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PLURALISM AND THE IDEA OF BALANCE IN EASTERN AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHIES

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Abstract

Balance, in the broadest sense, can be taken to be a desirable intermediary point or state between two or more opposing points or states. This thesis demonstrates and argues that the idea of balance is ubiquitous — it appears in nature, the sciences, religions and common sense beliefs. Furthermore, it goes beyond this by attempting to extract this idea from prominent ethical theories — both those in the West and East, namely, Kantian Ethics, Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, Utilitarianism, Islam, Taoism, Hinduism, Confucianism and Buddhism. In the sciences and natural world, molecules, objects or plants are simply forced towards the trajectory of balance. This descriptively gives us some forms of balance. Ethically, many theories, as I show in the essay, strive towards balance and thus normatively prescribe balance as the index of choice, conduct and action. I draw some conclusion from this, which is that a balanced conduct and action lead to ethical action, whilst an imbalanced conduct and action result in an unethical action. Objections to this notion are discussed and addressed in various stages of the essay. At the end of the essay, I apply this reasoning to issues in applied ethics, namely, terrorism, wealth inequality and the environment.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts, Applied Ethics for Professionals, in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Hasan Darwish

____ Day of _____ 2016

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Preamble

I will begin with some important quotes from some prominent thinkers. The ideas embedded in these quotes will feature and surface now and then throughout the paper.

"We are, quite literally, gambling with the future of our planet - for the sake of hamburgers [consumables]" - Peter Singer[1]

"The great Way is easy, yet people prefer the side paths. Be aware when things are out of balance." — Lao Tzu [2]

"Be careful what you water your dreams with. Water them with worry and fear and you will produce weeds that choke the life from your dream. Water them with optimism and solutions and you will cultivate success. Always be on the lookout for ways to turn a problem into an opportunity for success. Always be on the lookout for ways to nurture your dream." - Lao Tzu [2]

"To overcome evil with good is good, to resist evil by evil is evil." – Prophet Mohammed [3]

"The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." – Aristotle [4]

"He who busies himself with things other than improvement of his own self becomes perplexed in darkness and entangled in ruin. His evil spirits immerse him deep in vices and make his bad actions seem handsome" – Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib [5]

"Do not be too hard, lest you be broken; do not be too soft, lest you be squeezed." – Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib [5]

"Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony." - Mahatma Gandhi [6]

"We are not rich by what we possess but by what we can do without." — Immanuel Kant [7]

Section 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

According to John Noble[8], "Nature doesn't recognize the difference between good and evil. Nature only recognizes balance and imbalance and it aims to restore balance whatever it takes". When we observe the laws of nature around us, we find that this is indeed quite true. Whether it be the forces of attraction between particles, the diluting of water with a certain

[1] http://www.goodreads.com/search?q=peter+singer&search[source]
[2] http://www.goodreads.com/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=Lao+Tzu+balance&search_type=quotes
[3] http://izquotes.com/quote/331233
[4] http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/aristotle100762.html
[5] http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/ali_ibn_abi_talib.html
[6] http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5810891.Mahatma_Gandhi
[7] http://www.goodreads.com/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=immanuel+kant&search_type=quotes
[8] http://www.tv.com/shows/fringe/amber-31422-1360825/trivia/

substance or the balance of species populations within a certain ecosystem, it would seem that everything, in some way, is in search of balance. However, the constant addition of new imbalances (either through internal or external forces) ensures that static balance is only rarely and momentarily achieved. This is what prompts natural systems to oscillate back and forth to try to be as close to balance as possible, and to create a 'state of balance', an equilibrium. Thus, the balance described above is assumed to be a balance within a dynamic system of changing factors. Some of these factors are created by humans and others by nature, but the reciprocal nature ensures that both forces are affected and must react.

The question here is: can this thinking method be applied to ethics? Although not always directly stated, it would seem that most of our ethical decision-making follows a similar pattern. Imbalances both internal and external drive us to search for more fitting moral answers. These answers take various forms depending on the situation. Sometimes ethical dilemmas are balanced by a piece of knowledge which help put the person at ease (morally speaking), and sometimes they can or may require some form of action to make the dilemma balance. Ethical burdens are often placed upon individuals, other times on entire communities or more recently, on the world. Our understanding of right and wrong is, in many cases, based on a certain conception of balance; either *a balanced response* to the moral dilemma at hand or a response in search of a balanced end or state of affairs.

1.2 Background

The enquiries of whether the value of balance can be extracted from all ethical theories and standpoints with pluralistic approaches, and whether this can be built into a common conceptual model are indeed difficult to answer. However, it would seem that the ethical theories that have survived till today to reach us whether from the East or the West contain at least one common element worth investigating. My discussion will focus on Kantian ethics, Aristotelian virtue ethics and utilitarianism from the West, and Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism from the East.

I will be arguing that balance has been and is that common value and the search for a balanced response is a common approach. This can shed light on why different approaches can yield acceptable answers (often similar ones) and hence why pluralism (not relativism or monism) is the best way to resolve our ethical dilemmas. This view is likely to attract opposition. For example, one may argue that the idea is too abstract or is similar to relativism because of its pluralistic approach. However, the essay makes clear that although this view of balance is pluralistic in approach insofar as it inherently recognizes 'balance' as an end goal it is monistic.

A more modern view of pluralism in ethics outlines that the way to find the ultimate truth in ethics is by varying the approaches. This suggests, according to Mahatma Ghandi[9], that "Everyone has a piece of the truth" due to their unique experiences and interpretations about this world, and it follows that their ethical views will also contain a part of the truth. Interacting with people gives us the chance to acquire more pieces of the truth. At the very least it gives us a different perspective or angle; which naturally leads to a more balanced person. In fact, many can argue that the reason ethics is where it is today is because of the back-and-forth sharing of perspectives as well as the valid criticism of initially unnoticed weak points in arguments. Humans are generally prone to wanting some form of reflective equilibrium in their beliefs. As new scientific evidence or ethical views arise in this ever-changing world, arguments and beliefs must be ready to address these issues and provide reasonable responses that draw from our experience of similar challenges from our history, whilst providing a modern outlook on how we envisage the future.

As part of my investigation, the study will also attempt to develop a tool to resolve issues arising from imbalance using system thinking principles (commonly used in the sciences to find the 'balanced' response to an equation or problem). It will highlight that although various theories differ in method and normative approach (pluralistic), they are common in their goal; obtaining balance. Lastly, by way of application it will be shown how this conceptual model of balance helps us shape our thinking about issues connected to international affairs ethics (with a specific focus on war and terrorism) and business ethics (with a specific focus on wealth distribution and investment models) as well as the interaction between them and the environment. Combined, these aspects form a sizable part of our moral concern. Arguments from that section can be extrapolated to views on more specific cases and lower level issues.

The search for moral answers has taken us down very interesting roads in the past, in some cases leading us to very extreme ethical views. However, many of these extreme views were held in response to an immense internal pressure or relentless exterior forces. The importance of balance as a value, as I am presenting it, is a core concern in most, if not all, normative ethical theories. It would seem that the various ethical theories from the West or East, which aim towards some notion of balance all possess the ability to adapt to changes in society, religion and even technology. The theories seem to eschew extreme responses to moral situations as a way of pursuing a 'good' and stable life. The moral reasoning behind this can be cashed out in terms of some state or value that may be intrinsic or extrinsic. This might take the form of some value in respect of welfare or happiness in consequentialist theories, or reciprocal exchange

[9] http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5810891.Mahatma_Gandhi

between a person's rights and duties in deontology, or moderate conduct in virtue ethics. The point is that for these theories, the objective is a balanced ethical response to a dilemma or moral, even though their approach is pluralistic. There are many pluralistic forms of moral reasoning which tend to lead us to the monistic value of balance. This is what will be argued for, and a conceptual model (based on system theory) will be constructed from the common elements of eastern and western moral philosophy which can better address issues in applied ethics.

1.3 Research Questions

The related research questions that will be pursued in this essay are these: What conception of balance exists in eastern and western ethical worldviews or standpoints? How can they be consolidated and what implication does this hold for ethical engagements in certain spheres?

Various cultures, theories and ideologies define balance differently. Yet, in a sense they state the same core message. Notions of balance discussed in this essay will include the idea that balance is: avoiding two extremes, reflective equilibrium between theories, or a consolidation of pluralistic approaches/perspectives. All of these share the key elements that are defined in the broad idea of balance. They define two [or more] opposing alternatives. Both those alternatives are both impractical and would cause negative results. Therefore, the best answer lies somewhere in the relative middle and we [as human beings] need to find it. It is worth noting that the definitions are not mistaken, they have simply restricted their evaluation to a specific discipline, area of consideration or value.

For the purpose of this study, the term balance is defined more broadly as: **a desirable intermediary point or state between two or more opposing points or states.** Although the term point appears in the definition, the essay will focus on the term state in terms of it representing a complex interaction of forces. These forces can be physical, social, environmental, spiritual or even intellectual. This state is affected by the forces pushing or pulling in either direction towards the two 'pure' states. Perhaps the most important key word above is desirable, because it inherently acknowledges that there is something worth doing [for us humans] to achieve this state as it can probably result in justice or flourishing. Inanimate objects and most beings seem to naturally move towards this state; human beings (given their ability to choose) can either approach this intermediary state or push away from it. They can also be lead to believe that they are approaching it, when in reality, they are being forced away. However, they do so seeking balance.

1.4 Rationale of Study

With the amount of misinformation and division in today's world, it is important to remind people that there is a common value that we all seem committed to. Recent news of the Islamic State terrorism, nuclear war, environmental catastrophes and wealth inequality around the world have caused a major divide between eastern and western outlooks on issues of politics, culture, the economy and, not the least, ethics. It is important for people to realize why views that may be termed "extreme" (such as those of the United States and extremist ISIS) are problematic. Also, it is important to show that there is a common value that people are interested in maintaining a value that materializes in different forms due to cultural, religious and economic differences.

If we find extremism unacceptable we do so because we seem to inherently value some form of balance. Perhaps this stems from our understanding of justice or equality. Even if we sometimes perceive this to be different from culture to culture or from person to person, these perceptions seem to bundle up close enough to be able to distil a useful theory out of them. If this is so, then our focus (morally speaking) should be on moving away from such self-inflicted dilemmas that implicate us in extremist lifestyles, but not without maintaining healthy differences in opinions that provide autonomy and diversity. Our complicated moral reasoning for issues of war, business and environmental ethics should be a warning sign to us that we are on the wrong path (if we want our humanity to survive). These 'difficult decisions' do not need to be made if we act differently and in terms of the idea of balance that I am suggesting that we each individually value and that ethical theories themselves aim towards.

This study and its concluding argument do not by any means claim to resolve the problems arising from opposing ethical theories. What it does do, however, is show that a true exploration of those theories might lead to more convergence if we consider that they are searching for some form of balanced response (which many are). In a nutshell then, the study takes pluralism as an important in ethical interaction and thinking and concludes that a balanced and holistic approach that uses multiple theories might lead to a more balanced viewpoint.

Section 2: Conceptions of Balance

It is absolutely necessary to first examine several embodiments of the idea of balance. This review will be in the areas of descriptive, prescriptive, normative and metaphysical formulations of balance. Furthermore, it will help to clarify some of the preconceptions about balance so as to paint a clearer picture of why this idea seems to be worth investigating and formulating into some form of theory.

2.1 Descriptive Conceptions of Balance

The research will start by describing some prominent occurrences of balance in various areas of life and disciplines of knowledge. Sentient, non-sentient and inanimate objects are governed by the physical rules set out by these occurrences. Although these occurrences might not directly govern moral decision making, they definitely affect us and the world around us (which form part of our moral concern and are often used as premises in moral arguments).

Balance and Mathematics

One of the fundamental ideas in mathematics is the balanced equation. At the center of each equation there is the equality (=) symbol. In many ways the equality symbol is the symbol of balance in mathematics. It indicates that to find a solution, the two sides must be balanced in value. Any operation done to one side must be done to the other side. Otherwise, the equation would no longer be valid. Alterations to equations are governed by rules that have been discovered, agreed upon (for the time being) or simply established as axioms. For example, Simson (1811: 13-15) highlights some of the following axioms from Euclidian geometry:

1. Things which are equal to the same thing are also equal to one another.
2. If equals be added to equals, the wholes are equal.
3. If equals be taken from equals, the remainders are equal.
4. If equals be added to unequals, the wholes are unequal.
5. Things which coincide with one another are equal to one another.

Mathematics, however, deals with real world problems. Real world problems are complex and cannot always be reduced to neat balanced equations. Mathematics will typically reduce real world situations into models by representing only the most prominent factors in equations to calculate the balance point, in some cases even resorting to using less or greater than symbols (< >) to show that the solution lies within specific boundaries. Any point within that boundary will solve the equation at hand. Yet, depending on the scenario given there might be a “best” solution within a range of acceptable solutions. Perhaps it would be possible to reduce this into a point, but it is commonly accepted that doing so would require relooking at more factors and creating a more complex equation. An example of this is calculating how much concrete is required to be added to a concrete mix in order to get the best building. Engineers will typically calculate bounds for the percentage per mass that would be safe (as a standard). Yet, what is ideal for that specific batch on that specific day in those specific environmental conditions would require much more effort to calculate. In addition to this, by the time it is calculated, the conditions might have changed. This is not to say that this is not done sometimes. If we take space travel as an example, it is clear that every single factor (possible or hardly possible) is

accounted for. That is why it can be said that in mathematics it is desirable to find the balanced equation which is not so simple that it ignores complexity (therefore getting the wrong answer when applied to real life with tragic consequences), but not too complex that the resources used to get it would not justify getting it (which is impractical especially since the factors in the equation change).

Another prominent idea of balance in mathematics is shown in statistics. This idea is often referred to as the bell curve. It is a graphical representation of the normal distribution. The graph itself often represents probability and shows that when measuring phenomenon (such as height of human, leaves per tree [same type], bees per hive, etc.) there will exist a mean and extremes. Typically, most of the occurrences (probability) will be close to the mean. For example: The average height for a grown human beings is thought to be around 170cm (Roser, 2015). Some regions have an average of 160cm while some can go up to 180cm (Roser, 2015). Although this is different per region, this mean is often used to make judgements about what is 'normal' and 'not normal'. Most of the population will be within certain deviations from that average with very few being in the extremes. The extreme here does not represent an absolute extreme but rather a local one. Absolute extremes in this case would be something like a human being measuring 1cm (or less) or 15km (or more) which is, for the purposes of this study, impossible. Local extremes would take into consideration things like biological limits and actual occurrences. For example: the tallest man in recorded history, Sultan Kosen, measures 251cm while the shortest man, Chandra Bahdur Dangi, measures about 55cm. It is interesting to note that being taller than the mean has its advantages while being shorter than the mean also has its advantages. However, life becomes significantly harder as we approach the extremes. This does not mean it is not possible, but more often than not it requires special circumstances and custom made guidelines.

Balance and the Physical Universe

The idea of balance seems to be engrained deeply in virtually every science. Two prominent sciences which contain this idea are chemistry and physics. The balance described, however, is not so much a "desire" for balance as it is forced by the laws of nature (which can be viewed as desirable by the creator in some religions). When we review physics we notice various interesting phenomena. The first is a general phenomenon which happens to virtually any system where two opposing states come in contact and one's value is higher than the other. This can be pressure, temperature or concentration. Physics often dictates that the nature of these things is to flow from high to low until a balance is reached. In fact, significant energy (effort) needs to be utilized to keep the systems as they are or potentially reverse the flow i.e.

making energy flow from low to high. There are, of course, complex occurrences in the universe where various factors might make it seem that a reverse flow is happening but this is usually due to an imbalance in another factor. For example, pressure might seem to flow in an opposing direction due to a temperature imbalance, but if we left everything constant, the natural law would dictate that the pressure dissipates from the higher pressure system to the lower pressure system until balance is reached between the two systems. The desirable state almost always seems to be perfect equilibrium, but due to imbalances from external systems this is rarely achieved. Although there have been various improvements in our understanding of the physical world, one particular law seems to remain: for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. Although in physics the unseen reaction 'force' is instantaneous and in the same form, the universe contains complex reactions that do not always happen instantly or in the same form of the action. This is perhaps best unveiled in the idea of balance in chemistry.

A key tool used in chemistry is the balancing of chemical equations. In chemistry, some chemicals naturally react with others to form new chemicals (different form) with new properties while releasing energy (different form). Some require a kick-start energy or catalyst. This creates two states, one before the chemical reaction and one after the chemical reaction. Much like physical forces, it is the "desire" of the chemicals to reach absolute equilibrium. Thus, it will aim to find the best balance between the two states. This best describes reversible reactions where there can be shifts back and forth between the start state and the end state. Depending on external forces, one side of the equation will be preferred over the other based on what reaches equilibrium. Reactions can further be so strongly forced in one direction that the result is irreversible (with the knowledge we currently have) such as burning a paper or baking a cake. The interesting thing is that in nature and space, these reactions are almost solely controlled by forces. Human beings, however, have often used the natural properties of chemicals and their reactions to fulfil their desires. Thus, we have identified the desirable state which would balance our specific need (in that situation) and manipulates forces to push in either direction until that desired state is reached. Then we stop the reaction. This can be something simple like turning off the heat when the food is cooked right, or something complex like altering the parameters of a device to create a radioactive chemical that can be used in cancer treatment.

