

Kantianism is a normative ethical theory that is based on the works of the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant. This theory emphasizes the importance of rationality, autonomy, and dignity of persons in moral decision making. Kant believed that the moral worth of an action is not determined by its consequences, but rather by the motivation behind it. This paper will discuss the main viewpoints of key philosophers associated with the Kantianism theory, including the main terms and arguments, and present the adequacy of the theory for moral reasoning.

One of the main proponents of Kantianism was Immanuel Kant himself. According to Kant, moral worth is determined by the motivation behind the action. He believed that moral decisions should be made based on the categorical imperative, which is a moral law that is universally valid and applicable to all rational beings. This moral law is based on the principle of respect for persons, which means that individuals should be treated as ends in themselves and not merely as means to an end. This principle is reflected in Kant's famous statement, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end and never merely as a means to an end."¹ Another key philosopher associated with Kantianism is Christine Korsgaard. Korsgaard expands on Kant's ideas by emphasizing the importance of rationality and autonomy in moral decision making. She argues that individuals should act in a way that is consistent with their own values and beliefs, and that this requires them to exercise their own rational capacities. Korsgaard also argues that individuals have a duty to respect themselves and others as rational agents, and that this duty is grounded in the value of autonomy. In her words, "The moral law is not just a set of rules that we must follow, but it is a demand that we impose on ourselves, as rational beings, to be the authors of our own lives."² A

¹ Kant, I. (1785). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

² Korsgaard, C. (1996). *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*

practical example of Kantianism in action can be seen in the case of whistleblowing. According to Kantianism, individuals have a duty to report wrongdoing even if it goes against their own interests. This is because individuals have a duty to respect the autonomy and dignity of others, and to uphold the moral law. In the case of whistleblowing, an individual who reports wrongdoing is acting in accordance with the categorical imperative and is upholding the value of respect for persons.

The Main Terms and Arguments of Kantianism:

The main terms and arguments of Kantianism can be summarized as follows:

- Moral worth is determined by the motivation behind the action.
- Moral decisions should be based on the categorical imperative, which is universally valid and applicable to all rational beings.
- The principle of respect for people requires individuals to be treated as ends in themselves and not merely as means to an end.
- Autonomy is an essential value in moral decision making, and individuals have a duty to respect themselves and others as rational agents.

A Practical Example of Kantianism in Action:

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The Adequacy of Kantianism for Moral Reasoning:

Kantianism has been a highly influential ethical theory, and it continues to be relevant for moral reasoning today. The theory emphasizes the importance of treating individuals as ends in themselves and respecting their autonomy and dignity. This is a valuable approach to moral decision making, as it ensures that individuals are not used merely as means to an end.

Despite its strengths, Kantianism has been criticized for its emphasis on the rational and autonomous individual, which some argue ignores the role of emotions and relationships in moral decision making. However, proponents of Kantianism argue that emotions and relationships are not necessarily opposed to rationality and autonomy, and that they can in fact be incorporated into the moral decision-making process in a way that is consistent with the categorical imperative.

In conclusion, Kantianism is a normative ethical theory that emphasizes the importance of rationality, autonomy, and dignity of persons in moral decision making. Key philosophers associated with this theory include Immanuel Kant and Christine Korsgaard, both of whom emphasize the importance of moral law and the value of respect for persons. While Kantianism has been criticized for its emphasis on the rational and autonomous individual, it remains a compelling framework for moral reasoning that emphasizes the importance of treating individuals as ends in themselves and upholding the moral law.