

Recap

What makes an action **morally valuable**?

- Not just the effects. Butterfly effect.
 - * Even if it does have good effects.
- Not just performing it. Drunk driver accidentally honking horn.
 - * Even if it has positive expected value.
- Not just intentionally performing it. Self-interested shopkeeper.
 - * Even if it is *in accordance* w/ duty.
- Not even performing it because it brings you joy, or because you *feel* compelled to. The lover of humanity gets depressed.
 - * Even if it should be *encouraged*.
- It's morally valuable because the agent performs it
for the right reason
= from the motive of duty
= out of respect for the moral law These equalities are Kant's. You might like right reasons picture without the duty/law stuff.

The nature of the moral law

Recall: categorical imperatives vs. hypothetical imperatives.

- Seems like the moral law must be categorical.
 - * If it weren't, couldn't we just "opt-out"?
In other words: if it weren't, couldn't we just stop caring about the antecedent?
- *How* is it categorical?
Whatever it is, it must flow from something that holds unconditionally—*of necessity*—for those whose to whom it applies:
 - * The rational faculty

Roughly, think of it like this: every law of morality will be of the form, *if you are a rational agent, do this*. For rational agents, the condition here—"if you are a rational agent"—is met necessarily.

Formulation 1 of categorical imperative

Big Question for any more theory:

- *Why are the laws of morality binding? Why can't we opt-out?*

Specifically for Kant:

- *How can reason categorically bind us to act in a certain way? Why can't we opt out of reason's demands?*

Amazing analogy!

- There are requirements of *theoretical* reason that apply *categorically*: No 'if's about it!
 - * **Some theoretical requirements**
 - Don't believe contradictions. There is no opting out. Although of course you could fail to be rational.
 - Make only inferences for which you have justification.
- Analogy: *practical* reason can do the same.
 - * **A practical requirement: hypothetical case**
 - You intend to bring about X, and you learn that to bring about X, you must do Y. Practical rationality says you must either: There is no opting out! Although of course you could fail to be rational.
 - Give up your intention to bring about X.
 - OR
 - Intend to do Y.
- **A practical requirement: categorical case (FORMULATION 1)**
 - "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." 421.
 - [In more accessible terms: whatever you do you should act for reasons that could serve as acceptable reasons for anyone—to act otherwise is to act *inconsistently*.] From Sayre-McCord p. 5.
 - Example maxim: *whenever one has an exam and doesn't feel like studying, she shall copy off her neighbor's work.* From p. 3 of Sally's last handout.
 - Counter-example maxim? *whenever one has an exam and doesn't feel like studying, and everyone else is well-prepared, and she can do it without being caught, she shall copy off her neighbor's work.*

Sayre-McCord, Geoffrey. *Kant's Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals: A Very Brief Selective Summary of Sections I and II*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000. © University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals: with On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns*. 3rd Edition. Translated by James W. Ellington. Hackett Publishing, 1993. © Hackett Publishing. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Formulation 2 of categorical imperative

o Key quotes

- * *Value of rational beings*: “man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to an arbitrarily used by this or that will.”
- * *Rational awareness of this value*. “[Man] must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be regarded at the same time as an end.”

428.

o FORMULATION 2

“Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means.”

429.

[In all action one should respect others, and oneself, as sources of value and never simply as instruments for one’s own purposes.]

From lecture notes of Sally’s from another class.

- * *This* formulation prohibits the cheat-only-if-others-are-prepared maxim.
- * This seems like some sort of trick! Where did formulation 1 come from? What does it have to do with formulation 1?

Distinction:

- Consistency in *conception*.
- Consistency in *willing*.

Here’s a way to think about it:

Following lecture notes from Langton.

1. As rational beings, we are autonomous deliberators.
2. To treat a rational being as a mere end is therefore to subvert that being’s rational capacity for autonomous rational deliberation.
3. But if I will that subversion of *others*, then by FORMULATION 1, I will that subversion of *myself*.
4. Willing to subvert my own will is irrational.
5. Therefore, FORMULATION 2.

A worry from last class

Is immorality irrationality?

As we’ve seen, the underlying rationale for Kant’s approach is that the source of morality is in *reason* or *rationality*.

- o Could it really be that those who are (im)moral are (im)moral *because* in some important sense they are acting (*ir*)rationally??

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