

# Deontology (Kant)

GCEA Curs 10

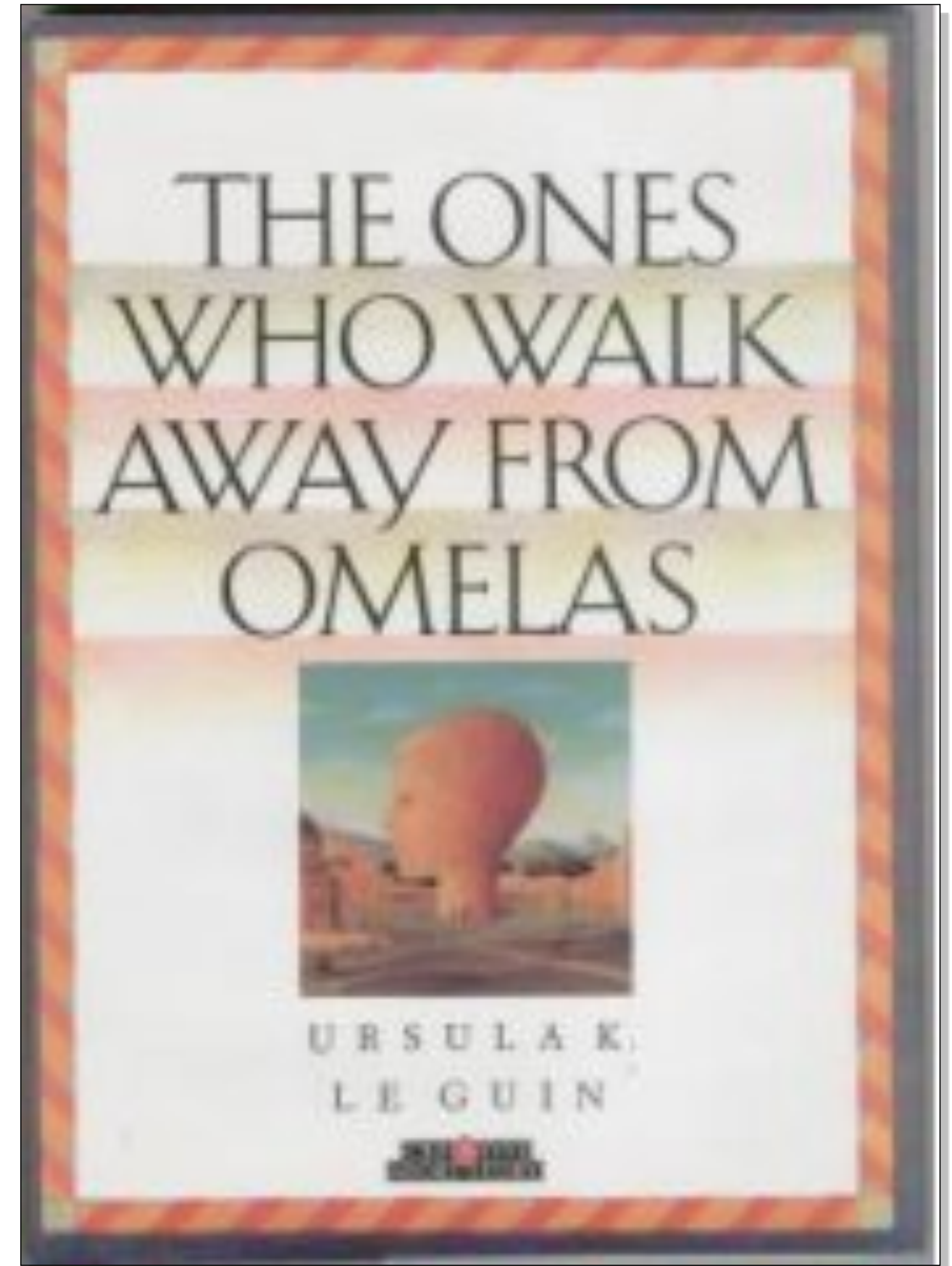
6 Decembrie 2022

# Those who walk away from Omelas

Română



Engleză



# Coffee Break :)

- There are two planets (A and B).
- On planet A everyone is taking care of everyone, they are constantly checking on others. The ones in need get pushed forward in line to get help quicker. They are ready to sacrifice themselves, even for strangers.
- On planet B everyone is concerned about themselves. They are mean to each other and usually they don't care about others. The ones in need are simply ignored (unless there is some benefit from helping them).
- On which planet do we live?

# Deontology

1. O acțiune este corectă dacă este în acord cu un set de datorii morale.
2. Consecințele acțiunii nu sunt relevante.

# Deontology

- = the study of rules
- ‘Deon’ (Greek) = duty, what has to be done necessarily
- A duty-based ethic, that focuses on the **act (intentions), not on its consequences.**
- Remember: Mill’s ethics focused on the consequences

# Deontological ethics

- Normative ethics
- Concerned with how/why do we accept a specific set of rules
- Consequences don't matter!
- intention(s) is(are) relevant = I am acting in a good way only if I have the right reason(s).

# Deontological ethics

- It does not matter how good some consequences can be, they are irrelevant to the way we evaluate the act.
- “The Right has priority over the Good” - if an act is not in accord with the Right, it is forbidden, no matter the Good that it might produce



# Deontology vs. Mill

Utilitarianism	Deontology
An action is right depending on the consequence it causes	An action is right depending on its conformity to a certain moral norm (regardless of the consequence)
<p>Example:</p> <p>Utilitarianism: You can lie in specific situations, if the consequences are desirable (for example: to save someone)</p> <p>Deontology: there is no situation in which you are supposed to lie.</p>	

- What do you think about this?
- What is your perspective regarding the fact that consequences are irrelevant?
- At first sight, what theory looks more appealing to you? (Why?)

