

# Immanuel Kant

The Categorical Imperative

**Immanuel Kant**

1724-1804



# **Kantian Ethics: The Basics**

# Kantian Ethics: The Basics

- Kant's approach is **Deontological**. This means that for Kant, the right or wrongness of the action is **in the action itself**, and not in its consequences.
  - Kant is a **rationalist**. He believes that reason is the means by which we can analyse the world.
  - Kant sets out his ideas in his book "Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals", and discusses it further in his "Critique of Practical Reason"
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# Duty

- The only thing, Kant says, which is good in and of itself is what he calls a **Good Will**.
  - The Good Will is a sense of duty we have to do the right thing.
  - He believed that “all rational beings” have the duty to behave morally.
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# Categorical and Hypothetical

- Kant says that morality is a “categorical imperative”
  - He contrasts this with it being “hypothetical imperative”
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# Categorical/Hypothetical

**Hypothetical: IF I want to lose weight, I must stop eating cream cakes.**



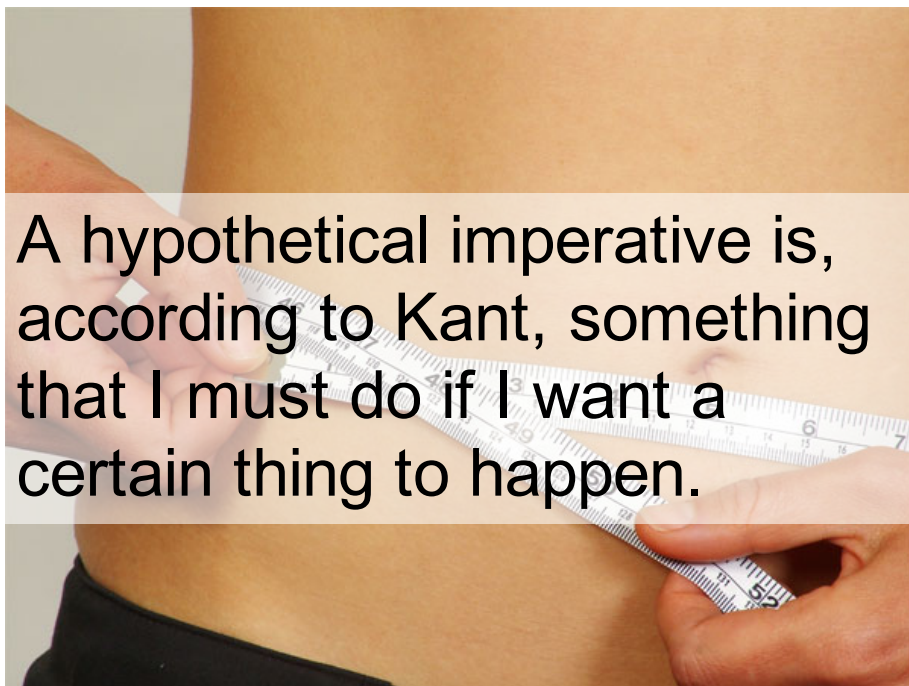
**Categorical: I must not tell lies**



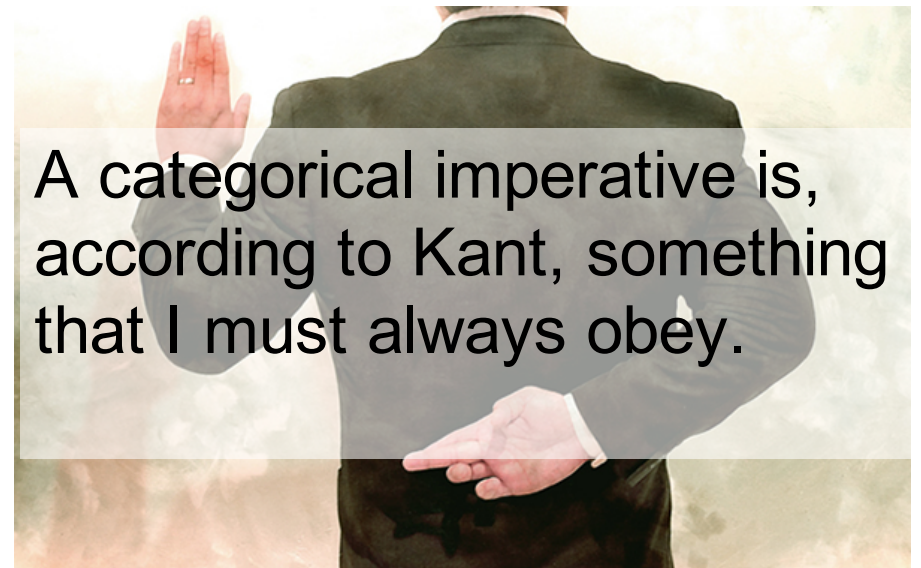
# The Difference?

**Hypothetical: IF I want to lose weight, I must stop eating cream cakes.**

**Categorical: I must not tell lies**



A hypothetical imperative is, according to Kant, something that I must do if I want a certain thing to happen.



A categorical imperative is, according to Kant, something that I must always obey.



# Kantian Ethics:

Are founded on the categorical imperative. His morals are based on a sense of duty.

# **The Categorical Imperitive**

# The Categorical Imperative

- There are three ways that Kant formulates the categorical imperative:
    1. One should act in such a way that one could will it that one's action should become a universal law.
    2. One should always act in such a way as to treat fellow beings as an end in themselves and not a means to achieving an end.
    3. One should act as though you were a legislator in the "kingdom of ends".
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**Duty**

**Good Will**



# Hypothetical Imperative

# **Categorical Imperative**

# Universal Law

**Rational**

**An end in itself**

# **Legislator in the “kingdom of ends”**