Reflections On The Works Of Immanuel Kant

Good Will, Goodness and Duty
Jan Vade

Immanuel Kant masterfully synthesized the long-divided traditions of Rationalism and Empiricism in his monumental trilogy: Critique of Pure Reason, Critique of Practical Reason, and Critique of Judgment. Through these works he introduced new rigor and direction to the field of philosophy.

Kant's moral theory, known as deontological or duty-based ethics, was primarily developed in the Critique of Practical Reason and later in his shorter work, Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals. This framework, commonly referred to as Kantian ethics, is founded on the premise that reason and rational thinking form the basis of morality, identifying certain actions as intrinsically right or wrong, irrespective of their consequences.

In his characteristically precise and logical manner, Kant begins the first chapter of this work by asserting that the only thing in the world that is entirely and unconditionally good, good without qualification, is a good will. While traits such as courage or patience may be considered desirable, they are not inherently good; when guided by a will that is not good, they can become harmful and destructive.

> “Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good, without qualification, except a good will. Intelligence, wit, judgement, and the other talents of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resolution, perseverance, as qualities of temperament, are undoubtedly good and desirable in many respects; but these gifts of nature may also become extremely bad and mischievous if the will which is to make use of them, and which, therefore, constitutes what is called character, is not good. It is the same with the gifts of fortune. Power, riches, honour, even health, and the general well-being and contentment with one's condition which is called happiness, inspire pride, and often presumption, if there is not a good will to correct the influence of these on the mind, and with this also to rectify the whole principle of acting and adapt it to its end. The sight of a being who is not adorned with a single feature of a pure and good will, enjoying unbroken prosperity, can never give pleasure to an impartial rational spectator. Thus a good will appears to constitute the indispensable condition even of being worthy of happiness.”
>
> Immanuel Kant (1785)
> Fundamental Principles Of The Metaphysic Of Morals
> translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott

Patience, for example, while often considered a virtue, can become a significant vice when guided by a malicious intent. A patient delinquent or a felon, who waits for the perfect moment to strike, can be more dangerous than an impulsive one who acts without thinking. The patient felon is less likely to be caught, thus prolonging his or her activities. The same applies to any intelligent or determined wrong-doer. As Kant points out, intelligence and determination are generally good and desirable traits, but not when they belong to a felon.

Kant also observes that many people possess character and temperament traits that facilitate the work of a good will. For instance, they might be naturally moderate in their emotions or are inclined towards thoughtful reflection. These are often commendable qualities and may even seem to contribute to a person's inner worth. However, they are not unconditionally good, as they can become very harmful when driven by a *bad will*. Therefore, Kant argues that such traits should not be overly valued, as he believes the philosophers of ancient Greece, particularly Aristotle, did.

Philosophers often provide insights into the obvious, helping us notice what we might easily overlook. Overlooking the obvious happens to all of us and it happens often. Have we overlooked the obvious in the relation to Good Will? Kant emphasizes that the goodness of a good will lies entirely in its intention to do good. He introduces this idea to highlight his main point: the moral value of a good will is not based on the outcomes it produces but on its commitment to doing good.

Kant, being a deontologist rather than a consequentialist, believes that the moral value of actions should not be judged by their consequences. For him, actions are deemed good or bad based on whether they are driven by a good will.

Commentators on Kant's ethics often assert that, according to Kant, actions are inherently good or bad. While this serves as an initial understanding of Kant's position and distinguishes it from the view that actions are judged by their consequences, it is crucial to remember that for Kant, it is the ***will*** behind the action that determines its moral value.

Possessing goodwill is not simply about believing that one's intentions are noble when performing an action, nor is it about loosely striving to do good. It is said that that "The road to hell is paved with good intentions[1]". Goodwill is not even about merely having an inclination to do good; rather, it involves acting in strict accordance with a specific, paramount rational principle that Immanuel Kant refers to as the *categorical imperative*. This principle is central to Kantian ethics and serves as the guiding foundation of the entire ethical framework.

