

Kant and Deontological Theories

US275 Scientific Ethics
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Kant and deontology

- Immanuel Kant
 - can use reason to work out
 - consistent, nonoverridable set of moral principles
- deontology
 - morality of the act
 - end never justifies the means



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Kant's theories

- Categorical Imperatives
- Principle of Ends
- Principle of Autonomy



Kant and Friends at Table,
Emil Doerstling, ~1900

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Intuitionism

- Synderesis
 - special mental process
 - innate awareness of morality
- natural law theory
 - humans have intuitive awareness of morality



St. Thomas Aquinas confounding Averroes
Giovanni di Paolo, 1445-1450

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Act-Intuitionism

- each act is a unique ethical occasion
 - must consult conscience or intuition
 - to determine rightness or wrongness of act

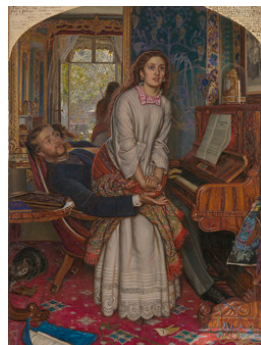


La Conscience
Lionel Le Falher,

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Problems with Act-Intuitionism

- Disagreements based on not looking more deeply into our conscience?
- can often express intuition as standard rules of reasoning
- relying on intuition for similar situations could result in inconsistent moral actions

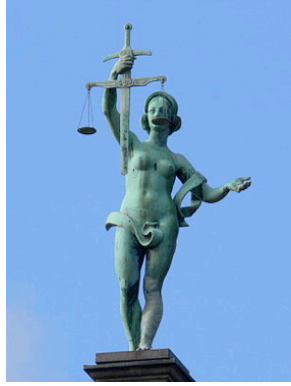


The Awakening Conscience
William Holman Hunt, 1853

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Rule-Intuitionism

- decide if action is right or wrong
 - by consulting moral rules received by intuition
- rules should provide guidance regardless of situation and outcome

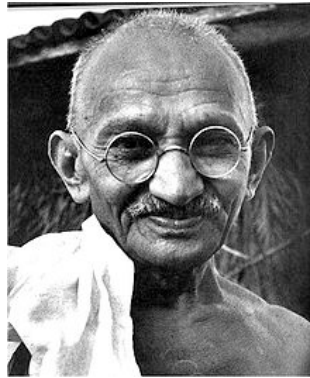


Conscience and Law,
Justicia sculpture on the courthouse in Bamberg, Bavaria, Germany

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Kant's categorial imperative

- categorial imperative
 - absolute command
- absolute, universal truth
 - morality is valuable in its own right



There is a higher court than courts of justice and that is the court of conscience. It supercedes all other courts.

~ Mahandas Gandhi

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Good will

- good will
 - only absolute intrinsic good
 - good will makes things morally valuable
- other intrinsic goods
 - can be corrupted
 - unless combined with good will



Tibetan Bodhisattva of Compassion (Avalokiteshvara),
Made in West Tibet, Ngari, from the Guge Kingdom,
dated between 1000 and 1050 AD.

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Hypothetical Imperatives

- means-ends command
- example:
 - If you want an “A” in the scientific ethics course,
 - then do your assignments!



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Categorical Imperatives

- unqualified commands
 - must perform moral duty solely for its own sake
 - “duty for duty’s sake”
- Example:
 - Do your assignments!



Sorting into categories...

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Universalizability

- for a principle to be rational or moral
 - it must be universalizable
 - must apply to everyone
 - must apply to every case that is relevantly similar



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Universalizability

- if an action can be universalized
 - then we accept the maxim
 - the action is moral
- if an action cannot be universalized
 - then we reject the maxim
 - the action is immoral



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Principle of Ends

- Each person is rational
 - with dignity and worthy of respect
- Act to treat humanity
 - respect as individuals
 - treat them as ends
 - not merely as a means



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Principle of Autonomy

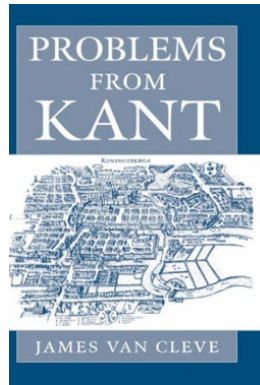
- act consistently with making universal laws
 - we can discover moral laws on our own
 - do not need external authority
- compared with Heteronomy
 - actions motivated by authority of others (religion, state, parents, peers, etc).



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Problems with Kant

- Categorical imperatives
 - do not allow for exceptions
- overridability of principles
 - when imperatives are in conflict
- Kant - rational intuitionist
 - use reason to make decision



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Assignment

The activity for this topic will be assigned in combination with the Virtue theory mini-lecture.



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Readings

Chapter 8: Kant and Deontological Theories

Pojman & Fieser (2009) Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong



Panel of Jeremiah or Ezra, holding/reading a scroll, in the Dura Europos synagogue. Wikimedia Commons

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Any Questions?

Email me at:
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<http://www.vippitbullkennels.com/images/animated-question-mark.gif>