Immanuel Kant

› His ethical philosophy was developed in three texts.
› "Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals" (1785),
› "Critique of Practical Reason" (1788)
› "Metaphysics of Morals" (1797)

http://www.philosophybasics.com/photos/kant.jpg
Normative Ethics: Deontology

- Ethical theory that uses rules to distinguish right from wrong.
- The word deontology derives from the Greek words for duty (deon) and science (or study) of (logos)
- Rule based on must act on moral rule due to an obligation to act morally regardless of consequences because one has a duty.
  - hold that some choices cannot be justified by their effects—that no matter how morally good their consequences, some choices are morally forbidden.
  - Kant argues that there are categorical rules that are derived from pure reason. One must not lie. If one is not truthful then one would not be able to rust anything told to them.
  - Kant states that a categorical imperative is “I ought never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim become a universal obligation.
  - Kant’s starts with a maxim that all life is valuable and that other moral beings must be treated as an ends and not as a means.
Normative Ethics: Deontology

- “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.”
  - Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals/On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns*

- "Live your life as though your every act were to become a universal law."

- “The categorical imperative would be that which represented an action as objectively necessary of itself, without reference to another end.

- "An action, to have moral worth, must be done from duty."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immanuel_Kant
Normative Ethics: Deontology

› At the center of Kant's theory of duty is what he termed categorical imperatives.
  › Rationally determined.
  › What you would want done to you
  › Can be determined

› avoids subjectivity and uncertainty because you only have to follow set rules.

› Outcome doesn’t matter. It is doing one’s duty to a moral rule
  › Famous example telling lies
    – Community can’t work if people lie
    – Nazis and hiding a Jewish person

› Rational people will reason to same imperatives
  – A common morality
Normative Ethics: Deontology

› The prime categorical imperative for Kant is the value of human life
  – Humans must treated as and ends and not a means

› “Now I say that the human being and in general every rational being exists not merely as a means to be used by this or that will at its discretion; instead he must in all his actions. always be regarded at the same time as an end.”

› From this formulation of a Categorical Imperative, we see an analogy to the Golden Rule.

› Kant, I. The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. Chapter 4: 428; Practical Philosophy, p. 79.
Summary

› Rules are primary
› Kant obligations
› Absolute right and wrong
› Universality can be applied to everyone

“All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason.”
— Emmanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason

“Treat people as an end, and never as a means to an end”
— Emmanuel Kant

Deontology

• Duty
• Focuses on the act itself
  – Truth-telling and promise keeping are right even when such actions bring harm
  – Acting unjustly is wrong even if it will maximize expected utility