

The implications of Kantian Ethics for Non-rational Nature/Beings: A Study in Environmental Ethics

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Abstract: This article will provide an introduction to Immanuel Kant's ethical theory, which adopts a deontological perspective, as well as his viewpoint on non-rational beings. This work consists of two components. In the first section, we will extensively discuss Kant's concepts of the categorical imperative and good will. Kant's ethical philosophy is founded upon the concept of logical decision-making that is guided by a sense of responsibility. As per his perspective, all phenomena in the natural world operate in line with inherent rules, whereas only entities possessing rationality have the capacity to act in alignment with moral principles and possess the faculty of volition. In the following section, we will examine Immanuel Kant's concept of moral duty towards things that lack rationality. According to Kant, individuals have responsibilities only to themselves and their fellow human beings. Humans are not morally obligated to fulfill any duties or responsibilities towards non-rational beings. Kant posited the notion that the act of murdering animals and the destruction of natural beauty were deemed immoral due to their consequential impact on an individual's sense of self-accountability and the heightened probability of mistreating fellow human beings.

Keywords: Environmental Ethics, Kantian Ethics, Non-rational Nature, categorical imperative.

INTRODUCTION

Immanuel Kant is one of the most renowned philosophers in western philosophy's history. He was born in the East Prussian city of Königsberg. His influence on ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, and aesthetics had a significant impact on nearly all subsequent branches of philosophy. Before 1770, Kant's philosophical career was commonly referred to as "precritical," whereas after 1770, it was commonly referred to as "critical." The term "critical" derives primarily from Kant's interpretation of mature philosophy as "critical idealism" (Poma, 2012). Kant's "critical philosophy," especially in the three critiques: *the Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787), *the Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *the Critique of the power of judgment* (1790), was founded on a critique of the virtues of reason. Kant argues that human reason is the source of the general laws of nature that govern every experience, and that this comprehension of humanity provides moral law and is the basis of our faith in God, freedom, and immortality.

Kant established the foundations for his ethics in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Moral* (1785). Kant states that the singular purpose of Groundwork is to establish the "ultimate moral principle." Kant is one of the most well-known philosophers in the history of duty-based ethics. Kant's ethical theory is categorized as deontological ethics. The term 'deontological' is derived from the Greek word 'deon', which signifies duty or obligation. Kant argues that an action cannot be morally right if the actor has a natural inclination to perform it or derives enjoyment from it, and that the rightness or wrongness of actions is independent of the consequences they produce. Therefore, moral reasoning is not founded on contingent knowledge; moral principles are revealed by reason itself.

Kant's moral philosophy is based on the rational, duty-driven approach to decision making. According to Kant, everything in nature operates in accordance with the laws of nature, and only humans can act in accordance with these principles and therefore have a will. The will is the capacity to make decisions solely on the basis of logic and independent of any inclination. According to him, a free will and a will in moral laws are equivalent. His explanation regarding free will is connected to his explanation of a priori knowledge. According to Kant, freedom is a practical theory of pure reason because it deals with the ground of determining the will. According to him, freedom is the possession of the will by every rational human. Kant contends,

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“To every rational being having a will we must necessarily lend the idea of freedom also, under which alone he acts. For in such a being we think *of* a reason that is practical, that is, has causality with respect to its objects. Now, one cannot possibly think of a reason that would consciously receive direction from any other quarter with respect to its judgments, since the subject would then attribute the determination of his judgment not to his reason but to an impulse (Moran, 2018: 94).

The ethical perspective on Kant is based on the fundamental principle of the inherent dignity of a rational person. Kantian morality encompasses the notion of upholding individual rights as well as the concept of a moral society, whereby rational beings are expected to collectively agree upon a shared aim. According to Kant, actions performed with a feeling of responsibility are those that are executed out of respect for the moral law and result in the establishment of the law as a universal principle. Immanuel Kant used the term “the Categorical Imperative” to refer to this fundamental premise of morality” (Paton, 1971).

