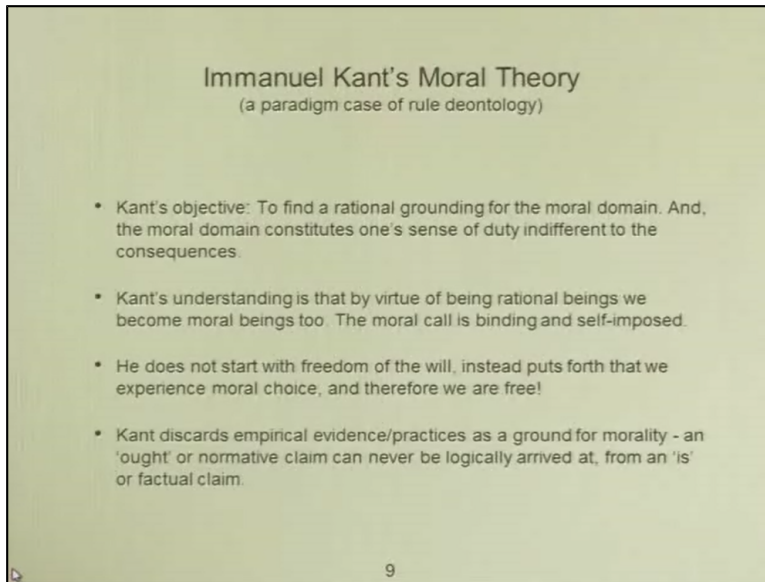


Ethics
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Module No. #01
Lecture No. #08
Deontological Theories – Immanuel Kant

Now, continuing to talk about, Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory.

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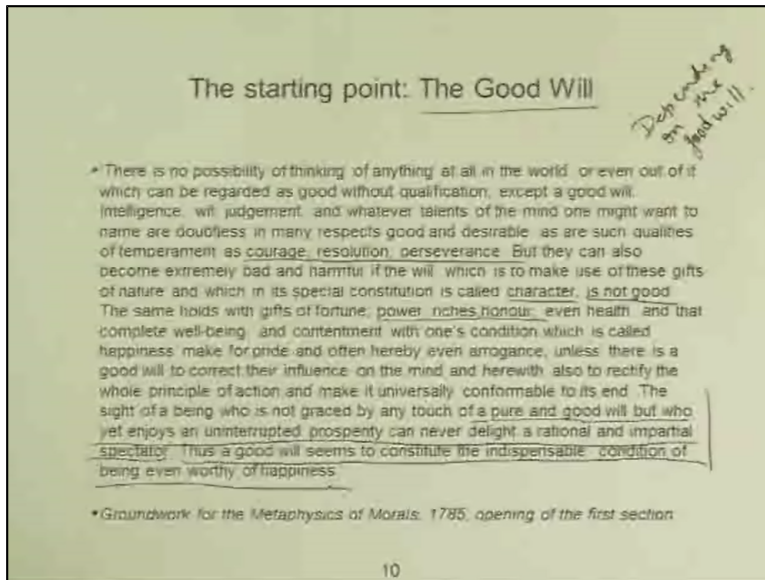
Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory
(a paradigm case of rule deontology)

- Kant's objective: To find a rational grounding for the moral domain. And, the moral domain constitutes one's sense of duty indifferent to the consequences.
- Kant's understanding is that by virtue of being rational beings we become moral beings too. The moral call is binding and self-imposed.
- He does not start with freedom of the will, instead puts forth that we experience moral choice, and therefore we are free!
- Kant discards empirical evidence/practices as a ground for morality - an 'ought' or normative claim can never be logically arrived at, from an 'is' or factual claim.

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Let us, go ahead and see, where does he ground his Moral Theory? Now, he grounds his Moral Theory, on the notion of the Good Will.

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This is the starting point of, Immanuel Kant's Moral Theory. Now, I quote from Immanuel Kant himself, there is no possibility of thinking, of anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be regarded with good, without qualification, except a Good Will. Intelligence, wit judgement. And, whatever talents of the mind, one might want to name, are doubtless in many respects, good and desirable. As, are such qualities of temperament, as courage, resolution, perseverance.