Kant seeks to demonstrate the only feasible way in which morality can be grounded, offering a foundation for it in reality and securing it in clear, rational action. He rejects the vague assumption, common among many, that morality is based on inclinations, whether misguided or otherwise, and on sentimental, often overly emotional feelings of compassion or pity. For instance, helping others out of a personal inclination to do so is not inherently immoral, unless it violates the *categorical imperative*. However, it is not truly moral unless it also aligns itself with the actions prescribed by the *categorical imperative*. (!) At its core, moral behaviour consists of fulfilling one's duty to the rational principle of the *categorical imperative*. The clearest example of a truly moral individual is one who does not wish to perform a particular action, yet does so because he or she recognizes it as moral duty. More precisely, the ideal representation of moral conduct is someone who wishes to perform an action but

[1] John Wesley referenced the proverb in his sermon titled, "The Almost Christian", in 1741: "'Hell is paved,' saith one, 'with good intentions.'

refrains from doing so because he or she understands that doing so would violate his or her moral duty.

It is occasionally asserted, albeit unfairly, that the categorical imperative, and by extension Kant's moral philosophy as a whole, is predominantly concerned with prohibitions rather than prescriptions. However, this perspective overlooks the fact that, according to Kant, one ought to act in accordance with categorical imperative. Evaluating actions through the lens of the categorical imperative reveals which actions are morally permissible precisely, because this evaluation identifies, eliminates, and proscribes morally impermissible actions.

Kant's moral philosophy also emphasizes the distinction between perfect duties of justice and imperfect duties of humanity, altruism, and generosity. Perfect duties are fulfilled by refraining from certain actions, such as theft or not paying debt. For instance, paying a debt is also considered a perfect duty. While paying a debt involves taking action, from the standpoint of perfect duty, it is viewed as not violating the categorical imperative and not infringing upon a creditor's right to payment.

Perfect duties represent a moral baseline that is frequently enforced by law in most jurisdictions, whereas imperfect duties exceed this baseline and are typically not mandated and not enforced by society standards or by law. While it is not compulsory to fulfill imperfect duties, doing so is desirable and good thing to do; thereby contributing to one's virtuous character, provided that perfect duties are also respected and fulfilled. For instance, giving to charity is an imperfect duty; it is not compulsory but remains a morally commendable action. Kant posits that perfect duties are determinate and can only be fulfilled in one specific manner, whereas imperfect duties are indeterminate and can be fulfilled in various ways according to individual discretion. Perfect duties allow no flexibility, whereas imperfect duties permit a considerable degree of flexibility.

What is this paramount categorical imperative, this significant Kantian principle upon which so much depends? After all this anticipation, one might expect it to be substantial. Kant articulates the principle in various manners in his Fundamental Principles, but the most straightforward and renowned formulation is as follows:

> "Act only according to that maxim which you can at the same time will to be a universal law."

While it appears simple, its meaning needs further clarification to reveal its philosophical depth and inherent sensibility.

The categorical imperative initially appears to involve treating others as one would wish to be treated oneself. This principle, often referred to as the golden rule, is articulated in various passages of the Bible. For instance,

> Matthew 7:12 states, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets."

This golden rule is undoubtedly a prudent guideline to include in one's ethical framework, as it presupposes that individuals universally desire similar positive conditions: freedom from hunger, homelessness, pain, and poverty; access to food, shelter, medicine, and financial resources; respectful treatment; and assistance in times of need. Much was written and said in fair and largely accurate generalizations that everyone requires love, affection, adventure, spending money, and a few friends. Nothing new here; from Aristotle to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Beyond fundamental needs and desires, individuals often have distinct and varied preferences. For example, some individuals may have a desire to engage in activities involving a variety of unusual and universally undesirable activities. Others, however, may not share these inclinations. Importantly, the fact that some individuals seek to partake in such activities does not grant them the right to impose these actions upon others without explicit consent. This illustrates a critical limitation of the "golden rule" as a universal principle of morality. While it suggests treating others as one wishes to be treated, it fails to address adequately scenarios where preferences and desires differ significantly, thereby necessitating the incorporation of other moral principles, such as consent, to ensure ethical conduct.

