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## Introduction to Philosophy

Theory of Value 5

## Recapitulation

- Utilitarianism (also Consequentialism) is the theory that actions are good, because they have overall good consequences/the best consequences possible
  - The greatest happiness for the greatest number of people
  - Not an ego-centric theory, but truly universal
  - Based on how we often deliberate about what to do
- Problems for Utilitarianism:
  1. How to compare pleasures/happiness?
  2. Problem of fairness > one of the reasons for rule utilitarianism > but also rules may bring the most happiness for the greatest number of people, and still be unfair

## Utilitarianism and the Evaluation of Persons

- One consequence of Utilitarianism is that it is irrelevant who is doing the action and certainly irrelevant who the ones involved in the action are
  - If, of two people, you can only save one, and one is your child, then you do not have any reason to save your child and not the other.
  - Peter Singer: if you have to choose between a human being and an animal, you do not have a reason to choose either.

## Kantianism

- The main idea of Kantianism (Immanuel Kant 1724-1804): an action is good if it is according to a rule which it itself is good, because it is grounded in rationality.
  - Utilitarianism uses reason to calculate the consequences: what is the best way to reach a given goal? There is no rationality involved in the goal.
  - Kantianism rejects this idea: there is also rationality involved in setting the goal.
    - finding the means to the given goal: **hypothetical imperative** (you should do x because x leads to the hypothesized goal)
    - real morality: **categorical imperative** (you should/should not do x – period)
  - Kant holds that an action done because of the consequences is not a moral action at all; only an action chosen for itself is moral.

### Universalizability of Maxims

- So for Kant the intentions of the actor count: an action is good if it is done from the right reasons
- The reasons for an action Kant calls a 'maxim'.
- An action is good if it can be subsumed under the right kind of maxim.
- A maxim is right if it can be **universalized** in such a way that it is **the only rational thing** to do.

### Universalizability of Maxims

- The test: a maxim is in accordance with the moral law/is good if and only if one can will it **as a universal law** to be followed by everyone in every circumstance
  - > if one cannot will the maxim as a universal law, then the maxim is not moral
  - > this is **not** a matter of judging consequences ('One should not cheat, because if everybody cheats, it would lead to bad consequences.')
  - > rather, it is a matter of consistency and rationality: 'One should not cheat, because if cheating would be the universal law, the practice of acting honestly would be destroyed, but that would be irrational.'
  - >> Kant: either one cannot really conceive something to be a universal law or one cannot really will it to be a universal law



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