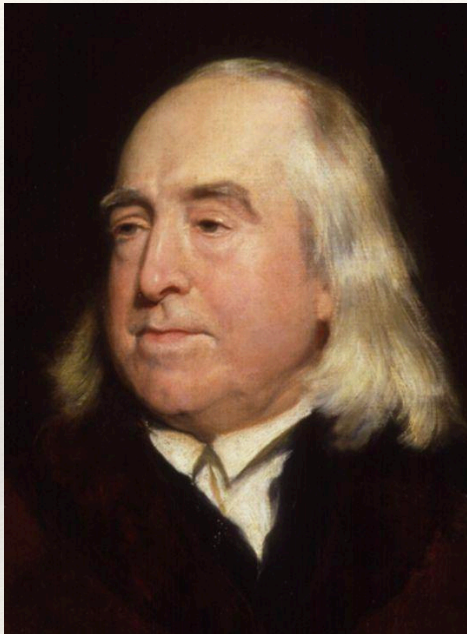

Deontology

Utilitarianism



Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)

Intrinsic values

Pain

Pleasure

$$\text{Utility} = \text{Pleasure} - \text{Pain}$$

Utilitarianism and Social Justice?

“Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature — that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance — and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth.”

“No, I wouldn’t consent,” said Alyosha softly

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov (1879)



Doing utilitarian
ethics because
you agree with them



Doing
utilitarian ethics
because they're
easier than Kant

Immanuel Kant



Born Emanuel Kant, 1724-1804

“The father of modern ethics”, “the father of modern philosophy”

Main treatises:

Critique of Pure Reason (1781)

Groundwork on the metaphysics of morals (1785)

Considered to be the father of deontology
(from the Greek words for duty (“deon”) and
science (or study) of (“logos”))

Immanuel Kant

- ❖ What is freedom? How can we act freely?
- ❖ What is the supreme principle of morality?

Immanuel Kant

- ❖ Rejects utilitarianism
- ❖ All human beings have dignity that commands our respect
- ❖ It comes from the fact that
 - ❖ We are rational beings
 - ❖ We are autonomous (acting and choosing freely)

I DON'T WANNA TAKE
A BATH! I HATE
TAKING BATHS!



THEY CAN MAKE ME DO IT,
BUT THEY CAN'T MAKE ME
DO IT WITH DIGNITY.



Immanuel Kant: Freedom

Kant agrees with the utilitarians: we are subject to pleasures and pains. However, those are not our “masters”.

When we respond to pleasure or pain, we act to natural necessity.



Immanuel Kant: Freedom

Autonomy

- ❖ To act freely
- ❖ To act according to a law I give myself

Heteronomy

- ❖ To act according to desires I have not chosen myself

We are not only sentient beings, governed by the pleasure and pain delivered by our senses; we are also rational beings, capable of reason. If reason determines my will, then the will becomes the power to choose independent of the dictates of nature or inclination.

Michael Sandel

Immanuel Kant: Freedom

- ❖ If we act autonomously, we do something for its own sake, “as an end in itself”.
- ❖ We cease to be instruments to purposes given outside us.
- ❖ This capacity to act freely is what gives human life its special dignity
- ❖ **Respecting human dignity means regarding people not just as a means to an end, but also as ends in themselves.**
- ❖ This is why it is wrong to use people for the sake of other people happiness

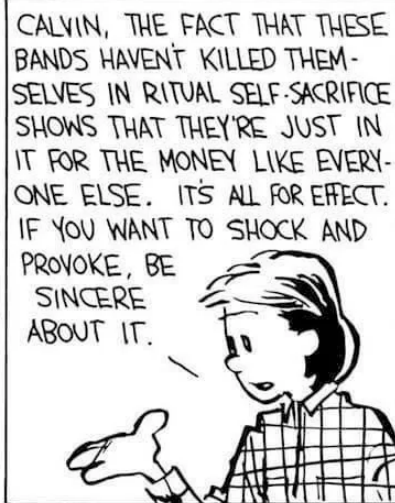
Immanuel Kant: Morality

What makes an action moral is the motivation for which the act is done

(Do the right thing for the right reason)

Only action done for the sake of the moral law (duty) have moral worth

When I act according to duty, only then am I acting freely (autonomously)



Immanuel Kant: Morality

*A good will isn't good because of what it effects or accomplishes, it's good in itself.
Even if by utmost effort the good will accomplishes nothing it would still shine like a jewel for its own sake as something which has full value in itself.*

The Better Business Bureau

What Does the
BBB® Accreditation
Seal Mean?