Balance, Organisms and Human Beings

As micro molecules bind to form proteins and DNA, and they in turn synergize to form cells and cells to organisms, we find that the search for the idea of absolute equilibrium or balance becomes far-fetched. This is perhaps because the synergetic effects of physical and chemical forces create something that needs to be evaluated with different rules. The broader spectrum

created with the rising levels of complexity creates more space for desirable “balance” and perhaps even for evolution to fill the different gaps which are physically possible. This creates unique interactions which require the explanations of biology to explain. Even though not all organisms are sentient beings, their level of development creates “desires” to survive and reproduce. To do so, they must often find relevant energy, nutrients and growth allowing conditions. This applies to single-cell organisms, plants, animals and human beings. The requirements are definitely different but their goal similar. Most plants require sunlight, water and nutrients, in addition to being in an acceptable temperature range in order to be balanced and grow. Human beings, though, seem to have the most diverse and evolved set of “desires” but biology shows us that this diversity in preference does not contravene basic rules set out for the survival of an organism. Namely, for humans, these are general requirements such as nutrients, air, water, rest, care…etc.

This does not mean that we as human beings are not different. Firstly, it would seem that, at some level, human beings are capable of surviving in virtually any circumstance (mainly due to the ability of adapting to resources surrounding us to ensure survival). Secondly, it would seem that human beings have the ability to choose (even if they believe that, ultimately, their faith is decided by a higher power, they have the power of decision making). Given two plates with the same exact nutrients presented in both a mashed/unappealing and a neat/pleasing fashion, a large majority of people would choose the neat fashion. This is perhaps due to our broader interpretation of surviving which evolved to include enjoying life. In addition to this, given a choice to reproduce chaotically versus to set up formal/healthy relationships which nurture the offspring, a great majority of people would choose a healthy relationship. Also, this is partially due to our interpretation of reproduction to include healthy development (mental, emotional and social), but it also seems to be balanced with our nature. Human children cannot physically survive without care and nutrition. This is unlike turtles, for example, which know what to do from birth.

It is interesting that the rapid pace of our evolution is often attributed to our ability to be balanced with our environment. Our anatomy allows balanced proportions between opposing parts of our body giving us versatility and better motor skills. Our digestive system is capable of adapting to various diets (as long as they are balanced with our nutritional needs). Yet, this balance would not be remotely possible without the human brain, which is carefully regulating, adapting and reacting to chemical, physical and environmental changes to find the most balanced way out; as it organizes breathing, sleeping, eating, working and other bodily activities into recurring cycles to ensure survival. Going back to the statistics section, it is interesting to

see that human minds have regulated human bodies across the globe in similar ways. For example, it is normal for a human being to 1) sleep 6-8 hours a day 2) drink 1-3L of water a day 3) breathe in air every x seconds…etc. Once again due to the synergetic effects of physics and chemistry at this level, the amounts might vary greatly but there is still a mean which is considered balanced and desirable while extremes are considered impractical and in many cases fatal. Each person has boundaries and combinations of boundaries for their hormones, biological functions and physical capabilities within which balance can be found, while exceeding either end might cause them to under develop or over develop (both of which can have negative consequences). A person cannot survive without breathing or drinking. There might be someone capable of holding their breath for 20 minutes or even an hour but it is hardly reasonable to say that a person is capable of holding their breath for 5 days or even breathing every 0.000001 seconds.

The real complexity, however, comes when considering immeasurable things. How much love does a person need? What is the work/rest balance a person should maintain? What is the balance one should strike between time they spend on themselves and time they spend on others? And so on. These questions are more often than not answered by advising people to find a balance between the two which fit their situation. Common discourse will state that one needs to achieve what he is capable of [balances his actions with ability], create a balance between living and working (otherwise they will harm themselves), etc. Interestingly though, this is where balance takes on a whole new level. What if balanced person A creates an imbalance for person B? What person A is doing (believing he is balanced) might be severely imbalanced for himself and others. What person A is doing might undermine the very ability of the planet to maintain balance and provide resources.

Balance, Earth and Ecosystems

Although it is sometimes difficult to view earth and ecosystems as having "desires," one can conceptually recognize that they react and naturally strive for balance. Every storm, volcano or earthquake is due to imbalances in the complex systems that allow the earth to be what it is. Every organism in some way or another participates in the careful balance of food chains. Every resource is linked to the needs of various organisms and depleting or overusing it has consequences which can change the entire balance of ecosystems. This, in turn, ricochets and affects earth as a whole. Most organisms find ways to adapt to changes or die off. However, as alluded above, humans have a choice in taking the actions necessary to restore balance and harmony on this earth or to continue their actions until nature strikes back (in an attempt to rebalance ecosystems).

2.2 Non-prescriptive/Moral Conceptions of Balance

One might say that there are several conceptions of balance that people work with in societies, which can be taken to be non-prescriptive/moral. The definition in the introduction, however, is not expressed in many people's conceptions of balance. In fact, some conceptions of balance are immoral (when taken literally), and it is important to point this out and to say why and how this is so. What I aim to do in this section is to examine different accounts of balance which might be embedded in moral reasoning.

Eye for an Eye

One of the most common and widely spread conceptions of a balanced ethical response is the idea of 'an eye for an eye'; reactions should be met with the exact same but opposite reaction in order to be 'balanced'. After all "getting back to the zero point on the scale is part of the deep structure of other notions central to doing justice, to settling disputes, to making and keeping peace" (Miller, 2005: 15). Miller (2005: 15-17) elaborates that the reason people believe in this idea is because they believe that this will return peace and justice. "Unless accounts are in balance, there is no basis for peace. Unbalanced accounts means you must beware the avenger, for he will be out to pay you back and will be justified when he does so" (Miller, 2005: 16). Some often refer to physics as the source of their inspiration for this way of thinking. Although the conception that all actions have equal but opposite reactions is true (forming the basis of Newton's laws of motion), even there it does not necessarily mean that the reaction force comes in the same mode or manner as the initiating force does. This idea is important because the actions guided by it have moral implications. Thus, it is worthy of moral evaluation.

Morally speaking, we might find several people making judgements that all murderers should be killed or that one should lie to liars because they believe that that would be just. Now although this perception of balance might seem intuitive (perhaps even fundamental) to some people, it presents two major problems. Firstly, it is virtually impossible to replicate the conditions with which the original 'unethical' action was conducted (especially when we take into account human intention and hundreds of other human elements). Miller (2005: 17) elaborates on this problem by explaining that this is fundamental to our account of what it means to get even. "If you get even by bringing the scale on the left back up to its neutral position [describing scales of justice], by one account you are back to where you started, back to zero; but by another account you have been undercompensated, for, if the debt is of honor, the wrongdoer enjoyed a certain amount of time indulging in the pleasure of looking down on you and of gloating at your humiliation" (Miller, 2005: 17). Therefore, it is almost always virtually impossible to truly 'balance' all accounts. To give a very basic example of this, let us imagine the lending of R100

in 1880 from person A (giving) to person B (receiving). If the compensation is only done in 1950 then we naturally expect the amount to account for inflation, factors including lost opportunity of possessing that money as well as factors that depend on the lender. It seems there will always be a difference in accounts (or in perceived accounts) which leads to moral residue which can grow into bigger moral problems over time.

The second problem is that it would seem that the ideal action, in retrospect, is never the one given by this approach (which usually leads to more immoral behavior). This method "makes no thought of the future at all, only of present desires fueled by thoughts of the past wrongs done to me" (Miller, 2005: 52). Eye-for-eye behavior simply multiplies the amount of problems to be resolved and creates a build-up of complex moral issues over time. This conception becomes much more dangerous when such duties for revenge or restoring balance are transferable unto families, cultures or entire nations. Offspring filled with hatred might overreact due to their unawareness to the details of the problem, nations might commit atrocities based on false accounts or exaggerations and so forth. When asked about forgiving and moving on, some argue that the problem there is that forgiveness is often read by the oppressing party as weakness (which often prompts more unethical behavior) and why 'eye for an eye' mentality is the best way to act. Yet, what people often tend to forget, in these situations specifically, is that some immoral actions happen by accident or without the implicit knowledge of the agent (that he is acting immorally). This ideology would thus create a problem where there was none (or at the very least create a problem where one could have been resolved).

Although this might not hold for the theory as it is often understood, if one looks beyond the literal meaning and application problems we might find that the core of the idea holds something very powerful. The core is that immoral or unjust actions require a corrective element [action] to be conducted on the oppressing party and a compensation element [action] to be conducted to the oppressed party. However, what is vital but is missed by this notion is an element of reconciliation between the two parties in order to ensure that the actual settlement is also perceived in this manner. It also helps reduce moral residue elements which might grow into future problems. To avoid a domino-effect of immoral retaliations, it would be best to identify the root cause of the problems and start mending from there.

Just World

Another very common conception of a balanced ethical response is this idea of a 'just world' (where the world around us will ensure justice/balance). This is perhaps slightly different than 'eye for an eye' mentality in that it often allows nature to be the force of action and is often used to make sense of negative things that happen to other people, and thus it implies that we should

not interfere. The belief can be described as “people ‘get what they deserve’. So strong is our need to believe in the moral order of the universe that we may look for evidence that a victim of a crime had done something to warrant their bad luck” (Wilson, 2009). Other more morally focused formulations state that the just world [idea] is the belief “that the world is a place where good people are rewarded and bad people are punished” (Rubin and Peplau, 1975: 1). Although the belief above would be ideal (if true), it is misapplied and used to justify somewhat conflicting moral behavior. The key problem is that this type of belief can lead to situations where people forget that fallible people can shift the scales to their advantage and convince the public that this is the zero point of the scale all along and that any shifts towards the initial equality are actually unbalanced. This shift is obviously not done overnight and can take decades and centuries of imbalances and build-up. It can also lead to the wealthy/powerful promoting a certain type of behavior (even if unethical), which leads to people following them on the pretense that it is just for if it weren’t; it wouldn’t be rewarded by society as a whole.

Researchers have also found that this type of thinking unfortunately causes people who believe in ‘a just world’ to have “admiration for fortunate people and to derogate victims, thus permitting the belief to maintain the perception that people in fact get what they deserve” (Rubin and Peplau, 1975: 1) which leads them to “admire political leaders and existing social institutions and to have negative attitudes towards underprivileged groups” (Rubin and Peplau, 1975: 1). This seems to be regardless of whether the victim is wrongfully convicted or the politician moral. Researchers have also shown that this thinking can have unfortunate consequences. Montada and Lerner (2013) in their book *Responses to Victimizations and Belief in a Just World* show how “often people naturally develop and employ ways of defending their conception of a just world. This may involve acting to eliminate injustice but failing [to do so] leads to blaming, rejecting or avoiding the victim”. In a more specific experiment, an innocent observer is forced to see someone (also innocent) suffering. The researchers found that “the innocent observer reported being extremely upset by the unjust suffering…. But those feelings change as the observer continues and is unable to intervene… [Mainly] because the observer believed she would be appropriately compensated for her suffering in the future” (Montada and Lerner, 2013: 1-2).

The reason that the belief above rarely leads to a just world or just response is because most people are either given a standard response that they should follow towards moral issues (without their own thought into the issue), or they are told that some issues are simply larger than them and they should not interfere with them, because they will not solve anything and perhaps might make things worse. Countless real world examples show how media persistence

on a certain nation's suffering can cause emotional deprivation and indifference (towards the suffering or issue) which leads people to accept any proposed solution which they are led to believe will result in long term compensation for that situation. It is no secret that the media, music and various other industries use this to their advantage. The media, for example, will often utilize world tragedies to push agendas and convince the viewer that no other way exists to resolve this issue except the way being prescribed by the same source and often seems to entail military intervention, for example. Thereafter, they will often convince the viewer that nothing else could be done due to the nature of the situation and that people are already backing this solution and so should they. Finally, they will convince the viewer that the goal was achieved without stating any future consequences, (to ease the viewers' thoughts that they did the right thing) or if alternate media spreads proof showing the opposite, the media source will aim to convince the viewers that although this is true, there is nothing they can do now since the action is already done and time will resolve everything. Two dreadful real-world examples is the Iraq war which led to the death of 1 million Iraqis and the intervention in Libya which has destabilized the entire country (which will be discussed in more detail in section 4). This is perhaps why the 'just world' formulation also suffers a tragic application flaw in that it has been misunderstood as a just world with no action or thought from our part. Even if it is based on the good intent of resorting justice naturally, it often fails to see that existing social structures will promote inaction and implant thoughts instead of promoting original thought and personalized action to ensuring a just world instead of simply accepting a 'just world'.

Balance, Moral Knowledge & Maturity

Lastly, people often justify their moral decision making by stating that "they didn't know better at the time". In a sense what they are saying is that they did not know what moral actions would actually balance the situation. Moral knowledge, like any knowledge, matures and grows with time. That is why children are often seen as having "natural virtue - a proto version of full virtue awaiting perfection by phronesis or practical wisdom" (Hursthouse, 2013: 6). Life's many instabilities can often cause parts of our moral autonomy to be underdeveloped. We are often urged to follow standard moral responses to dilemmas, but in reality, moral dilemmas require our personal reflection. This ethical knowledge can be gained through direct and indirect education and requires effort.

The combination of experience, stories, observations and reflection can provide broad guidelines for action whilst accommodating personal situations. The reason this is important is because often (when we are the center of the moral dilemma), we are the only ones who have true access to the whole story (so to speak). Thus, people will often act with the information they

have to make moral decisions. That is why we need to search for what true balance means and thus adopt an involved and mature approach to ethics. As Rachels (1997: 13-16) suggests we need to evaluate our own moral web of beliefs and identify when they are contradictory to common sense or perhaps even internally hypocritical. Rachels (1997: 10-13) view should not be disregarded so easily because it allows us to acknowledge the fact that "no element of the web is protected from the possibility that it might have to be revised or even rejected... [Especially] as new evidence is discovered and new considerations come to light". Many people will see this as threatening as it may debunk their beliefs, but in reality, it should be viewed in a very positive light. If a certain belief holds up even after investigation, argument and proves the test of time, then it should be viewed as a success not as a failure. What is often found is that people reject this evaluation because of their inner knowledge or feeling that the belief will be proved unbalanced or they merely inherited this belief without properly thinking about it.

Additionally, people find it difficult or tedious to challenge their beliefs and thus they will often continue an entire lifetime without thinking about them. People forget that "the roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet." – Aristotle[10]. Another common problem is the blind acceptance of crowd conclusions (especially towards moral issues). This is often blamed on religious authority, but is not unique to them since secular governments and the media also do the same with political or ideological beliefs (which naturally contain ethical elements). It is important to state here that individuals might reach the same conclusions without being conditioned to do so. They can also reach different conclusions in search of the same goal without one being immoral and the other moral, since every individual will naturally face different moral decisions that require different responses. Rarely (if not never) is a force so unique that one cannot apply anything from the world around them or the experiences gained from the world around them, but also rarely are moral interactions so standard that some personal touch cannot help achieve a more desirable, ethical and balanced response. It is not that our actions are constrained by our idea of balance but rather that they can be guided by what we believe is balanced (based on our knowledge and surroundings). This notion can change over time. Unfortunately, this notion can also be misguided due to years of moral degeneration that renders our understanding of balance and morality baseless.

This is something eastern cultures often refer to as imbalances or impurities in our morality. The source of this degeneration can be personal or institutional but it seems that more often than not, it is purposeful. Every person seems to be the only one who can truly realize their own balance, because they are the only ones aware of their personal history and experience. This

[10] http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/aristotle100762.html

conception changes and evolves over time. It also seems that since we are social creatures we tend to share this awareness with others and learn from each other's experiences (as part of our inner drive towards collective learning). The task of identifying, classifying, evaluating should not be outsourced to an authority or individual. This is not belittling the helpful role structures and systems around us can play in helping us acquire ethical knowledge. However, a distinction needs to be made between collectiveness and outsourcing. Outsourcing is the act of allocating the responsibility and effort put into decision making while benefiting from the effects (usually while wanting to reject negative effects and for some material compensation). Collectiveness is the idea of sharing in the thought process, benefits and consequences of actions. We all seem to believe that we are responsible for our actions, but it would seem that we also share a portion of the responsibility of collectives as well as the whole world. Human beings need to take ownership of their moral decision-making behavior because even if the decision making can be outsourced, the results most definitely find their way back to all the involved parties and collectives. For this we need true moral knowledge and understanding.

2.3 Balance in Ethical Theories (Normative)

Before delving into the metaphysical, one must find the bridge that links the non-prescriptive/moral and the metaphysical -- the bridge is the normative. The normative ethics is often defined as the part of the ethics which deals with questions within ethics, (not about ethics like metaphysical ethics) and it focuses on prescribing how a person should act or how he or she ought to conduct himself or herself (in an ethical sense). In normative ethics we expect a right or wrong, good or bad or an evaluation of some sort (Penrose, 2014: 1-3). The three most prominent normative ethical theories that have come down to us are: virtue ethics, consequentialism and deontology.

