A Formalized Ethical Theory

Chapter 14 completes the formalization of norms about *consistent thinking and acting*, which include:

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

We're *rational* (*wise*) in our moral judgments to the extent that we satisfy four general requirements (KICO): Knowledge, Imagination, Consistency, and Other things.

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Literal GR

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

(u:A$\underline{x}$u ⊃ A$\underline{u}$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.

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.

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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.

Willing that if

- 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?

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

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.

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GR

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

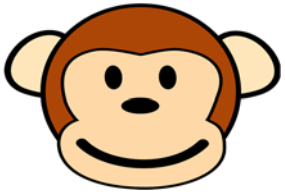
- I do A to another.
- I'm **unwilling that if** I were **in the same situation** then A be done to me.

← ←

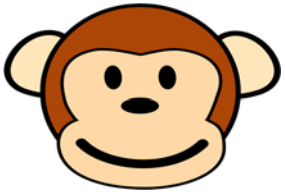
Don't combine these.

Formulating GR correctly requires:

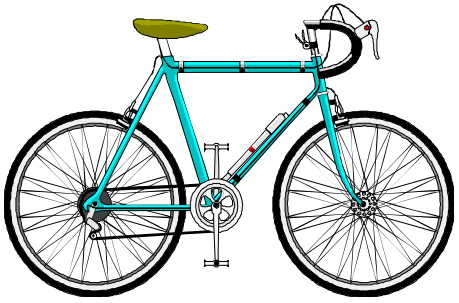
(1) a **same-situation** clause,
(2) **willing that if** (a present attitude toward a hypothetical situation), and
(3) a **don't-combine** (consistency) form.



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 willing that if 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.



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

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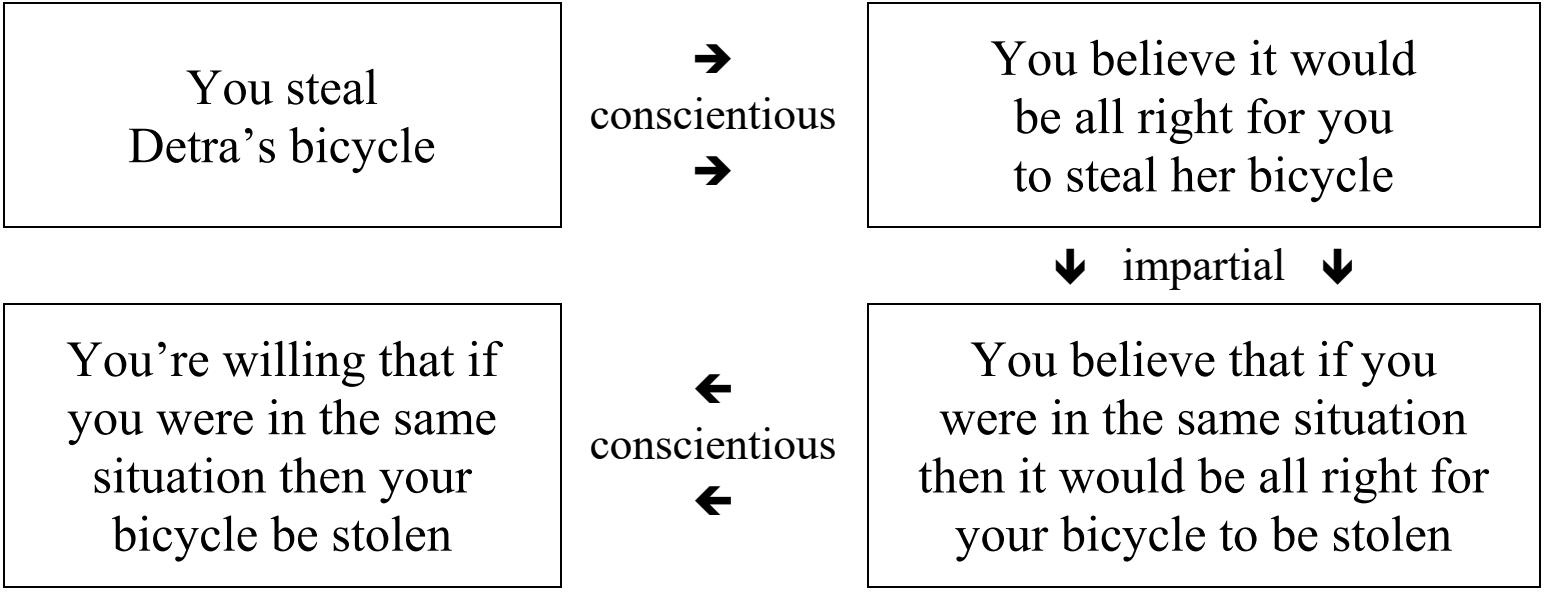
We can already prove the first step:

$\sim(\underline{u}{:}A\underline{u}x \cdot \sim\underline{u}{:}RA\underline{u}x)$

Don't act to do A to X without believing
that it's all right for you to do A to X.



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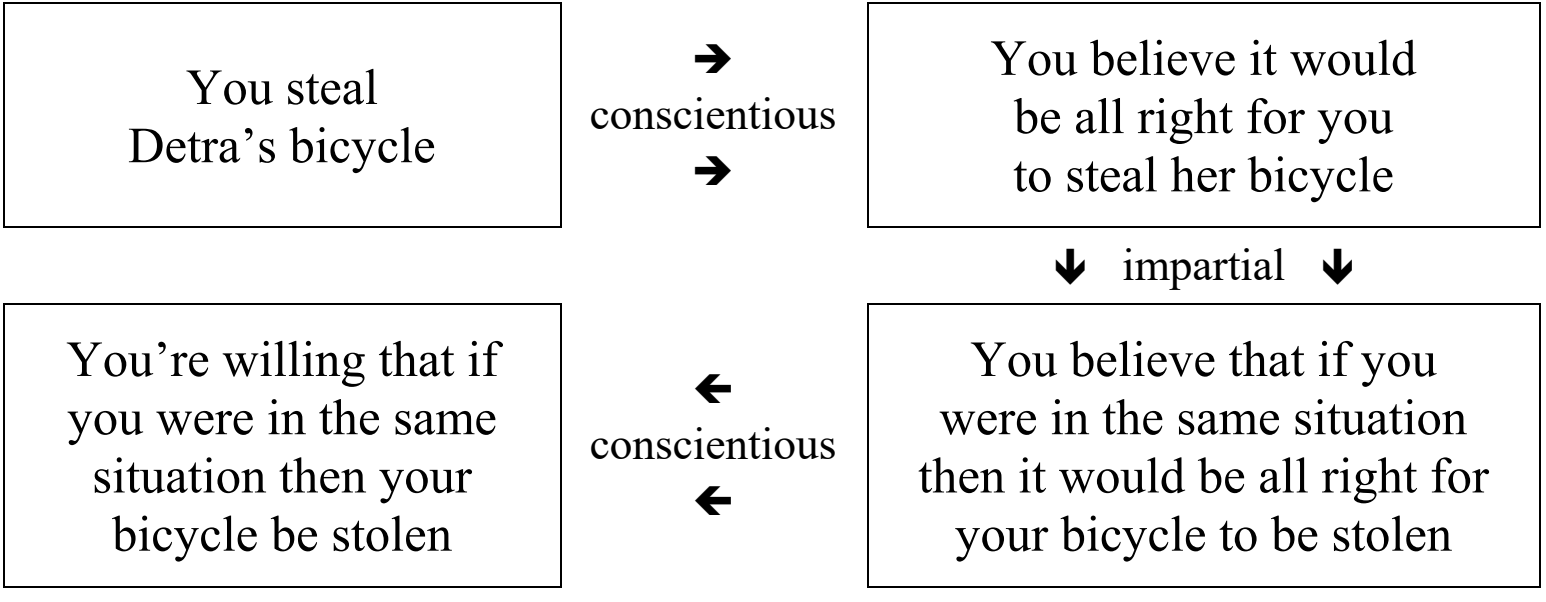
We need to symbolize these two ideas:

- "In the same situation, it would be all right for X to do A to me."
- "X may do A to me."