But, they can also become extremely bad and harmful, if the will, which is to make use of these gifts of nature, and which in its special constitution, is called character, is not good. The same holds with gifts of fortune, power, riches, honour, even health, and that complete well-being, and contentment with one's condition, which is called happiness, make for pride. And often hereby, even arrogance, unless there is a Good Will to correct their influence, on the mind. And herewith, also to rectify, the whole principle of action, and make it universally conformable to its end.

The sight of a being, who is not graced by any touch, of a pure and a Good Will, but who yet enjoys an uninterrupted prosperity, can never delight a rational and impartial spectator. Thus, a Good Will seems to constitute the indispensable condition, of being even worthy of happiness. This is from, excerpted from the groundwork for the metaphysics of morals. Now, this as we come across, is the foundation of Kant's moral philosophy.

Till now, we have been talking about Consequentialism, about Utilitarianism, Hedonism. Most of the places, where we find, that well, there are certain nonmoral Consequences, that are brought forward by acts, and that decide on the moral parameter of the Act in question. Now, Kant here, makes a break in the tradition, and tries to find a moral grounding, that is atomic, that is fundamental, that is axiomatic.

We have talked about, how Kant tried to, what were the objectives of Kant, in retrospect, we can see the picture, that Kant wanted to paint. Was where, the entire frame of morality, laid to rest on rationality. Now, that was a very difficult position to keep. Because, this was a time, when Kant was predominant. At that time, that was Kant's time, was filled with religion, with societal, with traditional values, as being the source of values.

Now, can tradition be the source of values. The customs and the rules, that have been coming out, are they going to be the rules of the current system. Or, is there going to be something else. As we talked earlier, that Kant wanted to cleanse his system. He wanted to clean, the moral system of all external evidences, or of all empirical evidences, and wanted to ground it on rationality. Now, he introduces this notion of the Good Will. Now, what is the Good Will.

The Good Will seems to be that, whenever all conditions, all capacities, all potencies in the world, are however desirable or undesirable they be, or by themselves not good without any qualification. That is, we require certain qualifiers, to make it good. Let us say, a strong human being, a physically well-built strong human being. Now, is that strength, a good thing, or a bad thing, is qualified, by how that person uses his strength.

Does he use the strength, to bully others? Does he use his strength, to assist others in need? Now, this entity called the Good Will, is what makes a difference to all other properties in the world. That is what, Kant is trying to bring to light that, nothing inside or outside the world, is good without a qualification. So, everything is good or bad, depends on certain qualifications, except the Good Will. The Good Will is the fundamental atomic goodness, that you seek.

Now, looking at the slide, we see that, Kant gives certain examples of character, power, riches,

honour, even health, and complete well-being, and contentment. So, he even talks about courage, resolution, perseverance. That, whatever these qualities are, they are good or bad, depending on the Good Will. So, then he later talks about, that the sight of a being, which not graced by any touch of a pure and Good Will, but yet enjoys an uninterrupted prosperity, can never delight, a rational impartial spectator.

Thus, a Good Will seems to constitute, the indispensable condition of being even worthy of happiness. Now, what is Kant mean, when he says that, that a better pure and Good Will, but who yet enjoys an uninterrupted prosperity, can never delight a rational and impartial spectator. Let us take the example of a movie. Why do we like the film star, the hero, the Protagonist of the movie? Let us take a usual plot, where the protagonist is strong, tuff, has overcome challenges, to preserve good.

So, when Kant talks about the, impartial and rational spectator, he means us as the rational beings. Who do we attach value to? Or, who is the Protagonist? The Protagonist is one, who not only is strong. And, that strength, does not make him the Protagonist. For very often, the Antagonist, or the Villain, is much stronger than the hero. But, what makes the hero, hero, is the Good Will.

Is the Good Will, without any qualification? That, he has the Good Will, that he has a good intention, that he is a good person, these are things, that make the agent, hero. So, this is what, an uninterrupted prosperity, will still not delight, the impartial and rational spectator. Because, it would not make a difference, or should not inspire the spectator, unless the spectator saw the evidence of the goodness, or of goodness of qualification. Now coming to the next slide.