This section will evaluate some of the conceptions of balance in these ethical theories. In addition, it will look at the idea of balance in the Eastern tradition. The idea of balance is named differently in different ethical theories but there remains some consistency in the submerged logic behind these ideas. The theories will be reviewed in a very broad manner without focusing too much on specific subsects (unless there is a reason for doing so). In most eastern theories, ethical theories are often linked to religious or other ideological beliefs and come as part of a whole package on how to live life. They are also quite naturally pluralistic in approach and different problems get evaluated by different mixes of consequentialist, deontological and virtue based approaches. Western theories seem to be a lot more focused on specific values, approaches and methods in the context of moral dilemmas. Although it does occur that a consequentialist theory, for example, will praise the role of virtue and rights, it does so while

maintaining and stressing its own approach. The aim of this section is to truly uncover all instances or formulations of an idea of balance in these theories before combining them into a common conception/formulation.

2.3.1 Balance in Eastern Philosophy

What is often under-examined is the role of eastern philosophical theories in developing and advancing the notion of balance. This is perhaps due to the fact that eastern ethical theories can often be intertwined within a bigger construct of events and are not always clearly categorized as in the west. This is also perhaps a reason for more focus on the community rather than the individual (due to an inherent view that individuals are pieces of a greater whole and the overall picture needs to be created by the individual pieces, different as they may be). Over time, this has led to the visibility of balance within eastern societies. A common view that is explicit in eastern culture is this idea that we must act in a way that preserves balance (sometimes referred to as harmony). This conception of balance is not to be confused with the maintaining of the status quo. In fact, it stems from an implicit belief that “life is change and in change there is balance” or “harmony is an ever changing state of balance”.

Eastern philosophy is very diverse and has a variety of social, political, religious and economic models which have affected how it has manifested itself. However, at some level, it is explicitly believed that balance is of very high importance, and different societies and cultures will naturally have different ways of achieving or reaching a state of balance due to their geography, history, and practical limitations. The religious and philosophical views of Taoism, Islam, Hinduism, Confucianism and Buddhism have many core principles in common that can in fact be presented as normative theorizing. Many great thinkers of the east such as Confucius, Prophet Mohammed, Buddha, Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib and Laozi contributed to the production of great texts and ideas which have provided guidance to billions of people throughout the ages. Their views range in complexity, diversity and are contextual. However, it would seem that their goal is common: To achieve balance or harmony. This balance is not meant to be an instantaneous one but a sustainable and lasting one. The balance might also have encouraged people (in times of chaos or stagnation) to take imbalanced actions to achieve new states of balance. It would also suggest that their ultimate role is to define, contemplate and realize this new changing state of balance (both within ourselves and within our community). This is why many eastern societies encouraged creativity, invention and thought which is hoped to eventually lead to ideas that could allow them to better adapt to new states of balance or even create them.

One interesting fact about eastern cultures is the summarizing of entire philosophies into a symbol or simple concept to be deepened as one's moral understanding grows. Some examples of eastern conceptions of balance include the Yin Yang, Karma, Dharma, Sirat al Mostaqeem, Zulfiqar, Middle Way and the Reincarnation Circle.

Yin Yang
Taoism



Karma
Hinduism



Dharma
Buddhism

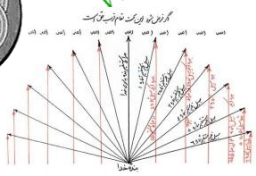




Zulfiqar & Sirat al Mostaqeem
Islam







Confucius, Scholar
Confucianism



Reincarnation
Multiple



Figure 1: Eastern Religious Symbols[11]

Taoism – Yin Yang (Consequentialist) Wu-Wei (Virtue Based)

Taoism believes in a deeper metaphysical force of balance which guides us to the right way (The Tao/Dao) (Wong, 2011: 192-195). "For every action [one of our actions], there is a response from the Tao" (Wong, 2011: 193). Taoism uses the Yin Yang as a primary symbol to represent this metaphysical force of the Tao. However, the end state is represented by a concept called the Wu-Wei (a belief in natural behavior and "action through non-action" in an ideal end state) and a focus on certain virtues of that end state such as compassion and moderation (Wong, 2011: 93,191). It implies that there is a path which allows us to be in harmony with the world around us in the same way that the planets circle the sun effortlessly. A path that requires to use minimal force and act within natural laws (which are beyond our control) (Wong, 2011: 25). This however does not imply that we should live a mundane life but rather to find a balance between the things we can and cannot control, and also to question whether the path we choose is indeed the one for us (which is an understanding that has evolved over centuries) (Wong, 2011: 23-29). As explained by Wong (2011: 29):

> *"Taoism was a voice that advocated reform with the hope of building a better society [in its early phase of development] …. During the Warring States, Taoism lost some of its early ideals and began taking a negative view of politics, culture and social rules and increased its emphasis on individual freedom and the cultivation of life…. However, whether optimistic or pessimistic, idealistic or delusional, active or escapist, Taoism was always a voice that spoke for the preservation of the natural way of the Tao"*

[11] Taken from Google Images by Searching Name of Symbol and the word 'Symbol'

This sway between both extremes is best shown by the Yin Yang symbol (shown in table 1 above). Yin Yang directly translates to shadow and light, and has an inherent understanding that we need one to acknowledge the other (Bellaimey, 2013). Thus we cannot tell that light is light unless we know darkness, and cannot tell darkness if we do not know light. Both forces are necessary for existence and they are opposite to one another (Bellaimey, 2013). In fact, this is so much so that they are independent, and you will always have Yin within Yang and Yang within Yin. Finally, the symbol presents the fact that they are interchangeable and turn into one another overtime. It also shows how there can be different types of imbalances between the two with excess of one or the other (Bellaimey, 2013). The normative ethical dimension of this is context-dependent consequentialist; it does not necessarily outlaw any action without first knowing the context that it is being performed in, and anything that is seen as bringing balance to the final product is morally acceptable (Bellaimey, 2013). The cyclical, continuous, balanced nature promotes acting in a way that is believed to bring balance to the entire whole that takes into account imbalances of the past and uncertainties of the future. However, what is seen as an acceptable virtuous state is that defined by the Wu-Wei where we stop acting with force and live in state of compassion and moderation, especially since "the wise person is flexible according to the dao… he learns to use the dao and that is why you should be able and know [and identify] your yin from your yang" (Bellaimey, 2013).

Hinduism and Buddhism – Karma (Consequentialist) Dharma (Deontological)

Karma is a central feature in Buddhism and Hinduism which prompts a somewhat consequentialist way of thinking where good action is promoted because it yields good results (towards oneself and society). It is often complimented by dharma which specifies a more articulated set of rules and duties. Although there are some distinctions between how these two are interpreted by sub sects of these two religions and philosophical traditions, the features of balance can easily be distilled from the common conceptions of these two symbols. In standard terms Karma is the belief that what goes around comes around (Mack, 2002: 1-5), whether it be good or bad. This prompts similar thinking to the Yin-Yang in that it is more of a metaphysical force of cause and effect which "is not a moral law [per se]. It is neutral; it is only a description of how things interact. "Karma is not a force wielded by gods" (Mack, 2002: 2-3). However, it does prompt us to act morally because it is what is best for us. We create our own karma and we are responsible for the result of the previous actions and thoughts of ourselves and others since "understanding karma is about understanding the effects your actions have on yourself, others and ultimately on everything" (Mack, 2002: 4). This conception does not imply that actions create direct and immediate consequence nor does it imply that this would be fair. It takes a deeper metaphysical stance on how things are.

To understand the normative stance of these philosophies we would have to explore the idea of dharma, which complements karma in that it specifies more concrete rights and duties that would best balance our role within the deeper metaphysical concept, in some cases even specifying virtues or morally worthy paths in life. Dharma in the broadest sense "means duty and/or virtue. The primary conception of dharma is indirectly related to the idea of justice. It is believed that if all people followed their respective dharma, there would result a just and harmonious social order" (Motilal, 2011: 115). However, the concept of dharma varies between Hinduism and Buddhism and even within them. This is perhaps because "theoretically, such laws or dharma (norms) should have been the same for all members of the society, but [in many cases] it was not so" (Motilal, 2011: 115). This dharma arises from various sources such as one's personal conscience, religious texts, duties towards society, abilities and social standing in society (Motilal, 2011: :ix,114-118). As for the end state, most thinkers believe it is the concept of the 'middle way' (often described as middle path). In their book: *Nagarjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way* Nāgārjuna and Kalupahana (1986: 1) explain:

> *The middle position is explained as "dependent arising which, when utilized to explain the nature of the human personality and the world of experience, appears in a formula consisting of twelve factors. The practical middle path is enunciated in the equally famous Dhammacakkappavattana-sutta respected by most Buddhists as the first sermon delivered by the Buddha. Here the middle path is between the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification and consists of the noble eightfold path leading to freedom and happiness.*

Islam – Sirat Al Mostaqeem (Consequentialist) Zulfiqar (Deontological) Names of God (Virtue)

The metaphysical conception of balance in Islam (that is agreed upon by the prominent sects Sunni, Sufi and Shia) stems from the Quran and is often expressed through the idea of the Sirat al Mostaqeem. The Sirat al Mostaqeem is a path that Allah (God) guides those who have Allah's (God's) Mercy and act virtuously. The idea of the Sirat al Mostaqeem is presented in the first chapter of the Quran (Al-Fatiha: 6) as being the "straight and rightful path" to happiness in life. This path can be different for each and every person and it is stressed by Sufi Scholars (Subset of Shia) that "أن *للطرق إلى الله عدد أنفاس الخلائق*" which translates to "The number of paths to Allah [God] is as many as there are people [personalities]" (Nabelsi, 2008: 4). This taps into a deeper understanding that each person has his own way of reaching this one path from their own starting point. Perhaps, the best way to understand this is to explore the concept of Nour in Islam. Islam tends to also focus in the Quran on the importance of "نور" which is a guiding light [to this path]. The idea here is that it is natural to oscillate [within bounds] about this straight path (as light oscillates around a line to reach its destination) but the aim is to have the right

direction, not get side-tracked or go into extreme oscillation that will plunge into chaos. This physical motion is portrayed conceptually in many Islamic practices such as the circling of the Kaba (in Hajj) known as Tawaf, the direction of Muslim prayer all around the world towards the Kaba (5 times a day), the oscillation between the Marwa and the Safa (known as Sa'ee) (Peters, 1994: :18-37). In many ways this reinforces the point above, Muslims around the world have their own specific angle that they pray to be aligned with the Kaba but it is an absolute duty at least once during one's lifetime to go to Hajj to experience (not just perform a ritual) as the focal point of final purification (Peters, 1994: :xxii-xxv).

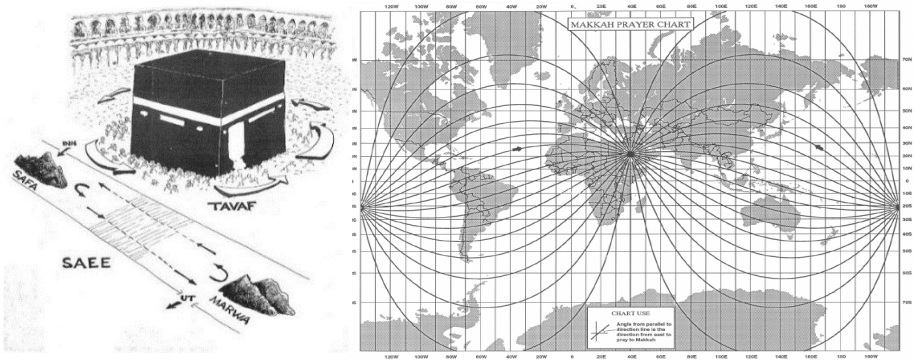


Figure 2: Kaba and Hajj [12]

Muslims (mainly Shi'ite and Sufi) find a deeper philosophical meaning in Zulfiqar (a historic and very meaningful symbol represented by the sword of Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib, the son in law of prophet Mohammad as a concept that most things (even knowledge) have a dual edge/nature and the sword (representing some form of willpower over weapons) can separate the "sharp distinction between right and wrong" (Gauding, 2009: 105). This is due to the fact that as they harm our enemies, they can also harm us.

Furthermore, it suggests the dual nature of items (tangible) and knowledge (intangible) that can be used for both good and evil. The aim is to be very weary when creating such items (and knowledge) because they might end up in the wrong hands (and in interpretation). What this stresses is that moral responsibility towards taking control of "tools" which amplify their inherent virtues/vices, because essentially it may corrupt them or even destroy them. This too links to a metaphysical concept of the dual nature of virtually anything surrounding us, but it is focused more on our duty to identify and learn to control the tools we have (which include bodily tools such as our sight, speech, and thought). It is reinforced in the Quran (Al-Bakara: 286) "Allah does not place a burden on a soul except [within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned". This is why the best way suggested in Islam to be balanced with one's abilities and responsibility is to

[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa'yee#/media/File:Tavaf.jpg

possess well known virtues, the absolute form of which is represented by Allah (God) alone. Yet, the Quran states that in verse 7 and 8 of Surat al Zil-zal (7-8): "فَمَنْ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَه يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَه" which translates to whomever does an atom's mass of good will see it [reflect on him] and he whomever does an atom's mass of evil will see it [reflect on him].

In Arabic, these virtues take on the prefix "ال" which translates to "The" indicating the absolute nature that is reserved for Allah, whilst people can possess the same virtue but only partially. Muslims must then consolidate and find balance between these virtues. In Islam there is a list of 99 names (signifying complex absolute virtues) of Allah (Samat, 2001: 3). However, it is believed that we can achieve a small part of that whole virtue by understanding, reciting, sharing and applying these virtues in our life. An example would be that Allah (God) is The Extensively Enduring (الصبور) or The Omnipotent (القادر) whereas in order to be a virtue for a human this would be Patient (صبور) or Capable (قادر) (Samat, 2001: xiii-xv).

Confucianism – Balance & Mean in the Work of Confucius

Another clear and influential appearance of balance in the form of a mean is found in the works of Confucius. Although Confucianism is not always referred to as a religion (more of a social philosophy) it undoubtedly has ethical teachings worth exploring as a normative standpoint. In fact, various accounts signal that Confucianism was developed in order to understand "the meaning of life by appeal to family and social obligation" (Secter, 1998: 92). This is often similar with other eastern accounts since "the common theme that runs through Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism is the concept of self-regulation, with each school of thought differing in the way it wanted to accomplish this (Secter, 1998: 92). Furthermore, as it is in eastern accounts, the Confucian school of thought focuses on self-regulation, which "can be summed up as filial piety and fraternal deference" (Secter, 1998: 92). The idea of balance is best summarized below by Confucius, in doctrine of the mean, (Legge, 2013: 2-4):

> *While there are no stirring of pleasure, anger sorrow or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of Equilibrium. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensures what may be called the state of Harmony. This Equilibrium is the great root of which grow all the human actings in the world, and this Harmony is the universal path which they should all pursue…. Let the states of equilibrium and harmony exist in perfection and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth and all things will be nourished and flourish...Chung-ni sa "The superior man embodies the course of the mean; the mean man acts contrary to the course of the mean… The Master sa, "Perfect is the virtue which is according to the Mean! Rare have they long been among the people, who could practice it… the superior man cultivates a friendly harmony, without being weak. – he stands erect in the middle without inclining to either se. – How firm is he in his energy*

2.3.2 Balance in Western Philosophy

Western philosophy has contributed greatly to the idea of balance. In approaching this idea both modern western ethical theories and early western moral thinking will be explored. Unlike eastern theories, western theories seem to stem from a need to address the moral atmosphere at hand and create moral responses based on that. Theories are often revived to rebalance people's view(s), and there is definitely a difference in general approach. With that being said, the concern for individual autonomy has led many western countries to strive to develop the best systems for people regardless of their background.

This individual focus allowed for a massive influx of moral outlooks to be presented and those which found standing with the moral mood of society were "selected". Some extreme ones (although still embraced by some today) faded away. What is important, though, is that some of these transcended the mere moral mood of the time because they struck some deeper cord, not just with some particular desires or interest, but something more general about our nature. Some of these theories, which are among the most prominent include: Kantian ethics, Aristotelian virtue ethics and utilitarianism. I hope to show that thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Aristotle, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham had the impact that they did because in developing their ethical thoughts and standpoints, which although rigid in certain aspects, aimed towards some conception of balance or a balanced moral response to ethical dilemmas.

In addition to some clear theoretical instances of the notion of balance, the best way to extract the conception of balance from western ethical theories is to look at how they argue for and against certain controversial issues. The theories above all aim, in some way, to create a happy virtuous autonomous agent. These conceptions come to life as we try to consolidate our intuition on right and wrong with what the theory seems to suggest. As new issues arise, these theories must reconsider their theoretical groundwork in hopes to adapt to the issues. What needs to be acknowledged for a start is that ethical theories in Europe and in large parts of the western world have led to a significant amount of development and the rise in universal human rights in the past 500 years. They have also encouraged the respect for the use of individual power, mixed with cultures and ideas leading to an innovative, diverse and multicultural way to solving complex ethical dilemmas. Western philosophies focus on an end state instead of a symbol or metaphysical force. This end state is described either in terms of a prosperous or happy life or in the language of an autonomous life where every human being is treated with respect and dignity.

Aristotelian Virtue – Golden Mean (Virtue)

A good place to start historically with a conception of balance is the golden mean which is both well-known and widespread in the work of Aristotle. What is not well known is the fact that Theano "the beautiful wife and formed student of Pythagoras…[in] one of her treatises contained the principle of the "golden mean" celebrated as a major contribution of Greek thought to the evolution of social philosophy' (Osen, 1975: 16-17). Additionally, various ideas resembling this appear in various places in early Greek philosophy such as the idea of disproportionality as opposed to symmetry in the works of Plato.

