

always consistent with moral justice. Not all laws are just, nor are all demands for justice addressed by laws. The duty of justice is generally subdivided by philosophers into two types: distributive and retributive justice.

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice refers to the fair distribution of benefits and burdens in a society. Benefits include education, highways, housing, economic opportunities, and police and fire protection. Taxes, jury duty, and military conscription are examples of shared burdens. Distributive justice presupposes that (1) there are conflicts of interest and (2) people have competing claims for certain limited or scarce societal goods.

For example, there are not enough well-paying jobs, college scholarships, or affordable housing. Therefore, the distribution of these latter goods is an issue of justice. Because there is a limited amount of money available for college scholarships, if you get a scholarship, someone else will be denied one. When there is not enough of something to satisfy everyone, how should the goods be distributed?

Distributive justice requires impartiality: treating equals equally and unequals in proportion to their individual differences. Because, circumstances are rarely equal, disagreements frequently arise in the actual application of this principle. Simply giving everyone an equal share is not necessarily just, because not everyone shares the same concept of the good life nor does everyone have the same needs. If we gave everyone a small scholarship to go to college, for example, that would be unjust to those who want to go to college but need more than a small scholarship. It would also be a waste of money for those who have no desire to go to college.

Marxist philosophers emphasize need as the key criterion in distributive justice. They claim that the economic arrangements of the capitalist system are unjust because many people's basic needs go unmet while the capitalists continue to control more and more of the society's resources, including college degrees.

Aristotle, on the other hand, maintained that justice does not necessarily entail that everyone should get the same share of society's resources. He was opposed to democracy, preferring instead an oligarchy or an elitist political system based on merit (meritocracy). Those who have contributed most to the community, he argued, deserve the most in return.³⁷

Most moral philosophers believe that both need and merit should be taken into consideration. The issue of merit or achievement is particularly relevant for the distribution of goods such as scholarships, rewards for achievement, and skilled jobs. People who have worked hard deserve a raise or a promotion simply because they have done a good job, regardless of their need for additional income. Awarding high-paying jobs and college scholarships solely on the basis of merit, on the other hand, is considered unjust by some philosophers because not all of us have the same opportunities to achieve educational and professional goals. They reject Aristotle's elitist concept of justice, pointing out that past injustices and economic disadvantages have limited the opportunities of marginalized groups of people.

In a just society, we all deserve a fair opportunity to pursue our goals. To create fair opportunities, affirmative action programs have been established to compensate disadvantaged people for past deprivations. Some people are opposed to affirmative action; they claim that it can create resentment among White men, lower the quality of work, and turn minorities and women into "petitioners for favors."³⁸ Even though the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the right of colleges to consider race in admissions, several colleges and state higher-education systems, including Michigan, Texas, and California, have banned affirmative action in admissions. As a result, there has been a 35 percent drop in enrollment of under-represented minorities at many competitive colleges.³⁹ The question remains, if not through affirmative action, how can we best distribute fair opportunities in college admissions to groups of people who have been disadvantaged.

John Rawls: *A Theory of Justice*

Deontologist John Rawls (1921–2002) in his book *A Theory of Justice* argues that justice demands not only impartiality but treating people fairly and in proportion to their needs as well as their merits. There are inequalities of birth and natural endowment (what Rawls calls the *natural lottery*) and historical circumstances that are undeserved but create disadvantages for certain people. People who have lower than average intelligence, or who are not born into wealth, are systematically excluded from enjoying the opportunities that others take for granted. Simply redistributing the wealth through welfare and charity does not solve the root problem, as long as the underlying conditions that disadvantage certain people still exist.



Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.

—JOHN RAWLS, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), p. 4

Rawls's solution to this problem is to found justice upon a social contract. To establish a social contract that is unbiased and based on impartiality, he uses a conceptual device that he terms the *veil of ignorance*. Under the *veil of ignorance*, each person is ignorant of the advantages and disadvantages—including, for example, economic standing, gender, intelligence, health, place of birth—that he or she will receive in this life. This prevents people from promoting principles of justice that are biased in their favor. Rawls writes:

In justice as fairness the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract. This original position . . . is understood as a purely hypothetical situation characterized so as to lead to a certain conception of justice. Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and ability, his intelligence,



Demonstrators face off with riot police during a Vietnam War protest in Washington, DC, May 21, 1972. One hundred and seventy-three of the demonstrators were arrested during a violent confrontation with the police.

