CS 3001-A: Computing, Society, and Professionalism

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Week 3: Deontology
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Harry Truman and Elizabeth Anscombe

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

Utilitarianism	Kantianism
• Consequentialist	• Deontological
• The consequences are most important.	• The motive is what matters, not the consequences.
• Pleasure over Pain; calculation of "utility" is mathematical.	• The Categorial 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

- Ex. Sending flowers to sick aunt; replying to your mom / partner's haircut

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**
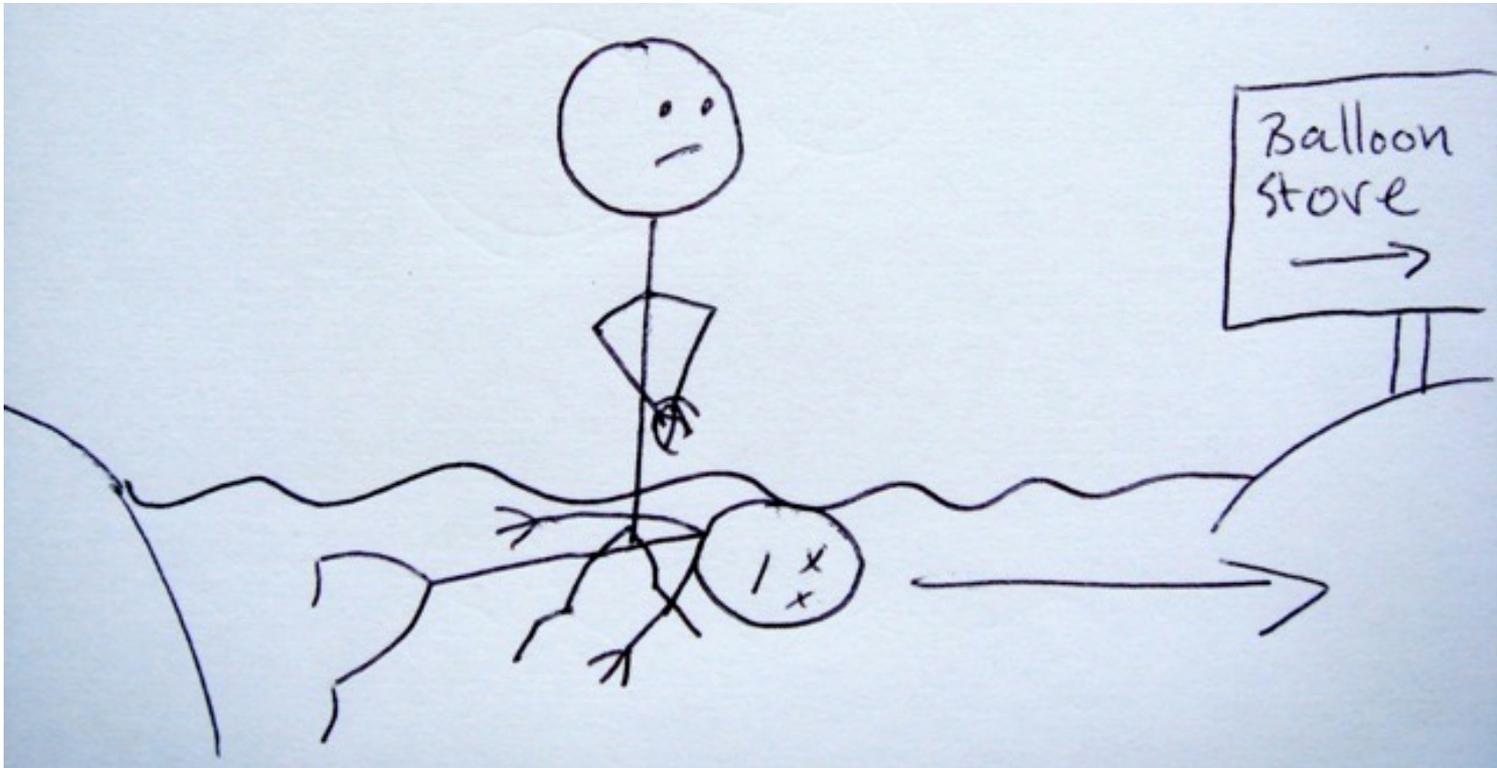 - The **Categorical Imperative**

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*, <u>then</u> 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

- What is a universal moral law?

Categorical Imperative: Two Formulations

In Short… summarizing Kant's Moral Theory

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Right acts are ones that follow rules that are universalizable

Rules must not be self-defeating

Rules must be reversible

An Example: Lying

In a futuristic society, advanced AI systems have been developed to assist medical professionals in diagnosing and treating patients. These AI systems are highly sophisticated, capable of analyzing vast amounts of medical data and providing accurate and timely recommendations. However, a dilemma arises when a critical medical decision must be made in a life-or-death situation.

A patient with a complex medical condition is admitted to a hospital. The medical team is faced with a difficult decision regarding the most appropriate course of treatment. The AI system, based on its analysis of the patient's medical history and current condition, recommends a treatment plan that aligns with established medical protocols and has a high probability of success. However, the patient's family strongly opposes the AI's recommendation, expressing concerns about potential side effects and personal beliefs about alternative treatments.

Should the medical team should follow the AI's recommendation, or consider the wishes and concerns of the patient's family?

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

The Case For and Against Kantianism