

# Online Ethics Education for the Aga Khan Humanities Project

26/10/02

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Do not hurt others with that which hurts yourself

The Buddha (Buddhism)

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you

Mathew 7 v.12 (Christian)

This is the sum of (the Dharma) duty: do nothing unto others which would cause you pain if done to you

Mahabarat, XIII:114 (Hindu)

What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow man. That is the law: all the rest is commentary

Talmud, Shabbat 31a (Jewish)

No one of you is a (true) believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself

Prophet Muhammad (Islam)

That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatever is not good for its own self

Dadistan-i-Dinik 94.5 (Zoroastrian)

Surely it is the maxim of loving-kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you.

Confucius: Analects 15:23 (Confucian)

We should behave to friends as we would wish friends to behave to us.

Aristotle (Greek Philosophy)

All things are our relatives; what we do to everything, we do to ourselves. All is really One.

Black Elk (Native American)

Blessed is he who preferreth his brother before himself

Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, 71 (Bahai)

In Happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self

Mahavira (Jainism)

Don't create enmity with anyone as God is within all

Guru Granth Sahib p.258 (Sikhism)

Tzu-Kung asked: 'Is there one principle upon which one's whole life may proceed?'

The Master replied, 'Is not Reciprocity such a principle? ...what you do not yourself desire, do not put before others.'

Analects of Confucius, Book XV, Chapter XXIII (Legge Translation 1861) (Confucian)

Try your best to treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself, and you will find that this is the shortest way to benevolence.

Mencius VII.A.4 (Confucian)

Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain, and your neighbour's loss as your own loss.

T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien (Taoism)

'In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self.'

Lord Mahavir 24th Tirthankara (Jainism)

A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated.

Sutrakritanga 1.11.33 (Jainism)

'Respect for all life is the foundation'

The Great Law of Peace (Native American)

The sage has no interest of his own, but takes the interests of the people as his own.

He is kind to the kind; he is also kind to the unkind: for Virtue is kind. He is faithful to the faithful; he is also faithful to the unfaithful: for Virtue is faithful.

Tao Teh Ching, Chapter 49 trans. by John C. H. Wu (Taoist)

What thou avoidest suffering thyself seek not to impose on others.

Epictetus: Encheiridion (Stoic Greek Philosopher)

Whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them.

Thomas Hobbes: Leviathan, I (English Philosopher)

To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbour as one's self, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality.

John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism (English Philosopher)

Act as if the maxim of your action was to become through your will a universal law of nature.

Immanuel Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (German Philosopher)

Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters.

Seneca: Epistolae ad Lucilium, Epis. XLVII, 11 (Stoic Greek Philosopher)

Desire nothing for yourself which you do not desire for others.

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza: Ethica, IV (Jewish Dutch Philosopher)

## Introduction

The Aga Khan Humanities Project want to encourage an engagement with **diverse cultures**, including Buddhist, Chinese, Greek, Indian, Ancient Iranian, Islamic, Jewish, Mongol, Russian, Turkic and Zoroastrian<sup>1</sup>.

This engagement is to encourage the use of **critical thinking**. At the same time, the AKHP “will not promote any **one perspective** nor provide instruction in any religion”. Instead, it will employ a **comparative** approach, highlighting pluralism and the differing foundations of civil society in various traditions.

Students will be encouraged to **build bridges** across communal boundaries, to recognise the greatness in other cultures and to make Central Asian culture available to the outside world. The AKHP thus requires students to fulfil an important communicative role.

In this paper I will seek to demonstrate that ethical content implies a particular set of pedagogic strategies, which in turn are best implemented using certain communications technologies. A number of ethical approaches have been surveyed, from traditional and modernist to postmodern ethics and I have attempted to draw out patterns in their goals, content and rationale, resulting in four important dimensions of similarity and difference.

I will discuss the various types of interaction between teachers and students and between peers in an educational environment, whether offline or online. Various educational strategies are aligned to particular ethical approaches and I proceed to make clear the different communications technologies available for implementing these specific educational strategies.

