

Study on kant and constructivism philosophy essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This essay will explore the notion on whether Kant is a constructivist and his views on said topic. Firstly I will outline what a constructivist is and a moral realist. From the 19th century in Darwinian theory, human knowledge could not offer anymore 'truth' to the understanding of humankind as we are a creation of natural selection and know a supreme amount of knowledge that is enough for human survival. A constructivist believes that our reasons for being moral does not derive from our requirements or interests, but are ingrained in us as rational beings. Moral norms are seen as universal and essential for combining rational beings. A moral realist holds the view that there are moral facts and that our moral opinion of these facts can be either accurate or counterfeit. Moral realists have a tendency to be cognitivists, such as Christine Korsgaard who in fact believed Kant to be a moral realist. Kantian realists preserve the view that Kantian constructivists are anti-realists at best (Wood 2008: 283). The thesis of this essay will outline Kant's theory and how he is influenced by constructivism. Secondly I will present the argument from Korsgaard who defend Kant's view on constructivism. Thirdly I will raise some objections to tackle these interpretations and conclude that Kant is a constructivist but possibly in a very weak sense. There are many different versions of constructivism such as Aristotle's view on constructivism, genetic epistemology, social constructivism and so on. Kantian constructivism involves him stating that past theories of moral obligations have ceased to endeavour us with information on moral obligations because they were unsuccessful as theories of practical reason. His take on moral obligations assigns him to some kind of constructivism.

Kant and Constructivism

Kant's driving influence into constructivism as I believe, would be the rise of his assurance that rational humans' wills are usually autonomous in their nature. Kant used this to justify the authority that moral obligations have on us. Freedom as autonomy has implications far beyond the negative sense. This refers to those laws that we lay down by ourselves, thus our wills are carried out by our own reason, instead of being forced upon us by natural law as it is with non-rational beings. Kant believes this autonomy is necessary for the likelihood of significance in our world. Korsgaard (1996) believes constructivism was used as Kant's argument and his opposing view towards scepticism. When reason is autonomous, this avoids the issue of scepticism as its authority does not derive from anything external to its area. Reason is self-sufficient if its influence is underivative and its purpose is constructed instead of submissively known. Kant stated the definite way to create legitimate reasons is through the Categorical Imperative. Reason is a 'self-legislative activity' (Kant Groundwork 4, Section 2) and I believe the Categorical Imperative puts across the independence of reason and its principal value. It is perceived as the 'constitutive norm' of reason and I feel we should not just a simple process of solution to influence what to do.

From this structure follows the character and level of Kant's constructivism. True assertions on how we must conduct ourselves are made true in virtue of a specific property of the values on which we conduct ourselves. That property is the property of being appropriate for willing as a worldwide law. Kant's belief is that we have to view ourselves as the source of the activities and results we will carry out in our world. Our acts should be associated in a

law-like manner, thus we ought to act in accordance to laws. For our willing to possess moral worth, the laws in which we perform upon ought to be rational, not just fundamental. Our moral values are perceived as worthy if they are successful in a specified assessment of reason. Kant says this assessment must steer clear of any contradictions and ought to be decided by us, as moral beings, to conclude how we must act. Therefore, accurate normative judgements are created by a procedure we take on as rational beings. The judgements are accurate in seeing them endure this procedure of rational inspection, and this accuracy can be viewed as constructed as it involved practical rationality as the valuable agent.

The difference to this kind of constructivism can be one suggested in Plato's Republic, a recognitional point of view. The thought of an 'ontological perfection' derives from the Form of Good; the idea that is existent in a world of ideas which is the core of what is familiar to everything that is good. So when a practical opinion is true, what would make it true is that person's stance on the Form of Good. Kant disagreed with recognitionalism and assumed the notion that moral truths were constructed. Kant contemplated how our representations are inclined to be in agreement with its objects. He supposed this happens because of one of two reasons: our understanding and intelligence is inactive or active in relation to its objects, and we can interpret the issue as consuming the form of a predicament. Kant thought it was not considered right to suppose that this 'ontological perfection' was a result of us acting upon this object. He distinguishes activity by relation to the 'intellectual world' and passiveness in relation to the 'world of sense'. Rationality 'just is' a type of activity, so the suggestion that we might inertly

