

# Ethics and animals assignment

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The relationship between society and an individual is as though between an object and its shadow. No one individual can function apart from society, nor can society operate without the support of individuals. Society, as we know, is the umbrella term for the collection of humans working as a community and sharing common ideals with regards to actions, ethics, and morals. The foundation of a society is always going to be the individuals that make it up. When the individuals in a society are all just and moral people, then society naturally would work as a just and moral entity.

Therefore, the implications of people's ideals, intentions, and actions dictate the conventions of that society. However, the notions of morality for each individual never stem within that individual alone. In other words, the interactions that a person has with others and his or her environment dictate the moral compass of that person. Hence, people and society function as object and shadow, making society an amplified illusion of individuals. As humans, we have a rational mindset. We can easily prove the thought process that one experiences before carrying out any action.

A moral compass for each member in society is created through their exchanges with others and their environment. This moral compass is used to evaluate the action we are about to take. Furthermore, this moral compass is what creates a distinction between intentions and actions. There are numerous arguments that can be created regarding intention and action. However, I personally feel as though regardless of the outcome, the intent to which we carry out an action is what should be considered when debating the morality and righteousness of an action.

The idea that intent is more important than the action itself aligns with Emmanuel Kant's understanding of morality. Emmanuel Kant is an 18th century German philosopher who wrote numerous essays arguing that reason should be the groundwork for establishing any idea of morality. In his work, "Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals" he contends that intentions overpower actions. Kant explains the notion of a moral compass through his idea of a categorical imperative. The categorical imperatives according to Kant are principles that can be universally accepted as they do only good and no harm.

By saying that they are good, they are morally just in the sense that the imperatives take into account the laws of nature. In other words, these imperatives understand the guidelines to the way in which the world works and they cause no disturbance to the functions of the world. These principles are what an autonomous individual may choose to live by. Kant explains that the duty of each individual is to live by a set of correct intentions. He provides four circumstances to illustrate how the categorical imperative should adhere to the laws of nature.

First, suicide is wrong as the law of self-preservation continues as there would be no people with time. Second, an individual should only borrow money if they intend on paying it back, as the circulation of money is a facet of nature. In other words, if loans were never repaid then lending would cease to exist. Third, individuals should function at their most capability since nature progresses through the interactions of able individuals. Lastly, individuals have an obligation to help others overcome obstacles since progression of nature may only take place once the hindrances have been cleared.

<https://assignbuster.com/ethics-and-animals-assignment/>

Within each four of these situations is an implication of the morals that people should adhere too. It is the thought process prior to the execution of an action that validates the morality of the action. By committing suicide, one feels as though there is more sorrow in their life as opposed to Joy, therefore killing themselves should be certified. Assuming that this is the correct mindset, then all individuals who felt as though their life was pervasive with unhappiness as opposed to happiness are morally permissible to kill themselves.

With people feeling that it is appropriate to omit suicide, life would eventually come to a standstill and as a result, society would become nonexistent. Therefore, the intent to kill oneself is essentially selfish, as it would lead to even more obstacles within society. This brings us back to the analyzing the value of intent versus action. The intention behind actions is what terms the action as moral or immoral. The ability to have an intent stems from the inherent rational that all humans possess. Regardless of the action, individuals have the ability to think of reasoning that leads them to undertake an action.

Therefore, human beings are rational and rational beings are ends in themselves. In other words, extraneous interests should not govern the interactions rational beings make during their exchanges with each other; rather the choices made are made for the sake of morality alone. No individual can be used as a means, we all live autonomously and our roles in society cannot be degraded to that of tools or objects. Individuals in society interact not to use one another, but to allow society to grow and continue as

a whole. Essentially, Kant arguments support the claim that individuals function in accord with other individuals.

Therefore, the intent of our actions affects our interactions with others making our intentions the prime basis for evaluating our morality. Our intentions should be parallel to the idea that we function to further society, not inhibit any aspect of society. Christine Grosgrain is a 20th century American philosopher who believes that much of Kant's ideas can be extended to non-human animals as well. Her arguments align with Kant in the sense that humans cannot treat each other as a mere means. We do use people for services all the time, but we still treat them with a degree of respect.

It would not be morally permissible for us to use others in such a way to which they are not in accord with the way we treat them. Each human being possesses a value of dignity and cannot be treated as a tool or object. To do so would euthanize an individual, which is morally incorrect. However, Grosgrain claims that the guidelines illustrated by Kant apply to nonhuman animals by implication. Grosgrain defines rational animals as those with the ability to perceive and to act voluntarily. Animals have an understanding of their external environments and capability to learn from prior mistakes.

