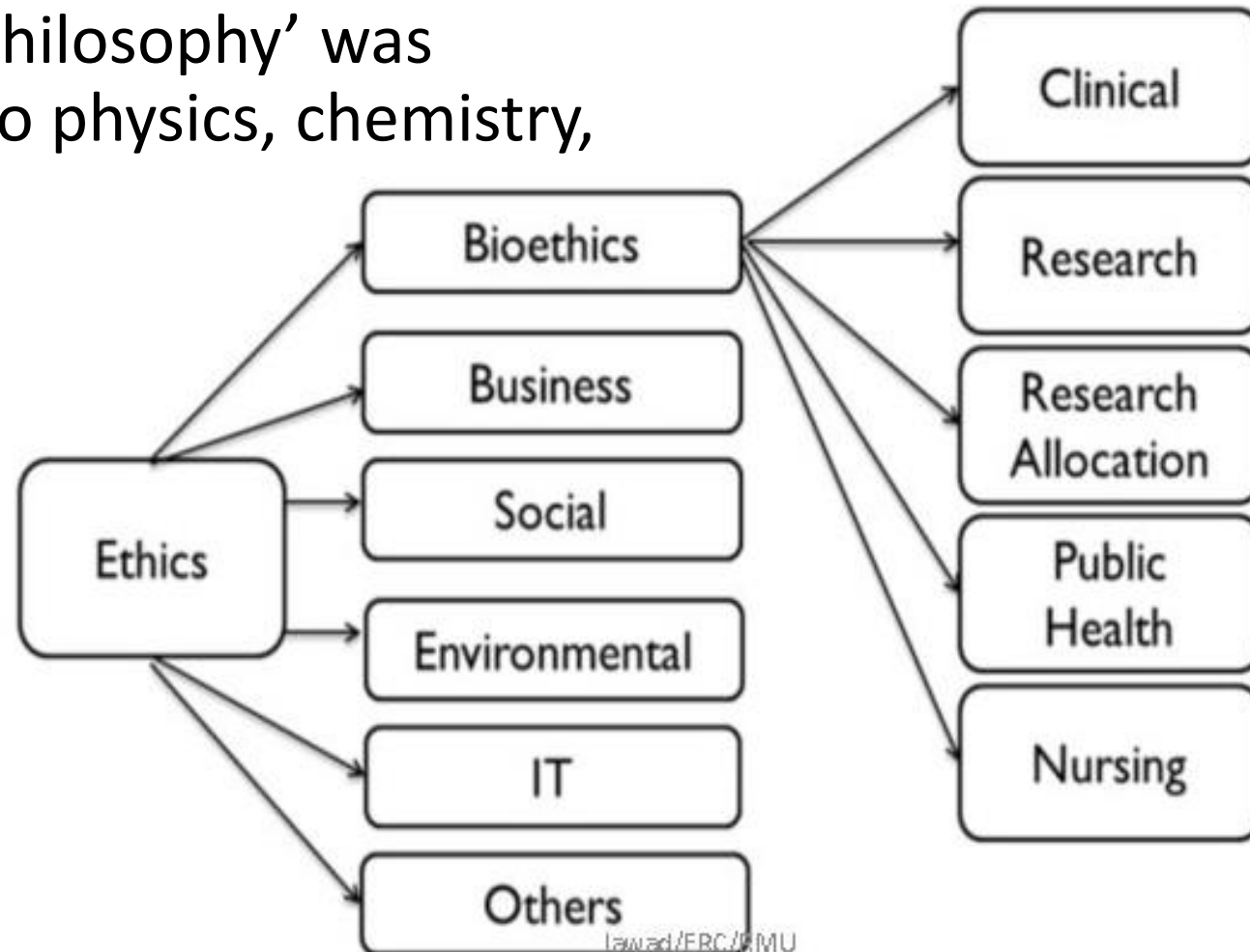
Social Development

Amartya Sen - governments should be measured against the concrete capabilities of their citizens

- "a theory that is both comparative and realisations-oriented (instead of being transcendental and institutional)."
- e.g. citizens must have 'functionings' to have a capacity to vote
- e.g. 'capabilities approach' in Martha Nussbaum's *Women and Human Development.*