Aristotle, however, is seen to have defined the concept of the golden mean as stressing the importance of moderation. This idea is discussed in detail in his Nicomachean Ethics. The three most relevant constructs are: 1) The idea that one who is in equilibrium is a healthy person 2) Each individual should find the mean which is relative to them and 3) When both extremes are vices, then the virtue is the intermediate (Aristotle, nd). For example, it is commonly held that modesty is good, however, when taken in excess it results in bashfulness and when shortcoming it results in shamelessness (Caseldine, 2011: xiv,164-183). Hence, a vice can be the defect or excess of a certain virtue or value. This is not to suggest that there are not cases where both of the above would be the right moral response. What it does encourage, is a balanced response to a specific situation. It also implies a sense that typically speaking those extremes should be rarely used as they are rarely needed in response to situations. Rather a person should "seek the mean and choose it; not the absolute mean but the relative one" (Browne, 1889: 46). Therefore, the mean is situation-specific. This balanced response is discovered through our intuition, experience and use of both analytical and holistic thinking tools, and simply practical wisdom. However, virtue theories seem to stress that virtues seem to be part of who we are. It is something that makes us up (uniquely so).

This type of ethics prevails when guiding interpersonal ethics with regard to human interaction, relationships and day to day activities. Although it is common to see virtue rhetoric used by governments and even armies, it is hard to conceive of a real scenario where an army (as a whole) is being honest or a government as trustworthy. This does not mean that the individuals within such systems might possess these virtues. However, with that being said, Aristotle seemed to hold that this idea surpassed virtues (with regard to his idea of a golden mean). According to Victoria Lyesenko in (Stepanjanc, 2007: 203-204):

> *Both [Aristotle and Buddha] understood the mean as something more complex and more intricate than an equal distance from opposite ends, an arithmetical mean or a mechanical equilibrium. They presented the mean regarding human beings as a state*

> *(condition) which is never given a priori, established spontaneously, or found by pure chance, but on the contrary is the subject of a constantly renewable creative search…. Aristotle argues that one can detect the mean "in everything continuous and divisible" if "there is excess and deficiency" …" for motion is continuous and action is motion. In other words, the mean is characteristic of something continuous, existing in the form of arithmetical progression (from deficiency to excess, as well as of something dynamic, changeable and complex. In ethics, it is a virtue; in a syllogism – a middle term; in a state… a point of stable equilibrium is balancing between "excess: and deficiency"*

A prominent reviver of virtue ethics in our time is Rosalind Hursthouse. Hursthouse defines three prominent aspects (based on Greek principles) which are necessary for modern virtue theory and also compliment the above. The first principle is the principle of excellent or virtue (arête in Greek). Hursthouse (2013:3) describes virtue as "something that goes all the way down". Virtues are not superficial and must manifest themselves in all our actions, emotions, choices, values and even lifestyle decisions (Hursthouse, 2013:3). With that being said, it is still possible in Hursthouse's account to be "honest to a fault" (Hursthouse, 2013:6). This dilemma is resolved by the second principle which states that virtues need some form of practical wisdom to be balanced (*phronesis* in Greek). For this principle Hursthouse considers a child whom we describe as courageous. If we review the meaning of courage, (which can be described as the ability to face fear or to show strength in face of danger) it becomes clear that acting based on this virtue without wisdom would result in recklessness while a lack of it would be cowardice (Hursthouse, 2013:6) Thus, children will possess a number of natural virtues, "a proto version of full virtue awaiting perfection," and that is why they are more likely to act with good intentions but ultimately make a wrong decision or mess up (Hursthouse, 2013:6-7). Hence, these virtues seem to have an inherent ability to evolve and adapt until balanced within ourselves and the situation. Here we must ask ourselves to what end goal? Or what is the state that we are aiming to achieve?

The end goal is described in the third principle which essentially states that virtue-based theory finds its base on what causes happiness, autonomy, well-being or flourishing for all human beings (*eudaimonia* in Greek). However, unlike hedonism, this concept maintains the idea that there is a 'true' or 'real' happiness, "the sort of happiness worth seeking or having" (Hursthouse, 2013:9). Hursthouse also states that this principle of *eudaimonia* is linked directly to what is considered a virtue (Hursthouse, 2013:10). That is why we might find that "virtue ethicists claim that a human life devoted to physical pleasure or the acquisition of wealth is not *eudaimonia*, but a wasted life" (Hursthouse, 2013:10).

Kantian – Categorical Imperative (Deontological)

Another well-known and well discussed western ethical view is that of Immanuel Kant. Kantian ethics is centered on deontology and encourages action in accordance with the categorical imperative. The methods and reasoning in Kantian ethics imply some form of reciprocal nature between rights and duties (obligations). Although Kant believed in one ultimate moral norm, he explained this ultimate moral norm in many ways (in order for it to be interpreted and understood). Sullivan (1994: 25) listed the three most common formulations of the categorical imperative as (1) The Formula for Autonomy, (2) The Formula of Respect of the Dignity of Persons and (3) The Formula of Legislation for a Moral Community. Bowie (2008: 4) elaborates on each of the formulation and the principles associated with them: (1) "Act only on maxims which you can will to be universal laws of nature"; (2)" Always treat the humanity in a person as an end, and never as a means merely." (3) "So act as if you were a member of an idea kingdom of ends in which you were both subject and sovereign at the same time". Although slightly harder to tease out, we can see that this view promotes a balance between being the subject and sovereign. The balance here can be found in the fact that we have to consider ourselves as both lawmakers and law followers, acting towards others as we believe they should act towards us and even growing our moral autonomy within a societal framework but paying special attention to our own circumstances and needs.

The idea of balance in Kantian thinking is brought about when dealing with the issue of reciprocity between rights and duties. In fact, several Kantian thinkers have truly gone out of their way to restructure or redefine the theory (mainly the definition of autonomy, human being, rights…etc.) in order to ensure that Kantian thinking leads to the correct moral judgement. Although the starting point is definitely different than consequentialism, it is also clear that Kantian thinking always has a limit to what can be 'explored' as an option (morally speaking) and consequently is often criticized for allowing too little (in contrast with consequentialism which might allow too much in order to maintain balance and in the process create unmanageable consequences). However, supporters of Kant will often argue that allowing too little is often the best route because otherwise we risk losing a part of our rights and humanity. In consequentialist terms the long term consequences would be better even if seemingly the short term ones are not attractive. Let us look at some examples on how this plays out.

Thomas Hill's (1992) book *Dignity and Practical Reason in Kant's Moral Theory* discusses amongst many things how Kantian thinking might treat the problem of terrorism. Hill (1992: 201) describes terrorist-hostage situations which will most likely involve the killing/death of someone (which is part of the challenge faced by Kantian thinking since killing is against Kantian morality

because it is clearly against formulations of the categorical imperative). Hill (1992: 196) does state that "terrorists, of course, often claim that their ends are morally worthy and the means are morally justified in the context. Some of these claims deserve a serious hearing, and even the more outrageous claims can post a challenge that moral philosophers should not ignore". In a sense, what he is saying is the people who might end up committing terrorist acts might be doing so because of their rights being taken away to the point where it is an only (extreme) option, but this might require very complex moral reasoning. Hill, though, only focuses on cases where terrorists "immorally threaten the lives of innocent hostages" (Hill, 1992: 197). The two main questions, as he puts it, are "can the categorical imperative, in some form, be sensibly maintained as an inflexible principle in the face of extreme cases?" and "if one admits intuitively reasonable exception to the more specific principle about killing (lying, promise keeping…etc.) commonly associated with Kantian morality, in what sense can these still be maintained as principles without abandoning the basic Kantian point of view?". These questions introduce what is relevant to this study. What seems to be emerging here is the view that either, Kantian thinking is simply too strict to allow us to deal with any extreme case, or we have to accept a refined approach that perhaps focuses on reconstructing traditional ideas without abandoning the spirit.

Hill (1992: 201) focuses on reconstructing Kant's principle of humanity instead of the categorical imperative because he finds it more promising. What is interesting in his reasoning is the difference he draws between the life of the innocent hostage and the terrorist. The first part of his argument explores in detail what the meaning of 'humanity' 'dignity' and 'ends' mean both in Kant's writings and in our modern time. The reason he does this, one may think, is because if we want to use the standard approach, we would be putting ourselves in a self-inflicted moral catastrophe. The traditional response is simply unbalanced and fails to consider the complexity of forces at work. Thus we have to ask: can something that 'compensates for its loss justify its sacrifice" and "can dignity be exchanged for more dignity?" (Hill, 1992: 203,204). Hill (1992: 204-206) acknowledges here that even Kant was reasonable enough to realize that some of these cases require different logic. Kant himself showed this way of thinking in his writings about war, capital punishment and other similar topics. However, perhaps there is a deeper reason that is seen by Kantians.

Hill (1992:217) states "in some circumstances it is morally permissible to kill terrorists and endanger innocent hostages". One of the problems with this scenario is that it violates a core principle which is treating a person as a means to some end; thus it contravenes the dignity principle. As Hill (1992:220) mentions that in order for this to be a "justified" killing, the person

would have to sincerely and truthfully choose to kill another human being without viewing him/her as a mere end; which as we can imagine is an impossible attitude to have while performing such an action. Thus in short, such a policy would be rejected even if it does involve saving others, and by doing so, it does not permit enough which distinguishes it from consequentialism (Hill, 1992:218). However, what if this was done secretly and had a stringent process for giving the order and was done once? Hill (1992:219) maintains that such a scenario would still be unacceptable under Kantian thinking, but for different reasons. This directly contravenes the Kantian idea of "openly acknowledged and scrupulously administered". If "any" exceptions are to be justified by the legislative procedure, then, they must be justified as overt aspects of a general public policy, not as secret, one-time deviations" (Hill, 1992:219-220).

The idea of forcing the state to commit a lesser evil to avoid the greater evil is not acceptable because it can in a sense allow terrorists to force the state to do the evil work for them and will be misused by state legislators and others to satisfy their own agendas (Hill, 1992:217-219). As a result, although there might be room for thought within Kantian thinking for increasing the risk of saving innocent hostages, or using deadly force against terrorists, it is completely unacceptable to intentionally take the life of an innocent human being even when the terrorist has put it in risk, because then the state would also be the one committing evil (Hill, 1992:220-221).

One can only ask why we would go to such length to place limits on what can and cannot be done. Well, it is because in many senses Kantians view this as a slippery slope which takes them further and further from their end goal. Similar to the thinking in virtue ethics there is also an end state which Kantians aspire to -- a kingdom of ends. A kingdom of ends, as Kant puts it, is a state where everyone is also happy, autonomous and respects the dignity of others. So even if it is painful to do so, a Kantian must look beyond and maintain his actions in accordance with the categorical imperative (and its formulations), not because he wants to see an evil taking place, but because certain actions/rules/exceptions might lead to tragic ends.

Kantian thinking in this type of instance provides a very valuable insight and needs to be considered when constructing arguments. The value here is shown that taking extreme actions might not actually solve the problem and that the mistreatment of the innocent individuals actually counts against us. This, however, also shows that Kantian thinking questions the right of the terrorist for life and does not find any problem with taking his life due to his direct threat on the individuals and the implicit rejection of reason and the categorical imperative. There is also no direct contraction towards our duty towards the hostages (unless we directly take their life, consequently treating them as mere means which violates the categorical imperative and

inadvertently give the terrorists what they want). What we can notice here, however, is a clear balance between duties and rights. The immoral and unjust terrorist rejected his right when he got involved in such an activity and thus our duty towards him diminishes (as we would like to think duties should diminish towards those who take similar action including ourselves). As for the victims it is clear that our insistence on avoiding situations that could affect them hard are strongly motivated by this feeling of duty towards keeping them safe as they were merely the unfortunate victims of another person treating them as mere means. However, there are 'terrorist' (as alluded to at the start of Hills essay) which this logic does not apply to because of the nature of their demands/threat.

This is also shown clearly with the example of a Nazi officer asking the owner of a house about the whereabouts of his victim. We can immediately sense that even Kant himself would not accept such a ridiculous request, and his moral reasoning would be to refrain from telling the truth (Varden, 2010: 403-405). There are those who might label this as lying but it does not change the fact that, on a certain level, this individual does not believe that the Nazi officer has the right to know and thus, we have no duty to tell him. They can even argue that provocation by him is treating them as a mere means and thus, they have even more reason to reject his request (Varden, 2010: 415-417). Thus, to give him information is unbalanced and to withhold is balanced with the categorical imperative because of a balance between rights and duties. Even if in most cases one choses to be the better person, and search for some deeper right that a person deserves solely due to the fact of him being a human being, there is a point where one will start to question if the opposing party is acting in a humane way (questioning his intention and duty) after all, and if he deserves this imposed right. It would seem that accepting a right to be assigned to you inherently comes with a natural duty. Rejecting the duty by default removes the right (or it would be unbalanced). However, it would seem that what Kantian thinkers are really trying to say is that in virtually all cases, some rights are irremovable because they are assigned to us by being alive and capable of improving one another. Therefore, the 'flawed' agent has a duty on us to improve him and care for him. Rejecting that is a mistake on our part, not his, and we would naturally deal with the consequences.

Utilitarianism – Peak Utility/Utility Maximization (Consequentialism)

Lastly, we look to Utilitarianism for answers (a form of consequentialism which focuses on maximizing utility). Although only introduced in the 17th century, Utilitarianism has drawn massive attention. Driver (2005: 34-35) describes Utilitarianism as a theory that "holds that the right action maximizes the good". Darwall (2008: 26-27) on the other hand refers to different examples which describe Utilitarianism as focused more on increasing happiness and

minimizing pain. However, as a whole, the theory focuses on increasing utility although there are many interpretations of what that means. Utilitarianism is a species of consequentialism, where consequentialism is focused on the consequences (good and bad) of actions/events and can be described as much more encompassing. Darwall (2003: 26-27) describes three features which distinguish utilitarianism: (1) Utilitarians are benefit consequentialists; (2) Utilitarians hold that non-moral value can be calculated by summing benefit across all affected parties; (3) Utilitarians believe that moral rightness or goodness of character traits is that which produces the greatest overall value.

It is debatable whether Utilitarians, or consequentialists for that matter, believe in a final end state (peak utility) of things since a continuous strive towards the absolute best response is inherent in the ethical arguments of these theories. Rawls (Sher, 2012: 264) argues that this end state might be when one can split "net balance of satisfaction summed over all the individuals belonging to it". Thus, in a sense, there is a belief that taking the resources and potential actions available into consideration, there is a set of actions which would lead to the best end result. Interestingly, Utilitarian arguments rarely (if ever) aim to maximize the local. For example, it is never about ensuring a person has peak pleasure in a moment mainly because 1) all future moments of pleasure will end up being short of this moment and thus might even cause the person more pain in the long run and 2) the search for more pleasuring things might lead to the person to take pleasure from others. In addition to this, utilitarian arguments inherently recognize that recognizing pain is required to recognize pleasure. What is required is finding an acceptable amount of pleasure for a minimal pleasure since absolute pleasure is often deemed impractical. It can also be indistinguishable from pain if the difference between the two is unknown.

2.4 Metaphysical Nature of Balance

The descriptive/moral/normative notions of balance all seem to hold a key to something bigger: a metaphysical idea of nature and balance. Many argue that the descriptive conceptions are so powerful, because they contain elements from our human nature or the nature of things around us. Thus, it cannot be wrong if it is part of our nature and it is true irrespective of our application. For example, it may be argued that 'the just world' conception still holds even in the case of misapplication; someone can argue that in a world where people choose to be ignorant and surrender their moral responsibility or questioning ability, it is only balanced and natural for them to be punished by this 'just world' in a way that nature or universal justice sees fit. Advocates of this way of thinking may bring countless examples of karma or a metaphysical force finding its way back to the oppressor, powerful people meeting a gruesome end or living a life of

unhappiness due to their interfering with divine justice (thus justice is preserved). Some may also argue that beings that do not think strategically enough to realize that an "eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind"[13] should be left to suffer the consequences of creating revenge cycles instead of evolving from such behavior. Ethically, this means if we keep acting unethically to resolve unethical problems, then we might all become blind to see the ethical path, and we would also be left to suffer the consequences of doing so. By stating the above, I am not trying to argue for or against these positions, I am merely making the claim that one could take a position that appeals to something metaphysical about human nature, nature of ethics or the nature of things.

We definitely know very well that the world around us abides by a certain nature. Various sciences describe and formulate rules to describe this nature. Often as well, this nature is based on an idea that everything must balance in some way or another, whether it is a mathematical formula or flow of heat. Nature, as alluded to in the introduction, also seems to have preference for cyclical behavior around some or other mean (which is often determined by hundreds of forces). Some believe, although in much more complex form, this applies to living creatures and human beings too. Our interactions with nature, one another and all things around us can definitely be extracted into forces, consequences and side effects. Some might even argue that beliefs can be analyzed in this way as well (because often they might lead to action).

The idea that humans abide by a certain 'nature' is not new and has been described in various ways. However, the theory of natural law can be described as a prominent one that has attracted the most attention. The belief is not unchallenged, as many people would argue that due to the fact that humans have a choice, they are able to influence and impact our 'nature' and the nature around us. This debate would definitely shed light on many issues, but one somewhat uncontroversial point we can take from it (combined with our historical record) is that human beings possess the ability to gain knowledge, interpret the nature around us and change the balance of power (whether through our own action or through receiving the natural law that is given by a metaphysical entity).