There are many examples of people engaging in activities which they would not be able to impose justly on other people. So, the "golden rule" has some critical limitations. Contrary to being a mere extension of the golden rule, the categorical imperative requires a more rigorous examination of one's actions. It entails asking oneself, ***"What if everyone acted in this manner?"*** before proceeding with any intended action. If the action in question is such that it would become inherently impossible for anyone to perform, if universally adopted, then one has a moral duty to refrain from it.

Consider the case of making a false promise—pledging something without intention of fulfilling. Kant observes that, when contemplating the consequences of false promises, an individual might recognize the personal benefit of such behaviour. For instance, one might alleviate financial difficulties by borrowing money with no intention of repaying it. A sensible individual would recognize that such a course of action is unwise. Engaging in such behaviour would lead to a reputation for untrustworthiness, thereby potentially obstructing future efforts to secure financial assistance.

> As Kant observes: "I see clearly indeed that it is not enough to extricate myself from a present difficulty by means of this subterfuge, but it must be well considered whether there may not hereafter spring from this lie much greater inconvenience than that from which I now free myself, and as, with all my supposed cunning, the consequences cannot be so easily foreseen but that credit once lost may be much more injurious to me than any mischief which I seek to avoid at present, it should be considered whether it would not be more prudent to act herein according to a universal maxim and to make it a habit to promise nothing except with the intention of keeping it."
>
> Immanuel Kant (1785)
> Fundamental Principles Of The Metaphysic Of Morals
> translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott

Thus, the consequences of borrowing money without the intention of repayment, and failing to fulfill such an obligation, may ultimately prove more detrimental than the immediate financial difficulties from which one seeks relief.

However, as Kant emphasizes, the prudence of making a false promise is distinct from the moral propriety of the act.

> He asserts “Now it is a wholly different thing to be truthful from duty and to be so from apprehension of injurious consequences. In the first case, the very notion of the action already implies a law for me; in the second case, I must first look about elsewhere to see what results may be combined with it which would affect myself. For to deviate from the principle of duty is beyond all doubt wicked; but to be unfaithful to my maxim of prudence may often be very advantageous to me, although to abide by it is certainly safer."
>
> Immanuel Kant (1785)
> Fundamental Principles Of The Metaphysic Of Morals
> translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott

This distinction highlights that moral duty is grounded in adherence to universal principles inherent to the action itself, rather than in considerations of practical consequences.

A maxim is a general principle derived from action. To evaluate the moral permissibility of making a false promise, one must consider whether the maxim of resolving difficulties through false promises could be consistently upheld as a universal law.
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
If one chooses to make false promises solely to extricate oneself from difficulties that cannot otherwise be resolved, this action establishes a maxim not merely for the individual but also, universally. By doing so, one implicitly asserts that all individuals may resort to false promises whenever it is advantageous to them. However, as Kant argues, while an individual may ***will*** to deceive, it is not possible to will a universal law that permits lying. Under such a universal law, the very concept of promises would be rendered meaningless, as trust and the binding nature of promises would be entirely undermined.

Under such a principle, the very act of making a promise would become impossible, as no one would place trust in another's assurances. Similarly, one would not accept promises from others due to the absence of trust. A maxim of false promising cannot be sustained as a universal law, nor can it be willed as such, because its universalization would inherently contradict itself by undermining and abolishing the institution of promising entirely.

Consequently, false promising is inherently immoral.

Immanuel Kant asserts that one ought to act only according to maxims that can be willed to become universal laws. For example, a maxim of false promising cannot be universally willed in the same way that a maxim of truthful promising can. While it is

conceivable for all individuals to universally adhere to truthfulness, it is inconceivable for all individuals to universally engage in deceit.

