The Ethics of

Ethics Café
16 September 2019

An initiative of Sophiatown Community Psychological Services

Why Ethics Café?

CONTEXT: Leadership network development/support

- Directors' & Leaders' Circle
- Coaching, debrief, supervision
- Workshops
- Organisational interventions
- Leadership retreats
- **Ethics management resource**

Ethics Management Resource

Ethics Café's (Quarterly)

Workshops

Consultations

Global Ethics Day event

Ethics Risk Assessments

Ethics Café today …

Imagine losing our capacity to be discerning and make judgements … We need these abilities in order to survive and thrive. However, the very same abilities can create fertile ground for generalisations, stereotyping and prejudice. It becomes a question of ethics when implicit and explicit bias unconsciously or intentionally become justifications for discrimination.

About our process

- Learn more about the topic.
- Practice skills necessary to navigate 'ethics territory':
  - Name and understand different viewpoints.
  - Explore reasoning from different viewpoints.
  - State reasons why viewpoints are believable/ right/ justifiable/preferable ... And why not ...
- Cautionary reminders:
  - Real experiences, life changing at times, emotions evoked.
  - Generosity in arguing, be prepared to change your mind.

Let's start with an experiment

Veil
of
Ignorance

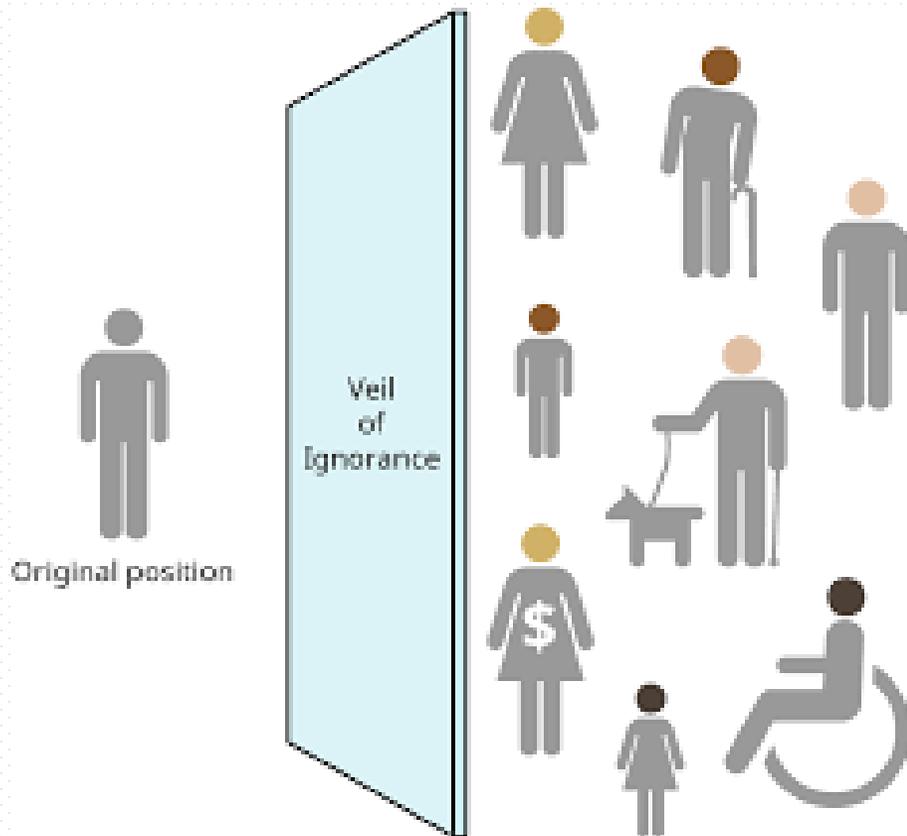Original position

Your group is the designer of

Planet Fairness

You don't know yet who will be allocated to you as inhabitants of Planet Fairness. Design the rules according to which Planet Fainess should operate.

Consider, for example, how to distribute resources, who has rights to what …

Planet Fairness is facing its first challenges – what will you do?

Atul murdered his neighbour and took everything in his neighbour's house for himself. He admits his actions, but insists that he should be allowed the same freedom and privileges as everyone else in Planet Fairness.

You have just established a medical system, where all the resources you have are used to meet the needs of those in Planet Fairness. Alina, arrives at the entrance to Planet Fairness. She fled from Planet Unfairness, seeking refuge with you. She has two children, no money, and is diabetic. She needs medical care.
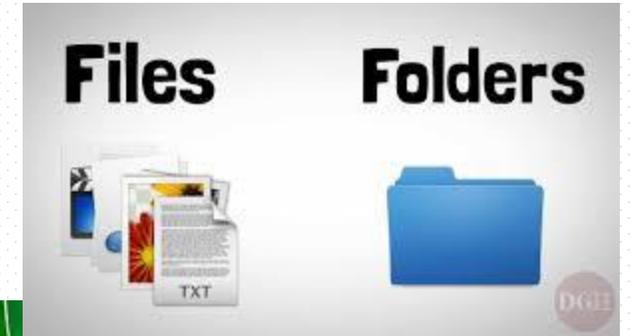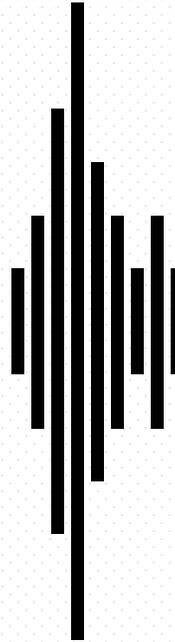
The meaning of words

