Chapter 7. GR Logic

BE CONSISTENT: about beliefs, ends-means, living in harmony with your moral beliefs (conscientiousness), evaluating similar cases similarly (impartiality), and *treating others only as you're willing to be treated in the same situation* (GR).

Chapter 8. GR Applications

Chapter 9. GR Frameworks

How can we most wisely and reasonably pick our moral principles?

The *GR consistency approach*, instead of building on some view about what moral judgments mean, builds on *consistency norms* that make sense from many views:

"Be consistent in your beliefs"
"Keep your ends and means in harmony"
"Live in accord with your moral beliefs"
"Evaluate similar cases similarly"
"Treat others as you want to be treated"

Consistency in beliefs demands that we not accept logically incompatible beliefs – and that we not accept a belief without also accepting its logical consequences.

- I believe "No duties bind universally."
- I believe "Everyone ought to be tolerant of others."
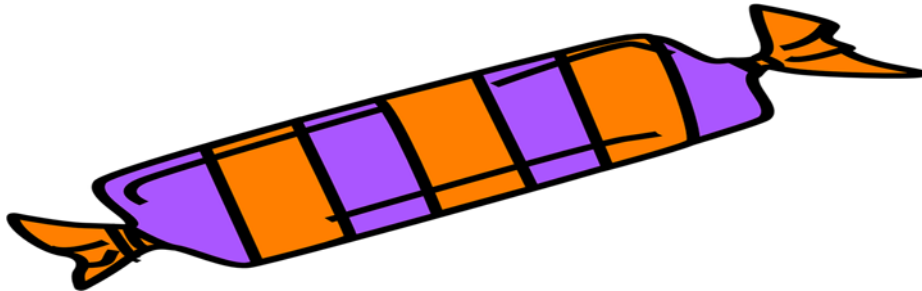
← Don't combine these.

Ima Relativist

Other examples: criticizing "All bearded people are crazy" (Gensler) and "Anyone with higher intelligence has a right to enslave anyone of lower intelligence" (Lincoln).

Consistency in will forbids this combination:

- I resolve to eat nothing. ←
- I eat this granola bar. ←

Don't combine these.

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

- I have the goal to become a doctor.
- I believe "Achieving this requires that I study hard and get good grades."
- I don't study hard and get good grades.

← Don't combine these.

Premed Maria

Ends & means need to satisfy GR (examples: slashing tires and *Erin Brockovich*). Kant: "Treat humanity, never simply as a means, but also at the same time as an end."

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

- I believe "I ought to do A now."
- I don't act to do A now.

Don't combine these. ←

- I believe "All short people ought to be beat up, just because they're short."
- I don't desire that if I were short then I be beat up.

Don't combine these. ←

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

- I believe "Act A is right."
- I believe "Act B is wrong."
- I believe "A and B are exactly or relevantly similar."

← Don't combine these. ←

Examples: the Good Samaritan story
(an imagined *exactly similar* case) and the *Babe*
movie (an actual *relevantly similar* case).

Impartiality applies only when we combine two evaluative beliefs and a similarity-clause. None of these correctly follows from impartiality:

1. If my doctor ought to remove my appendix, then I ought to remove my doctor's appendix.

2. Always act the same way in the same kind of situation.

3. Treat everyone the same.

4. Love everyone equally (e.g., love your daughter and a stranger equally).

The golden rule (GR), "Treat others as you want to be treated," is common to most religions and cultures of the world.

The old man and his grandson (The wooden bowl)

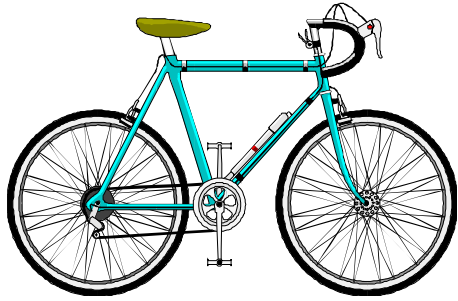*Switching places: Imagine your action being done to you.*

the golden rule

Treat others only as you consent to being treated in the same situation.

Gensler's GR formula

⬇ Don't combine these. ⬇

- I do A to another.
- I'm unwilling that if I were in the same situation then A be done to me.

If you're conscientious and impartial,
then you won't steal Detra's bicycle unless
you're willing that if you were in the same
situation then your bicycle be stolen:

| You steal Detra's bicycle | → conscientious → | You believe it would be all right for you to steal her bicycle |

↓ impartial ↓

| You're willing that if you were in the same situation then your bicycle be stolen | ← conscientious ← | You believe that if you were in the same situation then it would be all right for your bicycle to be stolen |

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

This can lead to absurdities in two ways:

different situations

If you want your doctor to remove your appendix, then remove your doctor's appendix.

flawed desires

If you want others to hurt you [suppose you do], then hurt them.

In the same situation

- I do A to another.
- I'm unwilling that if I were **in the same situation** then A be done to me.

