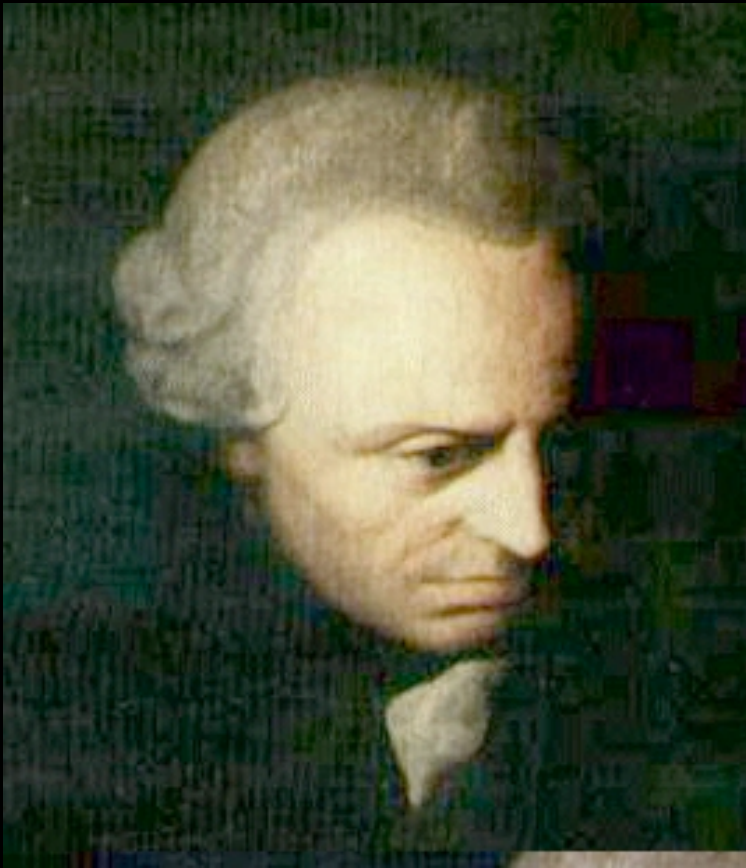


# *Deontology*



- Immanuel Kant  
(1724-1804)
- Founder of  
Deontology

# Deontology

The right act is that which is in accordance with the correct moral rule (GK. *deon*) or principle (Kant calls these “maxims”)

- Rejects hedonism
- Rejects consequentialism
- Different from Rule Utilitarianism--the rules of deontology aren't based on how much happiness they would produce.

# *Deontology*



The only thing which is intrinsically good is a good will.

A good will acts independently of the consequences.

# *Deontology*

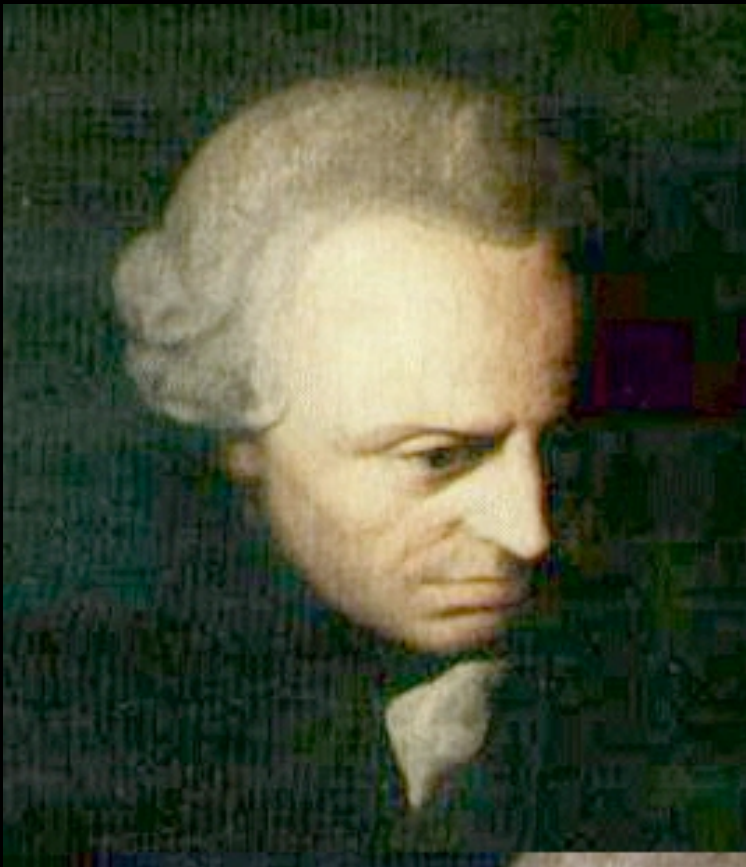


Other SUPPOSED intrinsic goods:

- Happiness
- Intelligence
- Wit
- Freedom

All of the above can be bad if not combined with a good will.

