

● ● ● | 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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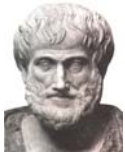
Evaluating Kant's theory

- 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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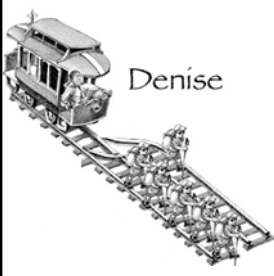
Examples

- o 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
- o The trolley problem
 - What is the gist of the problem?
 - What would you do?

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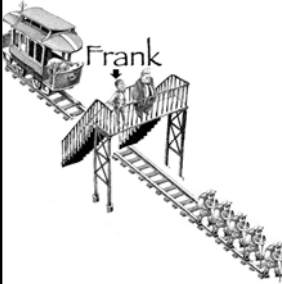
The trolley problem



o Denise is a passenger on a train whose driver has fainted. On the main track ahead are 5 people. The main track has a side track leading off to the left, and Denise can turn the train onto it. There is 1 person on the left hand track. Denise can turn the train, killing the 1; or she can refrain from turning the train, letting the 5 die. Is it morally permissible for Denise to turn the train?

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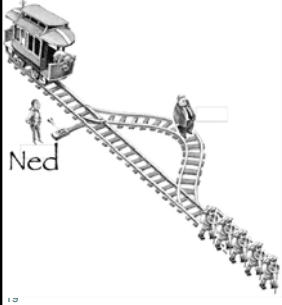
Trolley problem (part II)



Frank

- o Frank is on a footbridge over the train tracks. He sees a train approaching the bridge out of control. There are 5 people on the track. Frank knows that the only way to stop the train is to drop a heavy weight into its path. But the only available, sufficiently heavy weight is 1 large man, also watching the train from the footbridge. Frank can shove the 1 man onto the track in the path of the train, killing him; or he can refrain from doing this, letting the 5 die. Is it morally permissible for Frank to shove the man?

Trolley problem (part III)



Ned

- o Ned is walking near the train tracks when he notices a train approaching out of control. Up ahead on the track are 5 people. Ned is standing next to a switch, which he can throw to turn the train onto a side track. There is a heavy object on the side track. If the train hits the object, the object will slow the train down, giving the men time to escape. The heavy object is 1 man, standing on the side track. Ned can throw the switch, preventing the train from killing the 5 people, but killing the 1 man. Or he can refrain from doing this, letting the 5 die. Is it morally permissible for Ned to throw the switch?

Neuroethics - findings

- o 4th version
- o Seem to be different brain mechanisms involved
- o 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



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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