When individuals adopt maxims that cannot be universalized in their treatment of others, they reduce others to mere instruments for achieving personal objectives, rather than recognizing and respecting them as autonomous beings with their own inherent purposes. Acts such as lying, making false promises, stealing, or engaging in other forms of exploitation, treat others as tools for personal gain rather than as free and rational agents with their own ends and goals.

In Kantian terms, such behaviour constitutes treating others as mere means rather than as ends in themselves. By adhering to the categorical imperative—acting only on maxims that can be universalized—one ensures that others are always respected as ends in themselves and are never exploited as mere instruments for personal aims.

In discussing what he terms "the formula of the end in itself" Kant writes:

> "Thus the worth of any object which is to be acquired by our action is always conditional. Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature's, have nevertheless, if they are irrational beings, only a relative value as means, and are therefore called things; rational beings, on the contrary, are called persons, because their very nature points them out as ends in themselves, that is as something which must not be used merely as means, and so far therefore restricts freedom of action (and is an object of respect). These, therefore, are not merely subjective ends whose existence has a worth for us as an effect of our action, but objective ends, that is, things whose existence is an end in itself; an end moreover for which no other can be substituted, which they should subserve merely as means, for otherwise nothing whatever would possess absolute worth; but if all worth were conditioned and therefore contingent, then there would be no supreme practical principle of reason whatever.
>
> Immanuel Kant (1785)
> Fundamental Principles Of The Metaphysic Of Morals
> translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott

It is evident that, in our daily lives, we all rely on one another as instruments to achieve specific and personal goals. For instance, we use public transport, taxis, and other means to navigate our communities, while drivers, in turn, depend on us for their livelihood. However, this exchange must be grounded in mutual consent, with both parties voluntarily engaging in it. While we engage the services of the bus driver as a means to our end, we must recognize that he is not merely a means to that end. We must respect his autonomy and right to self-determination, which would be infringed upon if we were to evade paying the fare or otherwise cause him harm at the conclusion of our journey.

According to Kant, moral action is synonymous with acting in accordance with the rational principle of the categorical imperative. Interestingly, it is only by adhering to this rational principle that an individual transcends universal causation and is no

longer driven by personal desires or susceptible to temptation. By acting dutifully in line with the categorical imperative, a person rises above the causal order of nature and takes control of his or her own actions.

Kant asserts that freedom does not consist in the capacity to act according to one's desires, but rather in the ability to act in conformity with moral principles, particularly the categorical imperatives. True freedom, in Kant's view, is not the pursuit of personal desires, which would lead to enslavement by those desires. Instead, it is the rational capacity for self-determination in accordance with moral law.

Kant's moral philosophy is distinguished by its clarity and its provision of unequivocal criteria for determining moral goodness. It identifies the foundational rationale underpinning numerous longstanding moral precepts, such as "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not bear false witness." These commandments hold significance not merely because they are divine decrees or biblical injunctions, but because actions like killing, stealing, or lying contravene the categorical imperative. Such actions would establish maxims that fail to respect the intrinsic value of other rational beings, treating them merely as means to an end rather than as ends in themselves.

By articulating an absolute and categorical moral principle that transcends cultural norms and practices, elevating them to the realm of universally and unconditionally applicable reason, Kant's moral theory unequivocally declares that certain cultural practices—such as slavery, human sacrifice, the systematic oppression of women within patriarchal religious frameworks, the exploitation and inequities inherent in caste systems, and the pervasive exploitation of labour—are categorically morally indefensible and intolerable at all times and in all places.

Advocates of what is referred to as moral progress argue that individuals are capable of becoming more moral over time. Kant's moral theory supports this perspective by providing universal and rational moral standards against which the moral development of individuals and societies can be measured. The extent to which individuals and societies reject cultural practices deemed unacceptable under Kantian ethics and adhere more closely to its duty-based moral principles is indicative of the moral progress they have achieved.

