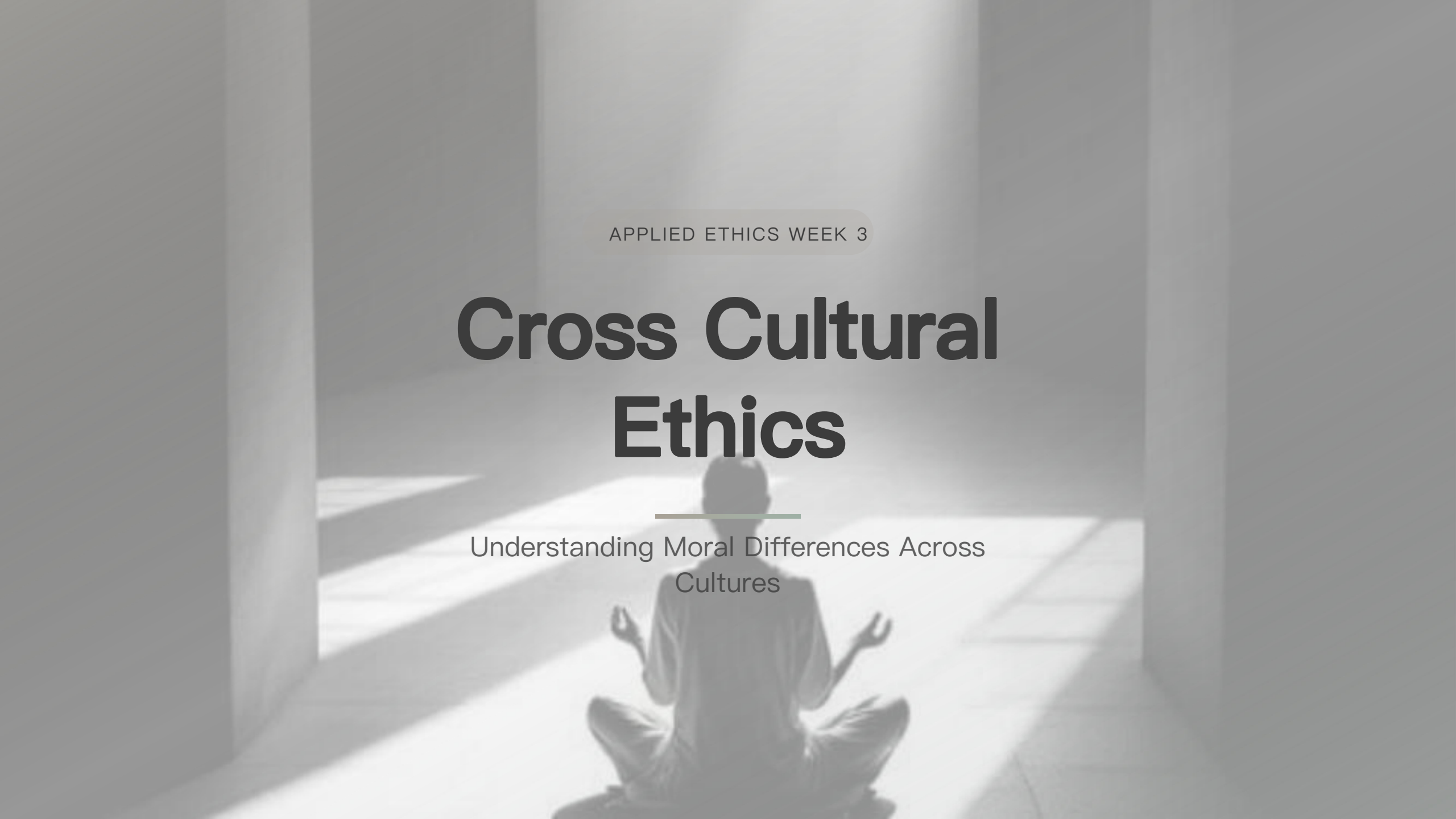


A person is seen from behind, sitting in a meditative lotus position on a light-colored floor. They are in a long, brightly lit hallway with tall, white columns on either side. Sunlight streams in from the far end of the hallway, creating long, dramatic shadows and a warm, ethereal atmosphere. The person's hands are resting on their knees in a mudra.