Another somewhat uncontroversial point is that we live on earth, and part of our nature requires us to live and want some form of continuity on this earth. This has allowed us to become a very powerful force and in many cases overcome once perceived greater forces and create a new order of balance. In order to amplify our abilities we have built systems to increase our complexity that focused on collective learning (Green, 2014). These systems manifest themselves as political, theological, social and even ethical. Upon building these systems we

[13] http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5810891.Mahatma_Gandhi

discovered inherent properties which arose from certain combinations of elements. However, as we learnt more about these systems we found that we often fail to consider the whole picture, misevaluating consequences (scale of our actions) and in many cases overextend by focusing too much on a certain goal instead of a balance of goals, such as focusing solely on profit in business or resources without considering the environment. Gunderson and Holling (2002: XXII) explain:

> *Simple prescriptions, based on bad or insufficient theory, are attractive because they seem to replace inherent uncertainty with the spurious certainty of ideology, precise numbers or actions. The theories implicit in these examples ignore multi-stable states. They ignore the possibility that the slow erosion of key controlling processes can abruptly flip an ecosystem or economy into a different state that might be effectively irreversible.*

The potential truth this holds to ethical interactions as well should not be dismissed so easily. On the one hand, we are very capable of producing systems that suit our perceived nature (which includes ideology, religion etc.) and balance our needs. On the other hand, the same systems can have a false view about our nature and the nature of nature itself which leads us to cause massive destruction, pain and negative consequences. It may be argued here that even if historically deemed irrelevant, (due to lack of scale or awareness) virtually all of our actions and beliefs today have ethical repercussions, and we are largely aware of this. From the simple purchase of a product from company A to the turning on a light switch; each action adds up with the actions of others to form a powerful ethical force.

If we are to be truly ‘ethical’, then we need to discover this nature and understand it. Whether it is in the form of duties, consequences or virtues, we cannot escape that our life requires effort (in the same way that natural systems require energy). Effort put into thinking, developing virtues, identifying our rights and duties in certain situations and taking action. Perhaps such a nature can only be explored when we zoom out to a macro-scale. This is echoed by Sagan and McCurdy (1995) in their famous quote about the Earth, our Pale Blue Dot, and human interaction throughout history:

> *The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam. The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot.*

> *Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds. Our posturing, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. The Earth is the only world known so far to harbour life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate. Visit, yes. Settle, not yet. Like it or not, for the moment the Earth is where we make our stand. It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.*

2.5 Commonalities and Differences in Ethical Theories Re the Idea of Balance

Thus far I have focused on showing that a very powerful and engrained idea exists in our descriptive, moral, normative and metaphysical reasoning. One thing people tend to forget is that there are thousands of ethical theories that were thought up (even found some backing at certain stages) but did not last (partially due to their failure to find a place to thrive and largely because they did not answer to people's needs). Most surviving ethical outlooks must have something in common that must be appreciated. If we reject extremism, then it would seem we are searching for balance. Ethics definitely still has the role of finding what can be counted as extreme and balance in response to issues (which is the difficult task that this section hopes to debunk), but there is definitely a dialogue aspect between different cultures/people who need to understand that other cultures that have survived also aim for the same search for balance. Thus, this balance might have manifested differently in different cultures due to historical, social, geographical or other reasons but this is what allows it to be pluralistic in approach but single in goal. What I hope to show in this section is that the theories that I examined in section 2 implicitly or explicitly share the following points:

1) Have an end state which is believed to be dynamic and focuses on a human being's true happiness (appeal to his nature).
2) Appeal to a cyclical balance focused on a metaphysical force guiding us to this end state (not end point).
3) Stem from different starting points but all aim to reach this end state from there.

4) Implicitly recognize the inevitability of pluralism and in fact speak of the massive negative effects of rejecting it (even if they maintain that their starting point will yield the 'true' answer).
5) Focus on our moral responsibility being balanced with our ability/knowledge but does not limit it to what it is now, it requires growth and effort.

As a side point, I hope to show how sub sects of those broad theories will often fail to gain the momentum they require (without external pressure) or hope to achieve, because more often than not, they have rejected one of the pillars above. Often, we might even find the term extremist or strict added as a prefix.

End State in Theories and Pluralism

In the theories discussed above (as well as in most religions and ideologies) the end state is relatively clear. In fact, in many ways once stated it seems intuitive (even if difficult to reach). It is vital to note that none of the theories (at least in my research) refer to an endpoint (which both mathematically and philosophically means an absolute end). Rather, it is a state of existence which is in sync, balanced, responsive and happy and therefore presumed ethical. Starting with the western theories, we find that Aristotle's idea of an end state is *eudemonia* (a state of human flourishing and happiness), Kant has the famous Kingdom of Ends (a state of moral autonomy and respect which causes happiness) and finally, in utilitarian thinking (although somewhat loose) is the idea of a net balance of happiness split amongst everyone (which would result in a state of 'peak utility' that causes everyone to share equally in happiness).

In eastern theories, Taoism has the idea of Wu-Wei (a state so close to balance and true harmony that you act without acting – resulting in true meaning/happiness), Buddhism has the idea of the middle way (a true balance between this life (indulgence) and the afterlife (strictness) which leads to a more meaningful and happy human experience), and Islam has the concept of the Sirat al Mostaqeem (a path of light [once reached] allows the believer to see meaning in Allah's wisdom and be truly happy). However, what I want to argue is that these end states are synonymous. Let us first start by assuming that these end states are not the same. One might argue that differences in perceptions on what happiness, harmony and autonomy are would lead to different perceptions of the end state.

This presents two major problems: (1) It means that only one of these states is correct and thus everyone must converge to it and (2) minute differences do not mean convergence. The first point is problematic because if we believe it then what we are arguing is that there is a narrow view which is correct and all opposing views must be converted or modified somehow. To begin with, this is not practical and will not happen considering the varied nature of people. Secondly, by forcing people into it we, are violating their rights, creating negative consequences due to the potential clashes and utilizing the worst of vices that show intolerance and ignorance. Also, one may only ask here: What is the point about having a narrow view of this world? What if that view turns out to be wrong? One may worry that any narrow view will not lead to more ethical action as commonly promoted. Whether we like to admit it or not, diversity challenges us (especially ethical diversity). We cannot always understand some points of view at first. With time and dialogue, we seem to grow our understanding and perhaps even respect them (even if we choose to maintain our own belief).

The theories discussed do not aim to lead their followers to their own demise, or promote a miserable end state, and they definitely do not see their followers as being enslaved in any way for us to have true grounds to oppose them. More often than not, when we make attacks against them, it is because we have a perception that one of the above factors is happening. Rather, the theories all seem to be promoting something about balance in our nature as human beings in order to have autonomy and happiness. As long as they are doing so and do not have a clearly extreme or unreasonable view of happiness, then perhaps they are looking at the same end state but with a slightly narrower angle. It is then our duty to hear them out and light their path when we can. In fact, visiting a look at the original texts, we find that the theories promote a true search and dialogue (not imposing) for this end state in order to avoid being misled.

Coffee beans planted in 100 different locations with healthy conditions (balanced with its needs to flourish) will grow into hundreds of different blends that reflect the nature they were exposed to. Some of these flavors may please or displease others, but at the end of the day, despite the different names given to the blends, they are all still coffee. Hence, the ideal state will be presumed to be the same, and it would seem that the agreed on features are: autonomy/harmony, happiness/flourishing and mutuality/balance. Those term dualities, although somewhat different, hold very similar connotation.

Cyclical Force of Balance and Starting Points

In the theories discussed above, there is also a metaphysical force which is meant to guide us towards the ideal action. More often than not (even in sub sects), it is believed that we still have the will to choose or oppose the action. This force is sometimes seen as wielded by a supreme being and sometimes seen as a natural force. Starting with eastern theories, we find Islam has the prominent idea of Allah's (God's) will and grace being the guiding force. Buddhism and Hinduism have an impersonal force displayed as karma (for some sub sects there are Gods who also act as wielders and guides), and Taoists believe in the force of the Tao. Western theories are a lot harder to pin down because this force often depends on religious or other philosophical views. However, in many ways, it can be said that western theories view nature as this force. Utilitarians use empirical premises to support their arguments which are merely an exhibited and written form of the force of nature. Kantians use as a source our rational nature; this can be referred to as the force of our human nature. The same can be said for Aristotle's virtue in that it also often stems from an idea of our nature to develop virtues.

It is definitely not an easy task to consolidate or identify if those forces mean or recommend the same thing. It is probably possible with some very complex philosophizing. However, it will suffice to say that they are linked in one key factor: they are perceived by us and that is what prompts our action. Since these theories promote the idea of free will, we have a choice in deciding to act on the basis of their prescriptions or against them. In theory, at least being guided by them continuously will lead us to the ideal state. This does not mean acting in the same way each time or similar to others, but rather acting in a balanced way each time that truly suits our point of departure. As I alluded to above, if the ideal states are somewhat similar and suffer from minor perspective problems, then it would seem the ideal actions would share the same problem.

When someone does something clearly contravening logic and ethics in the name of this ideal state and claims that the metaphysical force led him to do so, we need to recognize that he is the one with the wrong idea. Various unethical political groups use religious rhetoric to get more support even when they are misapplying what their religion has to say about the matter. The Islamic state (ISIS) uses various Islamic terminologies to support their actions but we have grown to realize that they may be mistaken. This will be discussed further in section 4. However, I must highlight here that the ideal action is very often silent and personal. It is done for the person himself, and the more it is shared and promoted, the more it loses meaning.

This is best summarized by Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib: "He who busies himself with things other than improvement of his own self becomes perplexed in darkness and entangled in ruin. His evil spirits immerse him deep in vices and make his bad actions seem handsome" [14]. Interestingly, this is something that the reviewed theories seem to converge on because they value some form of modesty. Utilitarians might even go as far as to say that since it was a duty all along (to donate or do some ethical action), gloating or any mention is actually wrong because it reduces the positive consequences of doing the action silently (out of our personal belief rather than in hopes to gloat). Abdussalam Guseinov in (Stepanjanc, 2007: 33-40) elaborates on the two sections just discussed and provides a basis for a succinct summary:

> *The idea of absolute morality is linked with a special function of moral motives in human behavior. Moral motives are not ranked on a part with pragmatic considerations based on the individual's natural wants, his social status, life circumstances, etc. Moral motives belong to a secondary level. Pragmatic considerations are quite self-sufficient to understand why a person commits a certain act… the function of moral motives can be more concretized by comparing it to the quality control department in production. As this department checks the compliance of finished goods with the generally accepted specification….it follows that absolute morality acquires subjectivity only in one's mind and in subjunctive modality; it reveals its absolute categorical imperative only in regard to the individual in whose mind it exists. Absolute morality is not what an individual can prescribe or even advise to another person, for it is what one prescribes to oneself to become moral… it should be admitted that appeals to absolute morality encountered in actual practice of social life and the attempts to speak in its name, as a rule (with rare exceptions calling for a special study), prove to be a dubious demagoguery. But the idea of absolute morality can hardly be blamed for it. More likely, it is quite the reverse. Bertrand Russell… when asked "Would you agree at least that some actions are immoral", Russell replied: "I wouldn't use this word" …The recognition of absolute morality inevitably implies that any moral judgement owing primarily to their depiction in concrete linguistic terms, leaving aside all other aspects are relative. An absolute value by definition can neither be described nor claimed or invoked by anybody. Those speaking and doing something in the name of absolute morality fail to do what they are preaching… [Thus] it is assumed that good deeds should be done incognito, in privacy from others and oneself. A good deed loses its ethical radiance when they start to shout about it… here we face an apparent paradox: goodness is a category of human practice [that] should actively assert itself and be visible but at the same time it ought to be invisible… This paradox is resolved [when we consider] that a negative action is an act unrealized by virtue of a conscious decision for the reason of being ethically inadmissible.*

[14] http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/ali_ibn_abi_talib.html

Section 3: Balance Construct

The aim of this section is to show how each of the normative ethical theories in the West approach ethical problems and inherently why it takes its approach to be the best. Combined with elements from the section preceding this one, a model is built to show how typical moral responses align with absolute morality. Virtue, in typically all cultures and theories, is often seen as something very close to absolute morality. The reason I'm focusing in this section on ethical theories in the West and not as much on those in the East, is that ethical theory oscillation in search of balance (clearly adopted by the people of that culture as a core belief) is more obvious in the former than the latter. For example, with ethical theories in the West when a particular ethical approach, say utilitarianism is either unbalanced in relation to a given problem at hand, or that we do not possess the theoretical and mental frameworks to approach such problem using such theory, we may generally move on to deontological thinking to set rules, rights and duties.

3.1 Inherent Approach in Consequentialism, Deontology and Virtue Ethics

Consequentialist Approach

Let us consider consequentialism first. Some can argue that it was the start of moral reasoning (for survival perhaps), but what is certain is that it definitely gained popularity in the face of complex issues in the past two decades where other theories failed to deal with the profound complexity. It also seems to be better able to account for collective moral thinking. In the broadest sense consequentialism states that "Of all the things a person might do at any given moment, the morally right action is the one with the best overall consequences. (If there is no one best action because several actions are tied for best consequences, then of course any of those several actions would be right)" (Haines, 2015). Thus, our evaluation of morality must also be tied to consequences. Consequentialist theories are definitely not controversy-free, but they are a prominent form of moral argument. However, this has led consequentialism to split into various sub-theories that aim to provide their own methods of evaluating consequences by creating a monistic value to aspire to (or work towards) by limiting the scope of thought or by specifying whom to consider. Perhaps the reason for this subdivision stems from a poor understanding of the consequences of our actions. Some are often thought of as extreme (such as hedonism), and some are thought of as more balanced as well as hold many potential answers (such as utilitarianism). What is relevant to this study, however, is the seemingly hidden intrinsic value of balance in the logic of consequentialist arguments. If we look at most consequentialist arguments across time we find 3 approaches to evaluating consequences:

1) Start with extremes looking inward to find the best action/consequence.
2) Start with the most standard (perceived balanced) response and expand outward.
3) Start at any point (or point which suits the evaluator) and expand area of consideration in all directions in search of the best answer.

Ideally, all 3 approaches should end up at the same point if given enough time and empirical information to assess consequences. This is also somewhat inherent in the theory. In a sense this admits two things: A) There is an action which is so perfect, it addresses all immediate and future consequences and truly benefits all B) Different starting points will naturally take different times/resource utilization to reach this point. An example is like starting at different points on a mountain, taking different paths but with the goal still being to reach the peak. However, ideal conditions are not always possible and if a textbook of consequences of everything existed then there would be no need for moral thinking. With limited resources consequentialist theories can only get so far and by the time one has to act, one might have to accept that the point which he reached (through his moral reasoning) is the best he can think of and thus he should act this way. There is nothing wrong with this approach, I am merely pointing out that the answer is dependent on 1) the resources available (information, experience, thought, time and otherwise) and 2) the starting point. In fact, most consequentialist theories have, for various reasons, often limited the amount of consequences one can account for and be liable for but there is a sense of doing as much as possible in consequentialist theories. This highlights three core features of the proposed idea of balance (which seem to exist in consequentialism thus far):

1) There exists an ideal action which is a perfect balanced ethical response to any moral dilemma (from the idea that you maximize until a maxim is reached).
2) Finding this ideal action requires an initial starting point and oscillation around it is natural until the proper ethical response is found (which requires resources).

In consequentialism more specifically, this can be described as the ideal point where doing more/less than this point or failing to consider/considering too many things would actually lead to more long term negative consequences. One aspect most admirable in consequentialism is that it recognizes that this point changes with time and is faster to respond to (given appropriate thought and resources). “It is important [for] people [to] be free to make decisions for themselves, even poor decisions, because that is the only way that people develop strength of character and constant experimentation is the only way humanity learns about the various possibilities of life [especially morally]” (Haines, 2015).

However, as critics have mentioned, it is also problematic at times because it can be "inhuman and immoral. When someone asks you a question, you should not stop to calculate the consequences before deciding whether to answer truthfully. If you decide by looking to the consequences, you are not really an honest person" (Haines, 2015). But one can only wonder, for example, what happens when, time over time, an agent is not given enough resources and thought to learn right from wrong consequences… to truly delve into the idea of all possible options and isolate personal interest. Unfortunately, there are people willing to drop nuclear bombs because the math adds up.

Deontological Approach

Deontology, although different from consequentialism, still takes into account consequences. The difference, though, is that deontology acknowledges that consequences are not the only things that count. However, deontology still falls within the theory of right action. Alexander and Moore (2015) note that "deontological theories judge the morality of choices by criteria different from the states of affairs those choices bring about. The most familiar forms of deontology, and also the forms presenting the greatest contrast to consequentialism, hold that some choices cannot be justified by their effects—that no matter how morally good their consequences, some choices are morally forbidden". Why? Well, in short, because of growing knowledge, experience and thought. For example, centuries of killing show only negative results of killing therefore there has to be something linked to the action itself that leads us to make a rule against it. In the stream of this essay, deontology (in a sense) is simply the ability to see patterns in consequentialist actions and formulate them into rights, duties and rules as a precedent. If we look at most deontological argument, we find that the main points of difference with consequentialism are the following:

1) Instead of starting with extremes, start with well-known starting points of your rights and duties or rules and imperatives in some cases.
2) When expanding thought into the 'unknown', do so by utilizing the above starting points as a basis of your thought (which does not reject consequentialist considerations but can severely limits how much say they have in the final argument).
3) Rules, rights and duties will clarify over time (and might even change position) in response to understanding of the imperative/absolute state.