Discussion Questions

1. In addition to the belief that war against the Vietnamese was an unjust war, many of the demonstrators were protesting the injustice of the military draft system which gave deferments to college students, thus placing an unfair burden on economically disadvantaged youth. Applying Rawls' second principle of justice, critically evaluate this argument. Discuss what position Aristotle would most likely take on this issue.
2. What other *prima facie* moral duties, such as fidelity to one's country and non-maleficence, are involved in serving in the military? Explain. Using the 5-step method for solving a moral dilemma on page 67, discuss what you would do if you were conscripted to serve in a war that you believed to be unjust.

strength, and the like. . . . The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular circumstances, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain.⁴⁰

Under these conditions of impartiality, Rawls argues that all rational people would agree upon the following *two principles of justice*:

First: Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others.

Second: Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all.⁴¹

Using these two principles, Rawls suggests that the primary social goods be distributed equally. **Primary social goods** include social goods, such as housing, food, police protection, and education, that are necessary to pursue our liberty rights and our concept of the good life. Nonessential goods, on the other hand, do not need to be distributed equally as long as the inequalities are still consistent with the rights of others to pursue their liberty and enjoy fair opportunity.

One of the problems with Rawls's theory is determining what constitutes a natural disadvantage: Aren't almost all of our abilities and disabilities, at least to some extent, a result of the "natural lottery"? For example, it has been documented that taller people and more attractive people have an advantage in the job market. Studies also show that oldest and only children tend to be more highly motivated as adults and make better leaders. Almost every president of the United States has been either an oldest or an only child. Should appearance or birth order be considered undeserved disadvantages that create a right to some form of public assistance or affirmative action in hiring?

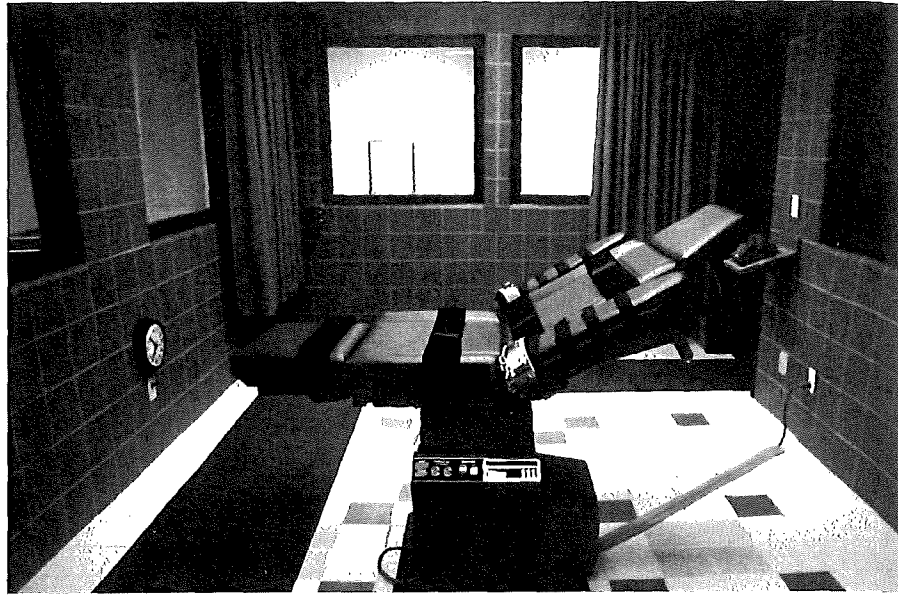
Rawls's assumption that all rational people would, under the veil of ignorance, agree upon these two principles has also been called into question. Some people might be willing to take greater risks, and others might prefer a less egalitarian distribution of social goods. Despite these criticisms, Rawls's theory of justice has provided a powerful tool for reforming social institutions and has been used to develop policy in areas such as health care reform, education, and the economy. For example, President Obama's health care law is based on the Rawlsian principle of justice as fairness and the idea that health care is a primary social good.