encounter a rational instinct of such an object is incomprehensible. The participation of our senses would propose that the consequential values of the will must be heteronomous and therefore ineffective as a foundation of moral influence. If we presume our intellect were to be active, then we are seizing the only hopeful margin of this predicament and end up back where Kant initially introduced us. Thus it will circle back. Imagining an active intellect is incoherent as we will not be successful in understanding what this representation of an active intelligence would be similar to, thus constructivism is unavoidable in view of the fact that the activity of the intellect must somehow be necessary to the substance of the representation.

Kant's hypothesis on moral norms being constructed has a constructivist consideration of standardised, practical truths. However, saying this, Kant's construction of his theory is foundational, it is supported by considerations that are not themselves constructed. The dispute for the influence of the moral law in the Groundwork is motivated by considering common sense perceptions concerning moral value. Kant analyzed common sense ideas with a thought that 'good will' is the only thing good without qualification. He believes that the good will is not the same to ordinary notions like 'he is good hearted', 'she means well', and 'she has a good nature'. Kant based most of his works on the idea that the good will is an important touchstone of common sense. A person is good only when he possesses a good will. This good will guides a person to make decisions in harmony with the moral law and make decisions which are morally worthy. Therefore Kant takes good will as somewhat of a fact and not a product of construction. In section III of the Groundwork it says we must perceive

ourselves under the 'idea of freedom' and so we are bound by moral law. In his Critique of Practical Reason, Kant turns around this argument by saying because we know that we are bound to the moral law, we can be considered as free "The moral law is given...a fact of which we are a priori conscious" (page 47). So, though Kant is a constructivist when it comes to regulated truths, his explanation on these truths appear to rely on cognitions that the object is not constructed, but they are instead normative truths about the natural world. This constructivism is built on main beliefs that are not themselves constructed, as Rawls stated in the Themes in Kant's Moral Philosophy (page 514-516).

Korsgaard's View on Kant and Constructivism

Christine Korsgaard saw us constructing our moral norms through what she called 'practical identities'. We see ourselves as either a student, teacher, nurse, parent and so on so forth and it is through these identities that we find our worth in undertaking moral norms. We form our conduct through these 'practical identities' and release our commitment and reasons for action. However, as we need reason to act and find these reasons within practical identities, this gives us an additional practical identity to which the foundation of our obligation leads us. This is our identity as moral agents and is what we call our humanity or 'moral identity'. The acknowledgment of this moral identity can allow us the contemplative achievement that our pursuit for the foundation of normativity requires.

Korsgaard offers another argument to tag onto the one above as it is not sufficient enough to tell us all of what morality entails. This argument rejects the notion that it is probable to encompass reasons only to value our own
<https://assignbuster.com/study-on-kant-and-constructivism-philosophy-essay/>

humanity with no similar value to others and their humanity. She argues that reasons ought to be distributed with others e. g. if my humanity is reason-awarding to me, it must be to another person also, thus on equal grounds the other persons humanity is reason-awarding to me as well. Our ' practical identity' verifies something similar to the Categorical Imperative in terms of the Formula of Humanity. Therefore, our action as moral beings relies on our consideration and acceptance of these identities and our acting on the reasons that originate from them.

Cohen held an opposition to this and contemplated whether a member of the Mafia (a person obliged to do right by his family and guard them as a ' loyal soldier' for the family) were told to commit a murder by his family, would he be obliged to do so? Korsgaard conveys her constructivism here as she says this Mafioso obligation is valid ' because it is the endorsement, not the explanations and arguments that provide the material...that does the normative work'. It is just the constructive actions of moral beings that allows normative truths to exist. Though certainly having to uphold that the mafia has any responsibility to perform his obligations is a steep consequence to preserve constructivism and Korsgaard had thought better of doing so. Korsgaard believes that humanity is of the utmost value to us but only if our humanity is not inadequate in sustaining our integrity. For instance, the mafia and their unlawful assignments are not coherent with a universal principle. Therefore, the mafia are unsuccessful as rational agents and manage a life that is not autonomous. We are unavoidably constrained by the moral norms of principles and reason.