It is commonly stated that due to these limitations, deontology is slower in providing the required balanced answer. On the other hand, a deontological answer always attempts to be more deeply rooted, and it is not viewed as a quick fix which will only lead to a series of future

negative consequences. With regard to proposed idea of balance in this essay deontology adds the following:

1) There definitely still exists an ideal action which is a perfect balanced ethical response to any moral dilemma and leads to the perceived end state.
2) Finding this ideal action requires us to start with a given starting point and oscillate within bounds, because oscillating too far would lead or move us into consequentialist/unaccounted grounds.
3) These starting points are often the accumulation of years of experience and thought of a specific culture/group/theory (this can unfortunately lead to some stagnation/lack of progressiveness).

Virtue Ethics Approach

Lastly, we are left with virtue ethics, which branches off from deontology and consequentialist due to the belief in right character versus right action. Virtues (as we know them) date back thousands of years, but there is definitely an element of evolution apparent in virtue. Moral growth in virtue ethics is seen as the developing of more sensitive, balanced and moderate internal states: virtues. Different cultures have often developed a liking of certain virtues over others due to historical and environmental conditions (often based on real stories and circumstances which lead to the development of these virtues in these ways). In short, virtue ethics may "be identified as the one that emphasizes the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to the approach" (Hursthouse, 2013: 1). The approach will be right if the virtue is right. (Hursthouse 2013:21) argues that "modern virtue ethics has always emphasized the importance of moral education, not as the inculcation of rules but as the training of character".

Virtues are remarkably flexible (sometimes even criticized for being ambiguous) and are not developed easily. They are, in many ways, a product of years of nourishment, trial and error and advance of practical wisdom. It might have been that rules/rights (in their restrictive nature) that allowed us to thrive in an environment which lead to the development of virtues, but once obtained they seem to allow us to look outward into the world of deontology and consequentialist that formed them whilst still maintaining our starting point of character and inner virtue. They form the next step in moral evolution. In many ways this is actually similar to the formation of stars (and the plasma that makes them up). To find the creation of a star, one must search the vast open space of nothingness (immoral or less than perfectly moral answer) for some gases which are infused together and hold potential (consequentialist), immediately following that, certain mathematical formulae (rules) about the interaction of particles must be possible to condense the molecules further into something connected and denser (individuals

as ends towards a common end state). Finally, once ignited and running, some scientists argue that the energy it requires to sustain the plasma in the star (the virtue) is a fraction (estimated at 10%) of the energy that was required to start it and can start producing light that shines towards others. If we look at most virtue based theories, we find the main points of difference with the theory of right action as follows:

1) One must start within himself (character and intuition) instead of action.
2) The right virtues and moral characteristics must then guide this action.
3) When expanding thought into the 'unknown' one must utilize practical wisdom to choose the most balanced approach between two possible extremes of action.
4) Special sensitivity is given to issues that create moral residue.

With regard to proposed idea of balance in this essay, virtue theory seems to add the following:

1) Virtue (unlike consequentialism and deontology) is not a starting point but a state in itself which is arguably in close proximity to an absolute state of morality (perhaps this is why virtues are defined as something from within, not bound by action).
2) Once this state is reached it is much harder to degenerate it due to the enlightening nature of the effect it creates in human beings.
3) The position of virtue (near absolute morality) allows it to be looking outward instead of inward.

Virtue ethics is seen as self-regulatory because it focuses less on specifying guidelines due to the implicit understanding that actions brought about by a virtuous agent (character) are naturally conducted with an ethical intention. Even when they turn out unethical or cause a moral dilemma, there is an understanding that this will be corrected by that virtuous agent by the display of another virtue. Although it is very difficult to envisage this same logic being applied to collectives, one cannot deny the positive role virtuous agents can play within collectives. Perhaps what is lacking is a proper theoretical framework.

The ideas from sections 3.1 and 3.2 are summarized in the model below:

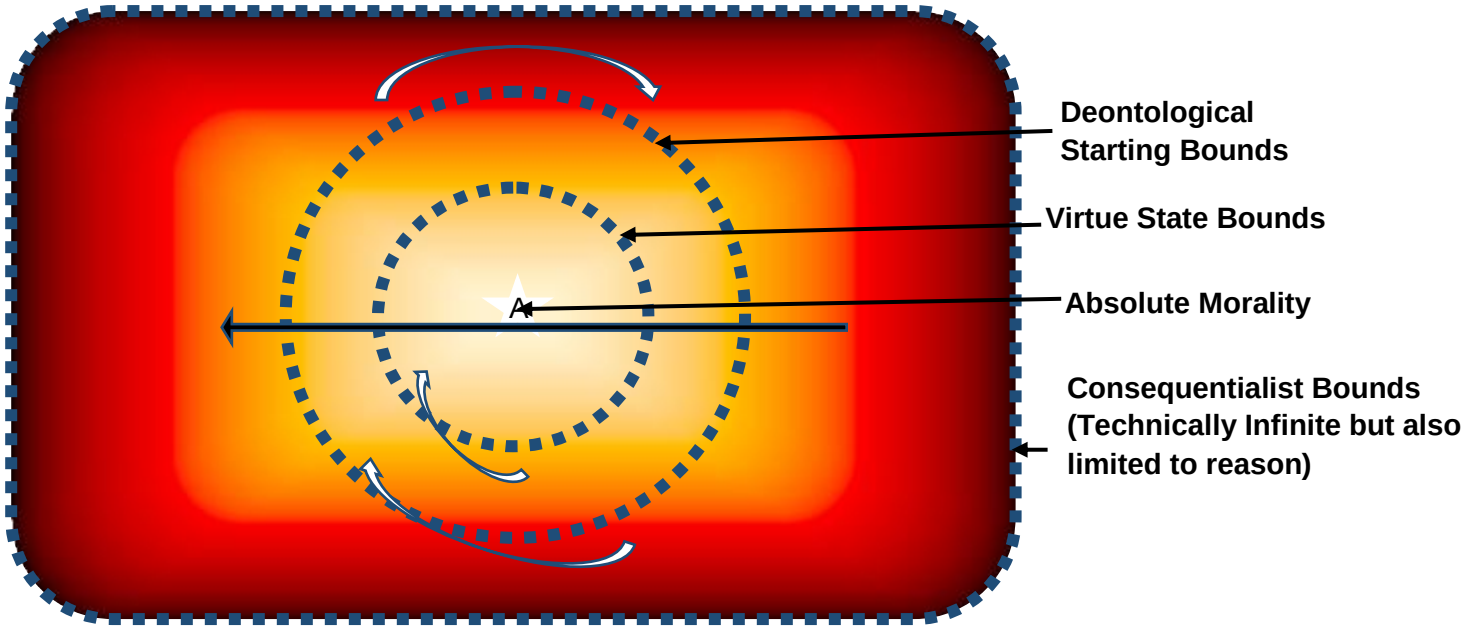


Figure 3: Summary model of apparent idea of balance around absolute morality (Own work)

The only way to maintain a position about a central point (create an end state instead of an endpoint) is through oscillation or cyclical motion. However, regardless of the starting point, the aim is to oscillate closer and closer to absolute morality. Herein, are found bounds for what is considered acceptable (depending on different theories). Problems may arise anywhere on the moral landscape visualized above. The more extreme the problem (morally), then predictably the further away it is from absolute morality. Naturally, we find virtue and deontological ethics incapable of matching consequentialist thinking there, however, it would seem that the aim is to find the most virtuous way of solving the problem for good (looking inward). New problems will naturally start out with consequentialist (due to a lack of theory) but as time passes, our moral reasoning grows to encompass it. The best way to reach a stable balanced response (consistent with absolute morality) is through going in cycles around it and approaching it with each cycle (a movement much like that of planets) instead of going straight to it but then going in opposite direction (hopes for an end point). Moral reasoning will never stop.

3.3 Importance of Pluralism in Approach

In order to not become argumentatively obsolete, reconstructions of traditional ethical theories have been done in the past. My first point, however, is that often the reasoning itself deviates from what might be considered a specific “argumentative style” that is isolated or insulated from other theories and approaches. The point is that these reconstructions do mix together other theories and approaches in their normative recommendations. This suggests then that (at least to some degree) when faced with morally complex problems that cannot be solved with

traditional arguments and thinking, we have to revise our stance with the aim of addressing the actual issue at hand. Why not accept that others have practical and useful tools and ways of thinking that we can use to solve our moral dilemmas? And why not set up intermediary frameworks for doing so? This in essence is the thinking of pluralism. We can maintain that we have different starting points for our moral problems, but as we approach the issues of complexity we may need to find compromise. This leads to convergence towards a point of balance but ends up leading to a state of balance. Although many values will come into play when addressing issues, it seems that they are a manifestation of a greater value being imposed on this situation: Balance. This common value of balance (if extracted from the differing theories) could be the reason that different approaches can yield acceptable answers, but the combined approaches highlight all current and potential moral failings.

The problem with monistic approaches is that they are similar in saying that all the world's problems can be solved by engineers and engineering knowledge alone. By saying so, we have restricted ourselves to a very limited view of the problem (and ignored the vast range of knowledge that could help us). When we do not end up solving the problem, the most common two approaches are either, to utilize tools from other disciplines while claiming that the engineer's method promoted them all along, or to develop a strange tool which solves the problem but can still be technically claimed as an engineering tool. This approach is filled with vanity, inefficiency and illogicality. The consequences of admitting that we all have approaches which yield a more complete answer are much more sparing. Utilizing this approach treats others as inferior and a means to an end, whereas involving them treats them as ends. Finally, virtually every virtue promotes collaboration, honesty and humanity. This is displayed in a pluralistic approach not a monistic one.

Ibrahim (Stepanjanc, 2007: 281) explains that for Islam: "Plurality in the world is in full accordance with God's will and predestination and no one must try to banish it… pluralism is not damnation. It is not negative, but entirely positive. Diversity is designed not to generate discord but competition in our service for the common good… Pluralism should promote human solidarity, harmony and mutual enrichment of all nations". Abdussalam Guseinov (Stepanjanc, 2007: 37) states that even "[Leo-Tolstoy and Mahatma Ghandi] shared the view that all the religions existing in the world are unified in their fundamental premises, but vary in external manifestations". Virtually all Utilitarians recognize the value of virtues and rules even if they disagree on the starting point. Engstrom (2009: 16) highlights that "although Kant's moral philosophy is often regarded as sharply opposed to ancient ethics, even the most cursory survey reveals that it includes many of the concepts prominent in ancient ethical thought".

Engstrom (2009: 16) discusses that Kant himself in ways did an exposition on virtue and the concept of practical wisdom is very prominent in his writings.

As for value, as I have been arguing, setting a value other than balance with the situation at hand leads to less than ideal states and extremism in some states. Pluralistic values on the other hand, will often end up organizing into some or other hierarchy which further promotes this idea of balance from the start. Lastly, relative values ensure that moral judgements are meaningless and thus ethics has no role. The negative effects of such thinking are clear. Guseinov (Stepanjanc, 2007: 33-40) highlights two other excellent points with regard to this:

> *The idea of absolute morality represents (a) an ideal point of departure, which is by the individual himself [often from his knowledge and immediate culture] for the moral qualification of his behavior… (b) it acquires practical strength through categorical imperatives and relevant negative actions and (c) it is distorted and transformed into its opposite in cases of public appeals to it… There may arise a double: "Is it worthwhile to adhere to the idea of absolute morality; would it not be better since it began to lose its grip, to push it down to free oneself forever from this fatality?" Perhaps, it would be better to do so, if it were possible [an appeal to our nature]. The renouncement of this idea is fraught with elevating any relative value to absolute. This is what we are currently witnessing when certain people and groups present their private positions, goals and interests as absolute ideals, the various parties speak in the name of history, different confessions of faith speak in the name of God, some states and nations assume the right to sit in judgement over others, when material assets came to replace spiritual values, and money turned into an idol for the sake of which are made far greater sacrifices than for all the idols of the past. In my opinion, the idea of absolute morality in its proper understating is not only compatible with cultural, confessional and political pluralism but it serves as an indispensable premise for it.*

3.4 Systems and Balance

Up to this point I have only shown that balance exists and a pluralistic approach is necessary. However, how can a person or system have their balance or their own balanced response evaluated and resolved (especially in relation to complex issues)? Van den Hoven (2010: 67) explains how this is especially problematic in the world of internet and communication technology where "with respect to problematic situations, whether it is at the individual, professional, institutional or societal level, we need to make up our minds and come to a conclusion in the midst of a panoply of considerations". He suggests (2010: 71) that "instead of applying highly abstract traditional theories… it is often more helpful to utilize mid-level normative ethical theories [tools], which are less abstract, more testable and which focus on technology, interaction between people, organizations and institutions". I hope to show in this section that tools typically used by system thinkers can be used and hold the most promise if

one hopes to resolve issues arising from imbalance. One specific tool which I believe might be helpful is the V Models. The V Model combines the considerations of system thinking principles into a practical solution-based approach. These tools are typically used to resolve system problems by decomposing issues until the complexity can be analyzed in parts and then combined until a final system solution is reached. This is all done with transparency in the process, traceability of thoughts and suggestions, accuracy, validity and verifiability. It does not limit the approach and does not base all its decisions on empirical premises. Hence, pluralistic means can be used to resolve the problem at hand and check that the solution we suggested indeed resolved the problem. The V model consists of two phases. The first phase aims to completely decompose the problem into the smallest possible elements that we can deal with.

Ethically speaking, this is identifying all possible morally worthy observations in a specific problem (from all branches of normative theories). In doing so, it creates a tree diagram linking them. Sub-problems might sometimes be decomposed further, while some remain at a higher level due to insufficient knowledge on how to decompose them, or the fact that already at that level they violate a certain right…etc. This can be revisited if an answer is not reached in the first attempt. By doing this, not only do we get a clearer understanding of the problem, but we start to debunk the historical circumstances that led to it as well as the ethical synergies. The second phase aims to find resolutions to the problems by finding resolutions to the sub-problems and integrating them (while checking that the integrated solution is consistent and balanced with the problem). Each step up the ladder requires a validation with the original problem. This is to ensure that negative emergent properties do not threaten the final system from being illogical or unethical. Typical V models look as follows:

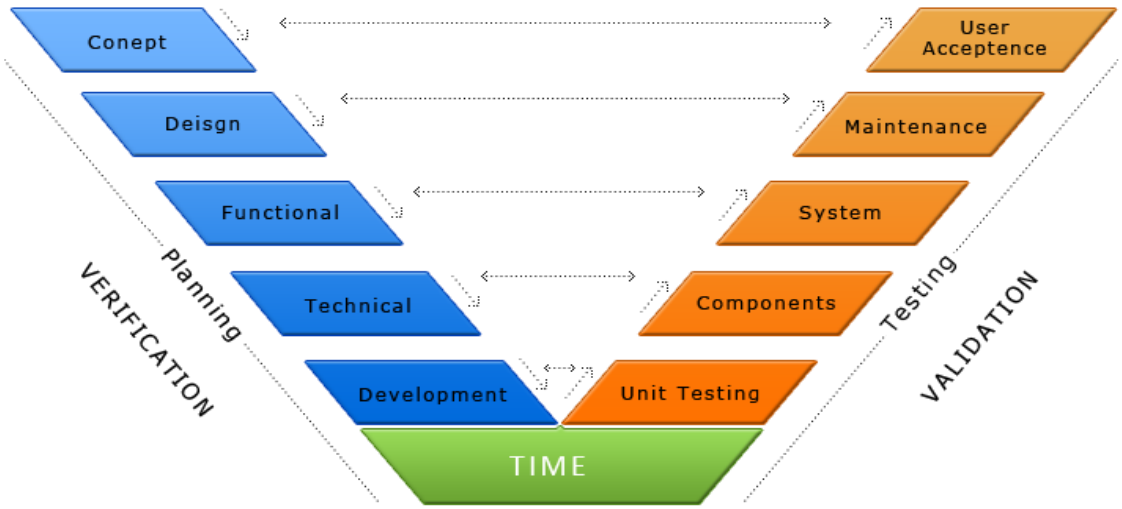


Figure 4: V Model Diagram for System/Software Engineering [15]

[15] http://www.softobiz.com/v-model

What makes this tool worth applying in applied ethics is that it can also be applied initially with pluralist in mind or done in parallel with other approaches (in cases of disagreement) to truly identify where paths diverge (with regards to what is balanced). Even though we naturally know that there is some disagreement, there is also a significant amount of agreement. Utilizing this approach will not only help clarify differing points of view to the reader but will also more easily allow them to change beliefs should they feel a specific way of decomposing the problem answers their need. The aim of this model is to present a way of continuously assessing considerations against the original moral problem and highlighting the shortcomings of singular approaches (since they only deal with the perceived problem).