Finally I outline a number of potential, simple scenarios in which ethical approaches, educational interactions and communications technologies are used to achieve particular ethical-educational outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org) 'The Aga Khan Humanities Project' pdf download, 15/9/02

## Goals of an Online Ethics Education Programme

The goals of the AKHP, outlined above, are critical in determining the framework for developing an ethics curriculum, pedagogy and means of communication. Not only are these elements of the framework not pre-determined, they are also intimately related to each other and to the goals of the AKHP.

By way of illustration, consider an ethic with particular content, for example a modernist (possibly Western) approach to ethical decision-making, which rests on a rational consensus of all relevant parties, achieved with the aid of evidence and the logical deliberation of equals. Such an ethic exists in the form of Habermasian Pragmatic Discourse<sup>2</sup>, which although, ironically, is not terribly pragmatic, is often held-up as championing and advancing the Enlightenment political-ethical tradition.

Clearly, such an ethical system will entail, or at least encourage particular pedagogic approaches, particularly in terms of student-teacher and student-student interaction. It would, for example encourage a highly-rational, almost deductive, dialogic, textual-verbal interaction that would seek a consensus and would avoid domination of any kind. This problematizes the traditional teacher-student hierarchy as well as the possible modes of inquiry into ethical issues. Video documentaries for example would not be seen as particularly useful, whereas debates, either face-to-face or online might be seen as promising channels of communication. In short, if a particular pedagogy and means of interaction are chosen irrespective of the ethical content, this in itself may encourage a particular ethical perspective and thus may in turn be taken as an ethical position.

This interdependency raises an important question for any ethics education programme – namely ‘Which Ethics?’ Any answer would need to recognise not only that ethical traditions differ across cultures, but that ethics as a discipline has undergone dramatic changes in meaning, especially recently. So, the question ‘Which Ethics?’ becomes ‘What is Ethics?’ and this, as shown, is not a trivial, definitional question.

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<sup>2</sup> Habermas, 1990, p.197

## What is Ethics?

While this may seem a straightforward question to answer, upon closer inspection we see that what 'ethics' means differs greatly according to particular academic disciplines, human practices and historical contexts.

The difficulty arises when we try to give a standard definition of ethics. For example, we might say that ethics refers to a set of principles of right conduct, or perhaps a theory or system of moral values. However, this can be questioned immediately on at least two fronts.<sup>3</sup>

A more productive approach might be a comparison of ethical systems, rather than a single definition. I am not aware of any readily accessible research in this area, but I shall endeavour to outline ethical systems in terms of end, means and rationale. Note that this is not a classification of ethical systems into categories such as Realism, Intuitionism, Naturalism, Subjectivism, Relativism and Universalism.

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<sup>3</sup> First, it is not clear exactly what we mean by 'right conduct' or even 'moral values'. Are we referring to a type of 'good' and 'bad' that has to include a conception of (metaphysical) evil (as opposed to merely mistaken)? If it does, then we are left with the problem of asking atheists to be ethical even though they don't have a reason to be. If our idea of ethics doesn't include the idea of evil, then how can an ethical 'good' be anything different from an aesthetic 'good' or even an economic 'good' (for the latter, Utilitarians would argue that they are indeed equivalent). Does such a 'good' relate in any way to scientific truth or is it 'merely' an opinion or a preference?

Secondly, it could be argued that what it means to be ethical cannot be formalised in any systematic way and that thus there are no universal principles of right conduct, only historically and culturally contingent modes of approval of particular conduct. Postmodernists in particular favour this argument in their attempt to critique the very foundations of modernist, Enlightenment thought. They recommend instead a broad, largely non-rational engagement with people of different backgrounds and value systems in an attempt to empathise with what they call 'the Other'. Thus, literature, journalism, ethnography and documentaries are particularly important in forming our set of ethical values, our sense of empathy, rather than systematic philosophy. (Of course this approach can be directly contrasted with the Habermasian pragmatic discourse outlined previously).

## A Simple Comparison of Ethical Traditions

The emphasis here is ancient Greek philosophy<sup>4</sup>, but the inclusion of a range of traditions show the model can be applied generally<sup>5</sup>.

