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**Short Paper 3**

Kant’s 2nd formulation of the Categorical Imperative has been the basis of philosophical theories. It posits that any action is morally permissible if treats humanity as an end, rather than a means to an end. For this paper, I’ll be relating this theory to the 2001 fantasy drama *Donnie Darko.*

In the beginning of the film, the titular character Donnie is awoken from a nightmare and chases a vision of Frank the Rabbit to a golf course. By doing this, Frank saves Donnie from a mysterious jet engine that crashes into his room that would have killed him. Frank’s action, though he is a psychotic vision, is morally permissible because it saves Donnie’s life, thus respecting his humanity.

Later on in the movie, Donnie has a disagreement with motivational speaker Jim Cunningham during one of Jim’s presentations. During the night, under Frank’s influence, Donnie burns down Jim’s home. As a result of the property burning, a basement is discovered that houses an ongoing child pornography operation. Here, Jim’s actions are not morally permissible since he is exploiting these children for his own depraved sexual pleasure. Donnie’s actions are questionable since his argument and subsequent home razing of Jim does not respect Jim’s humanity, but by his actions, he is able to save the exploited children and prevent Jim from doing more harm. In my opinion, more overall good is achieved by his actions versus the harm done. Frank’s actions are also questionable, since in order to stop Jim, he takes control of Donnie, thus using him as a means to an end. I also think that in this situation, it is permissible since much more good was done for people than bad.

At the end of the film, it is shown that all the events that have taken place since the jet engine crash are part of an alternate timeline, which starts to collapse in on itself. This is done to show that if Donnie does not allow himself to be killed by the jet engine, the world and time itself will be destroyed. The whole movie is a playing of causes to effects on why Donnie must die, shown to him by the psychotic hallucination, Frank the Rabbit. Donnie’s ultimate action, to return to the night of the jet engine crash and allow himself to die, can be considered questionable but is necessary for the survival of the human race. He, however, does not respect his own humanity in this action since his life is lost in the process. Frank’s actions throughout the film are much more questionable. He plays out this whole scenario for Donnie, in order to convince Donnie to let himself be killed. It could be cruelly ironic that at the beginning, Frank saves his life, in order to show Donnie why he cannot save himself from the same accident. Frank does this though to preserve the rest of humanity.

The questions and convoluted timeline of the film make it difficult to understand, but open up a plethora of ethical questions. I think that Frank’s actions, though cruel, are right. Much of the theory in general is challenged through to story of this film. It just goes to show that not everything is clear cut. I think though, that Kant would’ve enjoyed a film like this to think over.