

Jada Hamilton

Professor Sanchez

PHI101

April 25, 2023

Writing Assignment Two

Immanuel Kant's theory of ethics is based on deontological ethics (deontology). This principle states that the morality of an action isn't entirely based on the consequences but if the action is right or wrong. Immanuel Kant is from Germany and he studied the science of duties. To Kant, morality is defined by someone's action being driven by their duty. In other words, someone's will is based on their own definition of good and bad and acts from duty. "For example, we value knowledge, but such can be used to commit atrocities in the world, so knowledge is good sometimes. The same can be said of courage. We value courage, but a suicide bomber also exhibits courage. So, courage can only be good sometimes." (Wilburn, 2022) Based on this Kant believes that good will is intrinsically good and acts from a place of duty.

The specific principles of Kantian's Ethics are in three formulations of categorical imperative: Formula of Universality and Law of Nature, The Formula of Humanity, and The Formula of Autonomy. The first formula states that someone's actions should be based on the principles of the moral law. "Kant specifically said, "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." (Lewis, 2021) The second formula argues that everyone's action sets a principle and is a means to an end. Basically, treating humans should be like a means to an end, but not just something that doesn't mean anything. "Kant said, "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means."

(Lewis, 2019) In other words, treat humanity as you would treat yourself. The third and final formula states that a person's moral actions should be based on the categorical imperative because of rational choices. "Kant has provided a cornerstone for morality by locating the source of moral value in the autonomous will of the rational agent. Each rational agent, exercising his or her will, is a bearer of value in him or herself, and thus deserves respect for his or her own sake" (Cottingham, 2008)

It is always easier said than done when someone discusses morals and ethics. In a real life example, when someone is having a bad day and everything seems to be going wrong should they take their anger out on other people or treat others how they want to be treated? Obviously they should treat that person how they want to be treated because it's the golden rule. Personally speaking, even when I'm having a bad day I like to spread positivity to other people because in return it makes me feel better. When someone spreads negativity then they're almost like a virus. People like that should check their morals because their actions are making them seem miserable and misery loves company. "To help others where one can is a duty, and besides this there are many spirits of so sympathetic a temper that, without any further motive of vanity or self-interest, they find an inner pleasure in spreading happiness around them and can take delight in the contentment of others as their own work. (Cottingham, 2008)

Another example is when there are no seats left in the subway car. There is a 30 weeks pregnant woman and an old woman on the train. Do you give your seat to the pregnant woman or the old woman? First of all, if someone is able to stand up with no assistance needed they should give their seat to someone who is handicapped or not as well as they are. Personally I would ask the women if they would like to sit down and whoever wants to can sit down. I think the pregnant woman should sit down because she's holding a baby in her womb that is less than a

month away from being born. An old lady in the city can do just about anything unless they have a cane and are struggling. I think the moral of this question is to make sure that someone gets up and helps someone else that is in need even if it inconveniences them. “However a categorical imperative does not depend upon my desires or wants. These are necessary and always binding and are the oughts that determine what our moral duties are.” (Wilburn, 2022)

I think this theory is coherent to moral life because our choices don’t just affect us but humanity in general. We are all held to a higher standard to do better and determine our moral duties and be set in them. So our actions can be based on firm standards that are good and beneficial for humanity. I think there are some flaws in the theory like the fact that sometimes rule breaking is necessary considering the consequences. Technically it is still based on someone’s morals like if someone steals pills for their family because they can’t afford it but their health is restored. Universal rules aren’t valid when everyone’s situation is different. Morality should be relativist not absolutist because there are so many gray areas in tricky situations and I wholeheartedly believe that not everything is black and white.

Immanuel Kant’s moral philosophy is based on the value of an individual. He explained our ability to make choices, our ability to give ourselves a moral code and keep ourselves accountable, and logical consistency. He also believes that we have responsibilities regardless of our wants, dreams, or outcomes.

Lewis, M. (2021, November 7). *The basic principles of Kantian ethics*. Konyse. Retrieved April 25, 2023, from <https://www.konyse.com/articles/the-basic-principles-of-kantian-ethics/>

Wilburn, H. (2022, August 12). *An introduction to Kant's moral theory*. Philosophical Thought. Retrieved April 25, 2023, from <https://open.library.okstate.edu/introphilosophy/chapter/a-brief-overview-of-kants-moral-theory/>

Cottingham, J. (2021). Morality and the Good Life . In *Western philosophy: An anthology* (Second, pp. 485–554). essay, Wiley Blackwell.