Retributive Justice

Retributive justice, the second type of justice, involves punishment for wrongdoing. Punishment for a crime, according to most deontologists, is our duty because the moral order requires that the guilty should suffer in proportion to the magnitude of their crime. Retributive justice, according to Kant, belongs to the judicial or penal system, rather than private judgment.

Retributive justice is not the same as revenge, which is based on sentiment rather than reason. Nor should it be based on utilitarian calculations of the consequences of punishment in specific cases. Kant writes:

The penal law [retributive justice] is a categorical imperative; and woe to him who creeps through the serpent-windings of utilitarianism to discover some advantage that may discharge him from the justice of punishment. . . .



China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the United States have the highest death penalty rates in the world. The United States is the only Western democracy with the death penalty.



Discussion Questions

1. Kant supported the death penalty on the grounds that it was the only way to satisfy the requirement of retributive justice as well as to affirm the murderer's dignity by acknowledging his responsibility for his crime. Utilitarian Jeremy Bentham, in contrast, opposed the death penalty because, he argued, the deliberate infliction of suffering on a person who has committed an evil only adds more suffering and evil to the world. Discuss and debate both positions on the issue.
2. Criminal defense attorney Clarence Darrow (1857–1938) was an opponent of the death penalty. He believed that human behavior is determined by our environment and circumstances. Since it is out of our control, it does not deserve to be punished. Discuss Darrow's position in light of the discussion on determinism and moral responsibility on page 80. Discuss also how Kant would respond to Darrow's position.

It is the principle of equality, by which the pointer of the scale of justice is made to incline no more to the one side than the other. It may be rendered by saying that the undeserved evil which any one commits on another, is to be regarded as perpetrated on himself. Hence it may be said: "If you slander another, you slander yourself . . . if you strike another, you strike yourself; if you kill another, you kill yourself." This is the right of retaliation (*jus talionis*); and

properly understood, it is the only principle which in regulating a public court, as distinguished from mere private judgment, can definitely assign both the quality and quantity of a just penalty.⁴²

Unlike Kant, some moral philosophers regard retributive justice as neither rational nor self-evident. Utilitarians oppose retribution because it involves the deliberate infliction of pain and deprivation. Punishment can only be morally justified, according to utilitarians, on the grounds of the future-looking duties of beneficence and nonmaleficence. Thus, punishment should be used only when the beneficial effects of it outweigh the evil of inflicting pain on a sentient being.

The impersonal demands of retributive justice can also come into conflict with care ethics and the moral principle of ahimsa (nonviolence). In addition, a justice system based on punishment has been criticized for simply increasing violence in the world and in the heart of the wrongdoer rather than restoring justice. Jesus, in particular, spoke out against retributive justice (*lex talionis*).

Connections

What does it mean to practice ahimsa? See Chapter 3, page 83.



You have heard that it was said "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

—Matthew 5:38–39

Retributive justice remains one of the most controversial moral duties. Kant's notion of harming another person as a means of showing respect for that person seems odd to some people. Most people feel guilty when they do wrong, yet guilt does not entail an expectation of punishment. Indeed, fear of punishment will often lead to deception regarding our wrongdoing rather than accepting blame. Also, the negative response of most wrongdoers to punishment, including increased resentment and lowered self-esteem, should cause us to reexamine the belief that retributive justice is a moral duty.



Exercises

1. Discuss Kant's claim that retributive justice is a moral duty. Does retributive justice justify capital punishment, or should there be limits on retribution? Support your answer.

2. How should income be distributed? Is it fair that people who have been working at a job the longest, yet no longer have dependent children, get paid more than younger workers who usually have greater needs—such as a family to support and a mortgage to pay? Discuss how we should balance merit and need in distributing economic resources.
3. Rawls considers disabilities as part of the “natural lottery.” But our talents and abilities are also part of the natural lottery. Discuss how, if at all, these factors should be taken into consideration in distributing societal good. Relate your answer to your own life circumstances.
4. Some nations have natural advantages over others. Discuss whether having a natural advantage creates in wealthy nations a duty of justice to share their wealth with nations that are at a natural disadvantage.
5. Certain groups of people, such as Native Americans and African Americans in the United States, have been severely disadvantaged in the past by social institutions that discriminated against them. Discuss whether society has a moral duty to redistribute social goods through programs such as affirmative action to groups of people whose ancestors have been gravely disadvantaged in the past. Discuss your answer in light of Rawls’s two principles of justice.
6. To what extent is it morally permissible for a society to use coercion to force people to share the societal burdens? As taxpayers, should we be held responsible for supplying the needs of others—through welfare and disability programs—who are not working or who cannot support themselves? Support your answers.

