

Kantian ethics

Business



Whether simple or difficult, decision making is a part and parcel of society. Every single day we are faced with situations where we need to decide one thing over another. Some decisions may present a challenge, since some elements like virtues can prove leverage to those who have cultivated or possess them.

Making decisions based on virtues is a practice that is attributed to Aristotle, who defined moral virtue as a state of character which is embedded within a person's character. It is virtues that motivate individuals to behave in a manner that will enhance a character on the spotlight. Various individuals display a kaleidoscope of moral virtues, ranging from self-control, courage, and compassion. On the other hand, another category of virtues is intellectual virtues, which encompass practical wisdom. According to Velasquez, Andre, Shanks and Meyer (2010), all these categories of virtues can be fostered via learning and practice. Various professional fields of practice present an array of crisis decision making that requires application of virtue ethics in reaching a morally accepted decision.

This paper will scrutinize the Code of Professional Ethics for Nurses in the light of Kantian Ethics. In this case, the professionals in play are Ms. Corrine Worthen, who is a registered nurse, the head nurse, family members of the patient, and the physician. The protagonist in this case is Ms. Worthen, while the victim is a patient with a terminal illness. The impasse between the two nurses was provoked by the adamant stand that Ms. Worthen took not to perform a kidney dialysis on the terminally ill patient, when the head nurse, with the backing of the physician, wanted Ms.

Worthen to proceed with the procedure. This standoff has been brought about by the robust and divergent opinions of the nurses, which have been informed by “moral, medical and philosophical” perspectives. A dissection of this situation with the aid of Kantian ethical scalpel will expose the rightness or wrongness of either of the decisions arrived at. Kantian ethics in simple terms can be put like this: “doing some act is morally permissible only if others’ doing that act would also be morally permissible... before deciding to do some act, you should ask yourself ‘What if everyone did that?’” (Hooker, 2002). Kantian ethics is based on the Categorical Imperative, which can be formulated using the “formula of the Universal Law” or “the formula of the End in itself”, or the principle of humanity. The former is based on reasoning whether a maxim can be generalized to the rest of the population, while the latter proposes that whenever we act, we must always ensure that we treat everyone (including ourselves) as “ends” and never as “means”.

Another yardstick for Kantian ethics is the Hypothetical Imperative, where an individual’s judgment hinges on the desires and goals. Categorical Imperative, on the other hand, holds that the moral judgment of an individual has to be informed by unconditional categorical motives, based on reason, and not on situational or pragmatic information (Hill, 2009, p. 6; Rohlf, 2012).