

CS 4873-A: Computing and Society

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Week 3: Deontology

February 1, 2021





Harry Truman and Elizabeth Anscombe

- Thinking in contrast to thinking in terms of consequences
- Recap Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism

- Consequentialist
- The consequences are most important.
- Pleasure over Pain; calculation of “utility” is mathematical.

Kantianism

- Deontological
- The motive is what matters, not the consequences.
- The Categorical Imperative reigns supreme.

Deontological ethics or deontology (from Greek word, *deon*, "obligation, duty") is the normative ethical position that judges the morality of an action based on rules. It is sometimes described as "duty-" or "obligation-" or "rule-" based ethics, because rules "bind you to your duty."

What is deontological ethics?

Deontologists

- An act is right if, and only if, it conforms to the relevant moral obligation; and it is wrong if, and only if, it violates the relevant moral obligation
- They argue that the consequences of an action are irrelevant to moral evaluation
- They emphasize that the value of an action lies in motive, especially motives of obligation

Kant's Moral Theory

- Historical Background
 - Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)
- Kantianism is based on the writing of philosopher Kant.
- He believed that people should be guided by **universal moral laws**. For these laws to apply to all rational humans, they must be based on reason.
- Kant said that the only thing that is good without qualification is a **good will**.

Kant's Moral Theory

- Two concepts in Kant's moral theory
 - Good will
 - Duty



Humans are special

Kant's Moral Theory

- Two principles
 - The **Hypothetical Imperative**
 - The **Categorical Imperative**

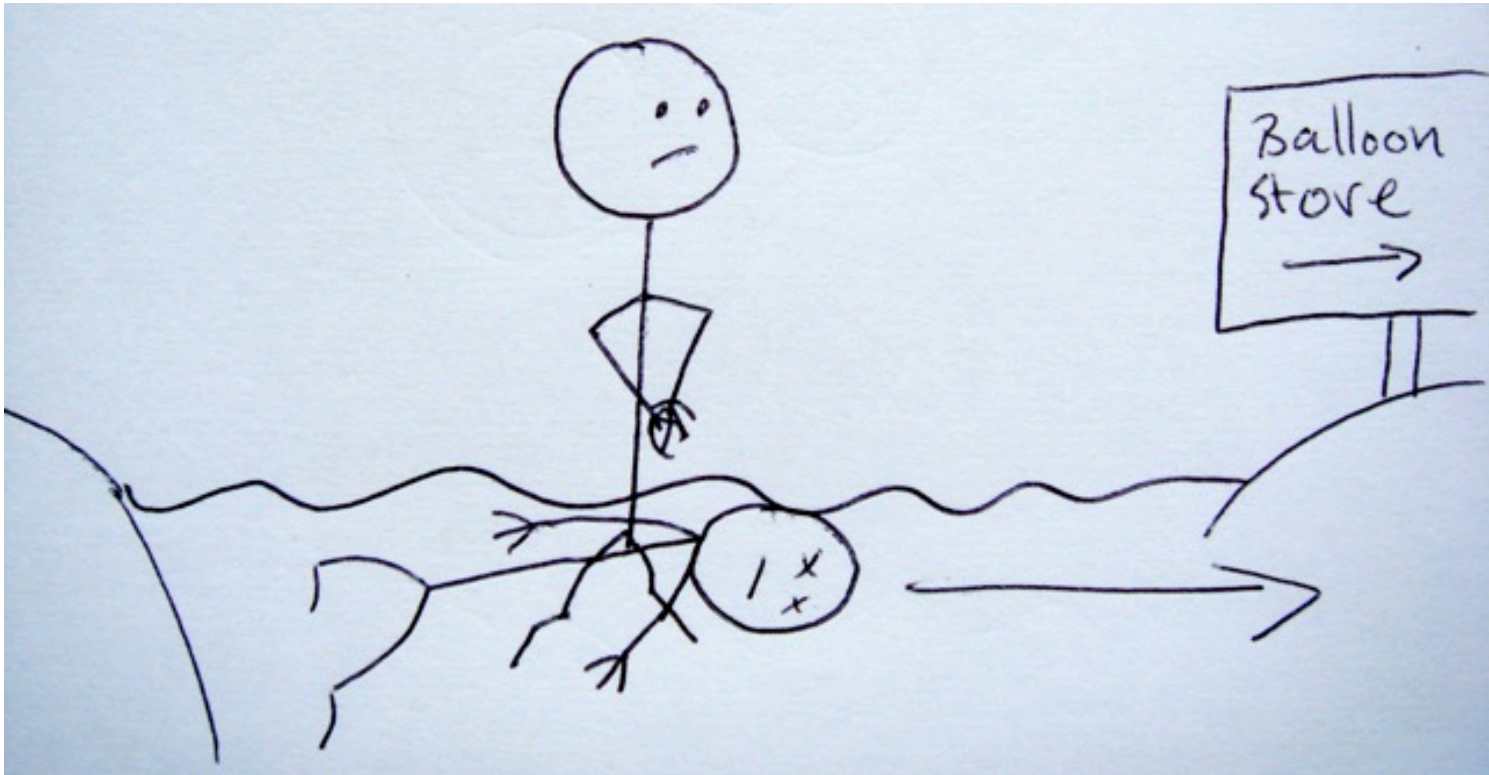
Hypothetical Imperative

- It defines the means taken to achieve an end
- These imperatives command conditionally on your having a relevant desire.
- “If I want to obtain *e*, then I must obtain means *m*.”
 - E.g. “If I want to buy a house, then I must work hard to make enough money for a down payment.”
 - “I must study to pass this exam.”