Ethical Tradition	Ethical Goal(s)	Ethical Content	Ethical Grounding
Stoic	Happiness	Wisdom, justice, courage & decorum	Reason=God. Unity of all creation. Philosophy as 'medicine' for the soul.
Epicurean	Static Pleasure (as avoidance of pain), rather than Kinetic (e.g. sensual/physical) Pleasure	Prudence, honour & justice	Cosmology without teleology leads to no fear of God, death. Pleasure as the empirically observed natural state of things.
Neoplatonic	Unity with God	Spiritual & ritual purification of intentions and attitudes	Essential goodness of Man. The human soul is Godlike. Innate desire to return to life beyond being and thought.
Socratic/Platonic	<i>Eudaimonia</i> (happiness/success)	<i>Arete</i> (virtue)	Temporary unison of the soul and body. Man's function is to govern his desires, which ensures social justice.
Aristotelian	<i>Eudaimonia</i> (happiness/success)	Intellect	The soul and body united in a

<sup>4</sup> The Hellenistic Philosophers, Vol. 1, Long, A.A., & Sedley, D.N., 1987

<sup>5</sup> A Companion to Ethics, ed. Singer, P., 1993

			complex. Man's function is to possess and develop reason.
Hindu	Order with Cosmos	Ritually embedded obedience, justice & giving of oneself	Dharma, Karma and more generally the Vedic scriptures
Buddhist	Relief from suffering	Conscientiousness, benevolence, restraint	Fourfold Truths and the Eightfold Path.
Islamic	Taqwa, (equilibrium), Also, happiness, justice (philosophical goal) & intimacy with Divine (Sufi goal)	Legal: Sharia (that which is obligatory, recommended, permitted, discouraged and forbidden) Philosophical: Reason and revelation Sufi: Sharia and disciplined purification	Legal: Quran & Sunnah Philosophical: communal 'city' framework and prophet as perfection Sufi: relationship of love
Modernist	Critical Distance	Rational debate based on science	Man as a rational animal. Science as the path to Universal Truth. Nature as deterministic and wholly knowable.
Postmodern	Empathy/solidarity	Literary and textual redescription	Final Values <sup>6</sup> , Incommensurability /asymmetry

<sup>6</sup> Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, Rorty, R., 1989

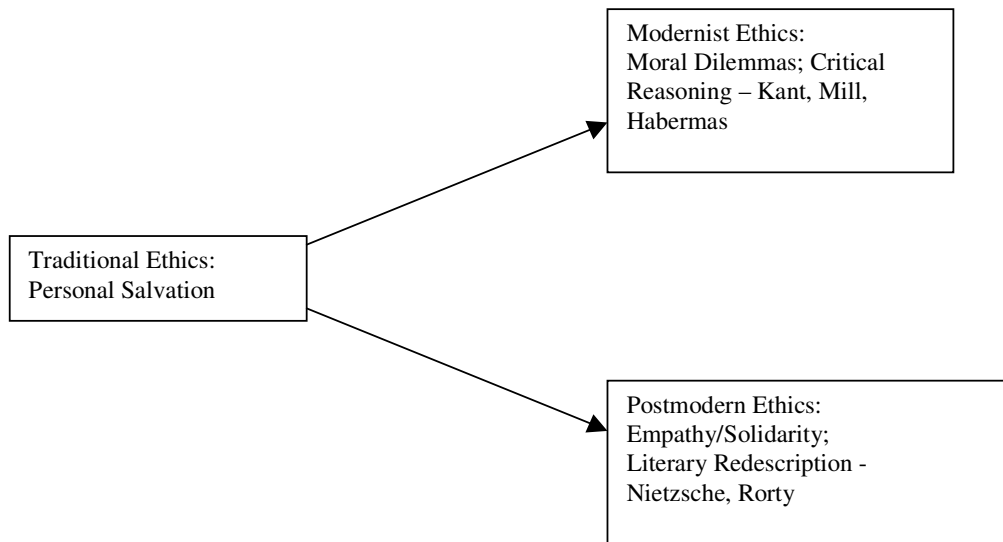
We can see from this simplified overview that some traditions put greater emphasis on certain modes of communication and interaction than others. For instance much of Greek, Modernist and Islamic philosophical ethics emphasises the use of reason and discussion/consensus. Greek ethics for example is largely grounded in a rational approach, it would be much easier to have a rational debate about it's means, ends and justification than Neoplatonism, Hinduism, Buddhism or Sufism, which emphasise an experience of something that is greater than ourselves, beyond thought and language. A traditional instructor-led discussion would be more appropriate here and that is indeed what we find in Buddhist monasteries and Sufi orders. Finally, postmodernism would argue for the ultimate incommensurability of our values; various ethic traditions are not amenable to a rational debate – you either accept a position or you don't. In short, ethical content generally points toward a particular pedagogic approach.

