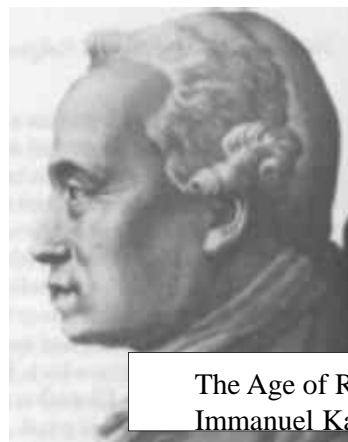


Immanuel Kant

The Categorical Imperative



The Age of Reason
Immanuel Kant

Rights

If someone has a **right** to health care, a job with a decent wage, shelter, sufficient food,
THEN

Obligations

We must ask ourselves, **WHO**, if anyone, has the **obligation** to provide such things.

Kant's One Right

The one absolute right that humans have is the right to be left alone.

Kant vs. Aristotle



Aristotle argued that the *telos* (end or purpose) of life is to achieve happiness. Happiness comes from good thought and good actions which lead to good habits which lead to a good character which leads to happiness.

Kant argues that using our reason and good will to guide us often leads to discomfort. Therefore, happiness cannot be our proper goal. If Nature (God) had intended us to seek happiness, it is more likely that we would have been guided by instincts, not by Reason.



Kant vs. Hume



Hume claims: "The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of our reason." Vice and virtue are determined by the way our hearts and feelings respond to them. Something is bad when "you turn your reflexion into your own breast, and find a sentiment of disapprobation, which arises in you, towards this action." The function of reason is to tell us how to achieve the goals that our sentiments or emotions tell us are right. Hume gives the metaphor of a ship: our emotions are the sails; our reason is merely the rudder.



Kant disputes that: Reason is the guide; it can tell us whether an action is one that we think all people should do.

Kantian Ethics

There is only one thing good in itself; that is a good will. Only God has a perfectly good will. To have “moral worth,” an act must be an act of the will to do one’s duty, as guided by Reason.

Acts in accordance with duty but done for some other reason than duty have no moral worth.

Acts in accordance with duty but done out of inclination have not moral worth.

KANTIAN ETHICS: OBLIGATIONS

DEONTOLOGICAL/NONCONSEQUENTIALIST
 BASED ON REASON AND WILL
 REQUIRES DISCIPLINE AND SELF CONTROL
 REQUIRES DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR THE RIGHT REASON

ETHICS IS NOT CONTINGENT UPON ONE’S FEELINGS NOR UPON THE CULTURE;
 RATHER, IT IS ABSOLUTE (CATEGORICAL)

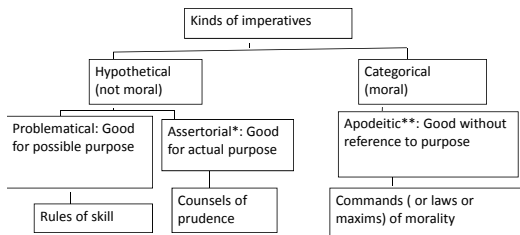
Making Ethical Judgments

Areas of Emphasis in Making Moral Judgments		
	Deontological or Nonconsequentialist	Teleological or Consequentialist
Purpose, Intent, or Motive	Act, Rule, or Maxim	Results, Ends, or Consequences

Kant emphasizes both intent and maxim; however, he claims if someone does have good will (intent/determination to do good), that is **good in itself**, even if the person is prevented from doing the act.

KANTIAN ETHICS

- ASKS “WHAT IF EVERYBODY DID THAT?” (and he assumes we will all get the same answer if we are disciplined and honest)
- Proposes an ideal world of self-directed individuals -- “THE KINGDOM OF ENDS”



*Assertorial: asserted as true.

**Apodeitic: asserted as necessary.

TYPES OF IMPERATIVES (“SHOULD”)

HYPOTHETICAL (NOT MORAL)-- THESE TAKE THE FORM OF “IF I WISH . . . , THEN I MUST . . .”

– **IMPERATIVES OF SKILL (Practical)** -- PIANO, CARPENTRY, MEDICINE

– **Practical Example:** If I wish to become a doctor, then I should study biology and chemistry.

Hypothetical Imperatives

(not moral laws)

IMPERATIVES OF PRUDENT CONDUCT

-- FRIENDSHIP, KINDNESS, APPRECIATION

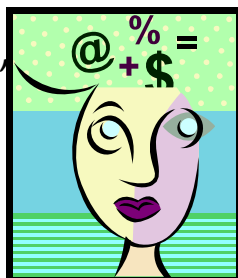
- **Example:** If I wish to have customers continue to come to my store, then I should charge them fair prices.
- **Example:** If I want my neighbor to respect my property, then I should respect hers.

Some "good" deeds are **not** moral deeds

- I do the right thing but I do it because I am forced to do it.
 - I don't sell cigarettes to minors because the law prevents me.
- I do it because I am hoping for some benefit to me.
 - I treat customers fairly because I want to increase my customer base.
- I do an act that seems good, but I do it because of inclination, i.e., it just makes me happy to do it.
 - I just like my customers so I treat them fairly.

SOURCE OF THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE AND A GOOD WILL

THE
DISCIPLINED,
RATIONAL
MIND



TYPES OF IMPERATIVES ("SHOULD'S")

CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE OR MORAL IMPERATIVE

Absolute, A Priori, Rational, & based on "Good Will"

(There are no IF'S, AND'S, OR BUT'S: These are apodeitic (necessary).

- I should not lie
- I should not kill innocent people
- I should not steal

When does doing a good act meet the standards of Kant's Categorical Imperative?

I must obey the correct maxim (deed or act or rule) because my reason tells me that is what I would will that all people do

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE THREE TESTS

- THE MAXIM MUST NOT BE SELF-CONTRADICTIONARY
- THE MAXIM MUST BE UNIVERSALIZABLE
- THE MAXIM MUST BE ONE WHICH COULD BE WILLED A PRIORI BY A RATIONAL PERSON

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE
VERSION I

“THERE IS BUT ONE
CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE,
NAMELY THIS: ACT ONLY ON
THAT MAXIM WHEREBY THOU
CANST AT THE SAME TIME
WILL THAT IT SHOULD
BECOME A UNIVERSAL LAW.”

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE
VERSION II

“ACT AS IF THE MAXIM [rule
or command] OF THY
ACTION WERE TO BECOME
BY THY WILL A UNIVERSAL
LAW OF NATURE.”

THE CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE
VERSION III

“MAN AND ANY RATIONAL BEING
EXISTS AS AN END IN HIMSELF, NOT
MERELY AS A MEANS TO BE
ARBITRARILY USED BY THIS OR THAT
WILL, BUT IN ALL HIS ACTIONS,
WHETHER THEY CONCERN HIMSELF
OR OTHER RATIONAL BEINGS, MUST
ALWAYS BE REGARDED AT THE SAME
TIME AS AN END.”

Using People as Mere Means
or as a Means Only

- Medical experiments in which the protocol requires that some patients receive placebos.
- Lying to voters to get power to act contrary to the good of the people.
- Experiments on prisoners without some advantage to them.
- Lying to parents or friends to gain some advantage.

Kant's Examples: # 1

**A man reduced to despair
contemplates suicide:**

Is suicide universalizable? No!

Does it treat oneself as a means or as
an end? As a means.

**Therefore, the categorical imperative
dictates that suicide is morally wrong.**

Kant's Examples: # 2

**A man in need of money thinks about
borrowing money and realizes he will have
to promise to repay it even though he knows
he cannot.**

Is such behavior universalizable?

Would he be using the person as a
means or as an end?

Kant's Examples: # 3

A person has a talent which he could develop to benefit himself and others, but he prefers not to work to improve the talent.

Is such behavior universalizable, i. e., could we rationally will to live in a world in which no one developed his/her talents?

Would we be using ourselves as a means or as an end if we did not improve ourselves?

Kant's Examples: # 4

A prosperous person is asked for charitable help. He considers not helping.

Is such behavior universalizable, i. e., could we rationally will to live in a world in which no one acted to help others?

Would he be using the person as a means or as an end?

Is Kant a closet utilitarian?

The examples of developing our talents or helping those in need seem very close to a utilitarian perspective. Defenders of Kant say there is an important distinction: utilitarians would say it would not bring more happiness to most (the end state) if people did not develop their talents or help others; Kantians merely ask whether a rational person could will to universalize those acts. That explanation may seem to be making a fine distinction.