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'good will' at the centre of ethics

- Kant attempts to bring the locus of the moral domain from theories/empirical observations back to the individual, in the individual's exercise of moral choice and freedom. |
- Morality cannot be based on the evidence of the senses; and that persons have an inherent sense of morality.
- The objective of an act, so as to be called 'moral,' is not benefit, pleasure or satisfaction; an act is 'moral' only if it is done from a sense of duty and nothing else. ||

sense of duty is the only source of moral action.

Certainty comes from the mind (and not empirical evidences) in actively ordering the evidence of the senses.

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Now, Good Will for Kant, is at the centre of Ethics. What is he briefly do. Kant attempts to bring the locus of the moral domain, from theories empirical observations, back to the individual, in the individual's exercise of moral choice and freedom. Morality cannot be based on the evidence of the senses, and that persons have an inherent sense of morality. The objective of an Act is to be called moral, is not to benefit pleasure or satisfaction.

An Act is moral, only if it is done from a sense of duty, and nothing else. The objective of an act, so as to be called moral, is not benefit, pleasure, or satisfaction, but an Act is moral, only if it is done from a sense of duty, and nothing else. Certainty comes from the mind, and not empirical evidences, in actively ordering the evidence of the senses. Now, what is Kant trying to say, here. First, that Kant attempts to bring the locus of the moral domain, from theories empirical observations, back to the individual, in the individuals exercise of moral choice and freedom.

So again, this is a part of Kant's agenda to clear, morality from empirical sources, or from evidence of the senses. And, he is making a crucial thing here, that persons have an inherent sense of morality. So, the objective of an act, so as to be called moral, is not benefit, pleasure, or satisfaction. An Act is moral, if it is only done from a sense of duty, and nothing else. Now, this is very crucial in understanding, what Kant is trying to put forth.

This is a crucial claim of Kant, that well, the moral Act is a conformity to the sense of duty, and

is not done for pleasure, or benefit, or even satisfaction. Now, if Kant were to ask Mother Teresa, that why do you serve the needy. And, if Mother Teresa would reply, that well, I serve the needy, because my heart goes out for the needy. I am touched, I am moved, I am emotionally charged, when I see the needy. And therefore, I serve the needy.

To this hypothetical dialogue, Kant would reply that well, Mother Teresa, you are not moral in that sense. Because, you are not functioning out of a sense of duty, to your supposed moral acts, or from your empathy, from the pleasure, or from the satisfaction, that you derive, from serving the needy. It is not from a sense of duty. It is not, a cold calculated dispassionate sense of duty. Rather, it is a warm feeling of affection, oneness, and mercy, that is prompting you to the actions.

So, that makes your action, that strips your action, of its morality. So, the sense of duty is non-negotiable. The sense of duty is the only source of action. Now, so thereby, the certainty that comes for moral actions, and moral claims, come from the mind, and not from empirical evidences. So, empirical evidences, just provide you to that data. The mind orders the data. Now, let us go to the next slide.

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The slide is titled "The Categorical Imperative: The test to determine the right from the wrong" and is marked with "CI" in the top right corner. It contains several bullet points with handwritten annotations:

- The principle to determine the right. It can be known apriori, that is by reflection alone as it is a part of mental structure.
- Categorical as opposed to hypothetical or goal based; imperative because it is a must or is binding. *Handwritten note: subjective principle of action*
- First formulation: "Act only on that maxim which you can at the same time will to be a universal law". *Handwritten note: must not be*
- An un-universalizable maxim (subjective principle of action) is involved in the contradiction of will in the following manner:
 - * X makes a promise & X violates the promise when suitable - for, by the very act of making a promise.
 - * X does something (say p) & then by violating it (negating p) when suitable.
 - * X asserts p very well knowing that (s)he would negate p later - this is the contradiction of will that Kant points out.

