

# Kant or utilitarianism assignment

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Utilitarianism requires too much concentration on individual aspects of what the greatest happiness is and basing moral standards around them. Kant believed that good will was the only thing truly good that could be used to determine a person's morality. This good will would make people act out of a sense of duty and not for example, out of self-interest or emotion. Kant used a categorical imperative to determine an action's moral worth. This imperative states that we should always act to will the maxim, or subjective principle, of that action into a universal law (Shaw and Barry 70).

I believe Kant would say that insider trading was immoral because inside traders typically act out of self-interest. To prove it a maxim for inside traders could read as follows: "I know insider trading is illegal but I will still do it in order to minimize or maximize my personal interests." This proves that an inside trader knows that this act is immoral, but will still indulge in it in order to preserve self-interest. From an organizational standpoint, Kant believed we would follow the rules laid out for us regardless of the outcome and that we should act on principles when making moral decisions.

Insider trading is damaging to the majority of stock holders who do not have ties to the "inside circle" of the organization. While the insiders save themselves from disaster the rest of the investors lose heavily. This is also an example of using people as means to an end, which is forbidden by Kant, because the families and livelihoods of investors have been put at risk in order for a chosen few to save themselves from disaster. I believe this to be inhumane to deny an individual the right to self-preservation which is essentially what is happening when insiders' trade before the information is made public.

Utilitarianism states that we must evaluate how our actions will affect everyone involved in certain situations. If the results of our actions net more good or happiness than bad for all of us, compared to any other action, then this is the correct action to take (Shaw and Barry 62). A utilitarian could deem insider trading either moral or immoral depending on the net of good or bad from the action and the relationship the stock holder has to the organization, such as someone with a fiduciary relationship to the organization as opposed to a rival looking to take over.

For example, if the insider information was good news for the company, it would cause a rise in stock prices and all investors could benefit from it. If the information was to be shared with all the stockholders and everyone could make a profit, it could be deemed a positive that maximized everyone's happiness. If the information was not shared and only a handful of investors were able to take advantage it would be immoral because it didn't produce happiness for all.

Another example would be if an insider came to possess information that would potentially put the company out of business, would it be immoral for this insider to pass it along to a rival? This could potentially save jobs that would create more happiness for all. The problem with utilitarianism in this aspect is that it leaves room for immoral actions to be considered moral based on a result and not on the character of the action itself.