# So...

- Deontological theories claim that morally good actions are those in accordance with certain rules/duties/maxims
- A maxim is a principle that underlines an act or set of actions.

# Deontological theories

- **Divine command theory:** we have the duty to obey God and, then we have the duty to do whatever God has commanded us to do
- The Divine command theory is a moral theory (theology), but **it is not normative moral philosophy**
- Normative moral philosophy = is based on logical reasoning or rationality
- Following commands does not require reason

# Deontological theories

- **The Golden rule:** Do to others as you want them to do to you.
- What do you think about this rule? Can it properly work as a main point for a normative theory?

# Golden Rule (Issues)

- It is based on experience.
- I discover throughout my life what I like and what I dislike.
- ‘I’ - it seems this rule would lead each of us to different results
- It depends on the moral agent rather than on the person being acted upon.
- For example: I might like loud music, so I make you listen to it, aiming to do something good.
- (You can also think of even more radical examples)

# Kant's Moral Philosophy

- Imperative = a command to act
- Two kinds of imperatives:
  - **Hypothetical** (they are not absolute)
  - Example: If you want this, you have to do that.
  - If you want to pass the test, you have to study
  - **Categorical** (definitive)
  - Absolute and unconditional moral commands
  - You have to do this!

# Kantian Ethics

- A woman was near death from an unusual type of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town has recently discovered. The drug was super expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$400 for the radium and charged \$4000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$2500. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: "I discovered the drug and I am going to make money from it, so no."
- So the husband got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

Should the husband have done that?



# What would Mill Do?

- Depends on the consequences.
- But there is at least one situation that would consider the husband to be moral.
- Should be noted that most probably Mill would blame the druggist.

# What about Kant?

- Reason is the judge and the source for morality
- Kant's perspective is based on Rationality.
- Moral objectives can be discerned through reason.
- When will is guided by rationality, it is good.
- Ethical duty is not based on the opinion of an individual (group, tradition, culture and so on), it is only based on reason
- Ethical duties are the same for all

# But why?

- Kant's motivation:
  - wants “supreme principle of morality” with a firm foundation in reason.
  - wants principle with intuitive view about morality - Moral rules that are:
    - universally applicable
    - exert a special force on us
    - concerned with more than just outcomes

# Categorical Imperative

- A. Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law. (= can I universalise my act without contradiction?)
- B. Act in such a way that you always treat humanity whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply

Is there any difference between the Categorical Imperative and the Golden Rule?

# Categorical Imperative vs. The Golden Rule

- The Golden Rule is based on experience
- The Categorical Imperative is based on reason
- There are situations when the Golden Rule may fail
- There is no such situation for the Categorical Imperative (according to Kant)

# Let's see if it works

It is 1942. You are hiding Anne Frank - a young Jewish girl - to protect her from the Nazi.

There is a knock at the door and an SS officer asks if you're hiding Jews in your house.

What do you tell him?

What would Mill tell him?

What would Kant tell him?

# Consequences of the Kantian ethics

- An action can be moral, even if its consequences are bad - as long as the intention was good.
- There should not be exceptions. The maxims - once they were universalised - should always be applied.
- The same action can be good or bad, depending on the intention.

# Kantian Ethics

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- duty is free from utility</li><li>- Respect for persons</li><li>- Reason-based</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- hyper-rationality and lack of emotion</li><li>- The irrelevance of inclination</li><li>- Overly formal and universal</li></ul>



# Funny issues

A. Is celibacy moral? (Use the universality test)

B. Which person is more moral?

1. R who returns a wallet (because they consider this is good).

2. S who returns a wallet (because they is afraid of Gods & wants to do good).

- A acționa din datorie/ conform datoriei (Exemplu: Am găsit un portofel plin cu bani și mă gândesc dacă să îl returnez proprietarului)
- a acționa conform datoriei și din datorie: să returnez portofelul, chiar dacă sunt sigur că nu voi fi văzut sau prins dacă îl iau → **acțiune morală.**
  - a acționa conform datoriei, dar nu din datorie: a returna portofelul, deoarece cineva m-ar putea vedea → **nu este o acțiune morală și demnă de laudă.**
  - a nu acționa nici conform datoriei, nici din datorie: să iau portofelul, pentru că am nevoie de bani. → **acțiune imorală**
  - a nu acționa conform datoriei, dar din datorie: să nu dau înapoi portofelul, pentru că eu cred că acest lucru este corect → **caz complex, nu este o acțiune morală.**

# Good points of Deontological ethics

- **Emphasise the value of every human being** (they give equal respect to all humans)
- **Provides more certainty** (they are focused on the action, not any 'possible' consequence)
- Majority's **moral intuitions** are based on the fact that if someone aims to do evil (bad), the action is immoral, regardless of the good consequences. So, it seems that deontology is on the same page with the moral intuitions one has. (!This cannot be generalised)

# Issues of Deontological ethics

- **Absolutist** - the rules are universal and absolute. There seem to be some cases when the rule should not be applied and Deontological ethics has no response for those situations.
- **Allows acts that make the world a worse place** - because of the previous issue.
- **Hard to reconcile conflicting duties**

Example: Duty 1: Do not kill. Duty 2: Save the ones in danger. But you can do 2 only if you reject 1.

Is Batman a  
deontologist or an  
utilitarianist?



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