### Some Important Distinctions

It is interesting to note the differences between traditional ethical concerns and more modernist and post-modern goals. Traditional ethics, whether it is Greek, Hindu, Buddhist or Islamic, is primarily concerned with individual development or salvation. Modernist and postmodernist ethics, in comparison, is more concerned with the complexities of human relations with each other and the world around them. This concern with human relations is in turn split into the Modernist concern with moral dilemmas and critical reasoning and the Postmodern concern with empathy/solidarity and textual redescription.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> But why the lack of concern with relationships in traditional ethics? This may be due to the prevailing cultural homogeneity of traditional societies. If everyone subscribed to much the same value system and that system encouraged people to be 'nice' (however vague that prescription was), then there was perhaps little to be worried about. However, with advances in technology and globalisation over the past 150 years, we are increasingly faced with a bewildering array of technical possibilities (nuclear weapons, genetic engineering) and different cultures and sub-cultures (West vs. East, Male vs. Female, Gay vs. Straight, Geek vs. Artist) from which we are forced to choose, (for not choosing is in itself now a choice). Thus the overriding concern with dilemmas (what we can *do* to others – largely a 'calculated' trade-off between legitimate and competing interests) and cross-cultural perception (how we *see*



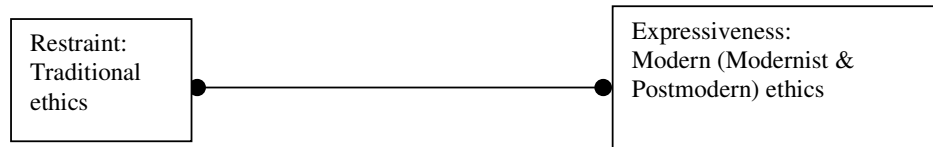
There is another difference between Traditional ethics and Modern (i.e. Modernist and Postmodern) ethics and that is the emphasis of Traditional ethics on personal restraint. We see this in Islamic Taqwa, Greek decorum and prudence, Hindu obedience and giving, Buddhist restraint and Sufi and Neoplatonic disciplined purification. But this concept is lacking in modern ethical conceptions, except insofar as restraint can be mechanically reduced to self-interest.<sup>8</sup> Instead, expressiveness is encouraged as a means of collaborative problem solving.

So, we have distinctions between the Traditional concern with the self and Modern concerns with relations and another distinction between Traditional restraint and Modern 'pleasure-seeking'. I have tried to argue (footnote 7) that these distinctions have arisen largely due to technological and economic changes over the past 150 years or so.

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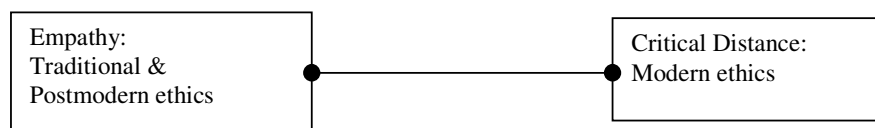
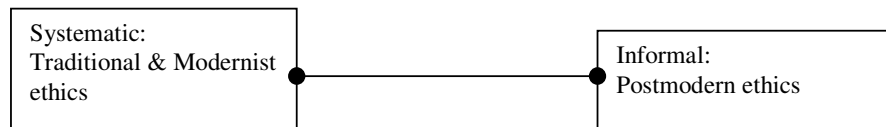
others). And as for personal salvation, that has effectively been marginalized to the realms of self-help books, morning TV talk shows and yoga classes – hardly the prime concern of modern ethics.

