Kant – Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals

**Big picture:** The right action is the one that duty requires, and it must be performed *because* duty requires it. Duties are determined by the categorical imperative.

**Extrinsic vs. Intrinsic Goodness**

* *Extrinsic goodness*: good for some purpose/goal [e.g. money]
* *Intrinsic goodness*: good in itself [e.g. a good will; Kant thinks *only* a good will is intrinsically good]

**Acting in accord with dutyvs. from the motivation of duty**

* Shopkeeper sets his goods at a fair price. Why?
  + Sense of duty
  + Self-interest
  + Immediate inclination
* An action is morally correct only if it’s motivated from a sense of duty
* [Motivation -> Action -> Consequences]
  + Kant says we evaluate the moral quality of an action based on its motivations, not its consequences
* Further examples:
  + Preserving one’s life
  + Helping others (e.g. donate to charity)

**The Categorical Imperative**

* Determines our duties
* Imperatives are “ought” claims, i.e. claims about what one ought to do.
* *Hypothetical Imperatives*: “declare a possible action to be practically necessary as a means to the attainment of something else that one wills”
* *Categorical Imperative*: “represents an action as objectively necessary in itself apart from its relation to any further end”
* According to Kant, there is only one categorical imperative (though there are several equivalent formulations of it):
  + **Categorical Imperative, Formulation 1:** Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law

**Examples of Kantian Duties**

* Promise-keeping
* No lying
* Develop one’s own natural talents

**Categorical Imperative, Formulation 2:** Act in such a way that you always treat people never simply as a means, but also as an end.

* Allegedly, this renders the same verdicts about our duties as Formulation 1, e.g.:
  + Promise-keeping
  + Develop one’s own natural talents

**Evaluating Kantian Ethics – some problem cases**

* “One thought too” many example
* Nazi Germany example