COMP4920 Essay 1

Adrian Balbalosa, z5397730

September 2024

1 Introduction

2 An Assessment of Kantian Ethics

Kantian Ethics is a deontological ethical theory which places emphasis on duty and moral principles over consequences. Central to this framework is the notion of the Categorical Imperative, which states that one should act according to the maxims which can be universally applied. Another formulation of this is that individuals should treat others as an ends, not just a means to an end. Kantian Ethics prioritises rationality and personal freedoms, and argues that ethical actions should arise from a sense of duty and adhering to moral law, rather than from emotional or situational considerations.

One of the strongest parts of Kantian Ethics is that it places emphasis on respect for the individual. A fundamental aspect of Kantian Ethics is that humans should be respected because we are rational agents, in that we have the capacity for rational behaviour, free from our impulses (Bennet 2015, p. 77). This underpins the notion that humans ought to never be treated as means to our own devices, because we are rational beings (Bennet 2015, p. 77). By ensuring that people are treated as an ends, it upholds human dignity and rights.

However, there is a fundamental flaw of Kantian Ethics, in that when duties conflict, it is not clear what action we are to take and how to resolve those dilemmas. A classical example used by critics of Kantianism is the murderer at the door scenario, where the correct response is to respect the autonomy of the murderer and tell the truth (Bennet 2015, p. 81). Lying could potentially save the life of someone, but we cannot lie as we would be disregarding the autonomy of the murderer, which is paradoxical in nature. As a result of this, we are left to deliberate with difficult ethical decisions in a complex situation like this.

3 The Applicability of Kantian Ethics to Automated Ethics

4 Conclusion

References

Bennet, C. (2015). *What is this thing called ethics.* second edition. Routledge.