The Better Business Bureau

What Does the
BBB® Accreditation
Seal Mean?



“

"For us, it's really important to be part of the BBB because it gives us credibility and helps us get more customers."

Immanuel Kant: Contrasts

Morality

Motives

Duties vs inclinations

Freedom

Determination of will

Autonomous vs heteronomous

Reason

Imperatives

Imperatives

*If the action would be good solely as a means to something else, the imperative is hypothetical; if the action is represented as good in itself and therefore as necessary....
For a will which of itself accords with reason, then the imperative is categorical.*

Immanuel Kant: Contrasts

Morality

Motives

Duties vs inclinations

Freedom

Determination of will

Autonomous vs heteronomous

Reason

Imperatives

Categorical vs Hypothetical

Immanuel Kant: Contrasts

Morality

Motives

Duties

Freedom

Determination of will

Autonomous

Reason

Imperatives

Categorical

Categorical Imperatives

The formula of universal law:

“Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”

Categorical Imperatives

The formula of universal law:

“Act only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”

This is the test for your action, not the reason for acting.

*You promise to take your nephew to the park on Saturday. But on Wednesday your friend calls up with tickets to a gig your favorite band are playing on Saturday.
Do you break your promise or not?*

*You promise to take your nephew to the park on Saturday. But on Wednesday your friend calls up with tickets to a gig your favorite band are playing on Saturday.
Do you break your promise or not?*

The Kantian Analysis:

For Kant, the answer would be clear: **You must keep your promise to your nephew.**

Here's why:

Testing the Maxim: If you break the promise, your maxim might be: "I'll break promises when something I prefer more comes along."

Now universalize this:

- What if *everyone* broke promises whenever a better opportunity arose?
- Promises would become meaningless - no one could rely on anyone's word
- The very institution of promising depends on people keeping their commitments even when it's inconvenient

You promise to take your nephew to the park on Saturday. But on Wednesday your friend calls up with tickets to a gig your favorite band are playing on Saturday. Do you break your promise or not?

The utilitarian perspective:

Breaking the promise:

- *Pleasure*: You get to see your favorite band (potentially intense, memorable pleasure)
- *Pain*: Your nephew's disappointment; possible damage to his trust in you; your own guilt
- *Broader effects*: If breaking promises becomes habitual, it undermines the general social utility of promise-keeping

Keeping the promise:

- *Pleasure*: Your nephew's joy; satisfaction of being trustworthy; maintaining the relationship
- *Pain*: Your disappointment at missing the concert; possible regret

Mill's Likely Conclusion:

Mill would probably say **you should keep the promise**,

You are helping out your auntie by taking her dog Rex for a walk to the newsagents. Suddenly the dogs fur catches fire from the flick of someone's cigarette butt. Rex is in pain but no water is available, only 2 pints of milk on No.5's doorstep.

Do you steal the milk or leave it?

You are helping out your auntie by taking her dog Rex for a walk to the newsagents. Suddenly the dog's fur catches fire from the flick of someone's cigarette butt. Rex is in pain but no water is available, only 2 pints of milk on No.5's doorstep.

Do you steal the milk or leave it?