As it stands it might only be usable by technical people in search of a way to incorporate ethics into design, however, I hope to write more on this in future research and how it synergizes with the idea of balance but the proposed conceptual model looks as follows:

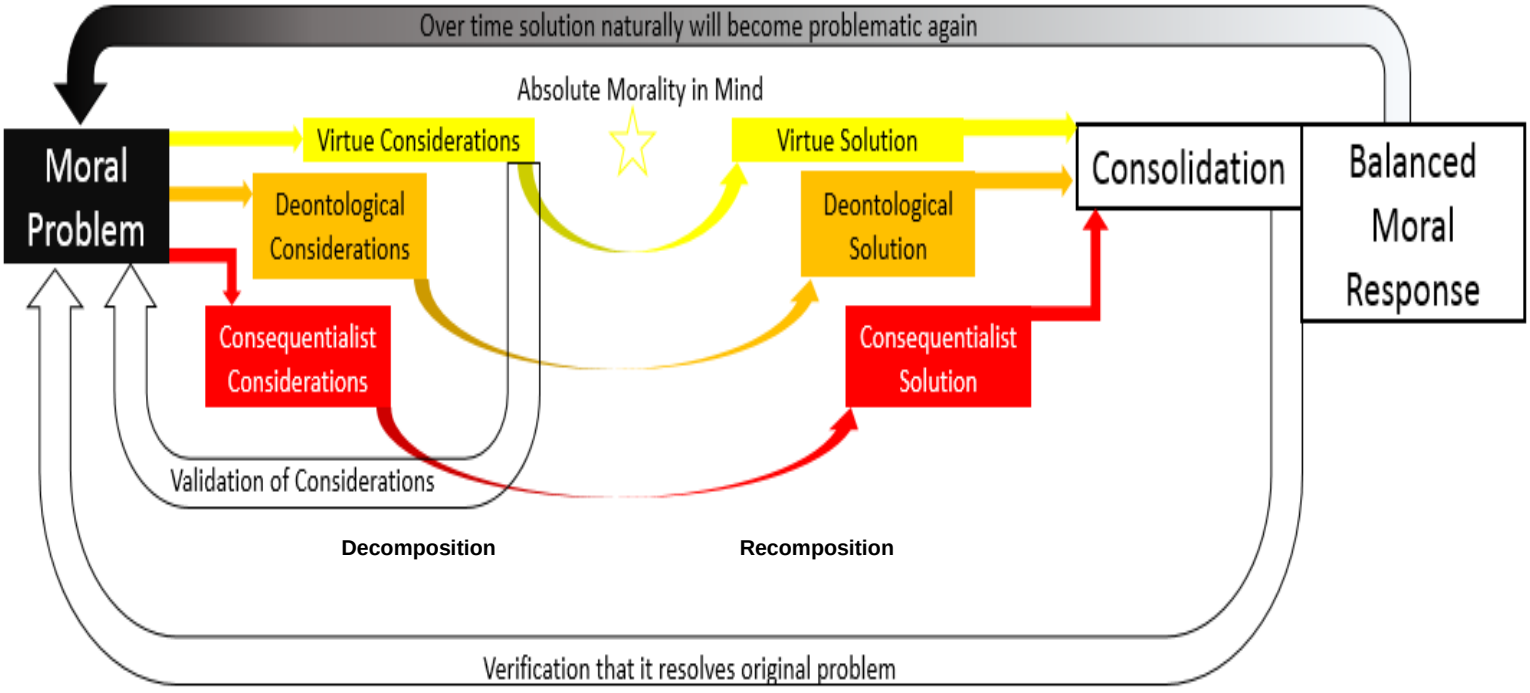


Figure 5: Proposed Ethical V Model (Own Work)

The ethical V model can assist us in identifying our own moral failings and contradictions. The benefit is that it can address issues of individuals and collectives (and individuals within collectives). The moral issues that this model hopes to address vary and will include complex organizational and personal dilemmas by breaking them down into interacting elements and considerations. It has been used in many other fields to look at issues holistically, strategically and sustainably and the actions that resolve them. However, decomposition and recomposition

can be quite difficult. This is where system thinking might be handy. System thinking, in essence, is made up of 3 basic principles. These are described in Sparrius (2014) as:

The emergence/synergy principle (also referred to as 1+1=3): "The performance of a system is not equal to the sum of the performance of its elements. This inequality is created by synergy which is caused by interaction" (Sparrius, 2014: 19). This is why an aircraft can fly but none of its parts alone can fly or a jigsaw puzzle picture is not credited to individual pieces (Sparrius, 2014: 19). This can be applicable to ethics since agents often do not use a single belief/theory in either generating their belief structure or dealing with practical problems. Ethically speaking, moral catastrophes are made up of elements where sometimes the lack of one could have prevented the catastrophe. Not only this, but this principle appears to suggest that balanced moral responses that lead to long term moral successes emerge from various theories rather than from one theory (through dialogue, collaborative efforts and neutralization of extremes). This is perhaps due to the fact that the moral response which inherits properties from various theories is more broadly accepted, more applicable and easier to understand for people with differing starting points. In addition to this, collectives (represented by nations and organizations) inherit different moral duties and properties from the sum of their agents. Thus, they also gain different rights and require different methods for analysis (which is apparent in moral engagements in business ethics and ethics and international affairs). Therefore, different combinations of beliefs can either create constructive or destructive actions. The synergy principle also stresses the importance of reflective equilibrium of ethical theories, and it addresses the plurality in an interesting way in that it provides a better way of understanding interaction between consequentialist, deontological and virtue based theories. Synergy between unethical interactions and beliefs can only realize more complex unethical issues. With regards to the idea of balance, this seems to suggest quite simply that even if things appear balanced on the local level, one must ensure that the effects of synergy between considerations is also accounted for. Emergent hypocrisy is perhaps the worst of these synergetic effects.

The stream principle: "Problems experienced downstream are symptoms of neglect upstream. Upstream problems can only be solved upstream" and "The ability to influence a system's characteristics diminishes very rapidly as the system proceeds from one stage of its life cycle to the next" (Sparrius, 2014: 1). Misunderstood cultures/virtues, miscalculated consequences and unethical duties can all create massively negative downstream consequences if not addressed in time. Thus, the lifecycle of action or character must be understood for ethical evaluation. Continuous review and rejection of dogmatic situations is necessary, but it also implies that sticking to one's beliefs might be necessary through some times. When a specific culture or

nation loses the ability to educate its youth on ethics, the downstream effects are immensely and vastly negative. When we postpone or outsource our moral decision making, the resulting ethical effects downstream will also be largely negative. One cannot think of an ethical action without thinking of long term consequences. This might be displayed in practical wisdom or empirical premises, but it definitely needs to have a consideration of history. With regards to balance, this means that humanity cannot be selfish and needs to ensure that balance is sustainable for everyone both now and in the future. For example, it is possible to meet our every desire in our lifetime and trash our planet. However, a short-lived "balance" would only benefit us temporarily (most likely only a few of us too). In fact, it is often said that if we continue to neglect our responsibility, things might become so out of balance that there is no turning back.

The hierarchy principle: "All systems exist in a multi-layer hierarchy, each more complex than the one below. Each layer in this hierarchy, say layer [N], is a system in its own right. Entities from the next-lower layer (layer [N + 1]) are its constituent elements. Entities from the next-higher layer (layer [N – 1]) form its environment. Each entity at any layer is both a system, an element of a system and part of an environment" (Sparrius, 2014: 19). The applicable point from this principle is that each item in the hierarchy is both a system on its own containing many elements and a component in a larger system. This is consistent with ethical discourse which has a similar principle in that it makes many statements which are classified as A, B or C level beliefs or statements. Virtue, from the theory available, is still largely regarded as a personal thing. Although it definitely aims, and perhaps could, step up the hierarchy to provide clear theory to guide institutions for the moment it is a human guiding concept. That is not to say that virtuous goals cannot be at a higher level of the hierarchy and promoting them in the name of organizations does not help; it simply acknowledges that it is still up to the individuals in that organization to live up to that higher level goal. This is perhaps why (especially in business and international ethics) consequentialist and deontological thinking take preference. They simply have a better methodology for acknowledging and dealing with the higher-level complexity. When we review the descriptive notions of balance; this principle comes to life. It is clear that on the particle level, balance seems quite deterministic and almost always in perfect equilibrium. However, as systems and considerations become more complex, balance becomes more of an oscillating state at higher levels. Additionally, it becomes much harder to achieve the perfect equilibrium and requires more reflection due to the synergy of imbalances and complexity of interacting forces.

Section 4: Balance & Issues in Applied Ethics

The findings thus far bring us to an interesting conclusion which can be used in issues of applied ethics. If balance is what leads to ethical action, then imbalance is the cause of unethical action. It is clear from the previous sections that balance does not mean stagnation or maintaining a status quo. Rather, it is a stable dynamic shift between growth and decline. Not only this, but if we take the system thinking principles into consideration, the factor that caused our growth (if unethical) can lead to imbalance downstream. Additionally, one needs to worry of the synergetic effects of forces involved, because within the systems, the net effect might be different due to emerging properties developed at that level.

4.1 Balance, Wealth and the Environment

One of the key facts that should raise flags everywhere is the new Oxfam report which states that almost half of the world's wealth is owned by 1% of the population (Walker, 2015). This state is actually quite unnatural, and I hope to show how it is the cause of many of our moral failings. Naturally, a higher temperature (higher state of wealth) would neutralize overtime with a lower temperature (lower state of wealth). Yet, higher temperature can remain high if energy is utilized to keep it this way and thereby increasing the deviation. Although some might argue that this state was created due to capitalism, what I hope to show is that the problem lies with how we have been conditioned to measure ourselves: consumption and growth (wanting more) instead of being balanced with our human and economic needs. The extremely wealthy have deployed various mechanisms to benefit from this. Some are even driven to ensure that neutralization and fair distribution of wealth does not happen.

The ultimate economic measure is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In a nutshell it measures how much a country can produce (in countries like the USA this is regardless of where that production comes from). Admittedly, the GDP would not be so problematic if the growth is ethical, healthy and sustainable (this would actually make it quite balanced). The problem is that a number like the GDP has imbedded in it the activities of war (weapon companies), treatment of disease (pharmaceutical companies) and destruction of the ecosystem (resource companies) and it simultaneously encourages us to grow it (Joseph, 2011). These activities also seem to almost always account for the largest part of the GPD. Also, since we are measured by the ability to consume instead of quality, lower quality or purposefully disposable goods flood the market. When this happens the synergy between the former and latter can have devastating effects on the environment and humans (Joseph, 2011). The problem is that the GDP increases growth but at the cost of healthy human behavior and many social failings (Joseph, 2011). It is the mentality of "more, more, more" even when it causes more war, devastation, hunger and

death (Joseph, 2011). It also neglects that more is achieved by taking the resources of those who need them and giving them to those who do not - simply for consumption. This is because it is based on the assumption that it is natural to keep growing instead of being balanced with our ability to grow (which consequently is more aligned with our nature as humans). Human beings grow tremendously in some phases of their development, but reach a stage of stability. At that stage cells are simply replaced to ensure sustainability and healthiness. The growth in human being is natural, and more often than not, growth beyond the point of stability can be cancerous. The interesting thing in this is that we subconsciously know this and countless studies show it, and yet we still choose the wrong path. "The great Way is easy, yet people prefer the side paths. Be aware when things are out of balance" – Lao Tzu[16].

Although people often speak of a balance of supply and demand here, and the fact that if people did not want it they would not buy it and it would fade away. I do not believe it is quite as simple as that. Unfortunately, some companies reach a state of power which allows them to shift the scales of balance. For example, using aggressive advertising to create more demand than would be natural, changing government regulation to make them more powerful and promoting inequality and unethical behavior by convincing viewers they are worth more by consuming more (even when they do not need the product or service). The view of growth and consumption also neglects the fact that companies have to have a balance between supply and demand with the environment. At that moment humanity is truly undermining earth's ability to supply what we need by demanding too much. Unfortunately, we do not even need this demand. It is simply based on an illusion that we need to consume more to be relevant. This mentality alone causes massive unethical effects on the 3rd world people, the environment and us.

4.2 Balance, Disasters and Charity

It is interesting to see countless studies showing a link between environmental imbalances and disasters. This effect has doubled since it affects the ecosystem's (where people live) ability to neutralize as well as affects the population's ability to respond to it themselves. In many cases, the storm or disaster itself is not the cause of most of the deaths. Rather, it is the lack of resources to help the people find shelter and food after the disaster due to an imbalance in wealth, opportunity and infrastructure. Peter Singer shows this in his famous piece titled "Famine, Affluence and Morality," where he presented an argument as a response to major natural disasters. His piece is directed towards a mixed audience and he aims to make an inclusive argument. In the article he discussed that people should give to charities because it is

[16] http://www.goodreads.com/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=Lao+Tzu+balance&search_type=quotes

their moral duty to do so and that the fact that they are abroad and not impacted by the problem does not morally matter (Singer, 1972: 229-230). It is important to truly recognize that massive tragedies that occurred far away would still find a way to affect us in the long run. Thus, preventing these negative consequences by small sacrifices is absolutely necessary especially since we should be aware that we are a "global village" (Singer, 1972: 233). Individuals had to go into a mental assessment of how much they could give based on their awareness of the problem, ability to donate (without compromising something of value) and other practical considerations like how much had already been raised [Forces] (Singer, 1972: 234-235, 241). In short, the response has to be proportional or in balance with the need, or we would create an imbalance which would lead to a future reverse action. The interesting thing is that throughout his argument he continuously stressed that the situation is dynamic. This makes our response different at each point in time of a certain moral dilemma or crisis. The crisis might require bigger donations at the beginning but less towards the end. In addition to this, we could not merely dismiss what we know about the dilemma or wait until it was resolved magically. Finally, in his arguments, Singer never specified strict financial donations. It could have been volunteering, spreading the word or anything that was a small sacrifice compared to the major dilemma. This shows balance thinking because of an inherent belief discussed earlier in this essay, namely that responses should not be a static reaction, but rather a dynamic situation dependent response (balanced with the person's ability).

It would seem at first that the target audience is middle class families with an acceptable amount of disposable income, but when we review consequentialist reasoning and balance reasoning we find things to be different. The world at this point in time is extremely unbalanced in terms of wealth distribution. Using the same argument as above (sacrificing something of comprisable worth) we can easily see how consequentialism is inherently against extremist cases similar to the one described in 4.1. In a situation where a middle class family gives, they might run into bad days which put them in debt and perhaps even into poverty. On the other hand, millionaires and billionaires who have money stored in a bank will probably not be affected in any way by large donations. They can probably sustain a luxurious and fulfilling life even if they donate 95% of their wealth in some cases.

This problem of extreme wealth is at the end of the day a business problem. Businesses and wealthy people have become very powerful (in some cases more than governments), and a balanced approach to resolving the problem needs to be taken. This extreme state of wealth was reached due to decades of documented underpayment, undervaluation, schemes, loopholes, tax evasions and plain fraud. The main problem seems to be that years of the rich

getting richer in first world countries and the poor getting poorer has led to societies not being able to fund for themselves, or build the appropriate infrastructure to deal with the type of crisis discussed by Peter Singer. Their well-being and resources are being leached away for consumption. Countless thinkers show how the path that leads us here was systematic. Annie Leonard explains the complex socio-environmental-economics in the "Story of Stuff" (2007):

> *We are currently undermining the planets very ability for people to live here… in the United States, we have less than 4% of our original forests left… but the problem is [the US] is using more than our share [of resources]. We have 5% of the world's population but use more than 30% of the world's resources and 30% of its waste… and my country's [the US] response to this limitation is simply to go take somebody else's!... This is a third world country… another word for our stuff that somehow got on someone else's land…. And what about the people who live here... well according to these guys they don't own these resources [although those people maintained the balance of those ecosystems and know them best]…even if they've been living there for generations… and it's because they don't buy a lot of stuff… thus you don't have value… next [their resources] move to production where they utilize energy to mix toxic chemicals with the natural resources to make toxic products… there are over 100 000 synthetic chemicals…only a few have been tested for health effects and none for synergistic health impact… the people who bear the biggest effect of these toxic chemicals are the workers many of whom are women of reproductive age [who unfortunately have no other option]… the problem is the erosion of local environments and economies here [in 3rd world countries] ensures a constant supply of people who no other option… these people go into cities, many to live in slums, looking for work, no matter how toxic…. It's not just resources that are wasted in such systems, its entire communities… [but this produces a lot of factories and raises costs if run in the US] so what do we do… move the dirty factories overseas and pollute someone else's land [which results in externalized cost which means that cost you pay in a country like the US simply does not account for the resources and cost of that item, it's simply a competitive price given to create more of the GDP] …. that's how I realized, I didn't pay for the radio. So, who did pay? Well. These [native 3rd world] people paid with the loss of their natural resource base. These [factory] people paid with the loss of their clean air [and livelihood] … The primary way that we are measured is by consuming not by being mothers, teachers, farmers but consumers [which makes one man very rich] … and this was designed*

Perhaps the answers to many of these queries lie in an ecocentric ethic. Ecocentric is holistic in nature and ethic does not start from the individual. It takes the community and inanimate things (such as water and stone) as having moral relevance, "since they form part of the 'the land.' The focus here is on whole ecological communities or ecosystems and on emergent properties they may possess…. Integrity and stability are not properties possessed by individual community members but the community *as a whole*" (Pojman, 2016: 18). This links closely with the idea of earth being a organism (Gaia) worthy of evaluation in it of itself in the works of Lovelock which build on ancient Greek ideas as a mother nature figure. Pojman (2016: 262) expands on

Lovelock (1979: 3)'s idea of the holism of the earth by stating as follows: "we are quite good at recognizing (individual) living beings and telling them from nonliving things, yet we cannot properly account for how we do it. It is clear that life involves a higher degree of order and some systematic mean of maintaining it. Life is a matter of a system having reduced entropy – that is, with a high degree of order – maintained by a flow of energy that is passed on in degraded form. This characterization is true for viruses, bacteria, mushrooms, trees, humans."