MORAL WORTH OF ACTIONS FROM DUTY

Kant describes three categories of propositions to clarify the essence of benevolence in relation to duty. First, according to Kant, actions are morally correct if they are performed for the sake of duty and not because of immediate inclination. For Kant, certain decisions expressing benevolence are morally acceptable if they are made for the purpose of fulfilling one’s duty. He argues that the moral value of an action is determined not by immediate inclination nor by self-interest, but by the principle by which the action is chosen. Therefore, the moral value of an action is determined not by its effectiveness in achieving its goal, but by the principle by which it is carried out. Humans are inclined to conduct in certain ways; however, a person of benevolence is one who performs positive deeds because it is his duty to do so, or even if he has no desire to. Briefly, we possess a variety of inclinations, some of which are morally good and others immoral. Therefore, if we wish to perform an act morally, we must rely on our reason and will, followed by a sense of obligation.

Second, according to Kant, actions performed out of a sense of duty will have moral value, not because they are undertaken with the intention of attaining it, but because they conform to the predetermined maxim. Consequently, the action does not depend on the achievement of the objective, but rather on the “principle of volition” according to which the task is completed by disregarding any other objective of the desired faculty. When a person pursues an action without any other primary motivation than a sense of obligation, it is because he or she has acknowledged an a priori valid moral maxim. This principle is known as the subjective action principle. A principle is a proposition that serves as the basis for an individual’s conduct. Therefore, the subjective principle is valid for the individual agent because he elects to act in accordance with it. Therefore, Kant refers to the subjective practical principle that an individual chooses to act upon as a maxim.

Kant distinguished between two types of maxims; empirical maxims are based on one’s own experience and depend on one’s sensual inclinations. And he refers to maxims that are not founded on sensual inclination as a priori maxims, as they are not derived from the experience of desire. In addition, empirical maxims are referred to as material maxims, and they are the ones that pertain to the intended objectives that the action seeks to realize (Anthony & Essien, 2018). A priori maxims are also known as formal maxims. Current formal maxims have been negatively characterized and do not apply to the action’s intended objectives. Kant contends that people whose actions are motivated by duty primarily adhere to a formal maxim. In other words, a decent person does not act solely on the principle of achieving the outcome he desires (Umotong, 2012). Therefore, the maxim of actions taken out of duty should be formal but immaterial. A maxim is moral according to Kant if it accords with the moral law. Therefore, the morality of an action resides not in the actor’s desire but in his or her intent.

Kant concludes that “duty is the necessity of an action based on respect for the law.” Kant applies the term “duty” to actions that result from “necessity” (Wood, 2017). Activities are “in accordance with duty” if they adhere to the rational principles that we should compel ourselves to obey. However, they are “removed from duty” when they did it out of authentic moral constraint. Kant opines that every species is capable of acting based on an instinct with the potential for positive outcomes, but only humans are capable of recognizing moral law and acting accordingly out of respect for the moral order. A person’s “reverence” for the law cannot consist solely of an emotive sense of regard for the law’s grandeur (Anthony & Essien, 2018b). It is rather the moral motivation of a person who recognizes that

the law is a reason for the imperative that transcends all other interests and issues. According to Kant, individuals experience reverence because they recognize that the law constrains their wills. There is no sense of the moral law's binding nature. Nonetheless, an ethical rule may serve as the foundation for a particular moral emotion. According to Kant, obeying the law is equivalent to performing solely out of obligation.

THE FORMULATION OF CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

Kant (2002) argues that there must be rational and objective grounds upon which judgments of rightness and wrongness can be established and promoted as imperatives for others to follow. Such imperatives arise a priori from experience and as universal principles with which all humans must comply regardless of their desires or circumstances. Therefore, imperatives are considered inviolable actions. According to Kant (2002), a judgment is a priori if it is independent of all experience and even of all sensory impressions. Kant says that a priori judgments do not necessitate any other form of experience because the authenticity of their truth resides within their law. The laws through which one should be required to perform any given act would be derived from the justifications for the obligation. Kant argues that metaphysical and universalizable characteristics are essential components of the a priori morality principle. It must transcend analytical forms and be implementable globally. It would be moral in its own right, as an ethical component of nature. In its application, no logical or practical contradiction would arise, as its universalizability guarantees that none would occur.