# *Deontology*



Kant: 2 types of motives

- Desire
- Reason

# *Deontology*



3 motives for the shopkeeper's honesty

- Direct inclination (desire)
- Indirect inclination (desire)
- Duty (reason)

# *Deontology*

DUTY means performing an action

- Out respect for the moral law
- From principle
- Because it's right (or wrong)

Mixed motives OK if duty is primary.

# *Deontology*

If duty and desire coincide, you're just lucky.

- Ex: The duty to preserve your life

Having good desires itself is not praiseworthy.

- The Compassionate Philanthropist
- Mr. Feziwig



# Deontology



## Objection

- Kant's view implies Mother Theresa is no better than Scrooge!

## Reply

- Both are motivated by desire
- Only the *consequences* differ
- Morality is *independent* of consequences
- People can't control what they desire
- They *can* control their rational choices

# *Deontology*



- To act morally, you must appreciate the act's moral qualities
- Kant is a psychological egoist with regard to desire
- Moral action isn't motivated by desire, but by reason
- Morality is doing what you should do, whether you want to or not

# *Deontology*



## Imperative

- A general policy or principle of action
- A command we give ourselves

## 2 Kinds of Imperatives

- Hypothetical: tell you how to achieve some desire.
- Categorical: tells you what you must do **regardless** of your desires.

# *Deontology*



## Hypothetical Imperatives

- Practical guides unrelated to morality
- “If you want X, do Y.”
- If you want to lose weight, eat fewer calories and exercise more.
- If you want a safe yet profitable investment, select a diversified mutual fund.
- If you want to improve your grades, spend more time studying.

# *Deontology*



## Categorical Imperatives

- Absolute guides which comprise morality
- “Don’t do Y!” “Do X!” or
- Don’t kill innocent people!
- Don’t cheat on your ethics test!
- Help those in need!
- Keep your promises!

# *Deontology*



## The Categorical Imperative

- The principle which unites all individual categorical imperatives
- Can be formulated various ways
- Each formulation acts as a test

# Deontology

Maxim = Principle of Action

**Universal Law** Formulation of the CI:

*Act only on a maxim you could will to be a universal law.*

Since morality is universal, any maxim must be universalizable.

Ex: The False Promise

You can't imagine a world where everyone acts on the maxim: **contradiction in concept**

# *Deontology*



## Other examples

- Suicide
- Murder
- Theft

## The above

- contain **contradictions in concept**
- Generate **negative duties**



# *Deontology*



Ex: The Rugged Individualist

You **can** imagine a world where no one ever helps without a reward.

You **can't** consistently will such a world:  
**contradiction in will**

Contradictions in **will** generate **positive** duties.

Ex: The Unambitious Person

# *Deontology*

The Humanity Formulation of the CI:

*Act so as to treat humanity as an end in itself, never merely as a means.*

It's wrong to use people.

People can't be treated like tools or inanimate objects.

You must consider the goals and interests of others.

# *Deontology*



## Examples

- The Jealousy Plot
- The Tyrannical Boss
- Theft, murder
- Prostitution

Objection: Doesn't modern life require impersonal interactions

Reply: Maybe common courtesy is enough.

# *Deontology*

## *Criticisms*



- Doesn't tell you what to do when two duties conflict
- The consequences do seem to matter in extreme cases

# *Deontology*

## *Criticisms*



- Too absolutist, inflexible, severe - no exceptions to moral rules
- Assigns no moral value to attitudes, feelings, or actions motivated by them
- Pessimist about human nature (egoism)

# *Deontology*

## *Criticisms*



- Assumes all rational people will agree on moral principles
- Ways to cheat with the categorical imperative
- Kant's conclusions don't necessarily always follow his principles, e.g. suicide, prostitution