The extract above seems to echo the worries of Peter Singer mentioned in the preamble. "We are, quite literally, gambling with the future of our planet - for the sake of hamburgers [consumables]" - Peter Singer[17]. If we are aware of this system, its consequences, the types of people who lead it and the fact that rules can be changed to make us benefit it, then it is our responsibility to change it. All of us! This is not something to be dismissed. Not only does this inequality affect individuals within countries, but inequality exists between different countries in the world. Unfortunately though, when the people of a specific country do not blindly accept this enslavement into the idea of more; the media-military complex convinces the citizens of a 1st-world country to support an invasion or systemic economic destruction of a country. Sadly, this complex has become powerful enough to do its own dirty work without societal approval. Countless case studies show how millions of people opposed their countries getting involved in other countries internal issues, yet, through clever branding and media efforts the powerful elite businessmen and politicians got what they want. In the words of Frankie Boyle (2015):

> *We invade their countries and justify it by saying that our way of life is better, then boggle at the idea they might think living here is great. We pay no attention to how our actions in other countries have precipitated this situation. There has to be something wrong with a world where the best employment option for a farmer in sub-Saharan Africa isn't being a farmer in sub-Saharan Africa, but crossing the Mediterranean on a punctured lilo, only to spend days dangling under a lorry so that he can end up selling lollipops in a nightclub toilet. Our indifference is staggering. For a lot of these people, their best chance of survival may be to dress up as a leopard and hope to get Twitter onside. Of course, the true existential threat to us might come from ourselves. If we can look at another human being and categorize them as "illegal", or that chilling American word "alien", then what has become of our own humanity? To support policies that dehumanize others is to dehumanize yourself. I think most people resist that, but are pressed towards it by an increasingly sadistic elite. If you're worried about threats to your way of life, look to the people who are selling your public services out from under you. The people who will destroy this society are already here: printing their own money, printing their own newspapers, and responding to undesirables at the gates by releasing the hounds.*

[17] http://www.goodreads.com/search?q=peter+singer&search[source]

4.3 Balance, Media, War and Terrorism

As a case study for this section, I want to use the rise of terrorism (specifically ISIS) and the military and mainstream media response to it.[18] If we consider the extremes in international affairs as pacifism and unjust war, then the middle ground must be just war theory. However, is the war on terrorism a just war? Is just war a morally balanced response to terrorism? Does it create more balance or imbalance? The war on terrorism is not just a military engagement but seems to be a media engagement. This is the topic I hope to discuss in this section.

At some level, what is discussed in the mainstream media is that the aim of attacking non-state actors (called terrorists) is to bring the conflict or terrorism to an end. Many countries participate in anti-terrorist activities, and yet, one wonders how effective those operations are, especially since some of these engagements seem endless and seem to create more problems than they resolve[19]. One cannot understand why this happens without studying the reasons terrorism grows. My argument revolves around the fact that the current approach used against non-state actors (labelled) is inconsistent with just war theory and often hypocritical when considering synergetic effects. In many cases, the response creates more terrorism and thus creates a self-defeating recipe for disaster. However, this benefits entities and individuals focused on growth at any cost.

One cannot understand ISIS without understanding where its ideology streams from. ISIS follows a very extreme version of Islam (often rejected as Islamic in first place[20-21]) called Wahhabism which even today only represents less than less than 0.5% of the Islamic population worldwide) (Pullat, 2014: 203-204). This ideology is harbored and funded worldwide by Saudi Arabia with estimated global spending on spreading their ideology being placed at over $100 billion[22]. Some allegations of intentionally translating the Quran in a way that favors extremist ideologies have also appeared by various sources. Everything from destroying historical heritage sites[23] to mistreatment of women[24] and even beheadings[25] have existed for

[18] Since there haven't been much academic resources on the subject matter I will be situating my discussion in news articles.
[19] I have previously and to different degree explored some of these ideas in a paper submitted last year (2015) for PHIL 7039: International Affairs. Yet, the core argument is different for section 4.3 and is focused on topic at hand
[20] See for Argument Against Wahhabism: http://www.islamicsupremecouncil.org/understanding-islam/anti-extremism/7-islamic-radicalism-its-wahhabi-roots-and-current-representation.html
[21] See for Argument Against Wahhabism: http://www.ahl-alquran.com/English/show_article.php?main_id=6308
[22] See: http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/last-nights-tv-the-quran-channel-4-banged-up-five-867474.html
[23] See: http://articles.latimes.com/2007/sep/16/news/adfg-mecca16
[24] See: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/09/the-facts-and-a-few-myths-about-saudi-arabia-and-human-rights/

decades in Saudi Arabia (prompted by the history of the ruling family –Al Saud) and seem to appear in the behavior of ISIS (due to following the same ideology).

One doesn't need to look too far back into history to notice that virtually the same scenario has happened before with the fall of the soviet union where "the Reagan administration strongly backed the mujahedeen coalition against its fight against the occupying Soviet forces" (Gerges, 1999: 71) except now it's to ensure Syria falls to ruin. Reagan often even referred to them as freedom fighters (Gerges, 1999: 71) much like the USA, Saudi Arabia and Turkey insist on calling several Al Qaida linked groups 'rebels' bearing in mind their own leadership insisted that they could not find sufficient moderate opposition[26] or could not truly differentiate them from Al-Qaida. One might argue that because rich companies in the United States benefited from this, they never even stopped to think about how they can force Saudi Arabia to reform (because it suited their global ambitions and interests) in the period of 60 years; they are ultimately morally responsible for extremism. Instead they provided them with weapons, financing and political cover both directly and indirectly. This is all while acknowledging that this is opposed to common sense, is completely contradictory to American values and goes against the American population's interests.

One of the principles of just war theory is that a military engagement must have just causes. Power states often use the following points to justify their cause: 1) They claim that it targets their or an allies' innocent population 2) They bring up the age old argument that it would be a form of disgrace for a superpower to sit empty handed in response to such a dilemma 3) They claim the individuals performing acts do not represent a social movement and do not form part of a state (thus, the enemy does not have a just cause and you cannot negotiate with them). However, all three claims seem to fall away when we consider why individuals and groups resort to terroristic activity in the first place. What is often found is that terroristic activities are performed as a response to a major power committing injustice towards a population; the state was powerless to stand up to such a superpower due to potential fears of political or economic sanctions. This leads the group to find other means of retribution. Due to an imbalance in military ability, and since the original injustice was faced by a previously innocent population, their means of retribution often ends up in attacking an innocent population.

[25] See: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-executions-amnesty-international-beheadings-death-sentences-rate-under-king-salman-10470456.html

[26] See: http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-07-07/u-s-training-yields-only-60-syria-rebels-so-far-carter-says

What is even more problematic is that virtually all military engagements of the United States and its allies are deemed just. The results of which are rarely properly disclosed to the viewers because it might affect future public authority. The pretense that these are just wars is also ridiculed because it is clear from the Israeli war against Gaza, the Saudi War of Yemen and the US war on Iraq that the number of civilians' deaths is often 10-15 times more than the death of soldiers from the other side (with virtually no civilian deaths) – contradicting virtually every pillar of the just war theory. What is atrocious is a statement like the ratio declined to 1:17 (44 Israeli soldiers to 761 Gazan civilians).[27] Or claims that the Iraq war yielded over 650 000 deaths (2.5% of the entire Iraqi population) seem to be merely acceptable (requiring no further mention in most western mainstream media) while the death of 20 individuals from the west will be broadcasted for days. This mainstream media imbalance directly and indirectly dehumanizes millions and treats their life with less worth.

This brings us to the second principle of a just war theory — right intentions. In international affairs, it seems that even if the consequences of the actual act of terrorism does not justify involvement, the fact that it affects 'interests' and/or 'image' is sufficient. Firstly, this leads us to ask why The States have so much 'interests' in other people's sovereign land? Also, does this not open up a possibility that anything can be used to justify the actions of superpowers and hide a discrete desire to injure and evident hunger for power by countries with strong militaries? If we accept this way of thinking, then we are suggesting that the rights and intentions of the weak are less important than those of the powerful. It also, in many cases, inherently implies that the value of the innocent lives who will be inevitably affected or ended by military intervention are less important than that of the lives of the state actor. This is clearly imbalanced and completely unacceptable to just war theory. Humanity really needs to ask itself if this approach really yields (or has ever yielded) answers. One needs to consider that civilian population living under non-state controlled areas (terrorists) are not gardens of Eden. In fact, due to various points discussed in 4.1 and 4.2, the education levels can be quite low and access to true freedom limited. Let us start with the assumption that The States are wiser/organized actors who are more aware and capable of handling complex problem (even if they do not actually do this). If this is true, then The States should have learnt that dropping bombs and utilizing mainstream media in this repulsive manner escalates the problem and should have found other means of resolution.

[27] See: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/08/18/how-israel-shifted-risk-from-soldiers-to-gazan-civilians/

Dropping bombs simply gives the reason for the non-state actor to mobilize more people against the state actor. To the simple village person, something in the sky just took out his family and the people he believed were protecting his culture. The fact of who that military jet belongs to and why it was there is not clearly explained to the innocent individual who just lost his family. Strangely, any explanation would be unacceptable if the state considered him as of equal worth as a State's citizen. Thus, naturally this idea that The States have the 'right intention' fades away, and it becomes clear that other agendas might be in play. Individuals around the world are not born terrorists, they are made. Acting in a way that eliminates families and creates questions simple minds cannot find answers to only perpetuate a cycle of ignorant information being fed to them by terrorist organizations and a creation of a terrorist harboring culture (terrorists are also equally to blame morally for utilizing anger and fear for their own immoral agendas). John Ito said that "if we destroy human rights and the rule of law in response to terrorism, they have won"[28]. What humanity is doing in response to terrorism is helping it grow and helping corporate agendas achieve what they want: more weapon sales, more instability, and more power through forced bargains for liberty, etc. There has to be another way to act.
Ironically, the response that the media gives escalates this problem. On the week of the Charlie Hebdo attacks thousands around the world were killed by ISIS, Boko Haram, Taliban and other terrorist organizations (Galloway, 2015). The Charlie Hebdo victims got international media coverage with presidents from many countries participating in rallies. What about the thousands killed around the world on that same day? By the same math they should have received an international march involving every president as highlighted by Trevor Noah (2015) on the *Daily Show*. The issue here is not that we must not be grieved and be angry at all by terrorist attacks, but there is an evident imbalance on how this grief is spread out. An emergent property of acting in this way is the thought that western lives are worth more than those of countries they invade. A point, I may add, which causes further terrorism.

The third principle has to do with legal authority. More often than not military engagements lack legal authority or proper public announcement. Even when they do, they misrepresent facts, fail to convey the real results of the intervention or attribute failures to other factors. The news is unfortunately filled with undisclosed drone bombings, proxy wars and destabilization of regions. How can militaries around the world and their military assets (funded by civilians) not represent their morality? Is this acceptable, especially when individuals are being told that the purpose of the military missions they fund with their money and lives is to create more stability and increase people's rights (which is also strange because it rejects the right of individuals to choose their way of life -or autonomy-? Here it becomes clear that state actors often fail (or seem to ignore)

[28] http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/joichiito206748.html

other means of resolving issues. This problem perhaps started with the idea of "not negotiating with terrorists" which is not problematic until a country labels all enemies or entities which remotely affect its interests as 'terrorists'. The United States is especially known for this since every 'other' is a terrorist in their news, media and films. In fact, a simple review of most movies shows this mentality that according to American mainstream media: South Americans are drug lord terrorists, Africans are child labour terrorists, the Muslim world is filled with jihadi terrorists, Russians are nuclear terrorists and so on.

The fourth principle of just war theory is that of last resort. This principle requires us to ask why serious focus is not placed on other methods. Off the bat, one will think that countries could find ways to cut their funding/resources, eliminate their means of causing harm, trace their weapons, or simply eliminate the fundamental cause of their aggression. ISIS uses 2-3 thousand SUV's, why not find out who they were sold to by using their unique engine numbers? The problem is that the results would unveil the truth behind ISIS and some countries would like this to be hidden. For example, the United States recognizes ISIS as a terrorist organization but purchases oil from Saudi Arabia (knowing it harbors radical Islam). The UK does something similar. When a journalist asked Prime Minister Cameron why he keeps in contact with Saudi even though they lack human rights, his response was: it is because they have an agreement that Saudi Arabia gives them military/secret service information that keeps them safe. How does Saudi Arabia get all of this information? Unfortunately, the mainstream media has been so successful at destroying any sense of logic for a mass of its viewers, that people were truly shocked of the news of the rise of ISIS when in reality it was actually simply a natural progression based on historical actions of the 'leadership' of these two countries. Although the United States claims to be fighting ISIS, one can only wonder why (a) ISIS has managed to grow since the United States got involved; (b) growth of ISIS seems to be related to events undertaken by the United States[29] (dating back to Iraq War); (c) ISIS seems to possess American weapons and expand according to American plans (and when they do not do so, like the ISIS attacks on the Kurds, they are hit hard but when they suit America's interest the media keeps quiet); (d) it is currently speculated that ISIS receives funding and logistical support from key US allies (Saudi Arabia and Turkey) either by selling oil to them or through direct weapons and financial support.

The fifth principle relates to the probability of success. This also seems to go hand in hand with proportionality — the sixth principle of a just war theory. Historically, if we look at the Vietnam War we can see that acting with more force only prompted more force by the other side. More

[29] See: http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/08/how-us-helped-isis-grow-monster-iraq-syria-assad

modern cases show similar effects. Those situations carried on for years. The aggressing party dehumanized the opponent, treated their life of less value and labelled any innocent casualties from the other side as collateral damage. How can such actions increase probability of succeeding at eliminating terrorism? They are designed by nature to increase terrorism. Unfortunately, one tragic effect is that terrorism flourishes in such conditions, and it is never highlighted how much the civilian population suffers from the creation of the terrorists.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the point of this applied ethics discussion viz-a-viz balance, mainstream media war, and terrorism is not to defend terrorists. They are a cancer which must be removed. However, we do not resolve cancer by blowing up the affected area and hoping the cancer does not find root in other areas of the body; rather one must carefully surgically remove it and continuously check that it has not grown elsewhere by taking the proper medication. As Steve Hughes mentions “you cannot have a war on terror… because you are having a war against the consequence of the actions you are involved in [since war creates terror]”[30]. Thus, the real problem, as Sydney J. Harris puts it, is that “terrorism is what we call the violence of the weak and we condemn it; war is what we call the violence of the strong, and we glorify it”[31]. Instead, perhaps we should simply take a stance against violence regardless of who commits it, and maybe then we will not need reasons for a just war. One could summarize that the global elites are unfortunately the only ones benefiting from this state. That is why they desire it to remain as is and have unfortunately formed a strategy to keep it this way. This is no desirable state to the citizens of any of the countries affected or involved. The current approach tackles evil with evil. In the words of Prophet Mohammed "to overcome evil with good is good, to resist evil by evil is evil.”[32]

[30] http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00mmg5z
[31] http://izquotes.com/quote/322341
[32] http://izquotes.com/quote/331233

Section 5: Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Research

Virtually, every theory that is accepted as a belief does so by appealing to the fact that it provides the most balanced response to a situation (which is often linked to the ethical). In some cases, as I showed in section 2, views can be distorted and what is considered or believed to be balanced is not always what is truly balanced. We often hear, for example, that this person is more Kantian than Kant because of his extreme attitude when in reality Kant seems to be quite a balanced person, and an evaluation of all his writings reveal a very mature and comprehensive theory that does not isolate itself from existing approaches. The same can be said for the theories and individuals from Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions and ideologies. Simply dismissing the philosophy will not get us on the same page any time soon. Dialogue, toleration and time hold much more promising avenues. The value of identifying forces and getting the best true balance will lead to the most moral ethical response. This is done while truly acknowledging that we are looking at the same goal: absolute morality and simply oscillating around it. The model developed at the end of section 3.2 (it seems) holds that virtues are, in a sense, the natural progression of years of moral evolution which help us pick up and resolve everyday issues and are especially good at dealing with moral quandaries. For issues that cannot be controlled or addressed with virtue, there would be rules and guidelines regulating human behavior until such a time that our moral evolution gains an understanding of such new issues. Most importantly though “happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony” - Mahatma Gandhi[33]. It is our duty to ensure that this is applied to us individually and the collective systems we create.

The second half of section 3 focused on suggesting a useful approach of the V model which might truly help expand the world of ethics. Perhaps this model is best shown through the applications in section 4 but still requires various finishing touches in order to be relevant, consistent and usable by ethicists. In summary the model aims, in the words of Edgar Morin, not “to reduce [moral] complexity into simplicity, [but] to translate complexity into theory” (Bastardas i Boada, 2015: 2) in order for it to provide useful moral guidance. Various features of the model show promise in this fact. This essay tried to be balanced in both theoretical and practical research. Exploration into the various ideas suggested in this essay might lead to some very interesting and promising research. In addition to this, the practical model might actually hold a new way of dissecting and conceptualizing arguments, perhaps ultimately finding convergence.

[33] http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/5810891.Mahatma_Gandhi

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