Considering "one ought not to kill" as an a priori statement independent of experience or circumstances, one would not be required to empirically demonstrate the grounds for "one ought not to kill." The statement 'one should not murder' is distinct from the statement 'killing is dangerous'; to comprehend why killing is dangerous, one must either experience it or contemplate its consequences. For the command "one should not kill" to be an a priori categorical imperative, the act of killing must have an intrinsically evil nature that renders it immoral, regardless of one's desire or the circumstances. The a priori is the fundamental grounding principle by which the moral agent can derive and discern imperatives as valid and universal. Kant states that the concept of an objective principle, insofar as it necessitates a will, is a command, and the formulation of the command is an imperative.

According to Kant, the principles of practical reason are both subjective and objective. In his "*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*," the term "ought" is used to characterize all imperatives and to indicate the relationship between objective law of purpose and a will that is not necessarily determined by it. In the same way that maxims are the subjective principles of practical reason, there are also objective principles that are independent of any subjective inclination. They are not therefore maxims. The point here is that our subjective preferences can create or become obstacles to the objective moral principle. In this context, Kant states that,

"...if the reason of itself does not sufficiently determine the will, if the latter is subject also to subjective conditions (particular impulses) which do not always coincide with the objective conditions; in a word, if the will does not in itself completely accord with reason... then the actions which objectively are recognized as necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will according to objective laws is obligation, that is to say the relation of the objective laws to a will that is not thoroughly good is conceived as the determination of the will of a rational being by principle of reason, but which the will from its nature does not of necessity follow (MacKinnon & Fiala, 2014: 126).

In this regard, Kant regards all objective principles of practical reason to be principles of duty, and they therefore appear to be commands. The term 'ought' to apply to rational creatures with inclinations and desires that may conflict with what reason requires. In contrast, this concept is of no use in the case of creatures whose actions are solely determined by desire and inclination, as they would simply respond to their strongest desire.

In the case of a moral will, a moral person is always able to act solely based on moral maxims and is never susceptible to an inclination toward actions not based on these maxims (Anthony et al., 2019). Kant is well aware of how the flawlessly virtuous must act, not merely out of a sense of duty, but also out of pure affection for virtue. This, in his view, is the absolute moral standard that we must pursue eternally, despite the fact that it cannot be attained under human conditions. Kant asserts that it would

be impossible for a person to be entirely virtuous; however, it would still be important to conduct good actions and not be enticed towards immorality. This form of will, sacred will, can only apply to God and cannot be applied to humans. People who have a conflict between desire and duty, however, will view the formal principle as an imposition. This is the necessity of absolute moral principle, which they perceive as a rule or a requirement.

According to Kant, “perfectly good will would, therefore, be equally subject to objective laws (i.e., the Law of Good), but it could not be conceptualized as obligated thereby to act lawfully, because from its subjective constitution, it can only be determined by the conception of good (Willaschek,2006). Therefore, no imperatives apply to the Divine will, or to a holy will in general; ought is out of place here, since the volition is already of necessity in accordance with the law. Consequently, the imperatives appear to be nothing more than formulas for conveying the link between objective laws and the subjective imperfection of human will, such as the human will. From this, we can deduce that imperatives conveyed via the word “ought” imply a relationship between an objective law and a will.

HYPOTHETICAL IMPERATIVE

Kant moves from the a priori state of the moral claim to the actual conditions that would make the moral judgment valid in action. Kant argues that virtuous deeds manifest as necessary deeds:

“the imperative declares what action possible by me would be good, and presents the practical rule in relation to a will which does not forthwith perform an action simply because it is good, whether because the subject does not always know that it is good, or because, even if it know this, yet its maxims might be opposed to the objective principles of practical reason.”

Consequently, there are primarily two types of imperatives. Hypothetical imperatives are those whose conclusion is contingent on the objective principle of practical reason. It requires the form “every rational agent, if he desires a particular end, must desire the good action as a means to this end.” As a result of the order of the reason specified by the end and the fact that the objectives differ, the action demanded by the reason will also vary. The hypothetical imperatives include those obligations, oughts, and duties that are neither obligations nor morality-related.

Kant recognizes two distinct varieties of hypothetical imperative. The imperative appears problematic to Kant if the objective is merely what the individual desires. The purpose is something that each of us inherently desires, such as pleasure; such imperatives are sometimes referred to as assertoric imperatives, prudential imperatives, and pragmatic imperatives. In a hypothetical imperative, a group of individuals within particular nations hold particular viewpoints. However, there are still certain objectives that could be claimed by everyone. Some people believe that all moral laws are of this sort; for instance, hedonists believe that they are principles for achieving pleasure. However, according to Kant, the moral law’s validity does not depend on the aims that men pursue, such as the laws of architecture or economics or even the universal assertorial laws of how to achieve happiness.

CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

According to Kant, the establishment of benevolence is not contingent upon hypothetical imperatives. On the contrary, he posits that:

“there is one imperative that, without being based upon and having as its condition’ any other purpose to be attained by certain conduct, commands this conduct immediately. This imperative is categorical. It has to do not with the matter of the action and what is to result from it, but with the form and the principle from which the action itself follows; and the essentially good in the action consists in the disposition, let the result be what it may. This imperative may be called the imperative of morality.”

According to Kant, individuals have a moral duty to maintain certain moral principles, which are considered categorical obligations. This suggests that the categorical imperatives are applicable to specific actions that people are obligated to consistently carry out. Furthermore, the categorical imperative not only encompasses the notion of compassion but also asserts its exclusive desirability. The only indispensable attribute of moral excellence lies in its prioritization of ethical principles above consequential considerations.

The categorical imperative encompasses several formulations. According to the translation by H.J. Paton, the first principle is that one should only act based on a maxim that may be desired to be universally applicable. The proposition may be expressed as follows: “Behave as if the principle guiding your actions were to be universally applicable in accordance with the laws of nature, as determined by your volition.” Both formulas are correct and may be compared. The concepts of categorical and hypothetical imperatives.

According to Kant, the application of the categorical imperative to maxims allows for the establishment of a definitive differentiation between moral and immoral maxims. Furthermore, the categorical imperative encompasses the notion of obligation. If an individual is obligated to do a certain activity, it is imperative that the guiding principle behind that action aligns with the moral code. Kant offers five distinct formulations of the categorical imperative. There are five distinct formulas that are relevant to this discussion. The first formula pertains to universal law, while the second formula relates to the rule of nature. The third formula concerns the end in itself, and the fourth formula focuses on autonomy. Lastly, the fifth and final formula is known as the formula of the kingdom of ends, which will be briefly examined in the subsequent analysis.

THE FORMULA OF THE UNIVERSAL LAW

The first articulation of Kant’s Categorical Imperative is known as the Formula of the Universal Law (FUL). One should only act in line with a maxim if they can simultaneously wish it to become a universal rule. A maxim refers to a normative theory whereby the subject relies on themselves in order to act in line with it. The institution known as FUL provides an assessment tool to determine the ethical acceptability of adhering exclusively to certain principles that have the potential to function as universal laws of nature. The presence of a lack of contradictory volitions is seen as the underlying condition for the possibility in question. The numerical value 69. Kant posits the existence of a singular Categorical Imperative, so asserting that the guiding principle of our actions must adhere to the universal rule. This indicates that the imperative is devoid of any conditions or limitations. The purpose of excellent action is not only to satisfy a particular need, since it is an undertaking that is inherently valuable to every rational human. It is only when reason has complete control over desires that such actions are pursued.

The proposition posits that the ultimate moral law ought to possess universality, implying that any particular moral rule should be both objective and impersonal. This entails that moral judgments should not be determined only by subjective wants, but rather should remain impartial in their application to all individuals involved. A principle that is capable of being “universalized” is one that can be applied to every individual without encountering any contradictions. This conclusion is derived from the understanding that the essence of rationality is in the consistent performance of actions to avoid any sort of inconsistency. In the context of FUL, the phrase “universal law” seems to have connotations of normative authority. The inquiry around the power in question pertains to its capacity to determine if it has the will to enable individuals to behave in accordance with the maxim. In summary, FUL advocates for the recognition of ethically acceptable maxims that may be universally applicable, therefore guiding individuals to restrict their actions within the boundaries of these maxims.