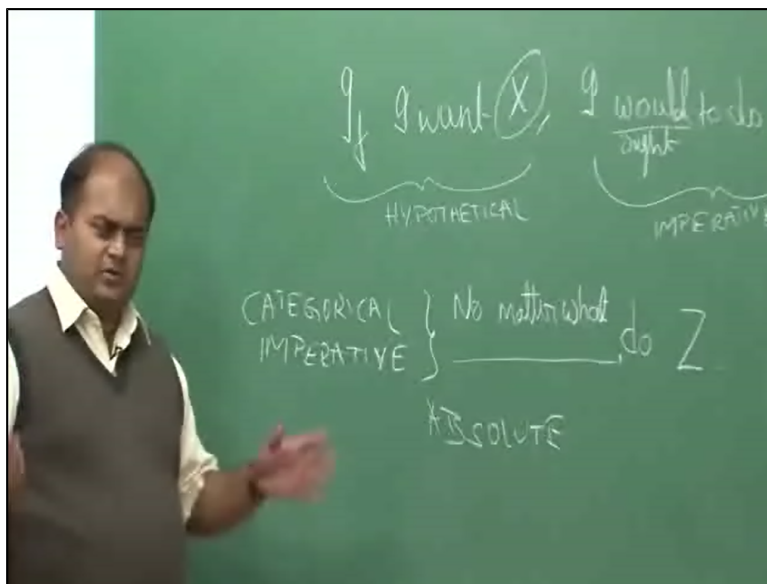
Handwritten notes at the bottom: "difficultly / may arise from violating the CI" and "asserting p - fully knowing that it would be negated later".

Kant talks about this thing called, the Categorical Imperative. Very often abbreviated, as the CI. What is the Categorical Imperative? The test to determine, the right from the wrong. That is this, in a single claim, is what Kant means by the Categorical Imperative. The principal, to determine

the right. It can be known Apriori. That, is by reflection alone, as it is a part of our mental structure. Categorical, as opposed to hypothetical, or goal-based imperative, because it is a must, or is a binding

First, let us talk about, these two claims. Now, what does Categorical Imperative mean? Now, the Categorical Imperative, would perhaps mean, not perhaps, but would definitely mean, something of a rule, of a moral command. Now, let us look at the board, to see, how best can we understand Categorical Imperative. This is quite a profound concept that, Kant has come up with. And, we are just skimming at the introductory level, to present a brief overview of, what Kant's philosophy is.

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Now, there are judgements, we do. If I want X, I would ought to do Y, right. Now, look at these two. If I want X, I would do Y. A fairly simple, conditional statement. Now, this is something, which is called a Hypothetical Imperative. This part of it, is hypothetical. And, this part of it, is an imperative, or a command. Now, this is basically, the structure of most moral judgements, or most policies, maxims, that we have in our lives. That well, we want something. And, to achieve that, we do certain things.

So, I want X. And, I ought to do Y, to get X. This is an example of, a Hypothetical Imperative. Now, let us look at an example of, a Categorical Imperative. Well, it is something like an

absolute moral command, it just says, do Z. If you want, you can fill this up with, no matter what. Now, the Categorical Imperative is saying, that well, no matter what, do Z. So, there is something, absolute about the Categorical Imperative. Okay, now let us not get confused, with the words and the phrases, that Kant uses.

What Categorical Imperative essentially means, is that, well, there are some things, right, which are categorical. Categorical meaning, they have to be done right. They are an imperative, because they are a command. A command, which is categorical, or which is to be followed, for its own sake. It is not hypothetical. It is not a command, or an imperative, to be followed, for some goal. But, it is an imperative, or a command, to be followed, for its own sake.

Now, here is where, Kant is unfolding his Moral Theory. That, it comes about that well, there are things that ought to be done, for its own sake. Right. Now, let us take a look at the slide. When we talk about hypothetical, it is goal-based. Because, it is a must or a binding, where the Categorical Imperative is done, for its own sake. Now, let us look at, Kant presented three formulations of the Categorical Imperative.