Critique of Deontology

1. *Western deontologists have been accused of promoting an abstract moral philosophy that sacrifices community in the name of individual autonomy.* Kant’s assumption that people are basically autonomous, private units who are free to carry out the moral law fails to take into consideration that we are all part of a wider social network of relationships.

German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770–1831) questioned Kant’s belief that individual autonomy and rationality are possible prior to membership in an ethical community. He argued that our sense of self cannot exist outside personal interaction and community. Like Confucius, Hegel believed that the unhappiness of one is the unhappiness of us all. Hegel compared modern society and a zoo filled with animals, each in its own cage with no community spirit. Indeed, Kant’s emphasis on individualism has been suggested as a contributing factor to our modern-day sense of alienation and a society where many of us live isolated lives.

2. *Deontologists tend to focus too much on justice and abstract principles and ignore moral sentiments such as caring.* The deontologists’ concern with justice and abstract principles of duty has been criticized by feminist care ethicists such as Carol Gilligan and Nel Noddings as a distinctively male approach that ignores

Connections

What do feminist care ethicists mean when they say “caring is a active virtue”? See Chapter 12, pages 398–399.

caring relationships. Although studies have shown that deontology is not a distinctly male approach, feminist care ethicists nevertheless raise an important point. Practical morality is constructed dialectically through interaction with others, not merely by an autonomous examination of the dictates of our reason. By reducing morality to one component—moral judgment—deontology fails to take into account the influence of relationships and the role of moral sensitivity in informing our moral values. Knowing what is right on the level of reason does not necessarily mean that we will do what is right. Reason alone, without the ability to sympathize with others, seems unable to produce the categorical imperative. Abstract rational principles, care ethicists argue, are insufficient to motivate us or provide us with concrete guides to action. History has, time and again, shown how easy it is for us to set aside these abstract formal principles and slip back into dogmatism, violence, and intolerance.

While an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality—that everyone should be treated the same—an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence—that no one should be hurt.

—CAROL GILLIGAN, *In a Different Voice* (1982)

Nietzsche likewise accused Kant's moral rationalism of being hostile to life by its rejection of the natural passions and instincts of life.⁴¹ Nietzsche argued that true morality is dominated by an instinct for life, not abstract reason. Nietzsche writes:

[Virtue] must be our own invention, our most necessary self-expression. . . . The fundamental laws of self-preservation and growth demand the opposite—that everyone invent his own virtue, his own categorical imperative. A people perishes when it confuses its duty with duty in general.⁴²

Nietzsche's criticism, however, is partly based on a misperception of the concept of duty. Kant and other deontologists such as Confucius and Ross did not believe that doing one's duty is antithetical to personal growth and relationships or to the expression of our natural passions and instincts. They were aware that the love of humanity in general is not a good substitute for particular friendships and relationships. There is no logical contradiction involved, for example, in universalizing a maxim that states: "In life-threatening situations, we should first, all other things being equal, try to save ourselves and those who are members of our immediate family." In fact, rational people would hardly be willing to universalize a maxim that states: "I ought to do, or be willing to do, for anyone what I do for my family and friends." In other words, a justice-based ethics, as Gilligan refers to deontology, and a care-based ethics are not necessarily incompatible with each other.

Connections

Why did Nietzsche regard the *ubermensch* to be a paradigm of the virtuous person? See Chapter 12, pages 405–406.

