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Kant and the Principles of Morality

The things that we do, everything has a purpose, but are we just doing it, because of the outcome? Or is it the right thing? Immanuel Kant presents his theory about what makes an action morally right. In deontological theory, moral things are based on the purpose and the principle of doing it, without thinking of the result of the action. Kant argued that people are not always able to rationally control their emotions. Instead, the intention of choosing an action is more important. Thus, deontologists judge actions based on what most people consider to be the morally right course of action, without regard to actual consequences. Responsibility is our operating principle.

Accountability is imperative because it tells us what to do. He divides his deontological views into hypothetical imperatives and categorical imperatives. The hypothetical imperative command is the driving force behind my actions. They should all depend on my goals or interests. The order passed has nothing to do with morality. However, the categorical imperative does not depend on my wants or needs. They are necessary and always binding, and they are the duty that defines our moral obligations.

He presents 2 formulations for the categorical imperative. The first stage is in which we must behave in such a way that the maxims or principles of our conduct may become universal laws. If your maxim cannot be generalized, then the action is morally forbidden. The second is

about how we should see our humanity as an end rather than a mere means. This means that I treat all people with dignity and respect; I help others achieve their goals whenever possible and avoid using them as tools or objects to achieve my goals.

He wants to show us that it's hard to make a distinction between every human intention, so he emphasizes what is acting in connection with duty and acting from duty. Let's imagine 3 teenagers who are outside of Walmart and they see an elderly man, who needs someone to carry his shopping bags. Teenager 1 decides to help him with the bags because if he doesn't do it, he might feel guilty all day. Teenager 2 helps him to carry the bags because he sees that is his Grandfather's friend, and he knows that he will tell his grandfather and if he helps, he might get some money, It's clear that the only reason that he is doing it, it's because he will receive something. Teenager 3 helps him to carry the bags because it's the right thing to do in some point he knows that he has a moral obligation to help those around in need when he can. They all do the same thing, they help him to carry the bags, but Kant has only one g man whose actions have moral value, and that is teenager 3; he understands what his moral responsibility is and acts accordingly. The other two acted only out of duty – they were guided by goals or desires other than duty itself.

Hypothetical imperatives, as mentioned before are dependent on my goals, for example, if I want to become a better runner, I should practice more, or if I want to go to medical school I should have a pre-med program in my major. A categorical imperative is different, is more about acting in a way that I help humanity without my desire or wants. For example, even if I don't want to help people If I commit to it, I should be bound. We should all be all too familiar with the feeling of having to do something when we'd rather be doing something else.

I think the theory falls in the categorical imperative, in the first and second formulation. On the first one there are maxims that can't have a universal aspect that can't seem to be immortal. For example, a hat collector lives to the maximum, a person buys hats but never sells any of them, so if everyone does the same, he wouldn't be able to get any because other people won't be selling them. The conclusion is that collecting hats is immortal as Kant says that we should act by our maxims that can be universalized, so then any maxim that can not be universalized is impermissible.

The main problem with the second formulation is that morality does not seem to be about not using people as a means to an end. The categorical imperative is considered the only moral principle. We must therefore be able to derive all moral obligations from it. But some actions appear to be morally wrong, but that does not mean they count as mere means. An example would be that it seems wrong to destroy the natural world through carelessness or negligence. If I accidentally set off fireworks at a time when there is a high fire risk and a forest fire breaks out. Forests are not rational and therefore not subject to immediate moral consideration. It doesn't seem to see anyone as just a means. Kantian defenders can explain why these are false within Kant, but this is a potential limitation of the theory.

The way to defend Kant will be how the maxim is phrased. Defined by two actions: buy and do not sell. If we divide it into two categories "I will buy hats to expand my collection" and "I will not sell hats to expand my collection", this problem can be avoided. This points to a general difficulty with the first formulation, that there is often more than one way to describe behavioral principles. If we frame it in a certain way it is controversial, but not in other ways.

Righteousness is not enough for an action to have full moral value. It is also necessary to act in good faith, which Kant refers to as the tendency to do good, or what is called good

character. The categorical imperative for the first and second formulas has great intuitive appeal. The abstract way in which the first formula is expressed means that ethical rules must be universal, and if a rule cannot be generalized, it should not be followed. This is consistent with our understanding that all people deserve equal moral treatment and that we should not make special exceptions for ourselves or others. The other view is that we are human beings with inherent worth and dignity and that it is highly immoral to use human beings as objects or tools. We see that his approach focuses on the value of each person, trusting our ability to judge our decisions based on morality or logic. Define your objective sense of morality in terms of categorical obligations that focus on our desires, goals, and outcomes.