The first formulation reads, Act only on that maxim, which you can at the same time, will to be a universal law. Now, this is a small sentence, but which puts forth, the first formulation of the Categorical Imperative. It says that, Act only on that maxim, which you can, at the same time, will to be a universal law. Now, what does it say. Well, what does a maxim mean? A maxim is a subjective principle of judgement. Let me write that, on the slide, for your clarity

It means, a subjective principle of action, right. Okay. Act on that maxim, or that subjective principle of action, which you can at the same time, will to be a universal law. Now, let us say, these are the words, that we are using, Categorical Imperative, maxim, we are using these words, these phrases, which are directly from Kant. And thereby, let it not confuse you, or make it sound superfluous. These are words, used by our translations, from Kant's works.

But, what we mean in essence, is crucial for you to understand, that well. Kant is saying, that well, what the first axiom, or the first formulation. It is not an axiom. It is a first formulation, of

the Categorical Imperative. And, as you can see, it is empty. It is bereft of any content. It does not claim, that there is any description, of what one must do. He just puts a formula. And, what is that formula? The formula reads, that Act only on that maxim, which you can, at the same time, will to be a universal law.

Now, what is Kant saying? Kant is saying, that well, what is this filter of right, rightness, checker, which he calls the Categorical Imperative. Any Act is right, if the principle with which you act, can be universalised. That is, if you are okay, being the recipient of the act, rather than the doer of the act, then the Act is right. If you are okay, if the maxim, or the subjective principle of action, is generalised, is universalised, is everybody starts fooling that, if it is that, is okay with you.

He gives rather an interesting example. He takes this example of, asking for a loan, when one knows that, one does not have the capacity, to repay the loan. Now, Kant postulates the situation, that well, a person who is in need of money, and has to ask for a loan, knowing fully, well, that he cannot repay the loan, he is in a quandary. Because, if he asks for a loan, saying that well, he cannot repay it, he would not get a loan.

And, if he asks for a loan, promising that he would repay it, he is clearly saying something, which he cannot do, or he clearly committing to something, which we cannot do. Now, it is the latter, that Kant thinks, is a challenge to the rationality of the agent. Now, if the agent assumes that, you he is able to fool, the one who is extending the loan, and commit repayment. Whereas, even while the time of accepting the loan, he knows that, he is not in a position to repay.

Then, that person, is guilty, of not just breaking a promise, but of being irrational, of not being a rational human being, of belittling his rational human agency. Now, how does he do so? Let us look at the slide, to understand, how he does so. Well. Now, an un-universalizable maxim, is involved in the contradiction of will. Now, this is a term, that we need to pay attention to. Well. What Kant means by contradiction of will? Is the difficulty, or error, arising from breaking one's commitment, or breaking or more accurately, violating the Categorical Imperative.

Now, let us look at this case, that is put on the slide. X makes a promise. And, X violates the promise, when suitable - for by the very Act of making a promise, X. Let us look at this example. Let us say, X makes a promise. And, X violates the promise, when suitable - for by the Act of making a promise, X does something, say P. And then, by violating it, when suitable, does something, which can be termed as, negating P.

Now, X asserts P very well knowing that, she or he would negate P, later. This is the contradiction of will, that Kant points out. So, let us look at this. What is wrong with the contradiction of will, or what does Kant mean by the contradiction of will. Now, the Categorical Imperative is a binding, or is a sense of duty, that comes to us, from our own rationality. It is not something, which is enforced by anybody else. Let me make it simpler.

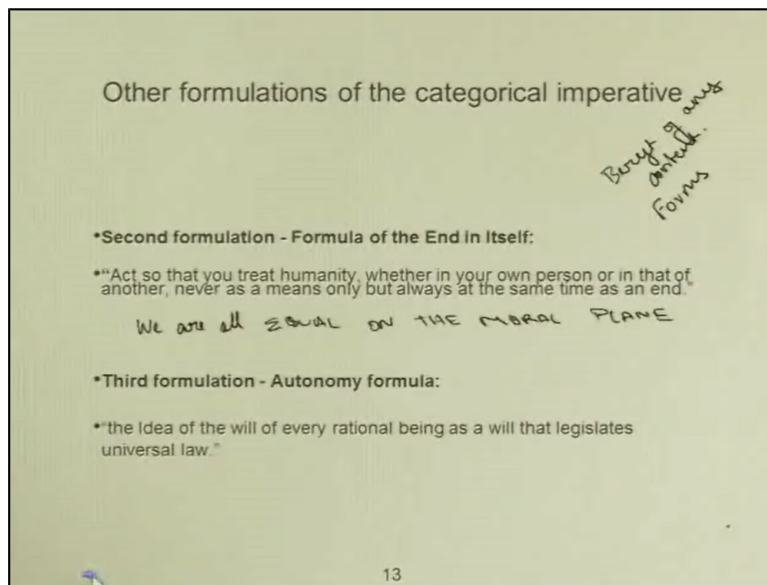
Well. When you feel, that there is something, that you must do, no matter what. That, it is your duty to do, that particular act. Then, you are functioning from, a sense of duty, which in certain interpretations, could be the Categorical Imperative. Let us take the example of a Doctor, to whom an injured Terrorist, or an Extremist, or an injured Criminal, has come for treatment. Now, the oath of the Doctor, is to provide treatment to any Patient, or any victim, or any injured, who comes to him.