3. *Deontology may be compatible with consequentialist theories.* Most deontologists believe that consequences, though not as important as duty, should be taken into consideration. Kant's denial that consequences are morally relevant has been criticized by utilitarians as well as other deontologists. Indeed, utilitarian John Stuart Mill pointed out that the categorical imperative, by its very nature, requires that we take consequences into account when adopting moral rules. According to Mill, rational people would not universalize a moral rule that would harm, rather than benefit, the moral community:

When Kant propounds as the fundamental principle of morals, "So act, that the rule of conduct might be adopted as a law by all rational beings," he virtually acknowledges that the interest of mankind collectively . . . must be in the mind of the agent when conscientiously deciding on the morality of the act. Otherwise he uses words without a meaning; . . . To give any meaning to Kant's principle, the sense put upon it must be, that we ought to shape our conduct by a rule which all rational beings might adopt with benefit to their collective interests.⁴³

Despite its shortcomings, the strengths and richness of deontology far outshine its weaknesses. In any case, it would be a mistake to consider any philosophical theory, or even any scientific theory, as a finished or complete statement about a particular phenomenon. One of the characteristics of a good theory is that it is open-ended and generates further thought. In this respect, deontology has made important contributions to the study of ethics.

Although Kant's moral philosophy, because of its formal character and lack of specificity, suffered a serious decline in popularity among philosophers during the first half of the twentieth century, it is now making a comeback. Few philosophers accept Kant's moral philosophy in its entirety; still, Kantian deontology is one of the most, if not *the* most, influential and fertile moral philosophies in modern history. Kant's thinking has had a major influence on modern European and American moral philosophers such as Sissela Bok, John Rawls, and W. D. Ross; it has also left its mark on philosophers around the world.⁴⁴ Deontology, with its emphasis on the dignity of the individual, has also had a major influence on the development of rights ethics in both Western and non-Western philosophies.



Exercises

1. Read the following quote from André Gide's novel *The Immoralist*:

"If there's one thing I detest it's a man of principles," [Michel said].

"You're right," Menalque answered, laughing, "he is the most detestable kind of person in the world. You can't expect any kind of sincerity from him, for he only does what his principles have ordered him to do, or else he considers what he does as a transgression."

Are people of principle detestable, as Michel and Menalque claim? Or are they the best and sincerest of people, as Kant claimed? Support your answer.

2. Evaluate the claim of care ethicists that deontology fails to take into consideration the role of sentiments in making moral decisions. Discuss ways in which deontology might be integrated with care ethics.
3. Nietzsche claimed that Kant's approach to moral education, with its emphasis on duty, promotes a boring herd morality. Nietzsche wrote: "What is the task of all higher education?" To turn men into machines. "What are the means?" Man must learn to be bored. "How is that accomplished?" By means of the concept of duty . . . "Who is the perfect man?" The civil servant. "Which philosophy offers the highest formula for the civil servant?" Kant's." Critically analyze Nietzsche's claim that a deontological approach to moral education turns people into machines.



Summary

1. *Deontology* is a popular approach to ethics in world philosophies and religions.
2. According to deontologists, for an action to have moral worth, it must be done from a sense of *duty*.
3. Deontologists disagree about the ultimate source of moral duties—whether it is reason or intuition.
4. The difference between utilitarianism and deontology is, in part, one of emphasis; utilitarians regard consequences, rather than duty, as most important for morality.
5. Confucian deontology emphasizes community responsibility over individual autonomy.
6. Duty and the *ought* were important themes in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European Enlightenment ethics.
7. Immanuel Kant is the most influential Western deontologist. Kant wanted to establish a groundwork or foundation for morality that would explain why we ought to behave morally. He claimed that reason provides the foundation of morality.
8. A *hypothetical imperative* tells us that we ought to do something if we want to achieve a certain result. A *categorical imperative* states that we ought to do something regardless of the consequences.
9. Kant's categorical imperative states that we should be willing to universalize moral maxims and that we should never treat a person only as a means to an end.
10. Kant's categorical imperative is a *formal principle*—that is, it lacks specific content.
11. According to Kant, only rational beings are able to act freely or autonomously. Therefore, only rational beings such as humans have intrinsic moral worth. Nonhuman animals are not part of the moral community or kingdom-of-ends.
12. A person of *good will* acts out of an autonomous sense of duty. This sense of duty, according to Kant, stems from reason.
13. One of our primary moral duties is the development of self-respect or proper self-esteem.

