

A case study of immanuel kant



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Part 1 - Immanuel Kant wrote that " For Kant, then, the focus is on outcomes, or the ends of an action; in deontology the actions themselves must be ethical and moral, or the outcome is moot. Deontology argues that there are norms and truths that are universal for all humans; actions then have a predisposition to right or wrong, moral or immoral. Kant believed that humans should act, at all times, as if their individual actions would have consequences for all of society. Morality, then, is based on rational thought and is the direction most humans innately want. It is not enough, though, for there to be individual morality. Kant took this further, reacting, and argued that a state or society must be organized by the way laws and justice was universally true, available, and, most importantly, justified by humanity. Yet, for Kant, these laws should respect the nature of freedom, autonomy, and egalitarianism of all members of society. Kant saw that a few basic rights were critical for any civil society to exist. After Kant, this became a rubric by which we may understand modern utilitarian principles and their interdependence with the concept of human rights. Thus it seems that for Kant, at least in Groundwork, the task is to seek the foundation of a principal of morality that will fit the human definition in almost all cases. Rationally, each person will move towards this axiom; to do otherwise would be to remain irrational. This, in particular, has relevance in the contemporary world of philosophical discourse, in which we can look at Kant's ideas about freedom and the nature of action and apply to the principles of autonomy and humans as autonomous agents.

For Kant, the basic idea of morality focuses on the question, " But it is far more than simply an account of human and social interactions - but a larger

view of the overall metaphysics of the basis of morality; political, religious, cultural, and social issues explored as well. This, for Kant, is a seminal issue of the basis of human rights - rights come from a deeper sense of ethics and morality, from the very basis of what spark defines humanity. But Kant did not develop his ideas in a vacuum, of course. The notion of human rights has been an ongoing political and philosophical debate since humans began to express their thoughts in writing. At the center of this debate is the notion that many remain dissatisfied with the definition of "good" or "appropriate" being at the whim of a particular social order, or ruling elite. This debate may be found in Aristotle, Socrates, and Aquinas, leading to more contemporary political notions from Lock, Kant, and even Martin Luther King, Jr. Forming the core modern argument, for instance, Aquinas argued that there were certain universal behaviors that were either right or wrong as ordained by the Divine. Hobbes and Locke differed, and put forth the notion that there were natural rights, or "states of nature," but disagreed on the controlling factors of those natural tendencies. Kant took this further, reacting, and argued that a state or society must be organized by the way laws and justice was universally true, available, and, most importantly, justified by humanity. Kant prescribed that basic rights were necessary for civil society, and becomes a rubric by which we may understand modern utilitarian principles and their interdependence with the concept of human rights. Kant deciphers his ethical questions surrounding natural rights, and by extension social and organizational rights, by critically analyzing the motivation of utility (an act) while briefly ignoring the consequences. Synthetic a priori judgments consist in utilizing certain sensory data and utilizing the Categories to organize the spatial or chronological. When we apply categories to our sensory data in

space and time, then we become aware of physical objects. Only categories make objects possible. Kant terms items that exist apart from space, time, and categories as “things in themselves”(noumena). Alteration of substances is possible for Kant – states of matter can change, evolve; therefore thoughts change too. Subsequent states are called effects when they transition appropriately from one state to another; “lawful” for Kant if it is a necessary consequence. There are, of course, dependencies as well, and Kant argues that it is more the appearance of cause and effect that is important, not the things themselves.

In the contemporary world these Kantian ideals can be seen in relation to the morality of public policy, social interaction, and publicity – actions relating to humans that provide the synthesis of information and motion towards utility for society. One may also view Kant’s causality in that policies must pass philosophical order to be just as social principles.). Morally, then, Kantian principles hold that in order to maintain what is both politically and socially just for society, the rights of the individual must not only be protected, but actively cherished and cultivated, in order for the political-social contract to be continually validate.