APPLIED ETHICS WEEK 3

Cross Cultural Ethics

Understanding Moral Differences Across
Cultures

Today's Journey

01

Learning Objectives

Define cross-cultural ethics and understand Western ethical thinking

02

Opening Dilemma

A real-world ethical conflict to set the stage

03

What is Cross-Cultural Ethics?

Three approaches to cultural moral differences

04

Western Ethics Fundamentals

Deontology, Utilitarianism, and shared assumptions

05

Eastern Ethics: Three Relationships

Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism

06

Comparative Analysis

Side-by-side comparison and class discussion

Cross-cultural ethics invites us to understand moral differences without assuming one culture is always right

Learning Objectives



Define Cross–Cultural Ethics

Articulate cross–cultural ethics in your own words, understanding it as a framework for navigating moral differences between cultures without defaulting to judgment or relativism.



Explain Western Ethical Thinking

Identify and explain two core features of mainstream Western ethical thinking: its focus on the individual as the moral unit and its reliance on reason and universal rules.



Identify Strengths and Blind Spots

Recognize one strength and one blind spot of Western ethics when applied to non–Western cultural contexts, using concrete examples to illustrate your analysis.

By the end of this lecture, you will be able to move between ethical traditions and ask: "Which relationship does this problem need?"

A Real Dilemma: The Refugee Girl

The Scenario

You are a nurse in an international aid camp. A **14-year-old refugee girl** needs a **lifesaving surgery**, but her **father refuses** because in his culture, female children cannot be treated before male elders.

The hospital's Western protocol says: **treat the child regardless of parental consent** to save her life.

The Core Conflict

- **Cultural Belief:** Female children cannot be treated before male elders
- **Western Protocol:** Treat to save life regardless of parental consent
- **The Stakes:** A child's life hangs in the balance



Who would follow the Western protocol?

Prioritizing the child's right to life and medical autonomy



Who would follow the father's wishes?

Respecting cultural authority and family hierarchy



Who feels torn?

Recognizing the validity of both

The Core Question

Why Cross–Cultural Ethics Matters

This is why we need cross–cultural ethics—**not to pick one side**, but to **understand why both sides feel right** to different people.



Western View

The child's **individual right to life** is paramount. Medical ethics requires treating patients in need, regardless of cultural barriers.

Core Value: Individual autonomy and human rights



Cultural View

The father's authority reflects **family hierarchy and cultural identity**. Disregarding it undermines community values and trust.

Core Value: Family harmony and cultural respect



The Cross–Cultural View

Both perspectives have **legitimate moral foundations**. The challenge is finding a path that honors both the child's needs and cultural context.

Core Value: Understanding without forcing

The Invitation

Cross–cultural ethics doesn't give us easy answers. It gives us **better questions**: What moral assumptions underlie each position? What values are at stake? How can we navigate this with both integrity and compassion?

What is Cross–Cultural Ethics?

The Simple Definition

Cross–cultural ethics asks: **Do different cultures have different moral rules?** If yes, **how should we handle those differences?**



Moral Diversity

Different cultures have developed different moral frameworks based on their histories, environments, and social structures.

Example: Individual rights vs. collective harmony



Navigating Differences

When cultures interact—through trade, migration, or global institutions—their moral systems may conflict. How do we respond?

Challenge: Finding common ground without imposing



Ethical Framework

Cross–cultural ethics provides tools for understanding, comparing, and navigating moral differences with respect and critical thinking.

Goal: Understanding without judgment

Three Approaches to Cultural Differences

1 Ethnocentrism
Closed approach

My culture's moral system is superior and should be applied universally.

"My culture's way is the only right way."

2 Cultural Relativism
Passive approach

Each culture's morality is valid for itself; no external judgment is possible or appropriate.

"Every culture is right for itself—no judging."