Intelligence and rationality are not different concepts entirely. Intelligence leads to rational thought. For example consider an animal stepping on a hot surface. Initially, the animal may not know that by stepping on the hot surface it will experience discomfort. However, after stepping on the hot surface the animal realizes that it must be careful with regards to that

surface. Grosgrain argues that this animal has the ability to understand that there is something wrong with the surface and it should be avoided. Having a thought process prior to taking an action is ultimately having a rationale.

By extending the idea of rationality to include animals, Grosgrain extends the remainder of Kant's arguments to animals as well. Therefore, according to Scoreboard's analysis of Kantian ethics animals should not be perceived as a mere means either. Our interactions with humans are carried out in such a way that no one individual can morally treat another individual as an object, tool, or device with a purpose. Kant argues that having ulterior motives when interacting with others, using others as purely a means, inhibits the laws of nature from continuing in its course.

The premises for Scoreboard's arguments are all within Kant's principles. Grosgrain ultimately agrees with Kant and simply extends those ideals to the treatment of animals. After evaluating both sides, I feel as though the debate between extending the Kantian ideals to the treatment of animals depends on what defines a rational animal and where the distinction between humans and animals come from based off the interactions between humans and animals. It is evident that humans have a rationale mindset. We have the ability to think as well as the ability to communicate our thoughts. Humans experience emotion.

We feel love, pain, sadness, and even numbness. Studies have observed animals feeling similar emotions, however their inability to communicate will never validate this claim. As humans, we also function within a society. We have duties and obligations to our society; hence the need to abide by a

categorical imperative becomes pivotal. We are the most interactive and interconnected species on our planet. If the interactions between humans and other humans are governed by morals and principles, then there should be some sort of moral governance when humans and animals are interacting.

For example, consider the way in which humans treat inanimate objects, such as a car. Most people clean their cars, get their oil checked, take it to the dealer for servicing, and drive efficiently for better mileage, and the list could go on. The bottom line is that the purpose of a car is transportation, and in order to allow the car to provide us with effective transportation we go out of our way to maintain the car's health. Even with cell phones, we charge them every night, we make sure the software is up to date, and we even invest in protective gear all to ensure the good health of our mobile phones.

Both cars and phones are inanimate objects that serve to be crucial devices in our lives. By keeping up the care of these objects, we give these objects a certain degree of respect. No sane individual throws their cell phone out the window nor rams their car into a wall. The functionality of these devices allows us to be more effective members in society as they ease our needs for these tools cause us to treat them with caution and care. We have made cars and phones to serve a purpose in our lives, and we have incorporated non-human animals into our society for various purposes as well.

Yet, we often fail to realize that these animals are not meant to be mere means in our lives and we have forced them to be incorporated in our human

society. When taking a look at our interaction with non-human animals, the first thing to evaluate is the purpose other species serve humans. Consider most of the medications on the pharmacy shelves. Most, if not all, of the medications have been tested on animals for safety and efficacy since the genes of non-human species are quite similar to that of human species. No animal has the ability to communicate; therefore no animal can actually consent to being used as a subject for drug testing.

Yet, in order for any drug to be considered safe and viable, it is pivotal that drugs are tested on animals prior to humans. We have incorporated animals to our society to further our developments and fulfill our needs. However, this incorporation has formulated a structure to our society that degrades animals to the worth of instruments and tools. By infiltrating societies of animals, living organisms that are highly genetically identical to humans, we have degraded them to being mere means. Kantian ethics values intent and respect of human dignity above all.

The intents behind our actions amongst humans illustrate a certain degree of respect towards each individual. We may use other humans for our own purposes, such as a delivery boy or taxi driver, but it is socially frowned upon to treat them poorly. The help we get from a delivery boy or taxi driver fulfills some of our purposes, in turn we compensate for their assistance through the exchange of money. In that same sense, our society has progressed through its dependence on animals. We have begun to use animals to fulfill our own needs such as research, labor, food, or companionship.

However, they are still living and rational organisms that belong to their own respective societies and without their consent we have annexed them into our own community. Therefore, taking everything into consideration Kantian ethics does apply towards humans by definition; however, they should be extended towards animals primarily because animals are living organisms with roles within their own societies. They have a level of intelligence within their respective spheres and a level of rationality. The intent behind the way in which we treat animals degrades animals to being a reposit, a means.