

Kantian ethics – strengths and weaknesses essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



It overcomes the problems of acting on inclination and whether this does or doesn't lead to moral behaviour. Inclination and emotions are too changeable and inconsistent to base morality on such feelings

The Categorical Imperative is a powerful set of principles that prohibit acts that would commonly be considered wrong, e. g. theft, murder, and fraud.

*It is independent of religion; this makes it accessible to all human beings because it appeals to reason alone.

*It has a positive support for justice and respect for persons; many say that Kant's theory is said to be the forerunner of international charters of human rights.

Supports actions that are usually recognised as noble, virtuous and other-regarding.

It provides a powerful set of principles to enforce moral conduct that we would commonly accept, such as condemnation of murder, rape and theft, based on reason.

Weaknesses:

Kant's assumption that the morally good will would always coincide with a correct knowledge of the moral law has not proved to be well-founded.

Differences in moral perception show that this is rarely the case. Kant's clear-sighted vision of objective morality has not been so clear to others, as moral disputes always show. Kant's laudable stress on duty leaves behind the problem of what duty. This Kant is no help where duty is difficult to

discern, or where conflicts of duty arise (give example) but is the sense of duty itself remains a provocative aspect of Kant's ethical theory. *The first important difficulty with Kantian ethics is his notion of a moral law. Kant assumed that an objective moral law existed, one that would be as clear to others as it was to him.

Unfortunately, many of the principles that were clear to Kant have been questioned by other thinkers e. g.: telling the truth (Kant says " we are obliged to tell the truth as an absolute moral requirement , for without telling the truth social life between human beings would become impossible"). Talk about the maniac and his girlfriend. *A further objection centres on the nature of the moral law. Kant argued that " moral laws were those that could without contradiction be universalised"; that is, made binding on everyone in all similar circumstances.

The technique of ' universalising' an action is a test to see if, as a law, it would have a positive or negative effect on human life (How does this prove the existence of moral laws?). Many would argue that so-called moral laws are at most social conventions, drawn up over the course of civilised history to make life tolerable and just. This, is it argued partly explains why ' morality' is not the same everywhere, because conventions are made to meet particular needs and circumstances.