

Philosophy of kant in gone baby gone philosophy essay



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In this essay, I will analyze the issues of Duty and Reason in terms of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. The movie, *Gone, Baby, Gone*, is a powerful analysis of morality set in the context of child abduction/kidnapping. It not only questions the characters in the movie, but the audience in asking themselves, ¿how can we choose between what is good and what is morally right?¿ In order to get a better grasp of the question at hand, Kant¿s ideas of duty and reason provides us with a foundation we can start off with. We can look to the doctrines of Kant and focus our attention to the characters of the movie to further explain the moral situations seen by the movie by analyzing Kant¿s doctrines of good will, duty, reason, maxim, and the categorical and practical imperatives. Patrick, the main character of the movie, captures the very essence of urban Boston life, a major city setting where drugs, violence, and sexual immorality are an everyday way of life for many Bostonians. However, when Bea, Helene¿s aunt entrusts private detective, Patrick Kenzie and his wife Angie the role to help with the abduction of Amanda McCready, it sparks the moral dilemmas and reason in Patrick Kenzie all throughout the movie and shows that even in a city with corruption, a person must do the right thing at all costs.

To Kant, ¿good will represents the effort of rational beings to do what they ought to do rather than to act from inclination or self interest.¿ (Kant, 145) Early in the movie, both Angie and Patrick are faced with a decision to whether or not get involved in the case of the abduction of Amanda McCready. At first, both Patrick and Angie seemed that they would rather not get involved, but after reevaluating his moral values and the situation at hand, Patrick offers his good will and accepts the job, not because of his own

self interest, but he felt morally obliged; to do what he $\frac{1}{2}$ ought $\frac{1}{2}$ to do. Angie, however is still hesitant about involving herself in the investigation, as she says to Patrick, $\frac{1}{2}$ I don $\frac{1}{2}$ t wanna find a little kid in a dumpster after they $\frac{1}{2}$ ve been abused for three days. $\frac{1}{2}$ in which Patrick replies $\frac{1}{2}$ Hon, nobody does. $\frac{1}{2}$ There are many moral complications within the characters of the movie, in terms of both Patrick $\frac{1}{2}$ s and Angie $\frac{1}{2}$ s moral viewpoint. Ultimately they make a decision to offer help in the investigation as they believe that they can do no wrong by doing some good. Kant concludes his doctrine of good will by stating, $\frac{1}{2}$ a reason is not intended to produce happiness, but to produce a good will. $\frac{1}{2}$ (Kant, 146) The reason behind Patrick $\frac{1}{2}$ s decision can support Kant $\frac{1}{2}$ s view on good will as his motive and reason behind aiding in the search of Amanda is of one that isn $\frac{1}{2}$ t to produce happiness for himself, but helping would be in itself, producing good will.

From this point on, after Patrick takes the responsibility and goes forth his investigation, the film only gets more gloomy and harsh. As Patrick continues his investigation, he is confronted with the issue, $\frac{1}{2}$ should we break a law in order to protect someone? $\frac{1}{2}$ Kant claims, $\frac{1}{2}$ action in accordance with duty is not enough; only respect for duty gives an action inner moral worth $\frac{1}{2}$ (Kant, 148) Patrick as a private investigator is confronted with many adamant situations in which he is unyielding and uncompromising. Such an example in the movie is shown deliberately when Patrick makes the choice of murdering the child molester, Corwin Earle. It is undoubtedly clear in Patrick $\frac{1}{2}$ s mind that the execution of Corwin breaks the law, however, it is seen as an act that would protect others and would be for the greater good

of the society as he sees it as another child molester taken off the streets. It is evident that Patrick's action was in respect for duty which gives the action an inner moral worth and is supported by Angie when she states, "I'm proud of you. That man killed a child. He had no right to live." In addition, Kant also claims that, "altruistic actions that result from feelings of sociability deserve praise and encouragement, but they cannot be classified as possessing strictly moral value." (Kant, 149) All things considered, Patrick as well as the society as a whole sees killing in order to save other children is the right behavior, however, Patrick knows for a fact that morally, it does not exhibit moral value.