THE FORMULA OF LAW OF NATURE

In continuation of his first articulation, Kant proceeds to articulate the following principle: “Act in such a manner that the maxim of your action could be willed by you to become a universal law of nature.” This formula posits that the principle guiding our actions should be one that we want to be universally adopted as a rule of freedom. The Formula of the Law of Nature may be seen as a derivative version of the Formula of Universal Law (FUL). Both formulas propose that our acts ought to align with moral maxims, and we have a moral duty to follow them. These formulas are universalizable since they are justified by the universal moral law. In this context, our activities are guided by the principles of pure practical reason in order to ascertain the underlying maxims. Consequently, once the maxim has been recognized as morally sound, we may proceed to act upon it. The difference between FUL and FLN:

“lies in the distinction between willing something to be a ‘law’ (*simpliciter*) and willing it to be a ‘law of nature’. Both sorts of laws consist in a general principle having *necessity*, but the necessity is not of the same kind. A ‘law’ (*simpliciter*) is a principle that is necessary in the sense that, as rational *agents*, we *must* (i.e.,

we ought to) follow it. In other words, a law (*simpliciter*) is a *normative* principle. Hence to ask (using FUL), whether you could will your maxim to be a universal law, is to ask whether you could will that all others should be *permitted* to follow it.”

The statement suggests that according to the FUL, it is incumbent upon a person to adhere to the maxim, and our acts ought not to be characterized by inconsistency. In contrast, the FLN argues that moral law has an inherent imperative that universally applies to all individuals possessing rational agency.

According to Kant, acts should be determined based on moral law, which suggests that their principles, if considered as natural law, would contribute to the overall equilibrium of goals among individuals and, at the very least, would not disrupt this harmonious system. Furthermore, in order to attain genuine moral virtue, such endeavors need to be pursued only for the sake of adhering to the moral rule itself. Kant starts his discourse by introducing the concept of good will, which is characterized by its commitment to adhering to moral law and guides the actions that a rational and virtuous will would naturally do. When individuals find themselves in a state of irrationality that necessitates a change in behavior, these activities must be undertaken as responsibilities. However, the feasibility of fulfilling these obligations is contingent upon the presence of goodness inside oneself. However, it is difficult to ascertain our moral performance unless we can accurately assess the amount to which we have fulfilled our tasks solely out of a sense of responsibility.

THE FORMULA OF THE END IN ITSELF

Kant's third formula demonstrates the notion of humanity as an end in and of itself: “Act in such a way that humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, is simultaneously a means and an end.” This formula mandates that the agent handle himself and others equally. We are obligated to respect all rational humans, including ourselves. This formulation prohibits using both others and oneself as a means. This has an intriguing relationship with Kant's concept of ideal duty, which will be investigated in the following chapters. Perfect duties, according to Kant, are negative, precise, and definite. Perfect responsibilities can be performed for oneself or for others.

For example, individuals are required to never perpetrate suicide. He believes that treating oneself as an end in oneself and destroying oneself by committing suicide are incompatible. Humans are not objects, and it is immoral to use them merely as a means to gratify one's requirements. Therefore, according to Kant, suicide is intrinsically immoral, and avoiding suicide is a faultless duty to oneself. And it is a faultless obligation to refrain from making promises that one has no intention of fulfilling. Kant argues that making deceptive promises is immoral because it is an example of using other people as a means. Therefore, he advises against making fraudulent promises that one has no intention of keeping or cannot keep.

As the objective basis of all practical reason, the principle of humanity resides in the rule. This principle applies to everyone, consistent with natural law. This criterion transforms the objective principle of will into a universally applicable practical law.

The goal presented by this principle is an objective goal that every rational human being must consider as an end in itself, rather than as a means. Consequently, this principle is the ultimate practical principle from which the laws of will are derived. Consequently, the objective principle can be applied to both the agent and others, as it directs the agent to embrace those maxims that are consistent with the universal law applicable to all beings. In this formula, Kant advises treating all people with fairness and never exploiting anyone.

THE FORMULA OF AUTONOMY

Kant's fourth formulation is as follows: “Act only so that the will could regard itself as simultaneously establishing universal law through its maxim.” The formula is founded on Kant's principle of autonomy, or self-legislation. The necessity will be imposed solely by the rational will. We create the laws that we adhere to. This formula shares the notion that this is a rational will that compels the agent to adhere to the categorical imperative rather than having it imposed from without. Kant argues that reason must be viewed as the originator of its principles apart from extraneous influences; therefore, it must be viewed as free as the will of a rational human being. In other words, the will of such a being

cannot be the will in and of itself; rather, it must be attributed to every rational being as a practical attribute of freedom.

