

Emmanuel kant's moral philosophy assignment

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The moral philosophy of Emmanuel Kant is the most straightforward and solid in foundation of all ethical theories. Kant's ethics are simple because they have a black and white (right and wrong) format. Many people cling to his thinking because his moral philosophy offers a firm solution to ethical questions, and this firmness removes any uneasiness in the agent's mind. The central theme that sums up Kant's moral reasoning is his categorical imperative, "I am never to act otherwise than so that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law. (306) By this Kant means that one should never perform an action unless they think that action would also be acceptable for everyone else to perform. Kant is not a relativist, which is someone who thinks that the morality of actions is subject to change based on the situation, but rather is an absolutist, believing each action has a universal morality regardless of the situation or consequences. This idea that "moral conceptions... Cannot be obtained from abstraction of any empirical" (308) furthers Kant's argument that the morality of actions is universal.

Since morality is not something we decide on from experience, its existence, as being of a certain ethical morality, remains the same over time in all occurrences of the action. Kant holds the belief that an action's morality is always consistent and is never compromised by the consequences due to the performance of that action. Unlike consequentialism, for Kant the greater good was irrelevant since moral laws are absolute. One of the actions that Kant believed was morally wrong was lying.

This means (according to Kant's ethics) that if a killer came up to you and asked you where your family was so that he could go chop their heads off,

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you would have a moral duty to tell him the truth. He held the claim that since the killer is his own moral agent, the weight of his actions will be on his shoulders regarding moral judgment and not on the truthful agent even though it results in the death of his innocent family members. While this is a very difficult answer for many to fathom, the reasoning behind it proves why lying is a morally wrong action.

Society is only able to successfully function, as a unit full of various relationships, when people can trust others and rely on others words and commitments. Trust and reliability is grounded in telling the truth; therefore if everyone lied in order to avoid a negative outcome, society would implode because nobody would ever be able to trust anyone else. Another more realistic situation to contemporary society where the categorical imperative applies is if you were to flirt with another married woman behind your wife's back.

In choosing whether or not to do the action, you would have to think, would it be okay if another man flirted with my wife in the same way I am with this other woman? Often people like to agree that the action is wrong, yet want to make themselves the exception to the rule. By constantly applying your action universally, maintains the idea that one can never use the ends justifies the means as a valid reason for performing a certain action. "Since the universality of the law... is properly called nature... that is the existence of things so far as it is determined by general laws. (311) These laws preside over any personal beliefs regarding the morality of an action, so an acting agent should always make ethical decisions based on these natural pre-existing laws even if they result in a negative consequence for that

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agent. This is the key difference that separates Kant from consequentialism. From this understanding of ethical theory, we can determine that where Kant believes the action itself has an inherent morality; consequentialism believes that the action itself is neutral because the morality is dependent on the result of the action.

In order to live a moral life, Kant says that each rationally thinking human being deserves to be treated with a certain respect and dignity. The morality of actions is determined before experience (a priori) through reasoning, which makes the morality something that is universal. All of his reasoning for this moral philosophy of deontology stems from his categorical imperative that states an action should only be done if it is always okay to be done regardless of the situation or outcome.

A completely continuous moral lifestyle is extremely difficult to live out; especially more so in modern American society where individualism is a significant ideology and people are often judged on the results of their actions. Even if it is impossible to completely abide by Kant's moral standards, by using our conscience to analyze the universality of our actions, we can grow into better more ethical people.