

The distinction from Kant between rules which are independent of our 'desires' (the categorical imperatives) and rules which are dependent on our 'desires' (the hypothetical imperatives) was widely accepted at the time of this paper.¹ Morality was widely assumed, even by skeptics, to be such that if it existed, then it was system of categorical imperatives. Kant's larger system involved tests for two kinds of contradictions when a proposed maxim was under consideration. If a maxim did not lead to either contradiction, then the maxim was categorical. Additionally, Kant took morality to be a subset of rationality. To be moral was to, in part, be rational. Immorality, then, was a marker of irrationality.

As support for this distinction, Foot notes that in English there are (at least) two uses of the word 'should' which correspond with the categorical / hypothetical distinction. This linguistic evidence, however, does not fully justify Kant's distinctions. If Kant was right that there are only two kinds of should, then any non-hypothetical use of 'should' will result in a categorical claim. This, however, results in absurd consequences. Rules of etiquette are stated without incorporating the desires of those to whom the rules apply would themselves be categorical (i.e. rules of rationality and morality). There are a number of potential responses that Foot anticipates from the Kantian which take up the rest of the paper.

A Kantian may try to reply that though such rules appear categorical, they are actually hypothetical. Rules of reason are, perhaps, able to provide 'reason-giving force' whereas rules of etiquette do not (eg Smith). If such a claim could be argued for, then perhaps it would be worth considering. Foot's assessment of the situation, however, is that such a claim 'is more often repeated than explained.' (pg 309)² Her conclusion is that there is nothing *necessarily* inconsistent or irrational about a person who rejects morality (due to a lack of desire to obey). Kant, then, was fundamentally wrong.

As another attempt to salvage the Kantian project could be that the rules of etiquette merely *look* categorical, but are actually hypotheticals in disguise. Such a response, however, is a double-edged sword. The same claim could be made, Foot states, about the categorical itself. In other words, we may think of morality as being categorical simply because we are *taught* moral rules in a stringent way. What argument is there that morality is categorical? The metaphors about the 'binding force' of morality merely beg the question. They does not answer it.

When it comes to the phenomena of being motivated, the Kantian could claim that it *feels* as though we must obey morality. It is natural to think that such a feeling is reflecting the categorical nature of morality. Foot is more than willing to admit this. Why? Because such feelings can also easily be described not as reflecting morality's categorical nature, but instead as reflecting a desire. There is nothing about the phenomenology of morally judgment that requires we view it as being evidence for the categorical view.

¹ While Foot is clear that what was originally meant by 'desire' is a bit of a gloss for something that is not necessarily intentional nor long-term, the general idea of a desire can work (so long as we recognize its limits).

² Pretty sick burn.

Kant also claimed that the only way our wills could be made good is if they were motivated by duty³ alone. Actions, on this line of thinking, are moral because they are done only 'for their own sake' or 'because they are right' and not for some ulterior purpose. (pg 312) Foot claims that moral judgements depend on the fact that moral judgment concerns itself with a person's reasons for acting *and* with what that person does. Etiquette, however, is just concerned with action. This is the final Kantian response that Foot entertains

Such a response, Foot claims, rests on a faulty view of human psychology. Kant was for all non-moral issues a psychological hedonist. He thought that people have only one motivation in non-moral spheres: their own happiness. To act morally, however, was to act not out of concern for one's happiness, but out of a sense of duty. Hence, if you help someone else solely out of a sense of empathy (i.e. not a sense of duty) then your will is not good.

Foot does not see why someone who has a desire to be honest, and then tells the truth based on that desire, should not count as having done something right. Foot does not find the amoralist a counterexample to her position. The amoralist may be a bad person, but they also may not have any reason to act otherwise.

³ hehe