Immanuel Kant envisions a "Kingdom Of Ends," a conceptual ideal in which individuals never treat one another merely as means to an end but consistently regard each other as free and rational beings deserving of intrinsic respect. For Kant, this represents the pinnacle of moral existence. However, the inherent tendencies of human nature, manifested in greed, selfishness, deceit, and moral weakness, suggest that this ideal may remain unattainable in practice. Despite this, the "Kingdom-Of-Ends" endures as a logically conceivable and aspirational goal, one toward which humanity progresses whenever individual actions align with the foundational moral principle of the categorical imperative.

Kant's intellectual successor, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, interprets history as the gradual unfolding of human reason toward a state of perfect rationality. Hegel's vision of an improved future, realized through the advancement of the institutions shaping human life — such as education, technology, legal systems, and political

structures, bears a conceptual similarity to Kant's "Kingdom-Of-Ends." In this ideal state, all individuals would act with complete rationality, fully harmonized with universal moral principles.

Critics often assert that Kant offers no concrete incentive, at least within this current life, to act morally. The claim that individuals fulfill their rational duty only by acting morally, and that true freedom is achieved through the fulfillment of this duty, may appear insufficient to inspire the majority to pursue a virtuous life. Most individuals will continue to believe they possess free will regardless of the nature of their actions, and for many, this belief alone is adequate. Who, then, is concerned with such abstract notions? Only those with an insightful philosophical disposition might adhere to the categorical imperative, understanding that doing so grants them authentic freedom.

However, it can be argued that Kant's objective is not to provide incentives for moral behaviour; he is not a proponent of practical self-help or moral motivation. Rather, his purpose is to explain the nature of moral goodness. While some individuals may aspire to align their lives with these principles, others will remain governed by desire, using others merely as instruments to achieve selfish ends.

Furthermore, Kant does propose an ultimate incentive for virtuous behaviour by linking it to the concept of moral reward. He contends that virtue will eventually be rewarded with complete happiness, if not in this life, then in the hereafter. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant introduces the concept of the *summum bonum* — the highest good—which represents the perfect moral state where an individual achieves both complete virtue and complete happiness.

According to Kant, the "summum bonum" represents the ultimate objective of all moral actions, and individuals are morally obligated to strive toward its attainment. This obligation arises not from any divine command but from the dictates of rationality itself. As previously outlined, individuals ought to engage only in actions that can be universally applied without contradiction, as such actions are consistent with rational principles. Conversely, engaging in practices, such as deception, which cannot be universally applied is both irrational and immoral.

Moreover, an individual can only be subject to a rational-moral obligation to pursue the "summum bonum" if its attainment is logically possible. Kant posits that moral obligation presupposes the logical possibility of achieving the objective in question. He argues that it is indeed logically feasible for an individual to attain the "summum bonum," albeit not necessarily within the confines of a single lifetime. While practical limitations suggest that individuals can achieve virtue in this world, they lack the capacity to ensure that their virtue is accompanied by corresponding happiness.

A look at the world reveals that some virtuous individuals are not happy, often due to suffering, abuse, or neglect. Conversely, many others experience a degree of happiness, at least in a limited sense, despite lacking virtue. For the “summum bonum” — the ideal convergence of virtue and happiness — to be logically attainable, and for there to be a genuine moral imperative to strive for it within this life, its realization must be possible beyond death.

Immanuel Kant posits that the existence of God is necessary, as God alone can ensure the eventual alignment of virtue and happiness in an afterlife, thereby fulfilling the ultimate aim and requirement of morality. This reasoning constitutes Kant's endorsement of the moral argument for God's existence, which he supported while rejecting other elements of theological doctrine.

Fundamentally, Kant asserts that justice is not guaranteed in this world. Virtuous individuals are not always and necessarily rewarded with the happiness that should accompany virtue. Thus, there must exist a divine guarantee of justice in an afterlife. Kant's perspective, in some respects, parallels certain aspects of Buddhist thought, which holds that the ultimate good — a state of perfect blessedness or bliss known as nirvana — cannot be achieved within a single lifetime. While Buddhism sees this state as attainable over the course of many reincarnations, Kant asserts that the highest good must be realizable in the next life through some kind of divine providence.