Stereotypes
    Stereotyping
        Discrimination

Data and information processing is an necessary human ability

Generalisations ➡ Stereotypes, Stereotyping
One theoretical view

- **Generics**: general claims about kinds

  Majority generics: statistical claims e.g. police officers wear blue uniforms.

  Characteristic generics: making claims about typical group members, often related to the group's function/role.

  Striking-property generics: claims about dangerous/appalling characteristics.

- Subclass of generics: **Stereotypes**

"Stereotypes typically make claims about generic claims about social groups … often going together with expectations of them" (pp. 677, 678).

"The term "stereotype" at once refers to the entire informational structure associated with a social category, as well as to individual parts of that structure" (p. 680).

"When we ask, "What's wrong with stereotyping?", we are asking primarily, "What's wrong with forming expectations of individuals based on group membership and structuring our interactions accordingly?" (p. 679).

Stereotyping: "The descriptive view of stereotyping says, roughly, that to stereotype is to imply a generic view of groups associated with one's concepts or with their formation or use" (p. 686).

Beeghly, Erin (2015). What is a Stereotype? What is Stereotyping? *Hypatia* 30 (4):675-691.

Is stereotyping wrong?

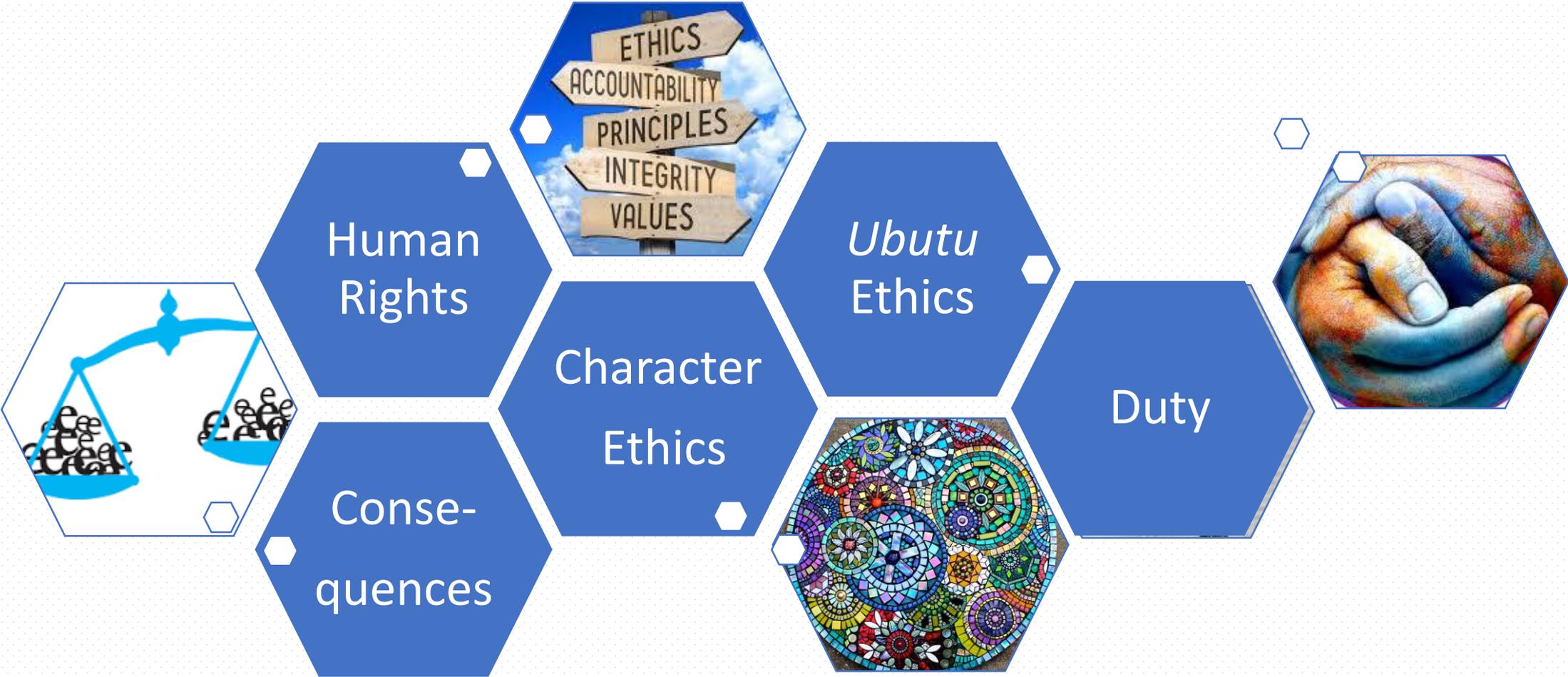What is morally objectionable about stereotyping:

- Unfairness (morally arbitrary factors)

- "humiliating expressions of social superiority"

- "negative effects of allowing stereotypes to structure our interactions with others" (p.688). (Equality, not basic goods, why are human rights important)

Beeghly, Erin (2015). What is a Stereotype? What is Stereotyping? *Hypatia* 30 (4):675-691.

Discrimination - ethics perspectives

Human Rights

Conse-quences

Character Ethics

Ubutu Ethics

Duty

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.

- Friendliness towards others is 'valued'. Being 'unwelcoming' is to deny others dignity.

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.

Character/Virtue Ethics

What kind of person do I choose to be, all the way down, even if others are not looking?

Practical wisdom is important when considering a virtuous life. This is the ability to judge well/discern and have virtuous characteristics in everyday life situations.

Examples of virtues: courage, temperance/moderation/ generosity, patience, humility, loyalty.

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

Human Rights

- Every person is of equal moral worth.
- Every person has the right to the basic goods to create a minimally decent life.
- Basic human rights include the concepts of equality, freedom, justice.
- It is morally wrong to discriminate against others on the basis of morally arbitrary / chance factors.
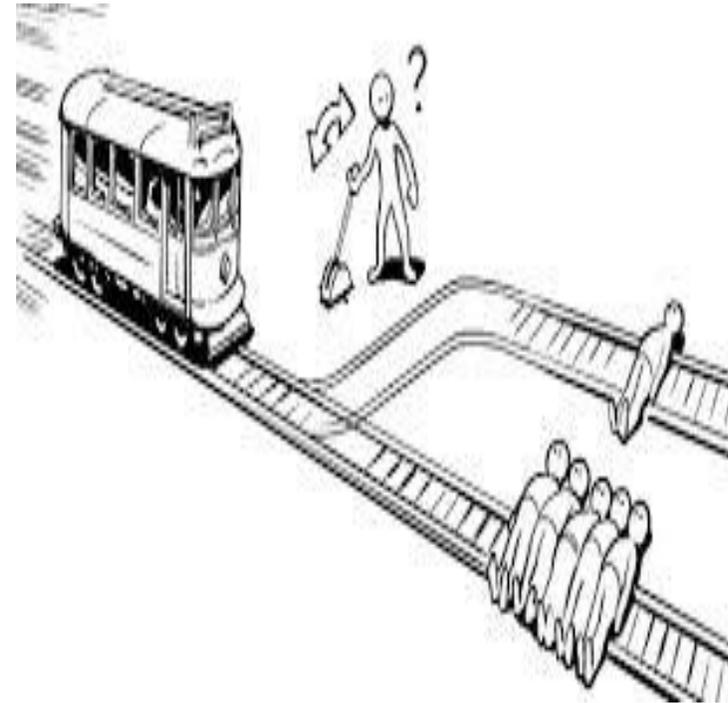
Recognise the tension between cosmopolitan and nationalist sentiments.

Pollis, Amanda & Schwab, Peter (1979). "Human Rights: A Western Construct with Limited Applicability", *Human Rights: Cultural and Ideological Perspectives*. New York: Preager Publishers.

Consequentialism

Right or wrong action depends on the consequences of actions. The action that results in the best outcome, is considered the justifiable one.

This will also be true for considerations of allocation of resources. What will be considered fair/best in the interest of the greatest number of people, and minimize harm to the greatest number of people.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Consequentialism.* Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/consequentialism/

Duty Ethics

Whether an action is moral/ethical or not is defined by obligations and rules. An action is right in itself, and not because of the consequence thereof.

Kant:

- Can a rule be universalised?

- Do not use others as a means to an end.

- We should all contribute to a just society that is harmonious for all.

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, *Deontological Ethics.* Available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-deontological/

Where is discrimination 'housed' and 'fed'?

Our thoughts & behaviour:

- What kind of a person do you choose to be?

- Duty of care and protection?

Tension: moral vision and reality of survival and progress

Societal systems

- Social justice considerations.

- Fairness?

- Duty of protection?

- Rights and claims?

Tension: cosmopolitanism and nationalism

Best NPO practice

Work on different levels at the same time:
- ➢Awareness
- ➢Ethics Culture
- ➢Direct service protocols
- ➢Advocacy

Johari window

1 Known Self Things we know about ourselves and others know about us	**2** Hidden Self Things we know about ourselves that others do not know
3 Blind Self Things others know about us that we do not know	**4** Unknown Self Things neither we nor others know about us

Closing