<sup>8</sup> This may be due to the economic drive – evident since the Industrial Revolution – to maximise profits and optimise the efficient allocation of resources, which requires authentic market signals achieved by recognising and pursuing one's pleasures and avoiding one's pains. This is of course largely a Utilitarian ethic, but its formulation can also be found quite clearly in Epicurean hedonism (along with strong exhortations to self-restraint which were deliberately forgotten or twisted over the years by Stoic and early-Christian challengers to the Epicurean tradition). Modern ethics is thus largely an ethic of consumption, not sacrifice and may be conceived of as an over-emphasis on Isaiah Berlin's famous 'positive' liberty (freedom to...speak, move, work etc), rather than his 'negative' liberty (freedom from...pain, hunger etc), perhaps as earlier traditions emphasised negative liberty (Two concepts of liberty', Berlin, I., 1958).



Another important distinction is between formal, systematic ethical systems and informal approaches. This is seen clearly when we compare the metaphysical grounding of Traditional and Modernist ethics with Postmodern ethics. We see that Traditional and Modernist ethics are based largely on carefully developed, sometimes mechanical (normally universal, absolute) conceptions about how the world works and what our place in it is, whereas Postmodern ethics abandons any attempt to underpin ethics with anything other than an appeal to relative cultural values.

We can also group Traditional and Postmodern ethics together in their mutual quest to generate a sense of immediacy, empathy and identity between adherents, compared to Modernist ethics which conversely encourages an unbiased, critical distance between people, in order for them to better 'calculate' the consequences of their actions (Utilitarianism) or to correctly judge the potential of their actions as a universal rule (Kantian)<sup>9</sup>. Thus:

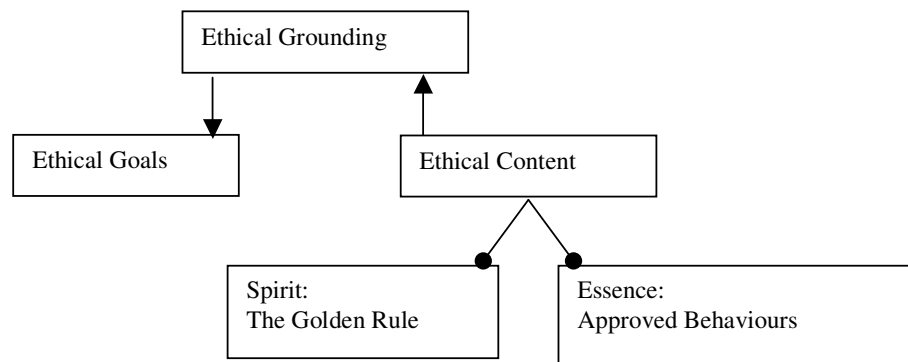


<sup>9</sup> For more on the issues of ethical distance especially as it relates to the media, see 'Why Study the Media?', Silverstone, R., 1999

## Revisiting The Golden Rule

But what of the simple Golden Rule – to treat others as you would like to be treated? As shown at the head of this document, most major religions and philosophies seem to subscribe in a fundamental way to some form of this Rule and as such the Rule seems to be a transcending, uniting principle. If as the Talmud says “That [the Rule] is the law: all the rest is commentary”, surely the distinctions highlighted above are essentially trivial to any ethics education?

Well, firstly, the Golden Rule cannot be seen as a substitute for ethical goals, content or rationale outlined above. Instead the Rule should be seen as an aspect of ethical content, almost as a practical summary of an ethical system's various exhortations. So, while the goals of different systems are still varied, the systems can be said to be similar in a very important way – they are similar in *spirit*. That is not in any way to marginalize the Rule – the spirit is as important to describing ethical content as the various encouraged behaviours, which make up the *essence*, and while the essence of anything divides and isolates, the spirit can be seen to unite (apologies for my diversion into metaphysics!).



Secondly, while the Golden Rule is undoubtedly a critical element of any major ethic, it does not furnish us with much in the way of inspiration for selecting among the various pedagogic strategies. As such, all of the distinctions outlined have a fundamental impact on which pedagogic strategies to employ when seeking to develop an ethics education. These distinctions raise questions such as “What the best way is to teach personal 'development' and self restraint?” “How do we provide tools to enable students to negotiate moral dilemmas and to meaningfully engage

with different cultures?”, and “How do we engage and motivate students without adopting a particular metaphysical and epistemological position, i.e. can a purely relativist, sociological approach truly engage a student’s critical faculties?”. To answer these questions we need to look at the different pedagogic strategies at our disposal.