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X may do A to me = MA$\underline{x}$u

"M$\underline{A}$" ("A may be done") is a permissive, a weak member of the imperative family. Accepting a permissive commits one to *consenting* to the act being done (*approving* of it, *being willing* that it be done) – but not necessarily to positively desiring that it be done. Accepting "R$\underline{A}$" commits you to accepting "M$\underline{A}$":

G1 $\boxed{R\underline{A} \rightarrow M\underline{A}}$

If it's all right for you to do A to X, then in the same situation it would be all right for X to do A to you.

= $(RA\underline{u}x \supset (\exists F)(F^*A\underline{u}x \cdot \blacksquare(FA\underline{x}u \supset RA\underline{x}u)))$

= If it's all right for you to do A to X, then, for some universal property F, F is the complete description of your-doing-A-to-X in universal terms, and, in any actual or hypothetical case, if X's-doing-A-to-you is F, then it would be all right for X to do A to you.

"F" is a universal property variable; we will sometimes also use action variables, like "$\underline{X}$."

"$F^*\underline{A}$" means "F is the complete description of act A in universal terms."

"■" means "in every actual or hypothetical case."

Universalizability

If it's all right for X to do A, then it would be all right for anyone else to do A in the same situation.

If act A is permissible, then there is some universal property (or conjunction of such properties) F, such that: (1) act A is F, and (2) in any actual or hypothetical case every act that is F is permissible.

$$(R\underline{A} \supset (\exists F)(F\underline{A} \cdot \blacksquare(\underline{X})(F\underline{X} \supset R\underline{X})))$$

G5 $\quad R\underline{A} \rightarrow (\exists F)(F\underline{A} \cdot \blacksquare(\underline{X})(F\underline{X} \supset R\underline{X}))$

Complete Descriptions

$F^*\underline{A}$ = F is the complete description of act A in universal terms.
= Act A is F, and, for every universal property G that A has, it's logically necessary that every act that's F is also G.

G10 $\quad F^*\underline{A} \leftrightarrow (F\underline{A} \cdot (G)(G\underline{A} \supset \Box(\underline{X})(F\underline{X} \supset G\underline{X})))$

G11 $\quad \rightarrow (\underline{X})(\exists F)F^*\underline{X}$

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Gensler's GR:

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

GR forbids this combination:

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

$$\sim(\underline{u}{:}A\underline{u}x \cdot \sim\underline{u}{:}(\exists F)(F^{*}A\underline{u}x \cdot \blacksquare(FA\underline{x}u \supset MA\underline{x}u)))$$

Don't combine (1) accepting "Do A to X" with (2) not accepting "For some universal property F, F is the complete description in universal terms of my-doing-A-to-X, and, in any actual or hypothetical situation, if X's-doing-A-to-me is F, then X may do A to me."

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[∴ ~(u:Aux • ~u:(∃F)(F*Aux • ■(FAxu ⊃ MAxu)))

1 ┌ asm: (u:Aux • ~u:(∃F)(F*Aux • ■(FAxu ⊃ MAxu)))
2 │ ∴ u:Aux {from 1}
3 │ ∴ ~u:(∃F)(F*Aux • ■(FAxu ⊃ MAxu)) {from 1}
4 │ u ∴ ~(∃F)(F*Aux • ■(FAxu ⊃ MAxu)) {from 3}
5 │ u ∴ Aux {from 2}
6 │ ┌ u asm: ~RAux {we need to derive "RAux"}
7 │ │ u ∴ O~Aux {from 6}
8 │ └ u ∴ ~Aux {from 7}
9 │ u ∴ RAux {from 6; 5 contradicts 8}
10 │ u ∴ (∃F)(FAux • ■(X)(FX ⊃ RX)) {from 9 by G5}
11 │ u ∴ (GAux • ■(X)(GX ⊃ RX)) {from 10}
12 │ u ∴ GAux {from 11}
13 │ u ∴ ■(X)(GX ⊃ RX) {from 11}
14 │ u ∴ (X)(∃F)F*X {by rule G11}
15 │ u ∴ (∃F)F*Aux {from 14}
16 │ u ∴ H*Aux {from 15}
17 │ u ∴ (HAux • (F)(FAux ⊃ □(X)(HX ⊃ FX))) {from 16 by G10}

In rev stn, X may not do A to me.