← Don't
← combine
these.

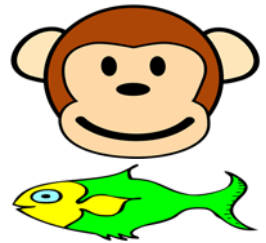Am I willing that if I were in the same situation then this be done to me?

Talking to your hard-of-hearing father, removing your doctor's appendix, a broccoli-hating waiter.

The **literal GR fallacy** assumes that everyone has the same likes, dislikes, and needs that we have.

The foolish GR monkey, wanting to be taken from the flood waters himself, took the fish from the flood waters.

Kita, the wise GR monkey, knew how fish and monkeys differ. She wasn't willing that if she were in the fish's situation then she be taken from the water. So she left the fish in the water.
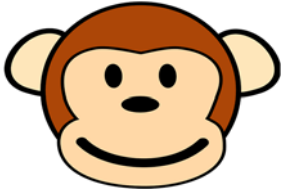
Using GR wisely (KITA)
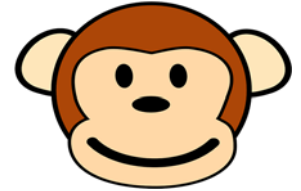
K   *Know:* "How would my action affect others?"

I   *Imagine:* "What would it be like to have this done to me in the same situation?"

T   *Test* for consistency: "Am I <u>willing</u> <u>that</u> <u>if</u> I were in the same situation then this be done to me?"

A   *Act* toward others only as you're willing to be treated in the same situation.

Willing that if

- I do A to another.
- I'm **<u>unwilling</u> <u>that</u> <u>if</u>** I were in the same situation then A be done to me.

← Don't
← combine
these.

Am I <u>willing</u> <u>that</u> <u>if</u> I were in the same situation then this be done to me?

A nurse giving a shot to a baby, a judge sentencing a dangerous criminal to jail.

The **soft GR fallacy** assumes that we should always do what the other person wants.

Baby squirrel Willy wants to put his fingers into electrical outlets. Does GR let us stop him?

The **doormat GR fallacy** assumes that we should ignore our own interests.

Frazzled Frannie thinks GR makes us never say no, even to unreasonable requests. (But hey, you're willing that if you asked this then others say no to you.)

Don't combine these

> - I do A to another.
> - I'm unwilling that if I were in the same situation then A be done to me.

← **Don't**
← **combine these.**

Electra wants others to give her electrical shocks (thinking these are pleasant). So the literal GR tells her to shock others (a bad action).

(1) Our GR doesn't tell her to shock others; it forbids a combination but doesn't say specifically what to do.

(2) To lead reliably to right action, our GR needs to combine with knowledge and imagination. Electra has her facts wrong.

(3) We need to use reason against her flawed desires.

The **easy GR fallacy** assumes that GR gives an infallible test of right and wrong that takes only seconds to apply.

Rich owns a coal mine and pays his workers $1 a day, which he thinks (wrongly) they can live well on. He thinks his 10-second application of GR justifies his pay scale. He needs to apply KITA, which can take much time.

The **too-simple-or-too-complex GR fallacy** assumes that GR is either so simple that our kindergarten GR is enough for adult decisions or so complex that only a philosopher can understand it.

GR	Treat others only as you consent to being treated in the same situation.

- I do A to another.
- I'm **<u>unwilling</u> <u>that</u> <u>if</u>** I were **<u>in the same</u> <u>situation</u>** then A be done to me.

← **<u>Don't combine these.</u>**
←

Formulating GR correctly requires:

(1) a **same-situation** clause,
(2) **willing that if** (a present attitude toward a hypothetical situation), and
(3) a **don't-combine** (consistency) form.

GR Variations

- Many variations on GR also work. Imagine someone else you care about on the receiving end of the action, say "ought not to combine," specify "relevantly" or "exactly" similar, or speak about desires or moral beliefs instead of actions.

- *Self-regard*: Treat yourself only as you're willing to have others (especially those you most care about) treat themselves in the same situation.

- *Future-regard*: Treat your future-self only as you're willing to have been treated by your past-self in the same situation.

- *Generalized GR*: Act only as you're willing for anyone to act in the same situation, regardless of where or when you imagine yourself or others.

The **third-parties GR fallacy** assumes that we should consider only ourselves and the other person.

Pre-law Lucy asks: "Please give me an undeserved A so I can get into law school!"

If our act affects X, Y, and Z, then we must be willing that it be done if we were in the place of X or in the place of Y or in the place of Z.

GR and Kant

Immanuel Kant
1724-1804

The GR consistency view is somewhat inspired by Kant's view. Both emphasize quasi-logical principles about ends and means, doing our duty, impartiality, and how to treat people. But the details are different, especially about GR (which Kant rejects), how to reason about ethics, and the importance of detailed knowledge and imagination (which Kant rejects).