## **Pedagogic Strategies**

### Types of Educational Interaction

There are a couple of important dimensions we can use to describe educational interactions. The first dimension is of hierarchy and equality, that is teacher (or more expert peer)-to-student or peer-to-peer. The second dimension is the formal versus informal recognition of pedagogic positions, that is, an explicit recognition versus an implicit or little recognition of those positions. The different types of interaction are scaffolding, debate, Socratic dialogue and cultural engagement.

**Scaffolding** - teacher or more expert peer helps develop an understanding of a particular topic in the student, an understanding that could not be achieved alone (e.g. an understanding of the theory of relativity). This is achieved by the instructor operating within the student's Zone of Proximal Development<sup>10</sup>, i.e. the level of understanding not yet reached but potentially open to the student. There is usually a formal hierarchy required for this to be successful, i.e. the instructor's relative expertise needs to be recognised by the student. A typical offline example would be a classroom/lecture setting.

**Debate** - equal peers obey a set of agreed rules within which they attempt to resolve a divergence of opinion by way of reasoning. The divergence is normally due to a trade-off between valid options (security vs. freedom is a common one). Consensus is attempted by either both interlocutors coming to some sort of (perhaps more abstract) agreement (as in academic debate) or one side 'losing' (as in parliamentary or legal debate). There need not be an actual resulting consensus for the debate to be successful, but a desire for consensus is required for success. This is used very little in an educational setting unfortunately, except between academics. More approachable examples are those from the courtroom and parliament.

**Socratic Dialogue** - a teacher or more expert peer engages in an informal discussion with the student with a view to changing the student's understanding. A formal hierarchy is not required for success, but an informal sense of respect for the expertise of the teacher is useful. The Socratic teacher seeks to understand the point of view of the student, the better to diagnose where the student is going wrong and how best to rectify the student's understanding. The technique achieves its goal by

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<sup>10</sup> Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes, Vygotsky, L., 1980

using the power of reason to get the student to accept various premises and axioms and to show, by deduction, how the conclusion follows from these various premises. Thus the interaction is very time consuming, but can result in a complete and thorough re-arrangement of the students understanding. Socratic Dialogue can be so informal that the teacher-student relationship almost disappears sometimes, for example a therapist may appear more as uncovering, listening and learning than teaching the patient. A typical offline example would be a tutorial or workshop setting.

**Cultural Engagement** - an informal interaction between equal peers consisting of either the production or consumption of mediated cultural artefacts. There is no appeal to reason and little in the way of a set of ground rules, indeed quite the opposite; creativity, freedom and novelty are the valued attributes. Participants seek to influence each other by making use of literature, poetry, film, fine arts, music and photography, among other mediated artefacts. There is little in the way of debate, except as what might pass for textual analysis. Participants seek to re-describe (values, identities, issues, meanings) rather than resolve. There tends to be heavy use of symbolism and myth (metaphors) in this form of interaction. Cultural engagement is so informal that it may easily come across in the form of a hierarchy if the producer of the media artefact is seen as an expert of some sort, especially in the form of documentaries. A typical offline setting might be watching the T.V news or a documentary or reading a newspaper.

Now that we have distinguished the different types of educational interaction, we can proceed to align them with particular ethical approaches and traditions. In each case the hierarchical position is set against the different goals of the various ethical traditions outlined before. For each element in the resulting matrices I have recommended a particular educational interaction type as the most appropriate. Note that while scaffolding and debate are always aligned to particular hierarchical positions, this is not so for Socratic dialogue and cultural engagement. This is due to the formal nature of scaffolding and debate, as described above.

	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Relational</b>
<b>Teacher-student</b>	Scaffolding	Cultural engagement
<b>Peer-peer</b>	Socratic Dialogue	Debate

**Individual vs. Relational**

Here, cultural engagement is not between peers but between students and those who are considered to be authorities on particular cultures or subcultures.

	<b>Restraint</b>	<b>Expressiveness</b>
<b>Teacher-student</b>	Scaffolding	Cultural engagement
<b>Peer-peer</b>	Socratic Dialogue	Debate

**Restraint vs. Expressiveness**

Those ethical approaches that encourage restraint, sacrifice and decorum make use of scaffolding and Socratic methods. On the other hand, modernist and postmodern approaches utilise debate and cultural engagement respectively.

