

Explain kant's categorical imperative

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The Categorical Imperative was a deontological, absolute, normative and secular theory put forward by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century. Kant's theory was deontological which means that it judges morality based on a person's action rather than the outcome, it is also secular, this means that, even though Kant is religious, his theory is not, his theory is judgemental which means the theory is normative and it is also absolute which means that Kant believes that everyone in the world should believe in his theory.

Moral Law can be achieved through reasoning our senses and is equivalent to "Duty + Good Will = Moral Law". Kant's theory was based on duty, which is a moral obligation/ responsibility with no benefit to yourself, it means that if you have the chance to do something to help someone it is your moral obligation to do that, "ought implies can" - Immanuel Kant, this means that if there is something that you should do, it implies that you can do it. Kant argued that if you have a good will to do something then the act is moral.

Good will is your motive to do something, so if your motive was to either impress or to get a good feeling, then the act of, e. g. giving to charity, it is rendered immoral. Good will is avoiding immoral acts. Kant also said that people seek the highest form of good called the Summum Bonum which will be attained by following his theory of The Categorical Imperative which is split into three formulations. Moral statements are described as "A priori synthetic", we can't prove what people should be doing by observing so they are a priori not a posteriori which requires experience.

The synthetic part comes from the fact that moral statements might be right or wrong and you need to see the act that will give you this knowledge. The categorical imperative is different from the hypothetical imperative; they are <https://assignbuster.com/explain-kants-categorical-imperative/>

practically polar opposites as the hypothetical Imperative is what the categorical imperative is not. the hypothetical imperative is not moral, they are conditional, whereas the categorical imperative is unconditional.

Universalizability is the first formulation of the categorical imperative and is the theory of a universal law that every person in the world is morally bound to, " act according to the maxim that it should become a universal law", this basically means that if an act is morally wrong for one it is morally wrong for everyone else. An example of this would be murder, most people believe that murder is morally wrong, and if it is wrong for them then it should be wrong for everyone else, this also builds up the fact that this is an absolute theory, " Do not act on any principle that cannot be universalised".

The second formulation of the categorical imperative is means to an end, which is to treat humans as ends in themselves, which means that you can't use a human for another purpose, or a selfish gain, as they are the highest point in creation, for example Abortion, Kant would disagree with abortion as you are not giving the unborn foetus the kindness or respect it would get as if it were a fully grown human, " Golden Rule - Treat others as you would like to be treated" - Jesus of Nazareth.

The third and final formulation is The Kingdom of Ends, This is basically the idea of a democracy and not , what most people would think to be, heaven, Kant's theory of a kingdom of ends actually led to the start of the United Nations where there are peace treaties signed and peace talks going on these talk can prevent war through the power of a democracy, " A law making member of a kingdom of ends".

The Categorical Imperative is morally unacceptable

Relativist scholars such as Carol Gilligan "Cuts the head from the heart", would agree with this statement as the categorical imperative does not consider the consequences which renders it morally unacceptable, since it is human nature to consider the consequences before carrying out and act. For example in I. V. F the parents have grown desperate for a child as clearly they have no means of producing a child naturally, the categorical imperative would say the unborn foetus was being treated as a means and not an end in itself, which would be immoral according to his theory.

Also, the theory states that something is not a duty if you are doing it out of love, for example if I gave to charity and it gave me a happy feeling it isn't necessarily moral, This is a problem as nearly everything we do, we do out of love. However Absolutists like Bradley, "fixed moral code" would disagree with this statement as it is based upon reason and provides clear moral guidelines to follow. Also, the categorical imperative shows respect to humans as the second formulation protects a human beings rights, and they shouldn't be exploited. In addition, Kant's theory uses reasoning instead of

sense experience to achieve moral law which leads to the Summa Bonum which is easier as emotions can affect the morality of an act, everyone has reasoning therefore the categorical imperative is easy to apply as it is an absolute rule. In conclusion I would have to agree with Mackie and say that The Categorical Imperative is morally unacceptable, he believes in "No objective values" as this theory is too rigid and also can only work if everyone follows it, for example not lying, you can't guarantee that everyone

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will not lie as they might find themselves in a position where they need to lie, to maybe protect someone.