As more and more of the truth is unveiled, Patrick finds himself crossing to the point where he himself cannot tell right from wrong. All throughout the movie, Patrick makes choices in line with what he believes in, however, he at certain points knows that an action is wrong because he applies that the ethical principle of murdering, kidnapping, and lying should be universal, without any contradiction. Kant suggests, "rational beings, to the extent that they act rationally, will always be guided by ethical principles or maxims that can be adopted by everyone else without generating any contradiction." (Kant, 150) A maxim is an expression of basic principle, general truth, or rule of conduct, a subjective principle of action that expresses a subjective motivation (a want, a wish, a desire, etc.) to act in a distinct manner. In the significant scene in the movie, when Patrick and Remy are by the truck bed talking, Remy asks Patrick, "what do you know?"

Patrick replies saying, "A priest said shame is God telling you what you did was wrong. Murder is a sin." In which Remy responds by saying, <https://assignbuster.com/philosophy-of-kant-in-gone-baby-gone-philosophy-essay/>

½depends on who you do it to.½ Patrick says, ½No, that½s not how it works, it is what it is.½ Patrick is applying the universal concept that murder is wrong, no matter to whom it is to. In accordance to Kant, he claims that it is wrong to tell a lie even it would save someone½s life because it should be applied universally, that lying is wrong. Patrick Kenzie addresses Remy½s moral values when he finds out he has been lying. Patrick says, ½He lied to me. Now I can½t think of one reason big enough for him to lie about that½s small enough not to matter.½ Through Kant½s categorical imperative, moral rules, then have no exception. Killing is always wrong and lying is also always wrong. Duty therefore is the necessity of acting out of reverence for universal law. Moral value is essentially established by the intention of the person acting. (Kant)

Towards the end of the film, both Patrick and the audience encounters what seems to be a very difficult moral dilemma. The issue is that of the two moral conflicts between Patrick and Jack Doyle (Morgan Freeman) clash. We, as an audience find out that the abduction of Amanda McCready was by Jack Doyle, who defends his position of doing so by stating that Amanda McCready would be better off with him rather than with her actual mother, Helene, who plays a drug confused mother who is shown to be immature, irresponsible, and trashy. In a crucial scene towards the end of the movie, the dialogue between Patrick and Jack supports Kant½s ideas; ½to act as to treat all human beings as ends in themselves and never as merely means to ends.½ (Kant, 154) Patrick defends Kant½s ideas stating to Jack, ½does it make you feel better doing it for the right reasons? You took her to be saved from her own mother? It wasn½t your life to give. Helene is her

mother. She is a mother and that's there where she belongs. Despite the fact that Patrick sees Helene as a bad mother, he treats her as if she is an end and not as a means. Even Lionel, who plays Helene's brother, says to not feel sorry for her sister, as she does not care for anybody else. Albeit, Patrick stands for what is right and makes the choice of returning Amanda home to her mother. Patrick's character defies logic and reason when he willingly returns Amanda back to her family, even though he knows the child would be better off with Jack. If Patrick did not act against Jack, he would be willingly, supporting and enabling a universal law that would make it acceptable to steal, abduct, or kidnap children from their family even though we do not approve of the way they are being raised.

The movie, *Gone, Baby, Gone* is a film that from the beginning of the movie to the end reminds the audience of its theme throughout the entire movie. Its characters are shown as an end, not as a means, it discovers the moral theme of decision making and deciding what our duties, and reasons are. It encounters the problem; how can we choose between what is good and what is morally right? Through Kant's ethics, and ideals, we as an audience and having morals, values, and decision making authority ourselves, can make these decisions about the question whether how we can choose between what is good and what is morally right.