	<b>Systematic</b>	<b>Informal</b>
<b>Teacher-student</b>	Scaffolding	Socratic Dialogue
<b>Peer-peer</b>	Debate	Cultural engagement

**Systematic vs. Informal**

Socratic and socio-cultural methods of interaction are often so informal that their positions of hierarchy or equality between peers is often reversed. We have seen that it is important for scaffolded and debate-like interaction to follow certain accepted ground rules.

	<b>Empathy</b>	<b>Critical Distance</b>
<b>Teacher-student</b>	Scaffolding	Socratic Dialogue
<b>Peer-peer</b>	Cultural engagement	Debate

**Empathy vs. Critical Distance**

We can see here that the most appropriate way to achieve empathy would be to engage peers in socio-cultural interaction. This makes sense when we think that the way we feel about those who are different to us is often the result of how we experience them through mediated cultural artefacts such as journalism and documentaries. Yet most schools ironically seem to concentrate their efforts on formal scaffolding or Socratic dialogue.

	<b>Consensus</b>	<b>Re-description</b>
<b>Teacher-student</b>	Socratic Dialogue	Scaffolding
<b>Peer-peer</b>	Debate	Cultural engagement

**Resolution vs. Re-description**

We can see that Socratic dialogue and debate are likely to achieve a rational consensus. Scaffolding and cultural engagement in turn are likely to either enforce a position or re-describe an ethical question entirely.

## **Types of Communications Technologies**

These various types of educational interaction can be achieved using a number of different online communications technologies. These are alternately monologic and dialogic. They are also synchronous (real-time) and asynchronous (time-delayed).

### Monologic Communications (one way communication):

**Weblogs** - a public, online diary or journal, chronicling the often daily events and experiences in the life of the author. Traditionally littered with links to various interesting, useful or funny web content. Normally displayed in the form of dated journal entries, from top to bottom of the page and with the newest first. Became extremely popular after the creation of blogger.com, a web based blogging tool and is now considered an important part of the online landscape and due to it's first-hand, unedited nature also considered by some as a viable alternative to traditional news media. Team blogs are also possible.

**Web Articles** - an essay, white paper or monograph written or posted by the website owner. Differs from blogging in that the article content is not as time sensitive; if blogging entries are for the short term, articles are medium to long term content. Web articles are more akin to research reports than to newspaper articles; anything shorter term would be considered a weblog. While blogging is 'cheap' in terms of time and effort, articles require much more effort and are therefore more sparse online.

**Online References, Glossaries & Dictionaries** - a true killer application for the Internet, the number of online encyclopaedias, glossaries, dictionaries and other types of references is huge and growing, ranging from specialist to generalist resources. They also range from the amateur to the professional. Professional references rarely disagree with each other on substantial issues enabling their confident use by the general public. These references are normally free and can come in many languages. Collaborative authoring tools (like wikis) allow for the creation of a reference by specialist Communities of Practice<sup>11</sup>.

**Digital Video, Photography & Music** - an option only recently made available with the fall in prices of electronics and the rise in processing power of PCs. Digital video and photography affords a level of impact for one's message that is unrivalled by other

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<sup>11</sup> Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Interaction, Lave, J., Wenger, E., 1991

forms of online, mediated asynchronous communications. The downside of course is the legwork in creating the media productions and the extra requirements for website visitors to download. Coupled with this is the use of offline CDs and DVDs of course, which provide a valid alternative channel. Although the communication is largely one way, digital video represents an opportunity to truly engage one's audience, many of whom would much rather watch a film, browse photographs or listen to music than read an extensive article or monograph, especially the younger audience.

### Dialogic Communications:

**Email** - another killer application for the Internet. The email exists only in communication between interlocutors and as such is an essentially dialogic form of communication. It is perhaps the only example of a successful 'push' technology apart from mobile phone text messaging (the web's content is 'pulled' by site visitors). Email is efficient, largely text-based and highly addictive, benefiting as it does from network effects<sup>12</sup>. Email is asynchronous in that responses to messages are not typically immediate, as they are with chat, or even face-face communication.