Utilitarian Answer: Take the Milk Immediately

For Mill, this is actually an easy case. Here's why:

Taking the milk:

- *Pleasure/Prevention of Pain:* Rex's intense suffering stops immediately; your auntie avoids the anguish of her injured pet; you avoid the guilt and distress of watching an animal burn
- *Pain:* The homeowner loses 2 pints of milk (minor inconvenience, easily replaced)
- *Net result:* Massively positive - severe suffering prevented at minimal cost

Not taking the milk:

- *Pleasure:* The homeowner keeps their milk (which they don't even know is at risk)
- *Pain:* Rex experiences severe pain and possibly permanent injury or death; you suffer psychological trauma from witnessing this; your auntie suffers; potentially expensive vet bills
- *Net result:* Enormously negative - catastrophic harm for trivial benefit

You are helping out your auntie by taking her dog Rex for a walk to the newsagents. Suddenly the dog's fur catches fire from the flick of someone's cigarette butt. Rex is in pain but no water is available, only 2 pints of milk on No.5's doorstep.

Do you steal the milk or leave it?

The Kantian Analysis:

For Kant, the answer would be clear: **You should not take the milk**

Testing the Maxim: If you take the milk, your maxim might be: "I'll take others' property without permission when it's necessary to prevent harm."

Universalizing this:

- If everyone took property whenever they judged it necessary to prevent harm, property rights would become meaningless
- People couldn't rely on their possessions being where they left them
- The institution of private property would collapse
- This fails the universalizability test

Categorical Imperatives

“But suppose, however, there were somethings whose existence has in itself an absolute value.... an end in itself... then in it, and in it alone, would there be the ground of a possible categorical imperative.”

Categorical Imperatives

“But suppose, however, there were somethings whose existence has in itself an absolute value.... an end in itself... then in it, and in it alone, would there be the ground of a possible categorical imperative.”

“I say that man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means for arbitrary use by this or that will.”

Categorical Imperatives

The formula of humanity as an end:

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

Categorical Imperatives

The formula of humanity as an end:

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

It is OK to use someone (even ourselves) as a means, AS LONG AS we treat in a way that is consistent with respect to their dignity

Immanuel Kant: Questions

1. *How can we reconcile duty and autonomy?*

Acting out of duty is to follow a moral law that you impose on yourself

2. *How many moral laws are there?*

The moral law I choose is based on the same reason than someone else's moral law

3. *How is a categorical imperative possible?*

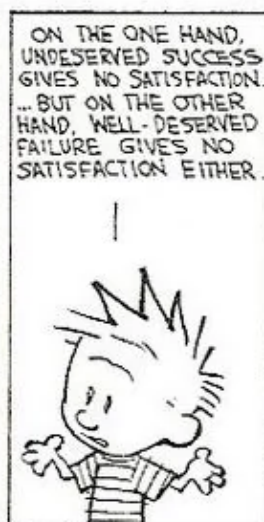
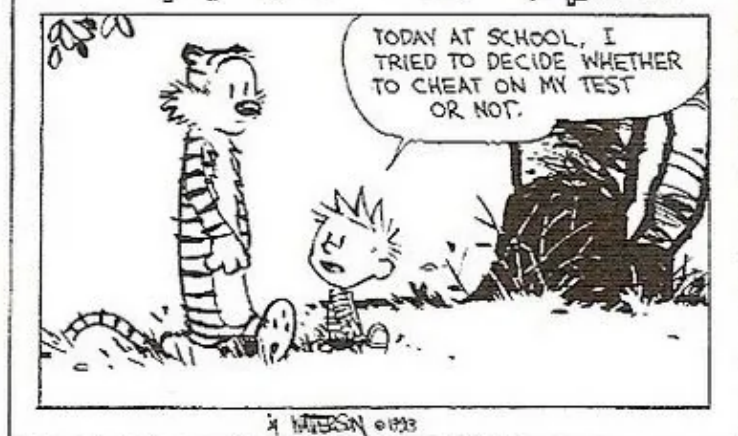
The idea of freedom makes me a member of an intelligible world

Immanuel Kant

Is Kant's definition of morality too stringent?

It is fine to have emotions and inclinations when thinking about an action,
as long as they do not provide the reasons for acting.

calvin and hobbes



THEN I THOUGHT, LOOK, CHEATING ON ONE LITTLE TEST ISN'T SUCH A BIG DEAL. IT DOESN'T HURT ANYONE.

...BUT THEN I WONDERED IF I WAS JUST RATIONALIZING MY UNWILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT THE CONSEQUENCE OF NOT STUDYING.

