

Chapter 7. Consistency: Avoid inconsistencies between your:

- beliefs,
- ends and means,
- moral judgments and how you live, and
- evaluations of similar actions.

Chapter 8. The Golden Rule

Chapter 9. Moral Rationality

$$2+2 = 4$$
$$x+y = y+x$$

Why are mathematical truths true – and how do we know that they are true?

The nature and justification of mathematical truths is controversial.

How would views like these see mathematical statements?

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In math and logic, we look for *formal principles* (ones that use variables & abstract ideas) – and test them by searching for absurd implications:

Correct

$$x+y = y+x$$

If A then B

A

∴ B

Incorrect

$$-(x \cdot y) = (-x \cdot -y)$$

If A then B

Not-A

∴ Not-B

Similarly, in ethics we should look for *formal principles* (ones that use abstract ideas + variables) – and test them by searching for absurd implications:

Correct

You ought not to combine believing A and believing not-A.

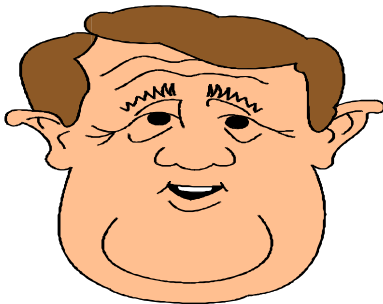
Incorrect

If you want X to do A to you, then you ought to do A to X.

Logicity: Don't believe logically incompatible things – and don't believe something without believing what logically follows from it.



“Good” means
“socially approved.”

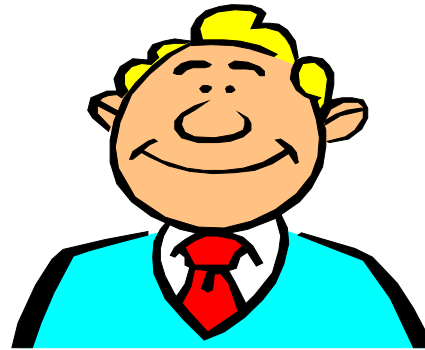


“The more intelligent
ought to enslave the
less intelligent.”

Consistency, while not guaranteeing truth, can lead us toward the truth.



“I didn’t kill my roommate!”



“I’m Napoleon!”

Does the duty to be consistent:

- have exceptions?
- require that we shun emotions?
- require that we prove everything?

Ends-means rationality: keep your means in harmony with your ends.

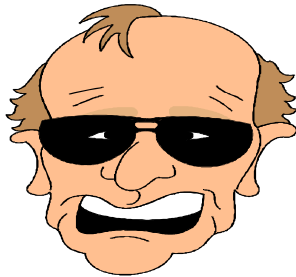


I violate this if:

- I have an end (e.g. to lose weight),
- I believe that to fulfill this end I need to carry out certain means, and
- I don't carry through on the means.

Conscientiousness: keep your actions, resolutions, and desires in harmony with your moral beliefs.

How would a conscientious pacifist live?



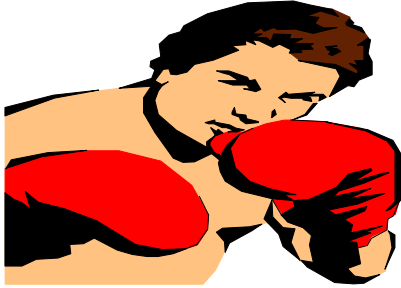
“Killing a human being is *always* wrong, even in self-defense.”

These combinations violate conscientiousness:

- I believe I ought to do A.
- I intentionally don't do A.

- I believe you ought to do A.
- I don't want you to do A.

- I believe that all people who are A ought to be mistreated – just because they're A.
- I don't desire that if I were A then I'd be mistreated.



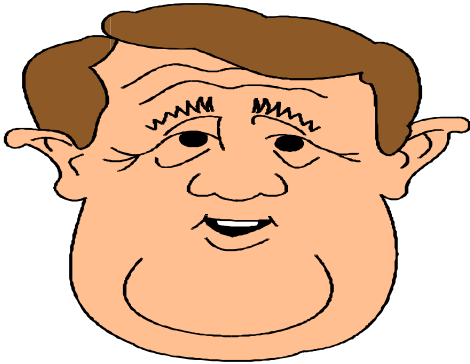
“All short people ought to be beat up – just because they’re short.”

How easy is it to live consistently with these beliefs?



“All people of dark skin ought to be treated poorly, just because they have dark skin.”

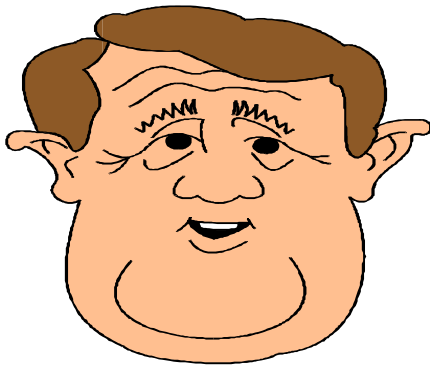
Or: “Each person should treat well those of his own race and not care about what happens to others.”



“Blacks ought to be treated poorly – because they’re inferior.”

Poor ways to counter the racist’s argument:

- Claim that all races are genetically equal in intelligence.
- Claim that all people have an equal right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.



“Blacks ought to be treated poorly – because they’re inferior.”

It’s better to (a) clarify the argument, (b) criticize factual errors, and (c) see if the person applies the moral principle consistently.

All blacks have an IQ of less than 80.
All who have an IQ of less than 80
ought to be treated poorly.
∴ All blacks ought to be treated poorly.

We still need to close
two escape routes:

- The racist could refrain from moral arguments and principles.
- The racist could desire that he be treated poorly if he were in the place of his victims.

LECI = Four basic kinds of consistency

L	Logicality
E	Ends-means
C	Conscientiousness
I	Impartiality

Impartiality: Make similar evaluations about (exactly or relevantly) similar actions, regardless of the individuals involved.



Impartiality forbids you to combine these three beliefs:

- act A is right,
- act B isn't right,
- acts A and B are exactly or relevantly similar.

Impartiality: Make similar evaluations about (exactly or relevantly) similar actions, regardless of the individuals involved.

- Is the “exactly similar” part useless? (the “good Samaritan” example)
- Is the “relevantly similar” part useless? (the “Babe” and “King David” examples)

Remember that the impartiality norm applies only when we combine two moral beliefs and a similarity-clause.

1. If I hold that the doctor ought to remove my appendix, do I have to hold that I ought to remove his appendix?
2. Do we have to treat everyone the same way?
3. Do we have to love all equally?
4. Do we have to always act the same way in the same sort of circumstances?
5. How does the impartiality norm differ from the golden rule?

Why be consistent?

(Note that most people recognize
that we ought to be consistent.)

Different views could answer differently:

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