3 Cross-Cultural Ethics
Active approach ✓

We can understand moral differences, identify common values, and work toward shared solutions without imposing one view.

"Let's understand differences and find common ground without force."

Why Cross-Cultural Ethics?

Unlike ethnocentrism (which imposes) or relativism (which accepts everything), cross-cultural ethics **engages critically with difference**—seeking understanding, identifying shared values, and working toward solutions that respect all parties.

Real-World Examples of Each Approach



Ethnocentrism in Action

"Western human rights are universal—every country must adopt them exactly as we have them."

The Problem: This approach ignores cultural context, historical differences, and the possibility that other societies might have valid alternative ways of protecting human dignity. It can breed resentment and resistance rather than genuine moral progress.



Cultural Relativism in Action

"If a culture practices child marriage, who are we to say anything?"

The Problem: This approach can silence legitimate moral criticism and abandon vulnerable people (like children) to harmful practices. It assumes all cultural practices are equally valid, which prevents meaningful ethical dialogue.



Cross-Cultural Ethics in Action

"We can criticize child marriage while understanding its economic and social roots, and work with local leaders for change."

The Strength: This approach combines moral clarity with cultural sensitivity. It recognizes that practices have complex causes, that change takes time, and that sustainable progress requires working within cultural frameworks rather than imposing from outside.

The Big Picture

The Central Question

Western ethics often starts with one question:

What should the individual do?

Two Ways to Answer

Rules

Follow moral principles that apply to everyone, regardless of consequences.

→ Deontology

Results

Choose actions that produce the best overall outcomes for everyone affected.

→ Utilitarianism



The Individual is Central

Western ethics assumes the **individual** is the basic unit of moral consideration. Moral questions are about what you should do, what you owe others, and what your rights are.



Reason is the Tool

Moral decisions should be made through **rational deliberation**, applying universal principles that any reasonable person could accept.

This individual + reason framework has shaped Western law, politics, and ethics for centuries.

Two Main Theories: Deontology vs. Utilitarianism

Deontology Immanuel Kant	Act according to rules that everyone must follow. Never use people as just a means to an end. Categorical Imperative: Act only according to principles you can will as universal law.	"Lying is always wrong, even to save a life." If everyone lied, trust would collapse. Therefore, lying is universally prohibited.
Utilitarianism Bentham & Mill	Maximize happiness and minimize suffering for the greatest number of people affected by your actions. Greatest Happiness Principle: The right action produces the most overall well-being.	"If lying saves 10 lives, lie." The consequences matter more than rigid rules. Saving lives produces more happiness than telling the truth.

Kant's Reasoning

Imagine if everyone lied—trust collapses. So never lie.

Mill's Reasoning

Imagine lying saves a family from a murderer—obviously lie.

Lying to Save a Life



Kant's Position

Deontology

"Lying is always wrong, even to save a life."

If everyone lied when convenient, **trust would collapse** and society couldn't function.

Lying treats the person you're deceiving as a **mere means**, not as an end in themselves.

Moral rules must be **universal**—no exceptions, no matter the consequences.

Kant's Insight: Morality isn't about calculating outcomes—it's about respecting human dignity through universal principles.



Mill's Position

Utilitarianism

"If lying saves 10 lives, obviously lie."

What matters is the **actual outcome**—the happiness and suffering produced.

Saving 10 lives produces **far more happiness** than the harm of one lie.

Rigid rules can lead to **absurd and harmful outcomes**—morality must be flexible.

Mill's Insight: Morality should promote well-being. If a rule produces more harm than good, we should question the rule.

Which is correct? Western ethics has debated this for centuries. Both have valid reasoning. But notice: **both share two key assumptions** that shape how Western ethics approaches moral problems.

Two Shared Assumptions of Western Ethics

1

The Individual is the Basic Moral Unit

Western ethics starts with the **individual**—not the family, community, or nature. Moral questions are framed as:

What should **I** do?

What do **I** owe others?

What are **my** rights?

Contrast: Many non-Western traditions start with relationships, roles, or harmony rather than the autonomous individual.

