

Is lying under any  
circumstances right or  
wrong



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Based on the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, I would have to disagree with his argument that lying is wrong under any circumstances. In this paper I will discuss my reason for disagreeing with the argument based on the flaw stated in the argument, how lying and telling the truth both have bad consequences depending on the circumstances, and also how moral rules cannot be absolute. In this paragraph I will be discussing the flaw that is stated in the argument, in which I absolutely agree with.

The philosophy that "Kant" is stating is completely flawed because it is contradictory on what he bases his reasoning on. "Suppose it was necessary to lie to save someone's life. Should you do it? Kant would have us reason as follows: We should do only those actions that conform to rules that we could will to be adopted universally. Second, if you were to lie, you would be following the rule 'It is okay to lie.' Also this rule could not be adopted universally, because it would be self-defeating: People would stop believing one another, and then it would do no good to lie, therefore, you should not lie. (Immanuel Kant). The problem would show in step two, on why we would be saying if we lied that we would be following a rule that it is okay to lie, when as Anscombe stated if you changed it around to "I will lie when doing so would save someone's life.

"That would make that rule not be self-defeating. Anscombe's argument, shows that in order not to lie completely and prove Kant's philosophy you have to show where lying would not have a good consequence behind it. But it clearly shows that depending on what you are lying for some lies can help more than hurt. Which leads me into my second point on how lying and telling the truth both has bad consequences. In Kant's philosophy telling the

truth leaves you blameless no matter what the outcome of the truth. And lying leaves you being held responsible for the outcome no matter good or bad. This to me is not a good philosophy because you cannot be blameless if telling the truth gets someone killed, but lying helps save his or her life.

Because you had to lie in order to save that person's life does that make you less heroic? No. To me it shouldn't matter as long as you did what you had to do to help that person stay alive. A lie can have harmful consequences you can get someone hurt by lying: and saying that a person did something can get them fired from work. But you can also tell the truth about a person and her actions and still get her fired from work. Both have bad consequences and it doesn't make that person feel any better about whether the outcome came from lying or telling the truth. And that shows how lies and truths both have bad consequences. A moral rule cannot be absolute to me because we don't live in a society that makes decisions based on morals.

Because there is some circumstances that make it hard to say that when this person lied it doesn't matter that the outcome helped someone it was just a lie and nothing else matters. That is not the reality of things morally; you cannot let a person die and feel good about yourself just because you told the truth. Making a moral rule absolute would be contradictory to Kants philosophy, tell the truth no matter what; but morally, is it right to let someone that you can help with a lie fall by the waste side? You may have morally told the truth, but you also feel responsible morally no matter how righteous telling the truth may have been. If you ask me if a moral rule was absolute there would be terrible consequences to telling the truth and not lying in certain circumstances. If such dilemmas occur, then doesn't this

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disprove the existence of absolute moral rules? Suppose, for example the two rules “ It is wrong to lie” and “ It is wrong to facilitate the murder of innocent people” are both taken to be absolute? The Dutch fishermen in Kant’s argument would have to do one of these things; therefore, a moral view that absolutely prohibits both is incoherent. (Immanuel Kant) In conclusion I feel that Kants philosophy as I stated in my thesis is flawed and I disagree with it completely. You cannot in my opinion say that as long as you tell the truth no matter what the consequences are would leave you blameless, if when telling a lie would help someone.

But just because it is morally wrong to lie it doesn’t matter of that consequence you are still wrong even though lying saved that person’s life. If you ask me it would be morally wrong to let a person die and not do everything in your power to save that person. Which is why I don’t feel like a moral rule should be absolute and why in both circumstances of lying or telling the truth you really never know what outcome you are going to get. It is a choice that you make based on the situation that you are in, and even when telling the truth the outcome can still be bad. Kant had a good argument to me, but as the readings say it was “ limited”. Works Cited Rachels, James ( 1941-2003) The Elements of Moral Philosophy