But, knowing this, that well, if he does, extend treatment to this particular patient of his, there might be more harm, than benefit to people at large. But, the patient is none other than a criminal, who is most likely to do, something wicked or evil, he is rendered back to his health. Now, what is the Categorical Imperative here say. The Categorical Imperative is, your sense of duty. If this, well, what you would like to be done to you. It is like the religious adage, that do unto others, what you would like others to do to you.

Now, the Categorical Imperative here, would be to do, what is your call of duty. Now, look at it, on the slide. Now, when X is asserting something, that well, you should do this. Or, he makes a false, in this particular case of loaning. He makes a false promise, that he can repay the loan. He is actually contradicting his will, contradicting himself. Because, he is asserting something, which he knows that, he would negate later.

Asserting P, fully knowing that, it would be negated later. So, considering the doctor example too, when the doctor provides treatment to the patient, who happens to be a criminal. Well, if doctor just does his duty. Then, he is not contradicting his will. But well, if he has the sense of duty, that he should help all. Then, by not helping, or not treating the criminal, he does something, which is contradicting his will.

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Now, there have been other formulations of the Categorical Imperative. There are three formulations, that Kant has come up himself with. Now, notice that, all these formulations, are of the Categorical Imperative, are bereft of any content. They are just forms, right. Now, the second formulation says that, Act, so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person, or in that of another, never as a means only, but always at the same time, as an End. So, this brings into focus, that well, we must use, or we must see each individual, each person, as an End in himself, right.

Now, this also interestingly has many ramifications, especially in political philosophy, that we are all equal on the moral plane. This is the claim, that is coming out, from this formulation. The third functional, or autonomy formula would say, that the idea of the will, of every rational, being as a will, that legislates universal law, right. So, that we are all autonomous. Now, we need not to go in further detail, about these formulations, unless and until, we would like to make a specialised study of Kant.

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Postulates of Morality:

1. **Freedom of the will:** To experience moral choice and thereof arrive at the sense of duty
2. **Existence of God:** Acting out of the sense of duty must eventually lead to happiness in the long run, if not in the short run, and this can be possible if world is designed so, so there must be a designer God.
3. **Immortality of the Soul:** Acting out of duty may cause harm & pain in the short run, so there has to be an immortal soul as the agent to achieve the good sought in this life time.

**These postulates, according to Kant, are implied in our sense of moral obligation*

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Now, coming to the next slide. Now, it is rumoured, or it is said, that well, Kant being a bachelor himself, had a manservant of sorts, with him to look after his daily needs. And, they both loved each other. And, the manservant was of course, simple. And, when Kant narrates his philosophy, after a long decade of, or decades of writing, the manservant is amazed. That well, you have taken, and he almost accuses Kant, that you have taken morality, away from religion, and god. And perhaps, you have nothing to cater for, in religion.

And, that it is rumoured, struck Kant so much, that he invented these, or he conjectured these postulates of morality, that in a conceited way, or in a hidden way, bring back the notion of god, that his manservant, was very much looking forward to. Well, we will just briefly go, over these postulates of morality. First, it says, that the freedom of the will. To experience moral choice, and therefore, they are off to arrive, at the sense of duty, one has to have the freedom of the will.