14. Kant claimed that moral duties are *absolute* duties and that there are no exceptions to this rule.
15. Sissela Bok and W. D. Ross claim that moral duties are *prima facie*. A *prima facie* duty is a moral duty that may be overridden on occasion by stronger moral claims.
16. Bok argues that it may be permissible, under certain circumstances, to break a moral rule such as "do not lie."
17. Ross lists seven *prima facie* duties: *Beneficence* and *nonmaleficence* are future-oriented duties; *fidelity*, *reparation*, and *gratitude* are duties based on past actions; *self-improvement* and *justice* are ongoing duties.
18. There are two types of justice: retributive justice and distributive justice. *Retributive justice* requires punishment for wrongdoing. *Distributive justice* is concerned with the fair distribution of social goods.
19. John Rawls maintains that distributive justice should be based on impartiality and fairness.
20. Georg Hegel rejected Kantian deontology as focusing too much on individual autonomy and ignoring the importance of community.
21. Feminist care ethicists criticize moral theories such as deontology that privilege reason.



The Analects of Confucius

Arthur Waley, Translator

Book I

4. Master Tsêng said, Every day I examine myself on these three points: in acting on behalf of others, have I always been loyal to their interests? In intercourse with my friends, have I always been true to my word? Have I failed to repeat the precepts that have been handed down to me?

8. The Master said, If a gentleman is frivolous,* he will lose the respect of his inferiors and lack firm ground upon which to

*i.e. irresponsible and unreliable in his dealings with others.

build up his education. First and foremost he must learn to be faithful to his superiors, to keep promises, to refuse the friendship of all who are not like him.[†] And if he finds he has made a mistake, then he must not be afraid of admitting the fact and amending his ways. . . .

[†]i.e. of those who still reckon in terms of "profit and loss," and have not taken jên (Goodness) as their standard.

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Book II

1. The Master said, He who rules by moral force (*tê*) is like the pole-star, which remains in its place while all the lesser stars do homage to it.

3. The Master said, Govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by chastisements, and they will flee from you, and lose all self-respect. Govern them by moral force, keep order among them by ritual and they will keep their self-respect and come to you of their own accord. . . .

Book IV

2. . . . The Good Man rests content with Goodness; he that is merely wise pursues Goodness in the belief that it pays to do so.

5. Wealth and rank are what every man desires; but if they can only be retained to the detriment of the Way he professes, he must relinquish them. Poverty and obscurity are what every man detests; but if they can only be avoided to the detriment of the Way he professes, he must accept them. The gentleman who ever parts company with Goodness does not fulfil that name. Never for a moment does a gentleman quit the way of Goodness. He is never so harried but that he cleaves to this; never so tottering but that he cleaves to this.

Book V

15. Of Tzu-ch'an the Master said that in him were to be found four of the virtues

that belong to the Way of the true gentleman. In his private conduct he was courteous, in serving his master he was punctilious, in providing for the needs of the people he gave them even more than their due; in exacting service from the people, he was just. . . .

Book XII

10. Tzu-chang asked what was meant by "piling up moral force" and "deciding when in two minds." The Master said, "by piling up moral force" is meant taking loyalty and good faith as one's guiding principles, and migrating to places where right prevails. Again, to love a thing means wanting it to live, to hate a thing means wanting it to perish. But suppose I want something to live and at the same time want it to perish; that is "being in two minds."

Book XVI

10. Master K'ung said, The gentleman has nine cares. In seeing he is careful to see clearly, in hearing he is careful to hear distinctly, in his looks he is careful to be kindly; in his manner to be respectful, in his words to be loyal, in his work to be diligent. When in doubt he is careful to ask for information; when angry he has a care for the consequences, and when he sees a chance of gain, he thinks carefully whether the pursuit of it would be consonant with the Right. . . .



Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics

Immanuel Kant

Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a Good Will. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and the other *talents* of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resolution, perseverance, as qualities of temperament, are undoubtedly good and desirable in many respects; but these gifts of nature may also become extremely bad and mischievous if the will which is to make use of them, and which, therefore, constitutes what is called *character*, is not good. . . .