Categorical Imperative

- Why categorical imperative?
 - Human beings are imperfect creatures and hence need rules imposed upon
 - These rules enjoin us to do or not to do something thus we conceive them as necessitating our action

Categorical Imperative: Two Formulations






In Short... summarizing Kant's Moral Theory



In Short... summarizing Kant's Moral Theory



An Example: Lying



Many of Kant's contemporaries
thought that his insistence on
absolute rules was strange



The Case For and Against Kantianism

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Week 3: Social Contract Theory
January 31, 2021





Context: Removal of Saddam Hussain's government in Iraq in 2003

Question: Was the response of the Iraqi people typical given a lack of governmental authority and control?

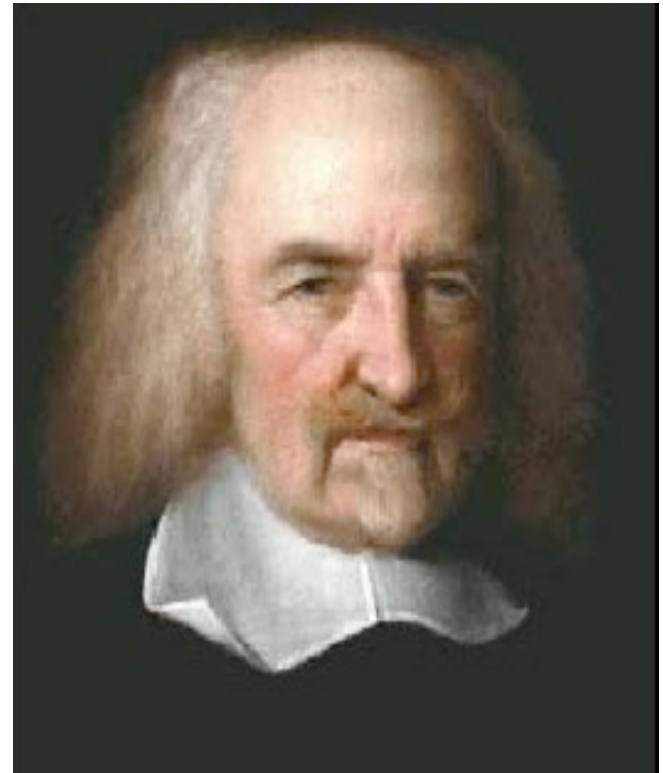


Social Contract Theory

Thomas Hobbes

Social Contract Theory

Lived during the English civil war era and saw the consequences of social anarchy




History

- Before society we were in the State of Nature.
- An individual dictated what he/she could/could not do.
- Survival of the Fittest



Life in a State of Nature – Hobbes called this a “state of WAR”



Why the state of nature is bad

No industry

No society

No agriculture

No pleasure

No seafaring

Continual Fear



Why does this occur?

Contract Law and Morality

Enter into a covenant with other people.

This is the basis of and reason for acting morally.

Explains the foundations of contracts: you both agree to give up some liberties.

In a state of nature, “upon any reasonable suspicion” the contract is void. (*Leviathan*, 1.14.18)



The Social Contract

It is the set of rules that rational people will agree to obey, for their mutual benefit, provided that other people will obey them as well.

Position of SCT

- “ . . . parties do not know their conception of the good or their special psychological propensities . . . ”
.
- The terms of the social contact are chosen behind a veil of ignorance.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

- Believed that humans are born inherently good. He coined the term “Noble Savage”.
- However, once the idea of private property was introduced mankind experienced a “fall from grace”.
- Individuals with many possessions saw that it would be in their best interest to create a government to protect their possessions.

John Locke


- British philosopher
- One of the first great defenses of modern empiricism and concerns itself with determining the limits of human understanding in respect to a wide spectrum of topics

Two Objections to Hobbes SCT


- One: The social contract is a fiction both historically and currently
- Two: The problem of duties to being that can't be part of the contract and can't reciprocate



Rawl's Principles of Justice



Why does social contract theory
work? – Example of Bill wanting to
evade taxes



Which laws/moral rules are legitimate to be considered under a social contract?



When is it permissible to
break the rules/laws?

Social Contract Theory

- The Case For
- The Case Against



Criticisms of Rawls' Principles of Justice



Today's takes on the SCT