Existence of god. Acting out of the sense of duty, must eventually lead to happiness, in the long run, if not in the short run. And, this can be possible, if the world is designed so, so there must be a designer god. Fairly self-explanatory. The conjecturing the existence of god, to present, that do acting by one's sense of duty, must eventually lead to happiness. Or, is that Consequentialism, creeping into Kant system. In the third one, is the immortality of the soul. Acting out of duty, may cause harm and pain, in the short run.

So, there has to be an immortal soul, as the agent to achieve the good sought, in this lifetime. So, it is very often seen that, living by one's duty, might actually cause more pain and harm in the short run. So, Kant conjectures, that there has to be an immortal soul, that benefits, from the good, that could be accumulated over time. So ultimately, these postulates are trying to hint, especially the second two postulates, could be accused of letting in Consequentialism, from the window. Now, these postulates are according to Kant, are implied in our sense of moral obligation.

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Summing up,

- Kant wanted to establish a moral system on the unshakeable foundations of reason/rationality indifferent to the less sturdy foundation of empirical evidence.
- Moral choice is the basis of asserting free will. Moral acts only emerge from a sense of duty; Drawing satisfaction out of the performance of a moral act strips the act of its morality.
- Morality is always a matter of conscious choice. Duty is to be performed only for its own sake & nothing else - duty for duty's sake!

RIGORISM

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Now, let us sum up. So, briefly, what is Kant's position. Kant wanted to establish, a moral system on the unshakeable foundations, of reason or rationality, indifferent to the less sturdy foundation, of empirical evidence. Moral choice, is the basis of asserting free will. Moral acts, only emerge from a sense of duty. Drawing satisfaction out of the performance of a moral Act, strips the Act of its morality. Morality is always a matter of conscious choice.

Duty is to be performed, only for its own sake. That is, duty for duty sake. This is also known as Rigorism, as attributed to Kant. So, let us now, sum up. That well, Kant in the Deontological tradition, which we have taken, the first example of a Deontological rule, Deontological tradition, as Immanuel Kant. The second example, we will be taking. Next is W D Ross. Now, Immanuel Kant as an example of, the rule Deontological tradition, tries to ground morality on

rationality, and makes morality, an atomic affair.

It does not make morality, depend on any non-moral consequences. And, what is it, that enforces morality? It is nothing but, one's own rationality, that enforces morality. For, when one violates the Categorical Imperative, one brings in the contradiction in will. And, this contradiction in will, is violating one's morality. So, this contradiction is a symptom of irrationality, or the denial of rationality, so intrinsic and valuable to human beings

So, what is the Categorical Imperative. It is briefly, the principle of universalizability. It has three formulations. It talks about well, that an Act is right, only if it can be universalised. So, what in principle, or in essence, is the universalizability claim. That well, I as an individual, have no special rights, or special position, on the moral plane. So, if I assume, that anybody in my situation, would Act like this. Suppose, I choose an Act X.

Now, if anybody in my situation, could or should Act X, then this is a right thing to do. So, the Categorical Imperative, is the filter for determining right from wrong. It is a rule. But nevertheless, it is a rule without any content. It is a rule of a form. It is giving, one a form. A form, that well, if this is the situation, we place it in the form. And then, if it is universalizable, then it is right. If it is not universalizable, it is wrong. Let us take an example.

If we think, that well, anybody who is poor should steal. I am poor today. And, I would steal from the rich. And, this is right, only if I would consider, that anybody who is poor, perhaps poorer to me. Or, that one day, I become rich, and she or he, steals it from me. Then, it becomes as universalizable. But, then there are again, various issues with universalizability. Say, something, of course Kant talks about this too. That, if we could universalise something as trivial, as tying one's left shoe string first, every time.

So, yes, Kant does refine his theories, to incorporate. It is a detailed exhaustive theory to, which has its essential grounding, as we have discovered. And, as we have talked about, that essential grounding is always on the, Categorical Imperative, or on the content, that universalizability as the criteria of determining right, of there being a rule, not being of a content less rule, in

discerning the right from the wrong. With this, we come to a close of our discussion, on Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy.