

The Categorical Imperative

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 - b. Acting from Sympathy can be Good.

Kant's Constraints

Kantian Deontology = Conforming to Rationality

Happiness is good, but not good in itself.

Justification: We *make* things good for us by valuing them, we don't value them because they are good as the Utilitarian claims.

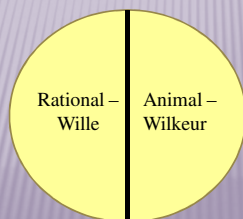


Kant (1724-1804)

The Good Will

The only thing that is *good in itself* is the GOOD WILL (*Wille* – the Rational Part of you).

Justification: The motivation with which we intend is the only thing under our control.



Determining the Right Action and Motivation

1. Formulate a Maxim-for-Action
2. Evaluate it as coming from the *Wille* or not.
3. If it comes from the *Wille*, it is good, and you are good in doing it; if it doesn't, then see step (4).
4. If it doesn't come from the *Wille*, but is *consistent* with it, then the action is good, but you are not doing it from the right motive and so you are not praiseworthy.

Maxims

Maxim: I will do Action A in order to achieve Purpose P.

3 Maxims in Kant's Shopkeeper:

- (1) I will be honest with my customers in order to gain their trust and get repeat-business.
- (2) I will be honest with my customers because I like them.
- (3) I will be honest with my customers because that's the right thing to do.

Maxims & Motivation

The Motivations:

- (1) I will be honest with my customers **in order to gain their trust and get repeat-business.** – SELF-INTEREST
- (2) I will be honest with my customers **because that's the kind of person I am or because I like them.** – CHARACTER OR SYMPATHY
- (3) I will be honest with my customers **because that's the right thing to do.** – DUTY OR THE MORAL LAW

Kant's Claim: Only Maxim (3) comes from the *Wille*.

Motivation from Duty

Motivations from SELF-INTEREST are not moral.

Motivations from CHARACTER and SYMPAHTY depend on a person's genetics and good fortune.

Motivations from DUTY come from a person's reasoning, from their rational will (i.e., their *Wille*).

The Hypothetical Imperative (HI)

HI: You should do Action A if you desire Object O and Action A is a means to achieving Object O.

Translation: Do it if it suits your goals.

Example: You want good grades. You can get good grades by studying or by cheating. Both satisfy the HI.



The Categorical Imperative (CI)

CI: You should do Action A if it is *The Right Thing to Do*.

Questions: 1. Is there anything like this?

2. How do we know?

3. What does it tell us to do?

Kant's Answer to 1.: The CI is a Law of Rationality.

So we have to do behave in accordance to it as long as we are rational. We are rational. Therefore, we are bound to obey the CI.

The CI as a Law of Rationality

You cannot rationally deny the existence of The Moral Law (the CI)

Proofs via each of the 3 Formulations of the CI:

The Formula of Universal Law

The Formula of Humanity

The Formula of Kingdom of Ends

The Formula of Universal Law

"Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (Kant, MM 421).

Steps:

- (1) Formulate a Maxim-for-Action.
- (2) Universalize the Maxim.
- (3) Check for Contradictions (Are (1) & (2) consistent?)
- (4) Evaluate the action as Permissible or Impermissible.

Kant's examples: Suicide, Lying-Promise, Laziness, Lack of Charity

Institution-based examples: Lying and Stealing

The Formula of Humanity

"Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means" (Kant, MM 429).

Humanity: Rationality

End: Something valuable in itself, for it's own sake.

Means: Something that is valuable as a way to get something else.

Don't lie, cheat, manipulate, harm, or otherwise use anyone in a way that they could not *rationally* consent to.

The Formula of Autonomy

“A rational being must always regard himself as legislator in a kingdom of ends rendered possible by freedom of the will, whether as a member or as sovereign” (Kant, MM 433).

- (1) You have freedom and you give yourself the laws of morality.
- (2) Your rationality determines the laws, so you are only truly free when you are acting in accordance with the laws (in accordance with your own intrinsically valuable nature).
- (3) Therefore, when we legislate laws, we must be willing to obey them.

A Democracy of all of Humanity

Maxims & Motivation

The Motivations:

- (1) I will be honest with my customers **in order to gain their trust and get repeat-business. – SELF-INTEREST**
- (2) I will be honest with my customers **because that’s the kind of person I am or because I like them. – CHARACTER OR SYMPATHY**
- (3) I will be honest with my customers **because that’s the right thing to do. – DUTY OR THE MORAL LAW**

Kant’s Claim: Only Maxim (3) comes from the *Wille*.

Summary: Kant

Constraint-Based

Respect your own rationality and the rationality of others.

Consider Rationality (in yourself and in others).

You can seek your own happiness but there are constraints.

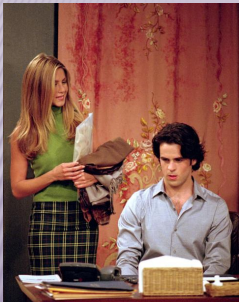
1. On Actions: Ask if anyone else’s rationality would be harmed.
2. On Motivations: Ask if you are acting from respect.

Objections

1. Rationality isn’t the Only Source of Value: Small children, animals, and the environment *are* valuable.
2. Acting from Sympathy can be Good.

Discussion Question:

Analyzing an Action from a Kantian POV



Analyze a controversial action from a tv, movie, or news program that you’ve recently seen from a Kantian perspective. For example, on Friends, Rachel asked out her secretary, Tag. Explain the action, the circumstances surrounding the action and briefly identify the show and the people/characters that are relevant. Answer according to Kant’s Formula of Humanity whether the action was right and then whether it was correctly motivated.

Complete this question by Thursday’s Class. We will discuss your answers in some depth.