

Ch.7: Kantianism

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7.1 “Faring Well” vs. “Doing Right”

The idea there is a crucial divide between two senses of the “good life”

Faring well	Doing right
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Living prosperously- Material success- Happiness, pleasure, comfort- ‘Having’ a good life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Acting morally- Moral integrity- Duty, virtue, righteousness- “Leading” a good life

The Faust Illustration

The story of Faust (from Goethe and Marlowe):

- Faust gains wealth, power, knowledge.
- He appears to “fare well.”
- But he trades his soul → morally, he fails.

“The materially best life is not necessarily the morally best life.”

Saying: "I'd rather cry in a Rolls-Royce than be happy on a bicycle"

Ex. Poker, social climbing, plagiarism

Why this matters

- Wicked people sometimes prosper.
- Good people sometimes suffer.
- Therefore, morality cannot simply be defined as whatever makes us happy or successful.

This creates the philosophical problem Kant will respond to:

Why should we choose doing right over merely faring well?

In 7.2 you'll see Kant's response to this and situations to identify moral worth.

7.2

- Only good will is always good
 - Skill, money, happiness can be misused
- Moral worth depends on intention/will, not outcomes or success
 - Acting from **duty**, not inclination or feeling, gives true moral worth
- Feelings/inclinations not fully controllable, only will is fully within our power



7.2

- If moral worth depends on intention and not outcomes,
- then if someone had good motives but bad results, is it still enough to determine moral worth?
 - i. Ex: Someone fell down on the other side of the street and you try to help them. But because you are on the other side, you are unable to help. Does it make you “moral” simply for wanting to help (will), or do you have to perform the action (outcome) of helping them up in order to be considered moral?
- Are good intentions enough to determine morality?

7.2

- Fallacy: good will is not enough to determine morality/doing right
 - Duty for duty's sake goes against natural goodness/doing right
- Actions speak more than intentions/motives
- You can think of doing the right thing but what matters is actually **doing** the right thing



7.3 David Hume and Practical Reason

- Scottish Philosopher (1711-1776)
- Radical skeptic, naturalist
- Failed to get university appointments due to his “atheism”

His view: Practical Reason is seen as a tool for achieving goals, helping you figure out how to acquire them, but it cannot determine what you should want

Example:

- If you desire to become rich, the reason would be to have financial stability.
- Leading you to budget, save money or invest
- The reason just figures out on how to get there
- Although, if you have no desire to become rich, then reason means nothing and would not motivate you



7.3

My view:

- I believe that Hume underestimates reason
- As most often people act against their immediate desires, as they can sometimes be recognized as not right

Example:

- People study even when they don't want to
- People keeping promises even when it becomes inconvenient

If someone had zero emotion, could they still be motivated?

Intention vs. Outcome

- Kant's View: Moral worth comes only from your pure intention
 - Outcomes are often out of our control due to "unfortunate fate"
- Criticism: Outcomes still matter
 - Judge morality by real world impact of the action not just the thought behind it
- Flaw in "Trying": You can't just "try"
 - Even with genuine intentions, attempting an action will lead to some consequences
- "*Trying to do something is not the same as doing it, certainly, but it is still the performance of some action or other*" (Graham, 89).

Question

Someone is drowning and you throw a life ring to save them. Instead you accidentally hit them in the head and they end up drowning

Should you be morally praised for your genuine intention or morally blamed for the harmful outcome?

Kant

- Praised! Pure intention to save a life holds moral worth. The outcome is unfortunate fate

Critique

- Could be both. Intention is good because the action of saving is considered beneficial. However that is only if the person is saved

Takeaway

- **Appeal:** Kant's ideology protects genuine intentions from unfortunate fate
 - E.g. bad luck, external factors, accidents
- **Disconnect:** Ignoring outcomes goes against how people naturally judge right from wrong
 - People inherently value the results that an action cause not just the thought behind it
- **Reality:** “Trying” to do something still requires a physical action
 - E.g. Intentions must be reflected by some physical actions and its consequences will follow

7.11 Korsgaard on Kant

- Korsgaard aimed to offer interpretation that overcomes standard objections
 - Act/intention/outcome, universalizability, duty for duty's sake
- Inescapability of action allows human beings to have personal lives
 - Action: causing things to happen
- Human actions (unlike animals) can be morally good or bad
 - Humans able to reflect and decide maxims of their actions
- Kant's fundamental endeavor: characterize the distinction between being a person and human animal
 - Personhood - ability to form causes of action according to rational principles
 - Korsgaard extends this by saying we come to be who we are only through rational action
- “Be moral or be no one.” (Theories of Ethics, Graham, pg. 95)

Kantianism in Technology

- According to Kantianism, AI cannot act morally
 - lacks autonomous will to act out of duty, programmed by others
- IBM prefers ‘augmented intelligence’
 - More aligned with Kantianism
 - AI (intended to operate w/out human assistance) vs. augmented intelligence (analyzes data, reports to user, allowing human intelligence to take over)
- Benefits of augmented intelligence:
 - Improves human decision-making by handling large amounts of data that's overwhelming for humans
 - Greater than sum of their parts: clinical study found AI system with 7.5% error detecting lymph node cancer cells, human pathologists had 3.5% error, 0.5% error when inputs from AI system and pathologists combined

2.215 - Consensus

existentialism as human
doing (cf. free will as an act of doing)—versus conditioned
being—essentialism as
human being (cf. freedom as a state of being).

Extensetall - Environment

Essentialism - Our Nature

Does morality come from environment

Nature or both or something else?

. Minnesota Study of Twins Reared Apart

- One of the most famous twin studies examined *identical twins (MZ)* raised in separate homes.
- Researchers found that MZ twins reared apart were about as similar in IQ and related cognitive measures as twins raised together. This suggests that genetic factors strongly influence intelligence and related academic traits.
- The authors estimated roughly 70% of the variation in IQ scores was associated with genetic variation in this sample.

NATURE AND NURTURE

EXPLANATIONS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

NATURE



Biological inheritance
and genetics determine
human behaviour

NURTURE



Society, culture, and social
processes determine
human behaviour