Critical Theory

E.g. Roy L. Brooks defined critical race theory in 1994 as "a collection of critical stances against the existing legal order from a race-based point of view".
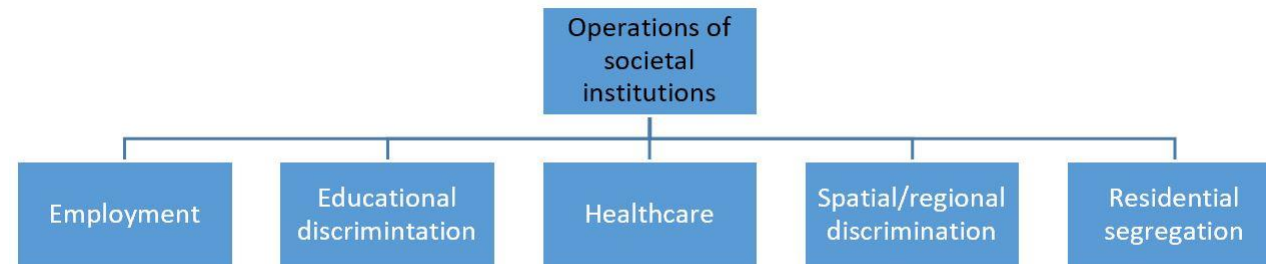
- more specifically, race is a social construct
- racism is neither an individual bias nor prejudice, but rather embedded in the legal system
- Racism is supplemented with policies and procedures

Structural Discrimination

- E.g. "You need to be liked: by people at your level, by people above you and by people below you."

- E.g. "Military leaders saw pandemic as unique opportunity to test propaganda techniques on Canadians."

https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20210921-why-hard-work-alone-isnt-enough-to-get-ahead

https://ottawacitizen.com/news/national/defence-watch/military-leaders-saw-pandemic-as-unique-opportunity-to-test-propaganda-techniques-on-canadians-forces-report-says

The Joker Problem

- "Some men just want to watch the world burn." (The Dark Knight, Nolan & Nolan, 2008)
- Byzantine Generals Problem
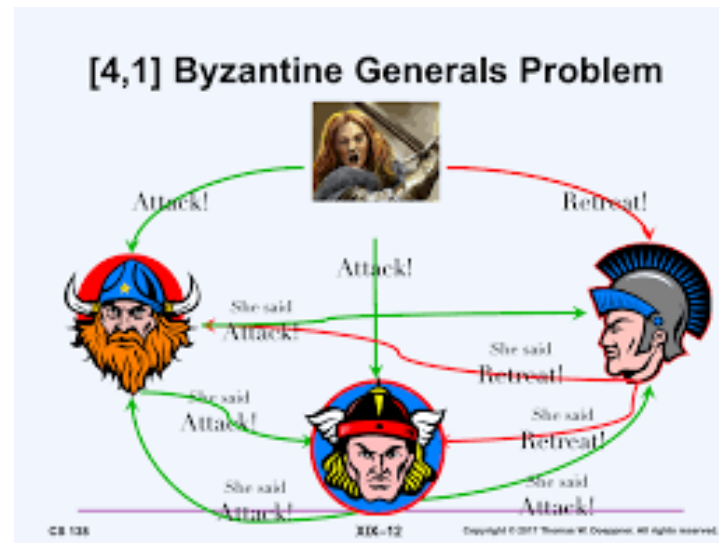
Maybe Ethics is a Technical Problem

"Competition has historically had a great impact on bringing the attention of the research community to a particular problem and in attracting new researchers to the areas." (deBruijn, et.al., 2020)