A rational being has intrinsic value because it can determine its own conclusion. Consequently, a rational being should consider the ends of others when determining his own.

Kant argues that rational beings are distinct from non-rational beings because they are endowed with rationality and have the ability to determine their own ends, which are a matter of benevolence. This principle requires individuals to recognize the autonomy of others, and it implies that moral laws should be universalizable and every rational being should consider itself an author. Kant, according to:

“beings the existence of which rests not on our will but on nature, if they are beings without reason, still have only a relative worth, as means, and are therefore called *things*/ whereas rational beings are called *persons* because their nature already marks them out as an end in itself, that is, as something that may not be used merely as a means (Korsgaard, 2013, p. 45).

Due to the expression of rational nature, which is intrinsically valuable, only humans are subject to moral law, according to Kant.

THE FORMULA OF KINGDOM OF ENDS (FKE):

Kant explains the fifth formula as follows: “Thus, act as if you were always, through your maxims, a law-making member of a universal kingdom of ends.” The FKE derives immediately from the FA. For him, a kingdom is a systemic union of diverse rational beings based on shared laws. According to this principle, all individuals are obligated to act in accordance with the principles adopted by the community of rational agents. The ideal is an entire or method derived from the concept of reason, and Kingdom of Ends is a whole and method of all the ends that we ought to pursue (Korsgaard, 1996). Such objectives are not only the ends of rational agents, but also the individual objectives that each rational agent can set for himself. Kant asserts that “all rational beings are subject to the law that each must treat himself and all others not merely as means, but always and simultaneously as ends in themselves.”

Within the kingdom, the concept of rational beings is a concurrent author and subject of universal law, guiding us towards ends in themselves that respect each individual as an end in itself. In Kant’s view, each rational being in the kingdom should always regard himself as providing universal law to every member’s will as well as his own, and should not seek any future benefit. Morality entails adhering to only certain maxims or motives that are compatible with the upcoming Kingdom of the Ends (Stratton-Lake, 2005). The concept of an ideal society is one in which all individuals observe the objective norms of reason and perceive their fellow humans not merely for the purpose, but always as they are. There is no requirement for a law to recognize the dignity of rational creatures if they cannot implement it themselves. People in the kingdom of ends serve as legislators based on the dignity of morality. Thus, they independently establish their own autonomy. In addition, a virtuous will must not be in conflict with itself, and its actions must adhere to universal laws’ inherent value. The kingdom is a confederation of diverse rational beings, and one must always consider himself to be both a law-making member subject to universal moral laws and a recipient of those laws.

According to Kant, it is impossible to discover the universal duty by studying empirical data such as human tendency, which varies from person to person. The universal basis of an individual’s morality should not be his or her rational nature, since it is identical in every person. No so-called moral rule is applicable unless it is rational, i.e., it is applicable to all rational beings without contradiction (Wood, 1991). Therefore, the ethical principle should be something that every individual, including himself, should adhere to. Kant employs a consistency test as the core of a fundamental moral norm, which he terms the categorical imperative. According to Kant, all actions based on maxims that rational beings cannot will to be adhered to by all individuals are not morally correct.

Thus, through the categorical imperative, it is possible to differentiate between morally good and harmful actions. However, for Kant, this is not only the measure, but also an unconditional directive for our behavior. Every rational being recognizes a duty to adhere to reason, so it is obligatory for all. Our duty can only be determined on the basis of the categorical imperative. Kant argues that if everyone violates their conduct, the validity of the fundamental moral rule would have no bearing. Thus, reason recommends an obligation, and the moral law maintains that whether or not people are effectively adhering to it, they must nonetheless do so.

KANT CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

In Kant's theoretical framework, the principle of autonomy is justified by the concept of freedom. The foundation of Kant's metaphysics of morality is freedom. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, he asserts that the concept of freedom is the central tenet of his entire theory. Freedom is considered as the property of the will. Kant asserts,

Will is a kind of causality of living beings insofar as they are rational, and *freedom* would be that property of such causality that it can be efficient independently of alien causes *determining* it, just as *natural necessity* is the property of the causality of all non-rational beings to be determined to activity by the influence of alien causes (Insole, 2020; 166).

