

# Utilitarianism and kantianism and morality

[Psychology](#), [Behaviorism](#)



Morality has always been a questionable topic with a multitude of answers. Utilitarianism and Kantianism provide two especially impactful theories. If there was a natural disaster in one's community and they could save their own child or two other children that are not theirs, it would naturally be a difficult question to answer-where utilitarianism and Kantianism provide possible answers.

Utilitarianism, a theory not fully understood until the 19th century, has posed a complex answer to complex moral situations. Classical utilitarianism, first written about by Jeremy Bentham in 1789, revolves around the principle of utility. This principle either approves or disapproves of any action taken by humans and weighs if it enhances or diminishes the happiness of the party who it is effecting. Naturally, there were going to be people who opposed Bentham, either in pieces or entirely. Philosopher John Stuart Mill, inspired by Bentham, wrote his own book and critiqued a multitude of Bentham's theories and beliefs and replaced them with slightly altered versions. Mill argued that some pleasures are just, naturally, better than others are. He also recognizes that many who experience a large amount of pleasure in one situation, may not in situations that others find pleasurable. This continued to open up channels for conversations about hedonism, utilitarianism, and basic morality. In the twentieth century, ideal utilitarianism emerged and began to question the traditional purely hedonistic view. This brought on new and categorical parts of utilitarianism, such as act and rule utilitarianism. Act utilitarianism is the belief that whatever the action that is taking place is, it should be performed in such a way that will create the greatest overall utility. The principle of utility should be used on a case-by-case basis in act

utilitarianism and the morally right action is the one that creates more well-being. Rule utilitarianism, one that stresses the integrity of morality and rules, is a belief that actions are morally justified if the action is in compliance with a specific moral code, or that the action and outcome are so complacent, the moral rule is included into the code. There should be a list of acceptable moral causes, and on every case, should be referred back to solve problems. Acceptance into the moral code would require that moral rule to produce a higher feeling of pleasure. Utilitarianism of itself is one of the most influential and widely recognized moral theories. Based on their immediate effects on the community, utilitarianism's core idea is focused on whether actions are deemed morally right or wrong. As with all theories, there are criticisms that surround them. Since there are multitudes of branches of utilitarianism, there are hundreds of criticisms made over the years based off different points. There are criticisms that argue it is impossible to calculate utilitarianism because the outcomes are unknowable. As well, act utilitarianism requires those to do what they can to maximize utility, but to go about it without any favoritism of outcome. If my community was hit by a natural disaster and I was faced with saving only my own child or two other children that were not mine, the utilitarian response would be to save the two children who are not yours. Specifically act utilitarianism, saving the two children that were not yours has a couple of benefits. The first, most obviously, is that you are saving two children instead of one. These two children will grow to do two times the amount of things the one child would do and would increase the gene pool. Even though these genes are not your own, they are important to the reproduction of humans and will

be twice more able to contribute than one. The human race itself would benefit from two beings instead of one, there are twice the amount of contributions to society.

Kantianism, a theory of morality proposed by German philosopher Immanuel Kant, is rightfully known as the opposing theory to utilitarianism. Kant believed that rationality was the ultimate good and that all people, no matter their morals, are capable of being fundamentally rational. His theory showed that all moral actions could be linked back to an underlying principle, and that is how the action is judged. Unlike utilitarianism, Kantianism looks to respect the goal, or duty of humans rather than to base it on the rightness or wrongness. Kant believed in an ultimate principle of morality, the categorical imperative, and this helps to determine what our moral duties consist of. An imperative, defined as a command, is used to guide people on their moral decisions. Even if doing said action would benefit you or your interests, you may not engage. The outcome must benefit the whole, no matter the personal or internal reasons. Kant, still less concerned about the consequences, is an avid believer that every human should follow their moral duty. This can relate to the core theory of rule utilitarianism, but the main difference is the importance of the outcome. Usually, when one is conducting Kantian analysis, it is important to follow a couple of steps, including identifying your variables, formulating the maxims, and finding the probability and utility of each outcome as acted on. In the case there is a natural disaster in a town and it is only possible to save your own child or two children that are not your own, you would likely save your own child if you were following the Kantian theory. Because this theory is less concerned

about the outcomes and is focused on your duty as a human, and in this case, a parent, the outcome with the greatest fulfillment of your parental duty would be the morally correct thing to do. This, being opposite of utilitarianism, is doing what is best for your genes and your family gene pool instead of overall society. Both Kantianism and Utilitarianism provide valid points, understandable theories and the opportunity to evaluate more than one option when solving a question of morality.

Both theories have their pros and cons, for society and personal, but neither can provide the “right” answer. Picking a correct answer on a subjective topic is difficult because of many peoples varying opinions and personal feelings. Utilitarianism, being better for the whole of society, continues to ensure that the outcome of a situation will benefit the whole society, community, or group of people. If your focus were to save lives for the good of your community, then the right answer would lead to utilitarianism. If your love for your child is too strong to break and you choose to save your own child, you would be following Kantianism.