

Ethics Café

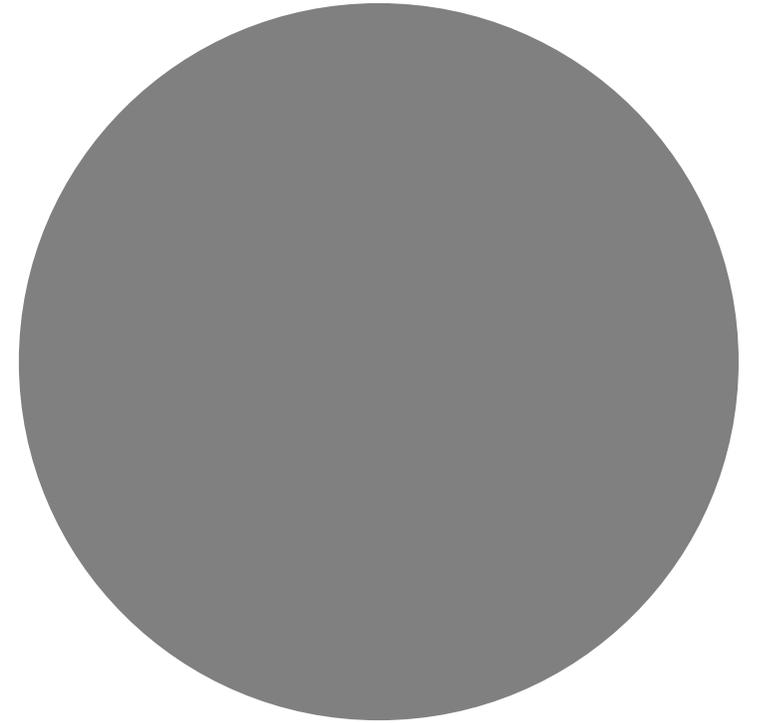
18 March 2019

14:00 to 16:00

An initiative of

Sophiatown Community Psychological Services

Truth Telling, Lying and Ethics



*Another lie ... another half-truth ... another instance
of silence in the face of un-truth ...*

Do you find yourself reacting when being lied to?

**Feeling that, for example, it is wrong when those you
are trying to support are selectively honest, or when
those in authority seem to lack moral courage to
speak truthfully?**

Truth Telling and Lying – Various Ethics Perspectives



Kantian Ethics

- We are all worthy as human beings, and deserve to be treated with dignity. We ought not to treat others as a means to an end.
- We are rational thinking beings, with the ability make reasonable decisions. This ability gives us freedom.
- If I lie to others, I go against my own dignity as a rational thinking being. "Each lie I tell contradicts the part of me that gives me moral worth".
- When I lie, I do not honour the dignity of others. My lies deprive them of their ability to exercise their freedom, to take into account all factors as they made decisions. This may impact their autonomy and choices.

**By a lie, a
man...
annihilates
his dignity as
a man.**

**-Immanuel
Kant**

Ubuntu Ethics



- The community and collective are prioritized.
- Interdependence, solidarity and treating others with respect, dignity and compassion are paramount.
- *Ubuntu* is a way of being that cannot be developed outside of being in relationship with others.
- Moral maturity is about realisation of one's best self in relation to others.
- 'Humanness' is realised through human connectedness, an attitude of doing good to others and not doing harm to others.
- If I lie, is this right or wrong to myself and the interest of all?

Himonga, "The right to Health in an African Cultural Context: The Role of *Ubuntu* in the Realization of the right to Health with Special Reference to South Africa", pp.177, 178.

Thaddeus Metz, "*Ubuntu* as a Moral Theory and Human Rights in South Africa", *African Human Rights Law Journal* 11/2 (2011): pp.532-559, p.536.

Augustine Shutte, *UBUNTU An Ethic for a New South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications 2001): p.13.

“Virtue lies in our power, and similarly so does vice; because where it is in our power to act, it is also in our power not to act.”

-Aristotle

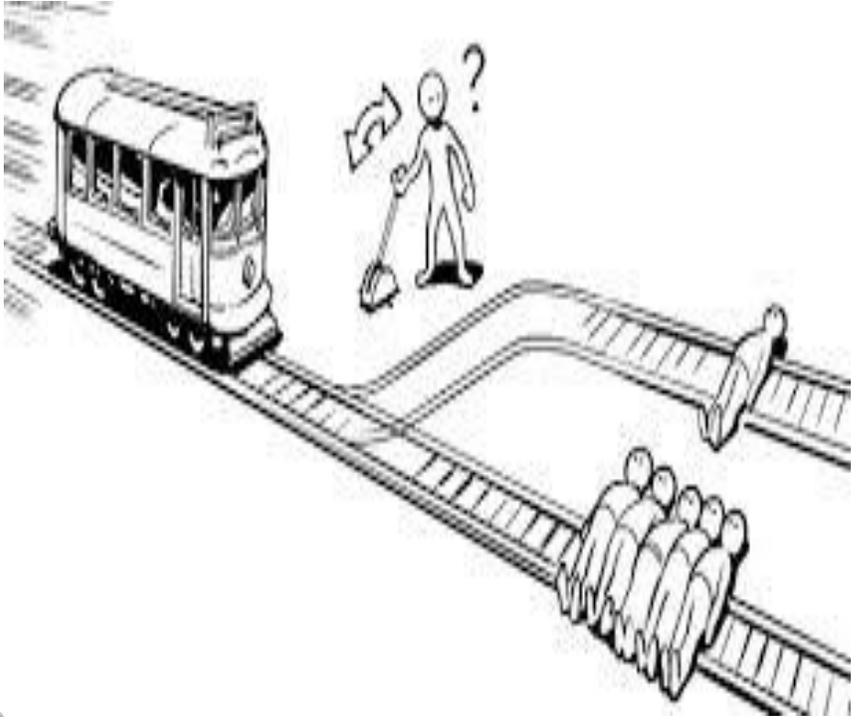


- The central question: 'What kind of a person should I be?'
- Virtue ethics focuses on moral character, 'that goes all the way down'.
- A person's character can be described with reference to virtues, e.g. honesty, compassion, courage, loyalty, self-control.
- The idea of 'practical wisdom' guides my choices.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Virtue Ethics*. Available at:
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/>

Virtue Ethics

Utilitarianism



- Utilitarianism is about balancing of interests.
- Morally justifiable choices are in the best interest of the greatest number of people.
- Consequences of actions should maximise benefit and minimize harm in the bigger picture.

Tim C Mazur, *Lying*. Available at <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/lying/>

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Truth Telling, Lying
and Ethics
Conclusion

Insights?
Take-aways?
Things to do?