2

Reason and Universal Rules Can Solve Moral Problems

Western ethics believes that **rational deliberation** and **universal principles** can resolve moral dilemmas:

Apply **reason** to identify the right principle

Use **universal rules** that apply to everyone

Calculate **outcomes** to find the best action

Contrast: Other traditions may emphasize intuition, harmony, or contextual wisdom over abstract reasoning.

Why This Matters for Cross-Cultural Ethics

These assumptions are powerful—but they're not universal. When Western ethics encounters cultures that prioritize family, nature, or spiritual development over the individual, **tensions arise**. Understanding these assumptions helps us navigate cross-cultural ethical conflicts with clarity and humility.

Dilemma 1: The Bribery Question

The Scenario

A Western company opens a factory in a country where **bribing local officials is normal**. Should the company follow Western anti-bribery rules or local customs?



Deontology View

Follow the rule. Bribery is wrong—period. It violates universal moral principles and company ethics codes.

Reasoning: If bribery were universalized, trust in institutions would collapse. The company has a duty to uphold ethical standards regardless of local norms.



Utilitarianism View

What outcome is best? Consider consequences: Will refusing to bribe prevent the factory from opening, costing jobs?

Reasoning: Calculate total happiness. If the factory provides 500 jobs and improves living standards, perhaps limited bribery is justified as a means to greater good.

Discussion Questions

- Is it ethnocentric to impose Western anti-bribery standards?
- Can a company operate ethically in a corrupt system?
- What would a cross-cultural ethicist recommend?

Dilemma 2: The Ethnocentrism Challenge

The Statement

"Every culture should adopt our ethics because we have the most logical system."

— Your Western friend



The Problem

This statement is a clear example of **ethnocentrism**—assuming one's own culture is superior.



The Assumption

It assumes Western logic is the only valid framework for ethics, ignoring other ways of moral reasoning.



The Alternative

Cross-cultural ethics asks us to **listen first**, understand different frameworks, then engage critically.

How Would a Cross-Cultural Ethicist Respond?

"Let's examine what you mean by 'logical'—different cultures have different rationalities." "What problems might Western ethics struggle to address?"

"Western ethics has strengths, but also blind spots. Let's explore both."

"Can we find common ground without imposing one system?"

Dilemma 3: Family Loyalty vs. Truth

The Scenario

Imagine a culture where **family loyalty matters more than telling the truth to outsiders**. From a Western view, this is "corruption." From their view, Westerners are "cold and disloyal."

Who is right?



Western View

This is **corruption**. Truth-telling is a universal duty. Family loyalty shouldn't override honesty, especially in legal or professional contexts.

Core value: Universal truth and individual integrity



Cultural View

Family is the foundation of society. **Loyalty to family** is a moral imperative. Outsiders don't understand the bonds that hold communities together.

Core value: Family harmony and collective well-being

The Key Insight

Western ethics **hits a wall** when facing cultures that don't start with the individual. It struggles with cultures that prioritize family, community, or nature over individual autonomy. This doesn't mean Western ethics is wrong—but it does have **limitations** that cross-cultural ethics helps us recognize.

Understanding Without Judging

Cross–Cultural Ethics = Understanding Moral Differences

without assuming one culture is always right



Western Ethics Recap

Focus: Individual + Universal rules/results

Tools: Deontology (rules) and Utilitarianism (outcomes)

Strengths: Clear principles, universal applicability, individual rights



Blind Spots to Recognize

Struggles with cultures prioritizing **family/community** over individual

May overlook **contextual wisdom** in favor of abstract rules

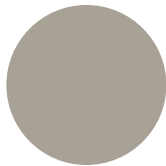
Can appear **ethnocentric** when imposed on other cultures

What's Next: Now we turn to Eastern ethics, which offers fundamentally different starting points—not the individual, but **relationships**.