Korsgaard's 'Locke Lectures' work did not concentrate on 'practical identity' but instead made self-constitution a prominent factor. Her debate is that our problem as humans is that we cannot do no other than act, yet, actions themselves are established by definite rational norms. The alternative for us is not to will poorly or in a good way, comparative to Kantian imperatives, but it is whether or not to determine ourselves as agents at all. We can either recognise ourselves as having a alternatives when deciding to act, or we cannot be considered as agents at all. Korsgaard supposed willing universally is achieved by governing ourselves through the Categorical Imperative, similar to Kant.

Practical truth is constructed since it is activity in harmony with the moral norms of practical rationality, which are constitutive of activity. In Korsgaard's and Kant's efforts we can observe both constructivism and the basis for the venture of construction. The source of normativity is the fact that we desire to take action upon reasons. Human beings are individuals that seek reasons and contemplate our recognition of our 'moral identity'. Once we identify that we act, we can identify that doing so is unfeasible without principles guiding us and that these principles are universally required. In both cases above, normative realistic demands are the objects of construction not recognition, they are not considered real apart from through our rational activity.

Arguments against Kant's view on constructivism

O'Neill does not agree with the views held by Korsgaard or Kant as she is not in favour of transcendental debates and rejects the idealised conceptions of rational activity. She discards the view that standardisation in moral

<https://assignbuster.com/study-on-kant-and-constructivism-philosophy-essay/>

philosophy rejects the boundaries and susceptibility of human agents, and therefore it is misrepresented and perhaps even risky. O'Neill supposes the process of construction is burdened with strong moral beliefs about activities and shared relations that are not accurate of rational beings.

Kant's constructivist view on moral norms is influenced by a dramatic understanding of human defect according to O'Neill, which to certain extent I do agree with. Human beings are likely to misguidedly rely on assertions that are not reasonable, and so they have to verify and assess the unwarranted assertions they make in analysis. In comparison to realism, constructivism states that the principles of reason are not accessible to rational beings by instinct or perception. Since such principles are not merely given to us, we have to utilize our rationality to figure out what these principles are. We require principles that are able to direct many agents, not preferably rational and not preferably self-sufficient on one another either. O'Neill's constructivist theory does not depend on any set version of rationality of humans. She tries to make sense of what principles will be well suited to agents who have limited rationality and have undetermined abilities for shared autonomy. Kant's view to this would be that no number of agents can decide to live in accordance to values that intend to weaken the agency.

Only reason can validate the credentials of its own assertions, accordingly attempting to figure out what the principles of reasons are is a circular debate. O'Neill argues this circular argument can be amended as the process of validation can be impulsive, as it entails reason evaluating the assertions of reason itself. More accurately, the analysis of reason reveals a

fundamental theory of reasoning: that we ought to depend on values that
<https://assignbuster.com/study-on-kant-and-constructivism-philosophy-essay/>

other rational beings can share. This is a small condition of universality which requires us checking the reliability of our assertions by contemplating whether they can be certified to others. So the major influence of reason is consulted by public contact between boundless rational beings, and it lies in the reality that the principles that dominate our thoughts are not convenient nor self-defeating. We appreciate what these values present when we surrender our arguments to crucial discussions e. g. the principle that we should not injure or mislead is a normative value constructed out of practical reason. Since the critique of rationale seems to be persistent and spontaneous, it seems to have a past which corresponds with the progressive practices of shared recognition. (O'Neill 1999, 174; 2002). I do not particularly agree with O'Neill's account here as it seems unpersuasive and rather unfinished. Her argument does not portray a wholly completed structure of moral norms or knowledge, and it provides no algorithm for shaping a system of morals. However, I do not doubt that it does maintain reason's capability to differentiate reliable justifications from simple validations.

Aristotle and constructivism?