Do A to X!

My doing A to X is all right.

Any similar act is all right.

My-doing-A-to-X is G.

Any act that is G is all right.

H = the complete description of my-doing-A-to-X.

	18	u ∴ HA$\underline{u}$x {from 17}	
	19	u ∴ (F)(FA$\underline{u}$x ⊃ □($\underline{X}$)(H$\underline{X}$ ⊃ F$\underline{X}$)) {from 17}	
	20	u ∴ (GA$\underline{u}$x ⊃ □($\underline{X}$)(H$\underline{X}$ ⊃ G$\underline{X}$)) {from 19}	
	21	u ∴ □($\underline{X}$)(H$\underline{X}$ ⊃ G$\underline{X}$) {from 12 and 20}	**Any act that is H is G.**
	22	u ∴ (F)~(F*A$\underline{u}$x • ■(FA$\underline{x}$u ⊃ MA$\underline{x}$u)) {from 4}	
	23	u ∴ ~(H*A$\underline{u}$x • ■(HA$\underline{x}$u ⊃ MA$\underline{x}$u)) {from 22}	
	24	u ∴ ~■(HA$\underline{x}$u ⊃ MA$\underline{x}$u) {from 16 and 23}	
#	25	uH ∴ ~(HA$\underline{x}$u ⊃ MA$\underline{x}$u) {from 24 by G8}	
	26	uH ∴ HA$\underline{x}$u {from 25}	**X-doing-A-to-me is H.**
	27	uH ∴ ~MA$\underline{x}$u {from 25}	**X may not do A to me!**
	28	uH ∴ ($\underline{X}$)(H$\underline{X}$ ⊃ G$\underline{X}$) {from 21}	
	29	uH ∴ (HA$\underline{x}$u ⊃ GA$\underline{x}$u) {from 28}	
	30	uH ∴ GA$\underline{x}$u {from 26 and 29}	
#	31	uH ∴ ($\underline{X}$)(G$\underline{X}$ ⊃ R$\underline{X}$) {from 13 by G7}	
	32	uH ∴ (GA$\underline{x}$u ⊃ RA$\underline{x}$u) {from 31}	
	33	uH ∴ RA$\underline{x}$u {from 30 and 32}	**It is all right for X to do A to me.**
#	34	uH ∴ MA$\underline{x}$u {from 33 by G1}	**X may do A to me!**
	35	∴ ~($\underline{u}$:A$\underline{u}$x • ~$\underline{u}$:(∃F)(F*A$\underline{u}$x • ■(FA$\underline{x}$u ⊃ MA$\underline{x}$u))) {fm 1; 27 contra 34}	

This ends our proof of the golden rule:

Always treat others as you want to be treated; that is the summary of the Law and the Prophets. (Mt 7:12)

$\sim(\underline{u}{:}A\underline{u}x \cdot \sim\underline{u}{:}(\exists F)(F^{*}A\underline{u}x \cdot \blacksquare(FA\underline{x}u \supset MA\underline{x}u)))$

The Golden Rule

Baha'i Faith: Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself. (Baha'u'lláh, Gleanings)

Hinduism: This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you. (Mahabharata 5:1517)

Buddhism: Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. (Udana-Varga 5.18)

Confucianism: One word which sums up the basis of all good conduct... loving kindness. Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself. (Confucius, Analects 15.23)

Islam: Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself. (The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith)

Taoism: Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss. (T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien, 213-218)

Judaism: What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary. (Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31a)

Sikhism: I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all. (Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299)

Jainism: One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated. (Mahavira, Sutrakritanga)

Christianity: In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. (Jesus, Matthew 7:12)

Zoroastrianism: Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself. (Shayast-na-Shayast 13.29)

Native Spirituality: We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive. (Chief Dan George)

Unitarianism: We affirm and promote respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. (Unitarian principle)

Based on Paul McKenna's poster (Scarboro Missions), posted with his permission at harrycola.com/poster