



Training Exercises E4 (Deontology)

Much on this exercise sheet will look familiar. This is not because of mere convenience but because it is actually easier to understand the differences between theories if you exercise them on the same examples.

Issue 1: *Scheduling Problems again*

It is Tuesday. You are a student assistant and it is part of your job to scan documents. Your professor said that you are to scan a certain book until Wednesday. In addition, you have an exam on that day you need to study for and also your sister asked you to help her move today. You only have time to do one of those. You know that your sister has plenty of friends who can help her move and you are sure that enough of them will show up. Your parents, though, won't like it much if you don't help your sister. You and your sister do not get along too well, so both of you actually would prefer if you did not help with the move. The exam tomorrow is very important for your studies and if you fail it now, the only possibility is to retake the exam later, which will delay your studies by one more semester. This would mean a lot inconvenience for you, as you cannot proceed with your life plan without having finished your degree. You think that there are good chances to pass the exam if you study today, but that you will most likely fail if you don't. Your professor will be a little angry with you if you do not hand in the scan in time, because he always gets angry about students who do not do their jobs properly. This will make you feel moderately embarrassed. Apart from this you cannot see any negative impacts, as you know that the scan is supposed to be for a seminar that only starts in a month time. You are reasonably sure that a few days of delay won't make any difference. You only have enough time to do one of those things: scan the documents in time, help your sister move, or study for the exam.

- (a) What is the right thing to do according to Scanlons contractualism?
- (b) What is the right thing to do according to the Categorical Imperative?
- (c) What would have been the right thing to do one week ago, when you had enough time to do all three things? Answer this question from the perspective of Kant, of Scanlon, of different forms of consequentialism, and of your own intuition.

Issue 2: *Bad Things?*

We likely (hopefully!) share the intuition that certain things are wrong most of the time (or even all of the time), including

- (i) murder
- (ii) stealing

- (iii) cruelty towards animals

Answer the following questions for each of the above:

- (a) Use Scanlons contractualism to explain that, for most situations, actions of this type are wrong. Can you do that for all of the above items? If no, is this a problem?
- (b) Can you come up with a (probably counterfactual) scenario, where Scanlons contractualism would allow the action? If yes, present such a scenario. If no, why not?
- (c) Use the Categorical Imperative to explain that, for most situations, actions of this type are wrong. Can you do that for all of the above items? If no, is this a problem?
- (d) Can you come up with a (probably counterfactual) scenario, where the Categorical Imperative would allow the action? If yes, present such a scenario. If no, why not?

Issue 3: *Williams*

Recall the second example from Bernard Williams, which we had paraphrased:

(2) Jim accidentally comes into a situation in which armed mobsters have tied twenty people up against a wall who failed to comply with the mob's unjust demands. The boss of the mob steps forward and announces that he will have all twenty people killed to incentivise others to comply with the criminal practices of the mob. The boss likes Jim for some reason. He offers Jim to shoot one of the twenty people himself. If Jim complies, the other nineteen will be spared and are free to go. If Jim does not comply, all twenty will be killed. Jim has no way to save all twenty and he knows that. The twenty people beg Jim to kill one of them, such that the others can live. Even though this is hard to believe, Jim has no reason to believe that the mobster boss is lying about his offer.¹

- (a) What ought Jim to do according to Scanlon?
- (b) What ought Jim to do according to Kant?

Issue 4: *Formalizing Scanlon*

Recall that Scanlons contractualism looks like follows:

An act is wrong if[f] its performance under the circumstances would be disallowed by [...all sets] of principles for the general regulation of behaviour that no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced, general agreement.

¹inspired by *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, with J.J.C. Smart, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973, pp. 93ff.

- (a) Take a look at the following four candidates of formalizations of the above. Which are adequate, which not, and why?

- (I) $\forall \phi. \text{wrong}(\phi) \leftrightarrow (\forall S. (\nexists A. \text{canResReject}(A, S)) \rightarrow \text{disallows}(S, \phi))$
 (II) $\forall \phi. \text{wrong}(\phi) \leftrightarrow (\exists S. (\nexists A. \text{canResReject}(A, S)) \rightarrow \text{disallows}(S, \phi))$
 (III) $\forall \phi. \text{wrong}(\phi) \leftrightarrow (\forall S. (\nexists A. \text{canResReject}(A, S)) \leftrightarrow \text{disallows}(S, \phi))$
 (IV) $\forall \phi. \text{wrong}(\phi) \leftrightarrow (\exists S. (\nexists A. \text{canResReject}(A, S)) \leftrightarrow \text{disallows}(S, \phi))$

$\text{wrong}(\phi)$ means that the performance of ϕ is wrong under the given circumstances, $\text{canResReject}(A, S)$ that agent A can reasonably reject the set of principles S for the general regulation of behaviour as a basis for informed, unforced, general agreement, and $\text{disallows}(S, \phi)$ means that a principle in S disallows ϕ -ing.

- (b) A friend of yours works for Gauss, an automotive company that is known for their semi-autonomous cars. They are a big fan of what you told them about Scanlon and they wrote the following pseudo code that tries to implement our simplified version of Scanlons contractualism:

```
Input:    act a,
          set of sets of principles SetsOfPrinciples,
          set of persons Persons
Output:   bool allowed

for(s in SetsOfPrinciples)
  for(princ in s)
    rejectable = false
    for(pers in Persons)
      if(pers can reasonably reject princ)
        rejectable = true
    else
      continue
  if(not rejectable and princ allows a)
    return true
  else
    continue
return false
```

Your friend wants to pitch this at Gauss but they are quite unsure about their result and asks you on your opinion.

What do you think about this code and what could go wrong with it if your friend tried to implement it in the next Gauss model, and why? There are multiple problems here. Try to find as many as possible.

Your friend also tells you that they used a lot of abbreviations and omitted some things that are more specific in the original. They, for example, wrote “set of sets of principles” in the code instead of “sets of principles for the general regulation of behaviour” for better readability. Please do not use these omissions as the target of you critique.

Issue 5: Gamification – revisited again

On previous exercise sheets, you saw the following case:

Tim is the manager of a supermarket. He ponders on introducing a gamification system in order to increase customer satisfaction. The system is supposed to work as follows: Every customer is asked to rate their cashier on a scale from 1 to 5 after checkout by pressing one of five buttons. The average of those ratings is calculated for every cashier and the employee with the highest rating gets a week of extra holiday as a bonus, while everybody else gets just their regular holidays. This results in them being a little less happy with their own number of days off than they otherwise would have been. Cashiers can always see their own average rating as well as the currently highest average, but not whom it belongs to.

1. Under which circumstances is Tim morally allowed to introduce the system according to Scanlon?
2. Does your moral intuition that you had on the first exercise sheet have deontological elements? Which elements from your intuition are not deontological?