Original image

Cat

model

Adversarial image

Ostrich

model

(small) adversarial perturbation
created by **attack**

https://www.kaggle.com/c/gendered-pronoun-resolution

https://www.crowdai.org/challenges/adversarial-vision-challenge

https://www.kaggle.com/c/inclusive-images-challenge/

https://competitions.codalab.org/competitions/17751
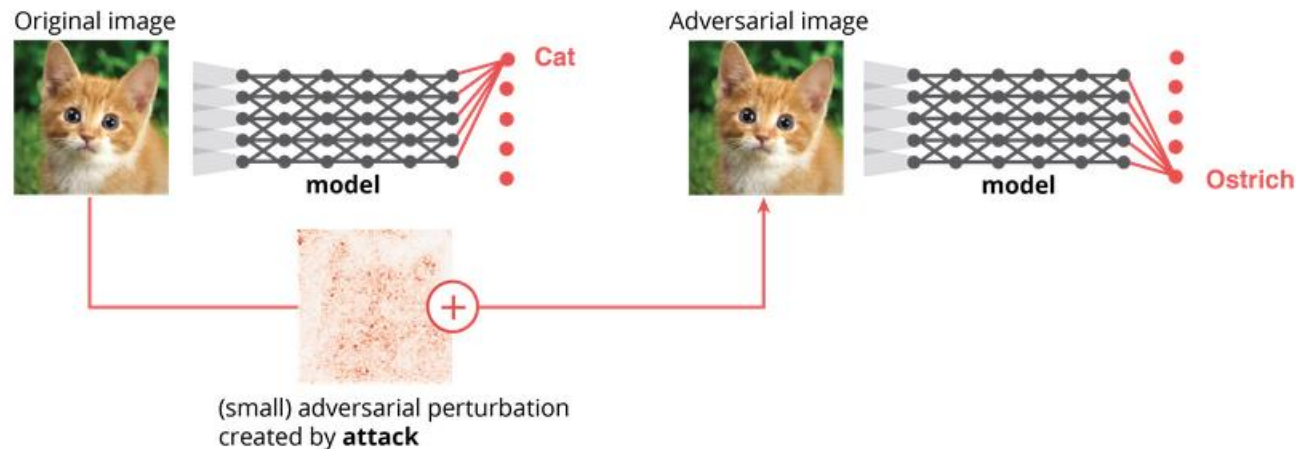
Or a Commercial Market Waiting to Develop?

For customers:
Ensuring that technology is progressive, fair and safe

PROGRESSIVE TECHNOLOGY

For workers:
Putting the human at the center of business design

HUMAN AT THE CENTER

For ecosystem members:
Building and growing a thriving environment for collaborative innovation

INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

For society:
Harnessing the core business for an ever greater positive impact for society

STRATEGY FOR IMPACT

For investors:
Aligning long-term value creation objectives with investor priorities

SHAREHOLDER-COMPANY FIT

For regulators:
Working with policymakers to create and maintain a level playing field for business growth

WISER POLICY

https://www.accenture.com/us-en/blogs/blogs-rebooting-responsibility

E.g. "Caryn Tan, Digital Strategy Consultant from Accenture, demonstrated the Accenture Fairness Tool, which enables a user to identify and fix some of the problems that result in unfair outcomes by analysing both training data and models." (deBruijn, et.al., 2020)

Complexity

- "In the cry 'We don't know how machine learning works!' we hear that these models do indeed work"

- "MLMs work because they're better at *reading the world* than we are"

- "Our encounter with MLMs doesn't deny that there are generalisations, laws or principles. It denies that they are *sufficient* for understanding what happens in a universe as complex as ours."

David Weinberger - https://aeon.co/essays/our-world-is-a-black-box-predictable-but-not-understandable

Simple Universal Solutions

Simple universal principles are not sufficient to address complex problems.

- As Jones (2011) writes, "Implementation must deal with interdependent problems, navigating nonlinear and often unpredictable change processes, involving a diverse range of stakeholders."
  - "the capacities to tackle complex problems are often distributed among actors."
  - "the outcomes of complex systems are unpredictable."
  - "complex problems often involve conflicting goals."

https://blog.doist.com/complexity-bias-comic/

The End of Ethics

Ethics are not abstract. Though we can derive universal principles based on abstract values or calculations, we shouldn't.

"The only real weapon against the fearful vision of a cold siber-Cyberia is joy. Appreciation of the space gives the surfer his bearings and balance in Cyberia." (Rushkoff, 1994:180-182).