PART 2

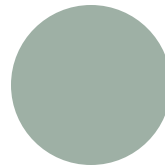
Eastern Ethics

The Three Relationships
Framework



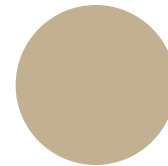
Confucianism

People ↔ People



Taoism

People ↔ Nature



Buddhism

People ↔ Self

Learning Objectives



Explain the "Three Relationships" Framework

Articulate the core relationships in Eastern ethics: **Confucianism (People)**, **Taoism (Nature)**, and **Buddhism (Self)**. Understand how each tradition answers a different ethical question.



Compare Eastern and Western Ethics

Use a concrete example to compare any Eastern tradition to Western ethics. Identify key differences in starting points, methods, and goals.



Recognize Buddhism's Cross-Cultural Journey

Understand that Buddhism, though widely practiced in China, **originated in India**. Recognize this as a perfect example of cross-cultural ethics in action—how ideas travel, adapt, and become integrated into new cultural contexts.

Eastern ethics isn't one single view. It's three different answers—each focused on a different relationship.

The Arranged Marriage Dilemma

The Scenario

A **20-year-old in rural China** refuses an arranged marriage. Her Western friend says: **"Good for you—follow your individual choice."** Her grandmother says: **"You are dishonoring your family."**



Western Friend's View

Individual autonomy is paramount. The young woman has the **right to choose** her own path. Arranged marriage violates personal freedom.

Western framework: Individual rights and personal choice



Grandmother's View

Family harmony and filial duty are paramount. The young woman's choice **affects the whole family** and community. Individual desires must be balanced with collective responsibility.

Eastern framework: Family harmony and role-based ethics

Where Do You Stand?

Do you instinctively side with the Western friend?

This reflects Western individualistic values you've likely absorbed.

Do you side with the grandmother?

This reflects collectivist values emphasizing family and social harmony.

Eastern ethics offers three different answers—each focused on a different relationship. Let's explore them.

The Three Relationships

Confucianism 孔子 (Kǒngzǐ)	People ↔ People Ethics is about human relationships and social harmony.	"How do we live well together?"
Taoism 道家 (Dàojiā)	People ↔ Nature / Universe Ethics is about living in harmony with the natural order.	"How do we live in harmony with the way things naturally are?"
Buddhism 佛教 (Fójiào)	People ↔ Themselves Ethics is about ending one's own suffering and cultivating inner peace.	"How do we end our own suffering?"

Key Insight

All three traditions are deeply woven into Chinese culture today. But notice: **none of them starts with the Western "autonomous individual."** Each asks a different question about our relationship to others, nature, or ourselves.

Cultural Borrowing: Buddhism's Journey

The Journey

Buddhism began in **India** (Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, c. 5th century BCE) and spread to China via the **Silk Road**. Over centuries, it blended with Chinese traditions.



Origin: India

5th century BCE

Siddhartha Gautama achieves enlightenment and begins teaching the path to end suffering.



Transmission

Silk Road

Buddhist monks and merchants carry teachings along trade routes into Central Asia and China.



Adaptation: China

Over centuries

Buddhism blends with Confucianism and Taoism, becoming one of the "Three Teachings."

Why This Matters

This is a perfect example of **cross-cultural ethics in action**: an Indian philosophy became Chinese by adapting. Buddhism didn't replace Chinese traditions—it blended with them, creating something new. This is how cultures evolve: through borrowing, adapting, and integrating.

People ↔ People

Core Idea

You are not a lone individual. You are a **son, daughter, parent, friend, teacher, ruler, or subject**. Ethics means playing your role well.



Ren 仁

Benevolence / Humaneness

Caring for others. The foundation of all virtue—treating people with kindness and empathy.



Li 禮

Ritual / Propriety

How you show respect—bowing, serving tea, mourning properly. Rituals create and maintain social harmony.



Xiao 孝

Filial Piety

Respect for parents and ancestors—**the most important relationship**. Family loyalty is the root of all virtue.

Famous Quote

"Do not do to others what you would not want done to yourself."

— The Negative Golden Rule

Notice: This is phrased negatively (don't do harm) rather than positively (do good), emphasizing restraint and respect for others' boundaries.

Ethics in Action: A Practical Example

The Dilemma

You promised a friend to see a movie, but your **elderly parent falls sick**. What do you do?



