Kantianism 7.8-7.11

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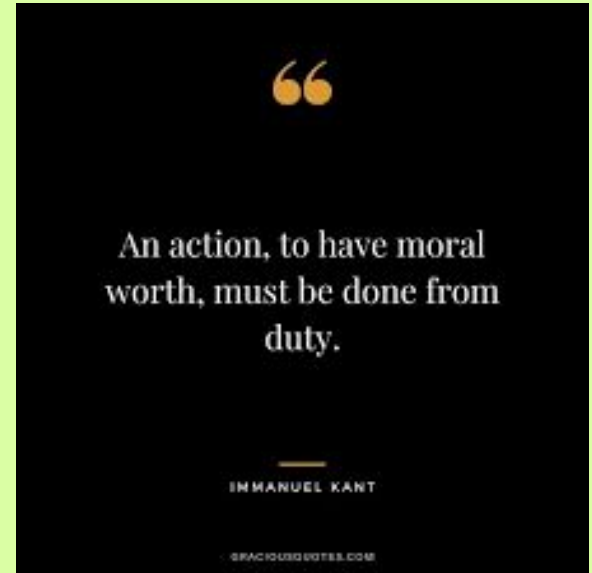
Kant's View on Moral Worth

Moral worth/goodness lies in intention and duty, not outcome. We must still do the action that comes with the intention and it must be grounded in duty. It cannot be an inclination.

Kant says moral worth also relies on duty which is not based on feelings but reason on how much good will the choice possesses.
Ex:
- A doctor gives medicine to save a patient but the patient still dies due to unknown circumstances
- Kant says it is reasonably morally good since the intention is to heal.

An action, to have moral worth, must be done from duty.

IMMANUEL KANT

GRACIOUSQUOTES.COM

Actions still matter - Critics

Critics argue that even though intentions decide moral worth, we must also consider if the action reflects the intention.

Ex:
- Someone tries to claim they saved a child from drowning but never actually called for help.
- Not a real attempt as the action must reflect the intention. He must actually try to save the child not just want to.

The Universalizability Test

- Developed by Immanuel Kant, the test is a method for evaluating if an action is morally acceptable
- "What if everyone in my situation did the same thing?"
- An action can only be moral if it is consistently willed as a Universal Law
- Intentions over outcomes - why we do something over what happens
- Ex: Lying to get out of trouble – Parking in a "No Parking" Zone

The Universalizability Test - Limitations

-   Main drawback of this test is how easily permissive it can be with people's sense of Moral Judgement

Example - The Consistent Nazi
-   A Nazi might believe that All Jews should be killed
-   However, if he accepts the hypothetical where he is Jewish, he too should die, this also passes the test
-   Logical Consistency might not relate to compassion and ethical values

Duty for Duty's Sake

- Doing an action because it is the right thing to do

- Duty is what is morally right based on reason

    - Aligns with your Maxims

Example:

- Why shouldn't we steal?

    - "It is our duty not to steal" vs.

        "I could get punished for stealing"

Duty for *duty's sake.*
Nothing more,
nothing less.

For No Other Reason

-   An action has no moral value if it is done for any reason other than doing one's duty.

Example:

-   If a doctor dedicates their life to saving people, but they also want to be paid for it, then their life had no true moral worth

If someone does their duty for duty's sake, but also has ulterior motives, can that action be morally good? Does it matter what those motives are?

Korsgaard & Kant

Korsgaard frames Kant's ideas as characterizing a "person" as distinct from an "animal"

Actions (Animals) vs Outcomes (Inanimate)
- Bird building a nest
- Water pouring down a mountainside

Human reasoning
- Between instincts (our inclination) and actions is the "reflective distance"-where reason is.
- Rational principles replace instincts to give us reasons for actions

Humans can be morally right/wrong due to reasoning; animals cannot. Do you agree with this?

"Good at being a person"

Personhood
- We are only people/individuals/agents due to **rational action**

Morality
- "Be moral or be *no one*"
- Consistently using reason to direct our actions makes us good at being a person (i.e unity of agency)
- Good at being a person = being morally good?

Can a human be bad at being a person? Is someone who is good at being a person really a morally good person?

"Excuse me sir"

@LIVSWEARINGEN

Video Link

Broader Ethics:
The Help in Social Media

1. Influencer "Helping" for the Camera:

The person being "helped" is used as a means to an end (content and clout), which Kant strictly opposes

2. Waitress Genuinely Helping a homeless woman by giving food, and shows compassion regardless of being filmed.

Kantian View: Morally worthy-action is from duty and respect, not for show.

Kantianism challenges us to focus on why we act, not just what happens and pushing us to be "good at being a person" by acting from rational, universal moral principles.