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ITETHIC

Book: Contemporary Moral Problems

Title: Chapter 1: Ethical Theories (Immanuel Kant: The Categorical Imperative)

Internet Reference:

<http://www.amazon.com/Contemporary-Moral-Problems-James-White/dp/0534517242>

Learning Expectations:

To define categorical imperative

What this reading has to do with morality

Quote:

“Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the time as an end...”

Book Review:

How do I determine the course of my actions and its consequences? I myself believe in the concept of investment. I act on something and see the effects it produces whether beneficial or not. As Immanuel Kant stated on this chapter, the categorical imperative refers to the thinking wherein one will be able to forecast the course and consequences of an action without any prior knowledge of it. People must and should be responsible in every thing he does. As for my personal experience, I enrolled in an IS course, I have very little idea of what can I derived from this investment. But as I progress to the flowchart and passing subjects, the goal gets more and more visible to me. All I know and strive to is to do my best effort in completing this investment.

What I have learned:

This reading exercised my critical thinking.

Integrity Questions:

1. Define categorical imperative in own words.
2. Do you agree on Kant's views? Why or why not?

Review Questions:

1. Explain Kant's account of the good will.

- Kant views good will as something that should not be considered as good for what consequences and feats it produces rather than that is good for itself.

2. Distinguish between hypothetical and categorical imperatives.

- Hypothetical Imperative states that one does not know what something contains unless a condition is provided. Categorical Imperative, on the other hand, is the opposite of the former, meaning one can know beforehand what something contains without any information on the subject.

3. State the first formulation of the categorical imperative (using the notion of a universal law), and explain how Kant uses this rule to derive some specific duties toward self and others.

- Kant stated that: *"For since besides the law this imperative contains only the necessity that our maxim should conform to this law, while the law, as we have seen, contains no condition to limit it, there remains nothing over to which the maxim has to conform except the universality of a law as such; and it is this conformity alone that the imperative properly asserts to be necessary."* This means that it we should act on something you really are capable of doing and aspire for it to become a universal law.

4. State the second version of the categorical imperative (using the language of means and end), and explain it.

- According to Kant, *"The will is conceived as a power of determining oneself to action in accordance with the ideal certain laws. And such a power can be formed only in rational beings. Now what serves these as a subjective ground of self-determination as an end; and this, if it is given by reasons all must be equally valid for all rational beings. What, on the other hand, contains merely grounded of the possibility of an action which effect is an end is called means."* This means that when we act, we must consider at the same time both the means and the end of what we try to do.

Discussion Questions:

1. Are the two versions of the categorical imperative just different expressions of one basic rule, or are they two different rules? Defend your view.

- For me they express the same sense.

2. Kant claims that an action that is not done from the motive of duty has no moral worth. Do you agree or not? If not, give some counterexamples.

- I agree, because I myself think that personal duties are the ultimate basis for morality.

3. Some commentators think that the categorical imperative (particularly the first formulation) can be used to justify nonmoral or immoral actions. Is this a good criticism?

- Yes, because it defines authority in one's own self.