Western (Kant)

"Keep your promise—lying/breaking promises is universally wrong."

A promise is a universal moral obligation

Breaking it harms trust in all relationships

The rule applies regardless of circumstances



Confucian

"Parent comes first—always. That's what a good child does."

Filial piety (xiao) is the most important virtue

Your role as child takes priority over your role as friend

A good friend would understand and support this

Reflection Question

Does this feel unfair to the friend? Or does it feel right that family comes first? **Your reaction reveals which ethical framework you naturally gravitate toward.**

People ↔ Nature / Universe

Core Idea

The **Dao** (the Way) is the natural, spontaneous order of the universe. Human rules and forced efforts only create problems. **Flow like water.**



Key Image: Water

Water is soft, yet wears down stone. It flows around obstacles—**never forces, never fights.**

"The supreme good is like water, which benefits all things without contention."



Key Concept: Wu- Wei

Often translated as "**non-action**" or "**effortless action.**" Not laziness—acting so naturally that you don't feel like you're trying.

"A good dancer doesn't count steps; a good person doesn't calculate moral rules."

Famous Quote from the Dao De Jing

"The Dao that can be told is not the eternal Dao."

The ultimate truth cannot be captured in words or rules. It must be experienced and lived.

Wu–Wei: Effortless Action

Understanding Wu–Wei

Wu–wei (無為) is often translated as "**non-action**" or "**effortless action**." It's not laziness—it's acting so naturally that you don't feel like you're trying.

Western Approach

"Stop, reason, apply the principle." **Conscious effort** is required to determine the right action.

Moral decision-making is a **deliberative process**—analyze, weigh options, apply rules.

Taoist Approach

"Over-thinking ruins everything. Trust your **cultivated nature**." Act from inner harmony, not external rules.

Moral action emerges **naturally** from being in harmony with the Dao.

Reflection Questions

Have you ever done the right thing without thinking?

That's very Taoist—action flowing naturally from your character.

Have you ever tried so hard to be ethical that you froze?

That's the problem Taoism points out—over-thinking blocks natural wisdom.

Ethics in Action: The Lost Wallet

The Scenario

You find a lost wallet on the street. What do you do?



Western Ethicist

Spends an hour deciding whether to return it

Duty: Is there a moral obligation?

Outcome: What's the best result?

Rights: Whose rights are involved?

Analysis paralysis—over-thinking blocks action



Taoist

Picks it up and returns it without a second thought

No deliberation needed

Action flows naturally from harmony

Simply what a person in harmony does

Wu-wei—effortless, natural virtue

The Taoist Insight

Both people return the wallet. But the Taoist does so **without struggle, without calculation, without effort**. The goal of Taoist ethics is to cultivate a character so aligned with the natural way that virtue becomes spontaneous.

People ↔ Themselves

Core Idea

Life involves **suffering (dukkha)**. Suffering comes from **attachment**—wanting things to be different, clinging to pleasure, avoiding pain. Ethics is the path to **end your own suffering**.

Important Reminder

Buddhism began in **India** (Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, c. 5th century BCE). It traveled to China and became one of the "Three Teachings" alongside Confucianism and Taoism. **This is cross-cultural ethics in history.**



Dukkha

Suffering / Dissatisfaction

Life inherently involves suffering. Birth, aging, sickness, death, separation from loved ones—all bring pain.



Attachment

The Cause of Suffering

We suffer because we **cling** to what we like and **resist** what we don't. Wanting things to be different creates suffering.



The Path

Ending Suffering

Ethics is the practice of **releasing attachment**, cultivating mindfulness, and finding inner peace.

Key Buddhist Concepts



Ahimsa

Non-harming

The foundational precept: Do not kill, steal, lie, harm sexually, or get intoxicated.

These are not commandments from a god, but **guidelines for reducing suffering.**



Karma

Cause and Effect

Your intentions create consequences—not punishment from a god, but **natural moral cause-and-effect.**

Good intentions lead to positive outcomes; harmful intentions create suffering.



