

# CS 3001-C: Computing, Society, and Professionalism

Munmun De Choudhury | Associate Professor | School of Interactive Computing

Week 3: Deontology

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# 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**

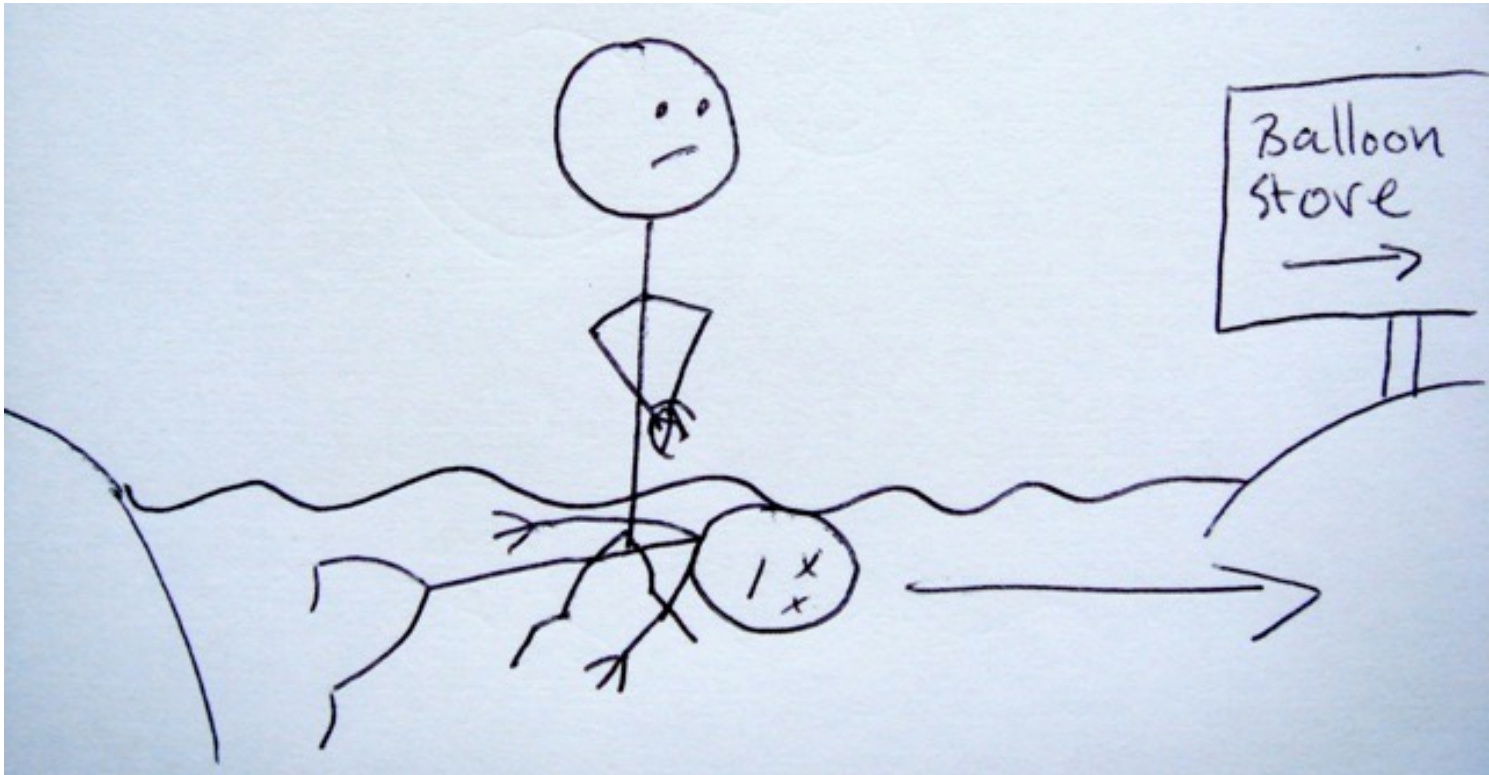
# Hypothetical Imperative

- 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