

Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant was a philosopher that lived in the 1700's. He was born in Konigsburgh and pretty much stayed there his whole life without ever traveling more than 30 miles outside of the city. He never married, never had any children, but he was reported to be very humorous with his students. He did everything in a precise order, all the time. Rain or shine, at 4:30pm every day he would walk up and down his street 8 times and then return back to his home.

Kant believed that "It is impossible to think of anything in the universe – or even beyond it – that is good without qualification, except good will."

Courage, intelligence, patience, fortitude are all characteristics of virtue, or of showing high moral values. But though this is true, Kant wondered if they are good even without qualification – and he said that sometimes they aren't.

Kant recognized that sometimes, that these characteristics do not always follow along the lines of "good". For example, the hijackers of 9/11 were definitely courageous and intelligent, however they were definitely not good or virtuous. Courage and intelligence in this example are very prima facie, and Kant would say that only things with good will are virtuous all of the time.

Kant philosophized that there were 3 kinds of motives: 1) Inclination, 2) self-interest, 3) duty.

A motive of inclination is one when we act when we feel like doing it at that moment. For example, an overwhelming sense of pity for a homeless person would incline us to give him / her money. Kant believed that when you act out of inclination that it has nothing to do with morality because it is considered to be an act of emotion. Acts of emotion are bad because that means that you are not using your reason.

A motive of self-interest is not considered moral because we are calculating what the benefit to ourselves is, rather than focusing on the issue at hand. For example, giving a homeless person money just so that you look better to your peers would be an act of self-interest.

The third kind of motive is duty, which is when you do something because you feel that it is the right thing to do. Kant believed this to be the only motive that is moral without qualifications. They have nothing to do with self-interest or inclination, they are imperative.

Kant believed that there were three kinds of imperatives: 1) technical, 2) prudential, and 3) moral (or categorical).

Technical imperatives are considered rules of skill. For example, if you are going to build a bridge, you are going to build it with the right materials and with some knowledge of

architecture- not with several bags of popsicle sticks. All technical imperatives are considered hypothetical and not everyone has to pay attention to them.

The prudential type of imperative is also considered to be hypothetical. An example of a prudential imperative is when you hang out with the certain types of people in order to become popular.

(This essay is incomplete)