If the moral agent is not autonomous, he cannot be held accountable for his actions, and if no one is accountable for his actions, those actions are not moral. With the aid of freedom, a rational being can therefore fulfill his duty. According to Kant, the will is a type of causality associated with rational humans, and freedom is the property of such causality. This uniqueness of causality is demonstrated by evaluating natural causality. The activities of non-rational creatures are determined by factors external to them. Every nonrational being's causality has the property of natural necessity. They lack the capacity for self-determination.

In contrast, rational humans have the unique ability to cause events of their own volition. They are autonomous, and external factors cannot affect their actions. Because a free will must be a will that creates its own law, free will and autonomy of the will are synonymous. A will is therefore free if it obeys moral laws. Therefore, morality derives from the concept of free will. This specific type of causality presents the idea of creating norms for itself; it is the categorical imperative.

Kant's concept of freedom asserts that an agent is free to choose how to use his authority. Consequently, the concepts of freedom and autonomy cannot be separated; they are interdependent. According to Kant, "the concept of autonomy is now inextricably linked with the concept of freedom, and with the concept of autonomy with the universal principle of morality" (Nussbaum, 2011: 64) In much the same way that the law of nature is the basis for all natural events and phenomena, freedom as an idea functions as the basis for all rational beings' actions. Therefore, we can infer that rational creatures view themselves as completely liberated. Moreover, freedom is intrinsically linked to the concepts of the moral law and the Categorical Imperative in the sense that they must heed this call to freedom. Consequently, the concept of freedom appears to be the only support that reason can provide for morality and the categorical imperative. To conclude this segment, it is important to note that categorical imperative is not predicated on any other purpose to be attained by a particular course of action. In contrast, if a duty is governed by the categorical imperative, it is undeniably a moral imperative.

KANT ON NON-RATIONAL BEING/NATURE

According to some philosophers, Kant's ethical views are notoriously anthropocentric, based on the notion that only rational beings possess absolute value. Kant argues that humans possess incomparable value and dignity due to their capacity for reasoned action determination. The fact that humans choose their operating principles subjectively distinguishes them from non-rational animals, which are driven to react by instincts. Kant distinguishes between rational beings and creatures at the outset of "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Perspective." He believes that the fact that man is conscious of his ego elevates him above all other living things on earth. Consequently, he is a person who, due to his preeminence and dignity, is completely distinct from objects such as the irrational creatures, whom he can command and govern at will.

People are the only rational creatures we are familiar with, and it is our responsibility to view them as such. Individuals are encouraged to revere their fellow humans who exist as ends in themselves. This proposes the use of the word 'humanity,' which is an essential human characteristic that includes having reason and a rational will in particular. This characteristic compels us to view ourselves and other rational humans as ends in and of themselves. Kant asserts that if a person conflates such duties or even considers that animals themselves are worthy of respect, he or she commits "an amphiboly in his concepts of reflection, and his ostensible duty to other beings is merely a duty to himself." There are ethical reasons for treating animals well; however, it would be incorrect to conclude that we are

constrained by the animals themselves, regardless of how our behavior toward them affects our dispositions. Kant argues,

“with regard to the animate but non-rational part of creation, violent and cruel treatment of animals is far more intimately opposed to a human being’s duty to himself, and he has a duty to refrain from this; for it dulls his *shared feeling of their suffering* (mine) and so weakens and gradually uproots a natural predisposition that is very serviceable to morality in one’s relations with other people (Koukouzelis, 2015: 53).

Kant condemns animal cruelty because it undermines humans’ ability to fulfill their direct responsibilities to their fellow humans. Kant believes that obligations to animals are indirect obligations to humanity because they are analogous to humanity; we follow obligations to humanity and therefore cultivate obligations to humanity.

However, according to Kant, it is permissible for humans to slaughter animals for sustenance; however, this must be done immediately and painlessly. Also, one should see to it that thought we set the creatures to labor, we should do it so without taxing them beyond their capacity. Furthermore, Kant emphasizes that physical studies of animals should be avoided if the same purpose can be achieved through other means, and that injuring or torturing them for the sake of mere speculation should be disdained. In addition, he suggests that we should express gratitude to a horse or dog for their service when they reach old age, just like our own family members. We have responsibilities toward animals, but only indirectly, because our treatment of animals has an effect on us. According to Kant, any activity involving the torture or inhumane treatment of animals is degrading to ourselves. It results in a violation of our duty to ourselves, as we would not, in fact, treat ourselves cruelly; we subvert the instinct of humanity within us and render ourselves senseless; it is, therefore, an indirect violation of humanity in our individual.

