1.

Using Immanuel Kant’s first version of the “categorical imperative,” explain in detail why cheating in an examination would be considered a violation of a perfect duty.

First, begin by explaining the meaning of a categorical imperative as opposed to a hypothetical imperative.

Second, discuss in detail why Kant regards the categorical imperative as a “good without qualification.”

Third, state and explain Kant’s first formulation of the categorical imperative.

Next, briefly discuss the distinction between perfect duty and imperfect duty in Kant’s formulation.

Finally, provide a detailed account of the Kantian moral test (using the first

formulation of the categorical imperative) to show why cheating in an examination would constitute a violation of a perfect duty.

ANSWER:

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was a great German philosopher born in Konigsberg which is today a part of Russia known as Kaliningrad. He combined early modern rationalism and empiricism, established the terms for most of nineteenth and twentieth-century philosophy, and continues to have an impact today in many other fields (Rohlf & Michael, 2020).

In order to identify the moral rule, Kant distinguishes between two types of imperatives which are commands that apply to specific human activities and deeds. It includes instructions on what one ought to do and ought not to do in accordance with rational reasons behind it. For example, going to the store to buy food or helping the poor, etc. There are two forms of imperatives, hypothetical imperative and categorical imperative (Khan, 2020). Now, the hypothetical imperative follows an if condition in its command. So if someone wants to achieve something then they have to do or not do certain deeds. The actions taken in accordance with the hypothetical instructions, decide on the consequences faced by rational beings. So when someone wants to buy a fridge they have to save up money, it is an example of a hypothetical command as it includes the condition of saving up money in order to buy a fridge. On the other hand, **categorical imperative gives clear injunctions to do or not do something without any conditions.** It can represent moral laws which are rational decisions taken by rational creatures in certain situations. The categorical imperative follows no condition to achieve something rather gives clear instructions that someone has to follow **no matter what.** For instance, one can not steal, tell a lie, or conduct criminal activities that harm society under any circumstances are examples of the categorical imperative. Here, it includes no conditions but rather gives clear laws of what to do and what not to do by imposing them to follow certain injunctions whereas the hypothetical imperative does not bind rational beings to any actions as they can only follow the instructions if they want to achieve a certain purpose.

Kant regards the categorical imperative as a “**good without qualification” as it** requires a person to do certain actions regardless of any qualification or conditions. The commands in categorical imperative are needed to be followed without any option or exceptions as it doesn’t require any qualifications and concerns everyone in the universe. Good without qualification is the idea that certain actions will be taken without worrying about the consequences followed by one's goodwill. Accordingly, the person conducting the activity has to have **goodwill** in order to perform ‘good without qualification’ and it has to be done regardless of the thought of any other interest except for the interest of the act itself. For instance, doing charity for the sake of fame cannot be considered as unqualified good as the intention of charity is unwise. However, when someone gives charity for the sake of this activity with wise intentions of helping the poor, it will be considered as good without qualification regardless of the outcome that it provides. Hence, unqualified good focuses on the actions taken with goodwill and it implies to everyone equally. Accordingly, the categorical imperative includes everyone following certain laws without any conditions or concern for the outcomes and focuses only on the actions conducted. For instance, helping a dying person would be a categorical imperative as everyone must follow it under all circumstances. Again, it is good without qualification since one is helping someone out with the wise intention of saving a life whether or not the dying person is a criminal or not. Evidently, that is why Kant regards categorical imperative as ‘good without qualification.

