



Kantian Ethics

The nature of Imperatives

- . To act for the sake of duty what should we do?**

The nature of Imperatives



we have to act out of respect
for **the moral law**.

The moral law is what he calls
the **“Categorical Imperative”**.

= commands.

There are three formulations:

1) *“act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.”*

2. *“So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.”*

3. *“...every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a lawmaking member in the universal kingdom of ends.”*

Types of CI

- **For kant there exist two types :**
- **1. Hypothetical Imperatives**
- **2. Categorical Imperatives**

1. The categorical imperative:

a command is categorical when you ought to follow it irrespective of how they **feel** about following it, irrespective of what **consequences** might follow, or **who** may or may not have told them to follow it.

Examples

‘You ought not lie.’ = categorical imperative

1. Hypothetical Imperatives

Example

academic experience

fruitful relationships.



Hypothetical Imperatives

If you want= you ought

The nature of Imperatives

- 'We have a certain **wish** and recognizing that a certain course of **action** would help us to fulfil this wish, we follow this course of action. Kant called this **the hypothetical imperative**; telling us what we OUGHT to do if we want to fulfil our wishes.

What is a Maxim?

Consider this example:



What is a Maxim?

- Perhaps I think that by **falsely promising** you, I will pay you back I will be more likely to get a loan from you.
- In that case my maxim is :
“whenever I can benefit from making a false promise I should do so”.

What is a Maxim?

- **I decide to exercise** because **I feel depressed**, then I may be said
- the maxim **“Whenever I feel depressed I will exercise”**.

What is a Maxim?

- A maxim is a rule that connects an action to the reasons for the action, i.e., a **motivation/goal**.
- "I ought to **(insert action)** _____ in order to **(insert, motivation/goal/context)** _____."

What is a Maxim?

- A maxim is a **general principle** or rule upon which we act.

PRACTICE

Identify the Maxims of the following acts:

1. I ought to rob from the rich in order to give to the poor.
2. I ought not to lie to people in order to take advantage of them.
3. I ought to cheat on the test in order to get a good grade.

formulations of CI:

- Kant's idea is that we use them as this "test" to see what
 - maxims are **morally permissible**.
 - If we act in accordance with those then we are acting from **duty**;
 - our actions have **moral worth**.

CI-1 formulations :

“Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”

The “test” /CI-1

- (i) Consider **the maxim** up on which about acting and whether you can act ;
- (ii) act as if in your will you were defining a maximum rule for all to follow (become **a universal law.**)
- If a maxim fails on either (i) or (ii) then there is no good reason for you to act on i.e morally impermissible to do so.

Testing Universal Maxim Example

- . The idea here is that some actions cannot be universal and necessary because they **undermine** the relationship between **the action** and **the goal** when universalized.

Example

- **lie to people in order to take advantage of them.**
- *Do I have a moral duty not to lie to people in order to take advantage of them?*

(1) Formulate the opposite maxim:

- I ought **not** to lie to people in order to take advantage of them.

Example

- (2) Formulate the opposite maxim:
- I ought to lie to people in order to take advantage of them
- Test to see if the maxim is universal and necessary by testing to see if it is **impossible** for the opposite maxim to be **universal and necessary**. That is, determine if making **the opposite maxim** universal and necessary would be **self-contradictory**.

Example

(3b) Is it possible that lying to people in order to take advantage of them is something that everyone always did?

(3c) **No**, (1) If everyone lied when they stood to gain from the lie, then all statements given under such circumstances would be lies, and hence **no one would be fooled by the lie.**

Example

- (4) Result, you have shown the impossibility of the maxim (I ought to lie to people in order to take advantage of them) being universal and necessary, so you can conclude that the maxim I ought **not** to lie to people in order to take advantage of them **is** universal and necessary.

CI-2 formulations

“2. So act that you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means”

CI-2 formulations

- See if your actions are using others or affecting others, in the meaning of never using them as a **mean** to achieve but always as an end.

Reflection questions

If your classmate use your essay without your knowledge. How do you act or feel?



Example CI-2 formulations

He Has not treated you as a rational agent. He would have asked you for your essay and you had **freely** chosen to let him has it. But given that I did not ask you, I was in a sense making choices **on your behalf** and thus did not treat you as **a rational agent**. So according to Kant I should always treat you as **an end** not a means.

CI-3 formulations

“3. ...every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a lawmaking member in the universal kingdom of ends.”

The third CI formulation

"Every rational being must act as if they were a lawmaking member in the universal kingdom of ends."

CI-3 formulation example

Suppose you're a university student and you're faced with a situation where you have the opportunity to cheat on an exam to get a good grade. Applying CI-3, you should act as if you are creating a rule for the entire university, where everyone is honest and values learning. You should consider whether your action respects the principles of a community where everyone is striving for knowledge and personal growth, and then decide not to cheat, as it goes against those principles.

Types of Duty

1. **perfect Duties** are mostly described as 'negative duties' 'do not steal', 'do not lie'.
2. **Imperfect Duties** are described as A duty that one needs to do. There are 2 imperfect duties:
Duty of self-improvement. Toward oneself
Duty to aid others. Toward the other.

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1. **perfect Duties** are mostly described as 'negative duties' 'do not steal', 'do not lie'.
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Duty of self-improvement.

E.g learning English .

Duty to aid others.

E.g charity

Storytelly corner



Speak about :

- 1. a situation in which you have been treated as means to one selfish end. what is the moral of your story?**
- 2. State some examples of Imperatives in ISlam**

Real example

A teacher had been elected as a member of a scientific committee. She realised, later, that the staff did so just to not allow another teacher to be part of the SC, who would hinder the activities of the SC.

1. Is the act of the teacher (the elected one) of a moral worth?