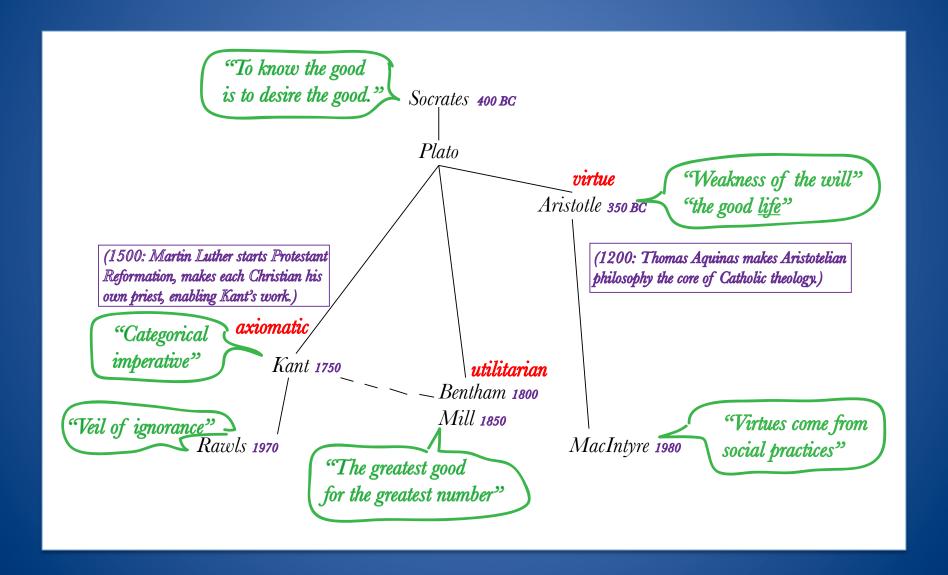# Ethics

Social Implications of Computers

A Brief History of Western Philosophy

Kantian ethics

- *Categorical Imperative:*
  - *Treat people as ends, not means.*
  - *Actions must be universalizable.*
- *Everything else can be derived from these axioms.*
  - *Example: Telling lies isn't universalizable because if everyone did it, nobody would believe the lies.*
- *Rawls: the Veil of Ignorance*
  - *Imagine you don't know whether you'll be rich or poor; black, white, or brown; male or female; etc.*

Utilitarian ethics

- *The greatest good for the greatest number.*
- *Actions are judged by (probable) results, not purposes.*
  - *A good act has good results, on balance, for everyone.*
- *Utilitarian philosophers like to pose <u>dilemmas:</u>*
  - *"Your spouse and your child are thrown overboard and you only have time to save one of them. Which one?"*
- *People today who don't think very hard tend to become utilitarians by accident. Don't do that.*
  - *If you're a utilitarian, it should be because you've chosen to.*

Communitarian/Virtue ethics

- *The goal of ethical philosophy isn't to judge individual actions, but to live "the good life" overall.*

- *Acting well comes from good habits—the virtues—not from deliberation on the spot.*

- *The virtues are learned through engaging in social practices, which are embedded in a particular community. You can't live the good life in a vacuum.*

- *Virtues are generally middle grounds between two kinds of error:* cowardice—courage—foolhardiness.