To be beneficent when we can is a duty; and besides this, there are many minds so sympathetically constituted that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest, they find a pleasure in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the satisfaction of others so far as it is their own work. But I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however proper, however amiable it may be, has nevertheless no true moral worth, but is on a level with other inclinations, e.g. the inclination to honour, which, if it is happily directed to that which is in fact of public utility and accordant with duty, and consequently honourable, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem. For the maxim lacks the moral import, namely, that such actions be done *from duty*, not from inclination. . . .

. . . [A]n action done from duty derives its moral worth, *not from the purpose* which is to be attained by it, but from the maxim by which it is determined, and therefore does not depend on the realization of the object

of the action, but merely on the *principle of volition* by which the action has taken place, without regard to any object of desire. . . . It cannot lie anywhere but in the *principle of the will* without regard to the ends which can be attained by the action. . . .

. . . Duty is the necessity of acting from respect for the law. I may have inclination for an object as the effect of my proposed action, but I cannot have *respect* for it, just for this reason, that it is an effect and not an energy of will. . . . The pre-eminent good which we call moral can therefore consist in nothing else than the *conception of law* in itself, which certainly is only possible in a rational being, in so far as this conception, and not the expected effect, determines the will. This is a good which is already present in the person who acts accordingly, and we have not to wait for it to appear first in the result.

But what sort of law can that be, the conception of which must determine the will, even without paying any regard to the effect expected from it, in order that this will may be called good absolutely and without qualification? As I have deprived the will of every impulse which could arise to it from obedience to any law, there remains nothing but the universal conformity of its actions to law in general, which alone is to serve the will as a principle, i.e. I am never to act otherwise than so that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law. . . . The common reason of men in its practical judgments perfectly coincides with this, and always has in view the principle here suggested. . . .

From what has been said, it is clear that all moral conceptions have their seat and origin completely *à priori* in the reason, and that, moreover, in the commonest reason just as

Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics, translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (London: Longman's, Green and Co., Ltd., 1873), pp. 30–39, 44–59, and 71. Notes have been omitted. (To read Kant's book online, go to www.bartleby.com/32/601.html.)

truly as in that which is in the highest degree speculative; that they cannot be obtained by abstraction from any empirical, and therefore merely contingent knowledge; that it is just this purity of their origin that makes them worthy to serve as our supreme practical principle, . . .

. . . [T]here is an imperative which commands a certain conduct immediately, without having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by it. This imperative is Categorical. It concerns not the matter of the action, or its intended result, but its form and the principle of which it is itself a result; and what is essentially good in it consists in the mental disposition, let the consequence be what it may. This imperative may be called that of Morality. . . .

. . . [W]hen I conceive a categorical imperative I know at once what it contains. For as the imperative contains besides the law only the necessity that the maxims shall conform to this law, while the law contains no conditions restricting it, there remains nothing but the general statement that the maxim of the action should conform to a universal law, and it is this conformity alone that the imperative properly represents as necessary.

There is therefore but one categorical imperative, namely this: *Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.*

Now if all imperatives of duty can be deduced from this one imperative as from their principle, then, although it should remain undecided whether what is called duty is not merely a vain notion, yet at least we shall be able to show what we understand by it and what this notion means. . . .

If then there is a supreme practical principle or, in respect of the human will, a categorical imperative, it must be one which, being drawn from the conception of that which is necessarily an end for every one because it is *an end in itself*, constitutes an *objective* principle of will, and can therefore serve as a universal practical law. The foundation of this principle is: *rational nature exists as an end in itself*. Man necessarily conceives his own existence as being so: so far then this is a *subjective* principle of human actions. But every other rational being regards its existence similarly, just on the same rational principle that holds for me: so that it is at the same time an *objective* principle, from which as a supreme practical law all laws of the will must be capable of being deduced. Accordingly the practical imperative will be as follows: *So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only.*

Discussion Questions

1. Analyze Kant's argument in his reading that reason provides the foundation of morality. Do you agree with Kant that all rational people would concur with the categorical imperative? Is it logically necessary, as Kant claimed, that all moral imperatives be categorically (universally) binding? Support your answers. Discuss also how Confucius might answer these questions.
2. Kant tends to focus on the individual while Confucius focuses on the community. Discuss whether their two approaches are in conflict or whether they complement each other. Support your answer using specific examples.