Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804)
The Freedom of Ethical Thought
The Principle of Utility: The Greatest Good for the Greatest Number

- A matter of “pain” v “pleasure” (or contentedness?)
- The Ends of an action are its only measure (v. intent)
- May NOT intentionally cause any harm
Virtue Ethics

- Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.

- The end goals in life:
  - First to achieve excellence – success
  - Second, to achieve “happiness.”

- The Virtues
  - Finding a “Mean” (excess – mean – lack)

- Ethics lead to the Politics
An example?

- Who is this?
- What reaction does he evoke?
- What did he do “WRONG”?
- Was it? Why?
The Revolution

Kant’s Epistemology

- Old: We Adhere to “reality”
- Kant: We give “reality” form

Reality “conforms” to the mind.

- Subjective: Can’t know Nature or Circumstance.

“Good Will” = absolute good.
The Ideal of Human Dignity

- Common People – Intrinsic Worth (Rousseau)
- Knowledge/Reason: A Priori vs a Posteriori
- People An Ends not a Means
Reason v. Passion

- Hypothetical
- Categorical
- Reason as absolute
- Knowing what is right v. DOING what is right.
Duty

- Moral Obligations (Justify?)
- Strife in Civil Society = Conflicts from Desire.
- “Categorical Imperative”
- CI = not just “right,” but “obligatory” (duty)
Categorical Imperative

- Three Formulas (two here)
- Formula 1
  > Formula of Autonomy (act as if to become a universal law) Free Will?
- Formula 2
  > Formula of Respect for Dignity of Persons (treat as Ends vs. Means)
Transcendental Freedom

Autonomy of the Will

> External Source = Un-free desires, interests, conditionals

> Internal/reason as source = Free

Adhere to “right”

Reason justifies and prompts to action
Defining Kant’s Syllogism

- **MAJOR PREMISE**: The Categorical Imperative (General)
- **MINOR PREMISE**: Proposed maxim or action (we act morally as reason obliges)
- **CONCLUSION**: A *Substantive Moral Principle* is created based on CI.
Applying Kant’s Syllogism

- **MAJ/P**: Making a False Promise is a **MORALLY** wrong Practice.
  - You “ought” never to do it.

- **MIN/P**: “I promise that as long as we are dating, we are exclusive...”

- **C**: “Wow, that other girl is really into me, but I will have to pass...”
Conclusions

- Kantian Ethics are right?
- Kantian Ethics are seemingly impossible?
- Misuse: Philosophy Professor example.
- Freedom – the ability to govern self with reason.