Part 2 – But how does philosophical debate translate into the dogmatic, practical nature of the modern world? For Kant, it is reason – somewhat dichotomous in that when things are dissected in “reality” it is theoretical; but practical when he analyzes how things should be. And, is not modern social theory really about the process of making society better for all, engendering human rights and considering how things “should be?” For Kant, then, there are two main rubrics of moral philosophy: 1) metaphysics

investigates the nature of reality, and 2) ethics, which, for Kant, seeks a priori rules that govern the manner in which free will helps make moral decisions. Reason has its practical employment in determining what ought to be as well. Theoretical reason is concerned with things that are formal and subjective. Practical reason is concerned with things that are real and objective. Kant believes that,

It seems that Kant is saying to us that the basis for all morality is far deeper than just the idea of moral action or inaction - it is reason itself. Reason is the human ability to make presumptions and identify the basic structure emanating from the idea of truth. It allows us to move from the particular and contingent to the global and universal. Reason seeks increasingly higher levels in order to explain the way things are. For humanity to prosper, Kant posits, the observable universe must, in and of itself, be conceived of by reason. This continual movement towards reason is simply a natural state of knowledge - learning, and ways to determine the truth of the natural world. But it is clear that theoretical reason can never have knowledge of the totality of things. Morality, according to Kant, must be universal. For this reason it can only find its place within the realm of practical reason. Morality could not possibly take place within the realm of theoretical reason because this would involve the sensible world. For Kant, morality has to be pure and universal.

Taking Kant a bit further, and looking at the ideas of Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics, we find that morality and ethics are more a choice of chronology and cultural appropriateness. Aristotle said we should act in the right way, at the right time, in the right amount towards the right persons for <https://assignbuster.com/a-case-study-of-immanuel-kant/>

the correct reasons (Nicomachean Ethics, II). The basic assumption about Aristotelian morality is that humans are moral agents through their individual actions. But, human behavior being what it is, morality is only one of the facets of human's evolution towards happiness.

This centuries-long debate, though, certainly remains controversial. Now, we have the benefit of some of the Continental philosophers, of existentialism and other modern theories. But, in Kantian (and classical) ethics, narrative theories focus on ways to analyze and synthesize methodologies for establishing right and wrong, and to propose ways for distinguishing right and wrong actions. We know that two major ethical categories exist; teleological or consequential ethics and deontological, or non-consequential ethics. Teleological ethics judge consequences of actions; the right and wrong as a ratio of good to evil within a given set of parameters.

Deontological ethics focus on the concept of the reason (duty) rather than any cultural or individual judgments of right or wrong. Under this paradigm, it is the nature (the inner feeling or duty or necessity) of action that defines the morality of the concept.

This concept of teleological and deontological forms is unclear for Kant.

There is the contrast between Kant's deontological and teleological imperative within the rubric of morality. Some of the arguments in Groundwork appear to be relatively incompatible with any sort of teleological paradigm of ethics or morality. Kant insists that morality for all individuals is a part (a locus) of rational will. Similarly, the manner in which Kant views good and evil seem anti-teleological, which makes little sense considering

his overall view of human nature, human values, and the purpose of the individual within the greater societal whole.

Kant assumes that duty and good will are synonymous, but it is morality, which motivates both. For instance, if someone must lie or tell a falsehood to remain moral to a duty, it cannot be construed as immoral - there was an a priori assumption. Actions cannot only be considered as the means to one person's end, but must satisfy the criteria of being a universal end, which ensures goodness for all, not merely for one. The basics of human nature are more inclined to act because of duty - which is the proper Kantian moral. Doing so does give one a feeling of happiness, and is therefore, perceived as good. Emotions play an important role in these perceptions, which Kant quite ignored. Emotions are not to be trusted, as they are fickle and intolerable. Perceptions, though, can change, and so can the concepts of right and wrong, depending upon the situation; a fact Kant ignores. In certain situations, for instance, falsehoods might be immoral, but Kant never conclusively proves this, remaining rather abstract. If, because of telling a lie a human life is saved, then one can assume a desirable end has been reached - but if the desirable end is not reached, how can we realistically agree that this is contrary to one's own moral duty, as Kant would have us believe? Kant's categorical imperative appears unable to provide an undisputed answer to that question, and at least his final authority on moralism.