Kant also acknowledges that appreciating natural beauty enables us to be better people and is necessary for morality. For him, appreciation of inanimate nature can help cultivate disposition because our behavior toward nature has an effect on us, and it is our responsibility to cultivate a more virtuous personality, which is more inclined toward doing what is right as opposed to seeking personal gain. “A tendency to wantonly destroy what is beautiful in inanimate nature (spiritus destructionis) conflicts with a person’s responsibility to himself.” Furthermore, Kant argues that the spirit of devastation is such that,

“Weakens or uproots that feeling in him which, though not of itself moral, is still a disposition of sensibility that greatly promotes morality or at least prepares the way for it: the disposition, namely, to love something (e.g., beautiful crystal formations, the indescribable beauty of plants) even apart from any intention to use it” (Altman, 2011: 53)

Therefore, according to Kant, animal cruelty and the devastation of natural beauty are wrong because they diminish one’s duty to oneself and may result in the mistreatment of other humans. In other words, according to Kant, there are no duties toward non-rational creatures for their own sake; our action toward them is a duty to oneself and to other humans.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we have examined the ethical perspective of Immanuel Kant and his characterization of human behaviors as devoid of rationality. Kant’s ethical theory is often classified as deontological ethics, emphasizing the concept of obligation and the principle of universal law. According to Kantian ethics, moral rightness is contingent upon the agent’s behavior being motivated only by adherence to the moral rule, without any other extraneous motivations. This kind of behavior suggests that the person engaged in it must consistently exhibit a disposition of benevolence, since this is a prerequisite for it to be considered morally virtuous. According to Kant, it is his belief that all phenomena in the natural world function in accordance with laws, however it is only rational human beings that possess the capability to act in accordance with moral principles and possess a will. The will refers to the cognitive ability to make decisions based only on rationality, independent of personal desires or preferences. According to Kant, there exists a singular categorical imperative, which necessitates that the principle guiding our actions adhere to the universal rule. Consequently, this means that the imperative is an unconditional law.

Furthermore, the categorical imperative necessitates individuals to engage in actions that possess intrinsic goodness, rather than merely serving as a means to achieve additional objectives or fulfill specific intentions. Ideally, these actions should be inherently good, such that every action undertaken by any rational agent is morally virtuous when driven by the full force of their rational faculties. The concept of humanity is objectively embedded into the legal framework, serving as the fundamental foundation for all practical reasoning. It is applicable to all individuals who are deemed suitable for adherence to the laws of nature. This criterion renders the objective principle of will as a universally applicable practical norm. The concept under consideration entails an objective aim, one that every rational creature is obligated to regard as an end in and of itself, rather than as a mere means. Hence, this concept functions as the paramount practical premise from which the rule of volition is derived.

Furthermore, we have engaged in a discourse on Kant's explication of human behaviors directed towards non-rational aspects of nature. According to Kant, actions directed towards non-rational nature are seen only as means to achieve human objectives. Non-rational entities lack direct moral consideration due to their absence of a rational essence. Nevertheless, the author argues that the ethical treatment of animals should not include cruelty, since it engenders a sense of cruelty towards people as well. Furthermore, he expresses strong disapproval towards the inhumane treatment of animals, since he argues that such mistreatment might lead individuals to neglect their moral responsibilities towards both their fellow people and themselves. In essence, our moral responsibilities towards animals are mediated indirectly, since it is our actions and treatment of animals that ultimately impact our own well-being. Kant also articulates such perspectives on the obligation towards nature, positing that there exists a tendency to indiscriminately dismantle natural beauty because to the recognition that an appreciation of such beauty might cultivate a disposition that enhances the likelihood of fulfilling duties towards fellow human beings.

According to Kant's moral philosophy, entities who lack rationality cannot be included inside the moral sphere due to their inherent absence of reasoning faculties. Contemporary environmental ethicists often criticize his ethical theory due to its anthropocentric character, hence leading to widespread criticism. The argument put out is that the possession of reasoning capabilities cannot be the only justification for attributing inherent worth.

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