

● ● ● | Psychological Aspects
of Social Issues

Chapter 6
Nonconsequentialist Theories
Do Your Duty


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● ● ● | Outline/Overview

- The Ethics of Immanuel Kant
 - Imperatives, hypothetical and categorical
 - Means-end principle
 - Evaluating the theory
- Natural law theory
 - Saint Thomas Aquinas – his theory
 - Doctrine of double effect
 - Evaluating the theory
- Case analysis

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● ● ● | Immanuel Kant's
Ethics



- One of the greatest moral philosophers of the modern era
- Right actions - morally appropriate only if done with a "good will"
- How to determine what moral law is?
- Moral law as a set of principles or rules
 - imperatives or commands
 - hypothetical or categorical.

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● ● ● | **THE Categorical imperative**

- *Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.*
- Every action implies a maxim
 - Examples?

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● ● ● | **Categorical imperative v 2.0**

- “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 a means only.”
- Vaughn refers to this rule as?
- Kant believed that all people have equal intrinsic worth.
- Treating people as a means rather than an end is a failure to recognize the true nature of persons.

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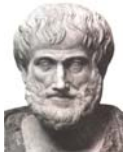
● ● ● | **Evaluating Kant's theory**

- Meets coherence criterion.
- Criterion 1 –decisions contrary to considered moral judgment.
- Criterion 2 – generally consistent with our moral experience.
- Criterion 3 – little help in resolving conflicting moral duties.
- Overall moral features.
 1. Universality
 2. Impartiality
 3. Respect for persons.

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Natural law theory



- Aristotle - Proper Human Excellences
- Humans' purpose – happiness
 - Expression of virtues e.g., loyalty, generosity, honesty, kindness
- Eudaimonia – total well being
- St. Thomas Aquinas articulated the theory in classical form
- Theistic – assumes that there is a divine entity that has given us reason to be able to comprehend order of nature



Nature – rational and goal directed

- How nature is reveals how it should be
 - preservation of human life
 - avoid harm
 - carry out basic functions
 - seeking truth
 - maintaining social relationships
 - behaving in ways that are reasonable
- Only humans can understand natural laws
- Reason - foundation of morality Moral laws are objective and universal
- Several exceptionless rules – directly killing the innocent; use of contraception; and homosexuality are always wrong

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Conflicting duties – how to resolve?

- Natural law acknowledges that conflicts can & do arise can resolve via doctrine of double effect.
- Performing a good action is permissible, even if it has bad effects, but performing a bad action for the purpose of achieving some good effect is not.
- Negative Duties are Stricter than Positive Duties
 - Negative is a duty not to do something
 - Positive is a duty to do something
- Morally relevant difference between doing something and allowing it to happen.

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● ● ● | Four requirements for permissible actions

1. Act itself must be morally good or at least indifferent
2. Agent may not positively will the bad effect but may permit it
3. The good effect must flow from the action at least as immediately as the bad effect
4. The good effect must be sufficient to outweigh allowing the bad effect

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● ● ● | Examples

- Different moral status-same outcomes
 - Terror bomber vs. strategic military bomber
 - Doctor intends to hasten the death of a terminally ill patient vs. intending to relieve the patient's pain
- The trolley problem
 - What is the gist of the problem?
 - What would you do?

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● ● ● | Neuroethics - findings

- 4th version
- Seem to be different brain mechanisms involved
- fMRI in conjunction with trolley problem and other questions
 - Reasoning/problem solving area for switch version
 - Emotionally centered brain regions used in "push person on tracks" version
 - Brain may handle morality similarly to grammar, immoral acts just stand out

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Evaluating natural law theory

- Generally internally consistent
- Certainly can conflict with our considered moral judgments
- Generally consistent with moral experience
- Absolutism of natural law arises from notion of nature being teleological
- Usefulness – debatable, principles depend on perception of nature

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