Kant defined categorical imperative based on four formulations. However, all four of the paths lead to the same solution yet he decided to divide his categorical imperative key question notions into **four formulations**. In his **first** formulation of the categorical imperative Kant says to act only on that maxim which we can will that it should become a universal law (Khan, 2020). Accordingly, defining the maxim is the **first step** to Kant’s first formulation of the categorical imperative. **Maxim defines actions taken by someone under certain commands that he would approve of for anyone else to do.** For example, if one likes to destroy forests and believes that it is normal to do it for anyone else as well, destroying forests is a maxim. The **second step i**s to make the defined maxim **universalized**. After one has identified the maxim he has to think in a broad sense by making the maxim mandatory to follow for everyone in the universe. In this case, one has to universalize the act of destroying forests considering everyone is bound by this act and has to do it no matter what. **Thirdly**, one has to analyze if there is any contradiction in the world due to his universalizing of the maxim. If there is any conflict, then the maxim will be immoral since it can not be universalized for everyone. However, if there is no conflict of the maxim and everyone in the world can not live in a world following this maxim, that will be an immoral act as well according to the first formulation of Kant. To illustrate, if deforestation is normalized and everyone starts cutting down trees, at a point, starting up a law like this would create huge chaos and contradiction since planting trees for their betterment and breathing to stay alive. In such a world, cutting down trees and destroying them would not make sense for which it can not be considered to be a moral law. Again, if there will be no trees and all human living beings will eventually die so people in the world can not live with this violation. However, always telling the truth, and returning anything that doesn’t belong to someone are some maxims that can be universalized without any contradictions and established as moral **laws**.

Kant derives two types of duties from the third step of the first formulation of the categorical imperative. According to Kant, there are two types of duties such as perfect and imperfect duties (Khan, 2020). **Perfect** duties are activities that must be performed under all circumstances in order to avoid contradiction in the world. To elaborate, when we universalize that maxim and find a contradiction in the world, that stands for being a violation to perfect duty. So doing the opposite of our maxim is our perfect duty and we ought to follow that path no matter what. For example, if one wants to universalize the maxim of stealing or taking something from someone that doesn’t belong to them, it would create chaos in the world since no one would have any ownership to anything and everyone would be taking things from one another which wouldn’t make any sense. In this case, stealing is a violation of the perfect duty which is not stealing things from others. Again, deforestation that we encountered earlier will be a violation of both perfect and imperfect duty since it will create contradictions in the world. On the other hand, imperfect duties are obligations that one can decide on how and when to do considering the circumstances as the violation of this creates no contradiction initially yet raises an unwillingness in the world of human living if the violation is completely universalized. Even though imperfect duties are not mandatory to be followed by everyone yet everyone on earth not following it can create mass issues in the community. For instance, if everyone is in a position to help others stop helping them, it won’t create a contradiction initially because it is their choice of action. However, when we try answering the second question of the third step of the first formulation of the categorical imperative which is if people will be willing to live in a world where it is normalized to not help anyone, we will see a crisis in that world for which it will be falling apart. Again, developing someone’s talent to become successful is an imperfect duty, and not doing it is their own choice. However, even though this violation does not create any contradiction, universalizing it establishes a very slowly improving world where no one is passionate about anything.

The first formulation of Kant's categorical imperative requires three steps to find the results which can be used to show why cheating in an examination would be a violation of perfect duty. To begin with, we have to identify the maxim which in this case is the activity of cheating in exams. Secondly, we have to universalize the maxim that it is acceptable for everyone in the world to follow our maxim in their actions. In this case, we have to universalize cheating in exams so everyone in the world will be cheating in exams. Thirdly, we have to see if universalizing our maxim creates any contradiction to prove that our maxim is a violation of a perfect duty. To emphasize, the examination system is created in the world to educate people and judge them based on their learnings to give them the raise that they deserve to create a balance of people from different races in the world. However, if everyone starts cheating in exams it would mean that no one’s learning is being evaluated anymore as they are not giving exams on their own knowledge. Also, there would be no meaning in inspecting their exams. So the whole exam system would lose its meaning and there would be no differences between people from different races which would lead to chaos in society and create a huge contradiction. Since our maxim will create contradictions in the world, not cheating in exams is a perfect duty, and cheating in exams is a violation of this perfect duty.

The fourth of nine children of Johann Georg and Anna Regina Kant, Immanuel Kant was born in the town of Königsberg, East Prussia, on April 22, 1724. Johann Kant was a harness maker, and the large family lived a humble life. The family belonged to a Protestant religious group of Pietists (a German religious movement whose members strongly believed in religious experience and biblical study), and a concern for religion touched every aspect of their lives. Although Kant became critical of formal religion, he continued to admire the "praiseworthy conduct" of Pietists. Kant's elementary education was at Saint George's Hospital School and then at the Collegium Fredericianum, a Pietist school, where he remained from 1732 until 1740. Here he gained a deep appreciation for the classics of Latin literature, especially the poet Lucretius.