**Message Boards** - another asynchronous communications technology, message boards (also known as bulletin boards or conferencing) typically consist a posted message and responses to this posting by other users. Message boards can be private or public, moderated or unmoderated - each has its costs and benefits. These boards can be web based or USENET based (requiring specialist, though ubiquitous software). Delays in replying can allow for more thoughtful responses by participants and anonymous interaction may facilitate higher quality interaction due to participant overcoming inhibitions. Message board communities can sometimes suffer from insiders and outsiders - those who dominate interaction and those who 'lurk' on the margins without contributing. Message boards consist of various threads of discussion and off-topic posts are not treated lightly, encouraging focus.

**Real-time Chat** - a form of synchronous communication, chat requires special, though very simple and easy to find and use software (web based chat is often slow and cumbersome). Chat 'rooms' or 'channels' can consist of two or more people and is distinguished by its free-flowing conversation. Indeed, the conversation can be so free-flowing that it is quite possible to sustain multiple threads within the same conversation, although this isn't always easy. Chat can sometimes be seen as the

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<sup>12</sup> Metcalf's Law: "The usefulness, or utility, of a network equals the square of the number of users"

more trivial end of the online experience, (due to its association with teenagers, virtual dating and pop culture), but this is unfair as it represents a largely untapped opportunity for use in education. What might take days using a message board can often take minutes using chat, for example interviewing and organising.

**Wiki** - an asynchronous, collaborative, web-based authoring tool. A wiki is made up of 'pages' that can be edited in any way (including deleted) by any member of the collaborative environment. A highly risky strategy, it in fact tends to encourage a strong sense of online community and responsibility. (This risk is partially mitigated with various backup features). Wikis allow for the creation of pages of knowledge and information in a coherent whole far beyond the capabilities of any one individual. Uses include single, shared bibliographies, websites, glossaries and definitions as well as collaborative stories and scripts.

So far I have analysed and grouped the various ethical traditions with the aim of drawing out their goals. I have also discussed the different types of educational interactions and aligned those interactions with the various ethical goals as appropriate. I have just described the different types of technologies available to us with which to implement the different educational interactions. We are now in a position to combine the different types of educational interaction with the appropriate, enabling technologies.

**Scaffolding = articles + message-boards.** Instruction by the teacher via articles for student internalisation, with communication via message board. This communication is purely for elucidatory purposes, not for any form of challenge, criticism or debate.

**Debate = message boards + references + wiki.** Structured, intermittent discussion between peers via the message-board, requiring a consensus of definitions and terms, via the references. The delayed nature of interactions allows for more thoughtful responses, i.e. critical distance.

**Socratic dialogue = chat + references.** Fluid discussion between peers via chat, with common agreement of terms and definitions via references. Chat allows for relatively informal dialogue and rapid responses, allowing the teacher or peers to quickly understand and hence correct each other's positions.

**Cultural engagement = weblogs + video + chat.** Construction of identities and positions between peers via weblogs. These positions are rarely interrogated, rather the identities are engaged with by peers. Digital video and images offer powerful avenues for presenting one's position and chat allows participants to experience and humanise those that are culturally different.

## **Sample Scenarios**

We can now create some example scenarios in order to pull all the threads together and to see how this framework can be operationalized. Of course there are at least 20 (4 approaches across 5 ethical dimensions) scenarios, but I shall try and describe only a few.

### Scenario A – Encouraging Empathy between Peers:

Cultural engagement in a peer-peer environment requires and encourages empathy. This can be implemented as weblogs + video + chat for empathy. Empathy is valued most by traditional and postmodern ethical approaches (empathy).

### Scenario B – Encouraging Critical Distance between Peers:

Debate in a peer-peer environment requires and encourages critical distance. This can be implemented using message boards, online references and wikis. Critical distance is valued most by modernist ethical approaches.

### Scenario C – Encouraging Restraint/Decorum in Students:

Scaffolding in a teacher-student environment requires and encourages restraint/decorum from the students. This can be implemented with the use of online articles written by teachers and experts as well as message boards, used by students to clarify the teacher's message, with the aim of internalisation of the material rather than expression of ideas.

### Scenario D – Encouraging Consensus Between Teacher And Students:

Socratic dialogue in teacher-student discussion encourages consensus in order for the interaction to be successful. This can be implemented using online chat and

references. The references are important for establishing common terms and online chat allows the interlocutors to respond to each other rapidly.