

# Codes of Conduct: A Logic of Permission and Prohibition

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**Abstract:** The fundamental components of a code of conduct are commonly thought to be permissions (“Feel free to smoke”) and commands (“Stop”), but I argue that they are instead permissions and what I call pure prohibitions (“Don’t feel free to smoke”). In contrast to ordinary prohibitions (“Don’t smoke”), which are just commands and thus both forbid certain things and expressly allow other things (e.g., “Don’t smoke” forbids you to smoke and expressly allows you not to smoke), pure prohibitions forbid certain things but expressly allow nothing. They are thus “mirror images” of permissions, which expressly allow certain things but forbid nothing, so permissions and pure prohibitions can be considered negations of each other: “Feel free to smoke” is the negation of “Don’t feel free to smoke”, and vice versa. Commands are conjunctions of permissions with complementary pure prohibitions: “Stop” is the conjunction of “Feel free to stop” with “Don’t feel free not to stop”. There are also conjunctions of permissions with non-complementary pure prohibitions: “Feel free to whisper, but don’t feel free to yell” expressly allows you to whisper, forbids you to yell, and is neutral on your neither whispering nor yelling. Because permissions, pure prohibitions, and their conjunctions (including commands) correspond to different patterns of expressly allowing and forbidding, they are all what I call permission-prohibition configurations (PPCs). I develop a logic of PPCs.

**Friday March 20th 3:30pm**

**Bunge Room 4207 in HC White**

