

I. Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804): On the Categorical Imperative

a. Background

- i. Kant was a German philosopher.
- ii. Born in Königsberg, which was known as East Prussia (today Kaliningrad in the former Soviet Union).
- iii. Educated at the University of Königsberg where he earned the equivalent of a Ph.D. in 1755.
- iv. He lectured at the university as a Privatdozent, “a private teacher whose salary was paid directly by his students” (Soccio, 320).
- v. He eventually became a professor of logic and metaphysics at the university in 1770.
- vi. He probably never traveled 60 miles beyond his home town during his life.
- vii. He had a rigid schedule. People could set their clock by regularly scheduled walks.
- viii. He died a lonely man, but his philosophy shook the foundations of Western philosophy.

b. Phenomena and Noumena

- i. Phenomenal world is the world of sense experience.
- ii. Noumena world is the world beyond sense experience.
 1. Things in themselves
 2. The will
 3. God
 4. Spirits

c. Good Will

- i. Morality is entirely based on reason and good will.
- ii. Good will is the only thing that has intrinsic value.
- iii. “To have good will is to act out of respect for the moral law” (343).
- iv. Morality is not dependent upon the consequence. Morality is in the intention of the act.

d. Categorical Imperative

i. Hypothetical vs. Categorical

1. Hypothetical: “If the action is good only as a means to something else...” (S, 210).
2. Categorical: If the action is good in itself. It must be obeyed at all times.
 - a. We ought to do x.
 - b. One cannot escape what one ought to do.

ii. First formulation

1. **Categorical Imperative I:** “The doctrine that makes an action right is that everyone could act on it, and you would be willing to have everyone act on it” (Schick & Vaughn, 344).
 - a. “Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become universal law” (S, 212).
2. **Universalizability:** “A principle has universalizability if everyone can act on it” (Schick & Vaughn, 344).
 - a. Example: Borrowing money without returning it cannot be universalizable, therefore it is not morally permissible.
3. **Reversibility:** “A principle has reversibility if the person acting on it would be willing to have everyone act on it” (Ibid.).
 - a. Similar to the Golden Rule.
4. Perfect Duty vs. Imperfect Duty
 - a. Perfect duty: “A duty that must always be performed no matter what” (Ibid. 345).
 - i. No killing innocent people.
 - ii. No lying.
 - iii. Not breaking a promise.
 - b. Imperfect duty: “A duty that does not always have to be performed” (Ibid.).
 - i. Developing one’s talents.
 - ii. Helping the needy.

5. Criticisms of the first formulation

iii. The Second Formulation

- 1. **Categorical Imperative II:** “The doctrine that what makes an action right is that it treats people as ends in themselves and not merely as a means” (Ibid. 349).
- 2. People are inherently valuable, and for this reason, people should be treated as a means in themselves.
- 3. Criticisms of the second formulation