Anatman

No Permanent Self

The radical idea: There is no fixed, separate "you." The self is a **flowing stream**, not a fixed rock.

This challenges Western assumptions about the autonomous individual.

A Question to Consider

Is it harder or easier to be ethical if you believe there's no permanent "you"? **There's no right answer**—just noticing that Buddhism starts from a completely different place than Western "autonomous individual."

Why "No Self" Matters for Ethics

The Profound Implication

If there is no separate self, then **harming others is harming yourself**. Compassion becomes not a duty, but a **recognition of reality**.



Western View

I have a duty to be compassionate because **reason or religion requires it**.
Compassion is an obligation I fulfill.

Compassion as **duty**—something I should do



Buddhist View

I am compassionate because I **recognize that others are not separate from me**.
Their suffering is my suffering.

Compassion as **reality**—seeing interconnection

Famous Quote from the Buddha

"Hatred never ceases by hatred; only by love."

Responding to harm with more harm only perpetuates suffering. Breaking the cycle requires compassion, not retaliation.

Ethics in Action: The Organ Transplant

The Dilemma

A Buddhist doctor knows a patient will die without an organ transplant. But killing one healthy person to save five is still killing. What should the doctor do?

The Precept

The precept against killing is primary

- Killing one to save five is still killing
- Precepts are not flexible rules
- Breaking precepts creates negative karma

The Compassionate Response

Work to reduce suffering within that limit, with compassion for all six people

- Seek alternative solutions
- Provide comfort and care
- Cultivate compassion for all beings

Contrast with Utilitarianism

A utilitarian might say "kill one to save five" because the outcome is better. Buddhism says **the act of killing itself creates suffering**—for the killer, the victim, and all involved. The ends don't justify the means.

Side-by-Side: Three Dilemmas

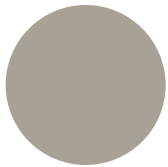
Your parent asks you to lie to protect them	Moral. Filial piety comes first. A good child protects family.	Depends. Does the lie flow naturally? Forcing truth might violate the Dao.	Unwholesome. Lying breaks a precept. But compassionate intent reduces negative karma.
You feel very angry at someone who wronged you	Cultivate ren. Repair the relationship through ritual and role awareness.	Let it go like water. Anger is forcing. Flow around it.	Examine your attachment. Why are you clinging to this anger? It causes your own suffering.
A forest must be cut for a new village	Weigh human roles. The living need homes; ancestors need respect. Harmony among people first.	Resist. This violates the Dao. Humans are one thread in nature, not its master.	Practice compassion for all beings. Minimize harm. If cutting is necessary, do it mindfully with grief.

Key Insight

Notice: Confucius asks, "What do the people need?" Taoism asks, "What does nature need?" Buddhism asks, "What does my mind need to end suffering?" **They are not fighting—they are answering different questions.**

Different Questions, Not Competition

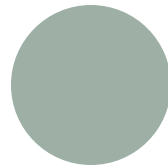
Each Tradition Answers a Different Question



Confucianism

"What do the people need?"

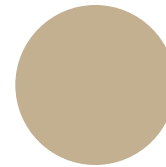
Social harmony and proper relationships



Taoism

"What does nature need?"

Harmony with the natural order



Buddhism

"What does my mind need?"

Ending suffering and finding peace

They Are Not Competing

These traditions are not fighting to be the "one true ethics." They are **different tools for different problems**. Each addresses a different dimension of ethical life:

Confucianism: Social dimension

Taoism: Environmental dimension

Buddhism: Inner dimension

Debate: The One Relationship

The Statement to Debate

"If you could only teach ONE of these three relationships to children (People, Nature, or Self), which would you choose?"



People Relationship

Confucian Corner

Society can't function without social harmony
Relationships are the foundation of ethics
Humans are fundamentally social beings



Nature Relationship

Taoist Corner

Without nature, there is no society
Environmental crisis demands this focus
Harmony with nature sustains all life



Self Relationship

Buddhist Corner

Inner peace is the foundation for all virtue
Mental health crisis requires self-awareness
You can't help others if you're suffering

Debate Structure

- 1. Assign Corners:** Students move to the corner representing their choice.

2. Prepare Arguments: Each group prepares ONE reason why their relationship is most important.
- 3. Open Floor:** Students can switch corners if convinced by another argument.

4. Debrief: Discuss what you learned about the interdependence of the three relationships.

Can Society Survive with Only One?



Only People?

Confucian society might achieve social harmony, but...

What about **environmental destruction**? Without concern for nature, we destroy the planet that sustains us.



Only Nature?

Taoist society might live in harmony with nature, but...

What about **human rights**? Without social structure, how do we protect the vulnerable?



Only Self?

Buddhist society might achieve inner peace, but...

What about **justice**? Without social engagement, how do we address systemic suffering?

The Answer: Complementarity

The three traditions survived in China for over **2,000 years** because **they complement each other**:

Confucianism for social order

Taoism for environmental
humility

Buddhism for inner peace

Different Tools for Different Problems

The Core Message

Confucius, Laozi (Taoism), and the Buddha are not competing to be the "one true ethics." They are **different tools for different problems**.



Western Ethics Asks

"What should the individual choose?"

Focuses on individual autonomy, universal rules, and rational deliberation.



Eastern Traditions Ask

"How do we harmonize?"

Focuses on relationships, natural flow, and inner cultivation.

Neither is Complete Alone

Western ethics provides clarity and universal principles. Eastern traditions provide context and relational wisdom. **Cross-cultural ethics invites us to draw on both**—asking not "Which is right?" but "Which approach does this problem need?"

Which Relationship Do You Need?

A Personal Exercise

Think of a **moral problem you faced recently**. Which relationship was most relevant?



People

Confucian

Did it involve relationships, social roles, or community?



Nature

Taoist

Did it involve the environment, natural flow, or harmony?



Self

Buddhist

Did it involve inner peace, attachment, or personal suffering?



Individual

Western

Did it involve rules, rights, or individual choice?

You Are Now Cross-Cultural Thinkers

You don't have to pick one tradition. You can ask: **"Which relationship does this problem need?"** This is the power of cross-cultural ethics—moving between frameworks to find the most appropriate response.

Assignment Overview

Four Parts

Complete all four parts of this assignment to demonstrate your understanding of cross-cultural ethics.

1 Analyze a Dilemma

Choose **one** of the three dilemmas. Analyze it using **two different relationships** from the Three Relationships framework, then add one **Western individual-rights perspective**.

Show how each tradition offers a different lens on the same problem.

2 Strengths and Blind Spots

Identify **one strength and one blind spot** of Western ethics when applied to a non-Western culture. Use a **concrete example**.

Be specific: What does Western ethics handle well? Where does it struggle?

3 Explain the Framework

Explain the **"Three Relationships" framework**. For each tradition (Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist), state the **core relationship in one phrase**.

Be concise and precise. Show you understand the essence of each tradition.

4 Cross-Cultural Ethics in Action

Buddhism originated in India but is commonly practiced in China. **Why is this a good example of cross-cultural ethics in action?**

Think about adaptation, integration, and cultural borrowing.

The Three Dilemmas for Analysis

1

The Factory Pollution

A factory in your town **pollutes a river**, providing jobs for 500 families but killing fish and harming downstream villages.

People: Jobs vs. health

Nature: Environmental harm

Self: Attachment to jobs

2

The Best Friend's Secret

Your best friend confesses a secret that, if revealed, would **hurt their family** but failing to reveal it would allow an **injustice to continue**.

People: Loyalty vs. justice

Nature: Natural flow?

Self: Your attachment

3

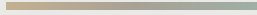
Career Anxiety

You feel **constant anxiety about your future career**. A Western therapist says "assert your individual goals." A Buddhist might say something different.

People: Social expectations

Nature: Go with the flow?

Self: Attachment to future



Cross-cultural ethics invites us to become thinkers who can **move between traditions**, asking not "Which is right?" but **"Which relationship does this problem need?"**



People



Nature



Self



Individual