Immanuel Kant, though a devout Christian, did not formulate his argument to advocate explicitly for a Christian worldview. Instead, his aim was to rescue human existence from the threat of moral futility. In Kant's perspective, without a deeper moral foundation, it would ultimately make no difference whether one emulates the life of Donald Trump or Mother Teresa.

Critics of Kant often contend that his moral theory, while offering precise guidance for behaviour in all situations and eliminating moral ambiguity, suffers from an inherent rigidity. However, this critique fails to acknowledge the significant distinction Kant draws between perfect and imperfect duties. Unlike perfect duties, which are absolute and must be adhered to without exception, imperfect duties are indeterminate and can be fulfilled in various ways, thereby providing substantial flexibility within Kant's ethical framework.

Kant's moral theory, while more adaptable than acknowledged by his harshest critics, remains resolute in its principle that truth-telling is a perfect duty. He maintains that no circumstances, however extraordinary, can justify lying.

Many critics have challenged this rigid stance, arguing that lying can be morally defensible when motivated by altruism. A striking historical example can be drawn from World War II, when the Gestapo actively pursued Jewish individuals. Imagine being in a position of sheltering one or more Jewish escapees and facing Gestapo officers demanding to know their location. In such a scenario, it would seem both morally justified and necessary to mislead the Gestapo, rather than strictly adhering to Kant's categorical imperative and thereby enabling atrocities. This conclusion appears self-evident: to deceive in such circumstances is the course of action any reasonable, practical, and compassionate individual would take, guided by empathy and a sense of humanity.

Immanuel Kant, renowned for his rigorous logical reasoning, rejects the permissibility of lying, even when motivated by altruistic intentions. He articulates this position in his essay, *On a Supposed Right to Lie from Altruistic Motives* (1799).

While this essay represents an important contribution to philosophical discourse, its publication is to some degree regrettable in that it is often invoked by critics to disparage Kant rather than to appreciate his substantial intellectual achievements.

In the essay, Kant argues that, even if a lie does not directly harm the deceived party and might prevent an immediate wrongdoing, it has far-reaching negative implications. He asserts that lying undermines the principle of truthfulness, a cornerstone of societal structures such as contracts, the legal system, and the broader fabric of human interactions. This erosion of truthfulness, he contends, threatens the stability and moral coherence of society.

The maxim or a principle derived from the act of falsehood — that it is permissible for individuals to lie under certain circumstances — ultimately fosters a world where truth is met with scepticism rather than trust. In such a society, the pervasive absence of trust would lead to chaos and disorder. Paradoxically, even lies motivated by altruistic or other reasons would lose their efficacy in such an environment, as deceit relies on the existence of trust to exploit.

> “Although uttering a lie may not directly harm the individual who is lied to, this act of falsification, while not a lie in the legal sense, constitutes a significant breach of duty. By distorting truth, one undermines the reliability of statements as a whole, creating conditions where declarations are no longer credible. This erosion of trust compromises the validity of all rights based on contractual agreements, rendering them ineffective. Consequently, such an act represents a profound violation of humanity's collective moral foundation.”
>
> *Excerpt from*
> *"On A Supposed Right To Lie Because Of Philanthropic Concerns."*
> *Adjusted Informal Translation*

Immanuel Kant presents a compelling argument. However, the criticisms levelled against him are not entirely without merit: his unwavering commitment to a highly abstract and inflexible moral principle appears detached from the practical realities of everyday life, sometimes at the expense of common sense and basic decency.
xxxxxxxxxxxx
We can use previously mentioned example where a strict adherent to Kantian ethics who, out of a refusal to lie, discloses the whereabouts of Jews to Nazi Agents does not seem to exemplify genuine morality. Instead, such actions reflect an extreme adherence to moral principles and a form of rigid moral absolutism.

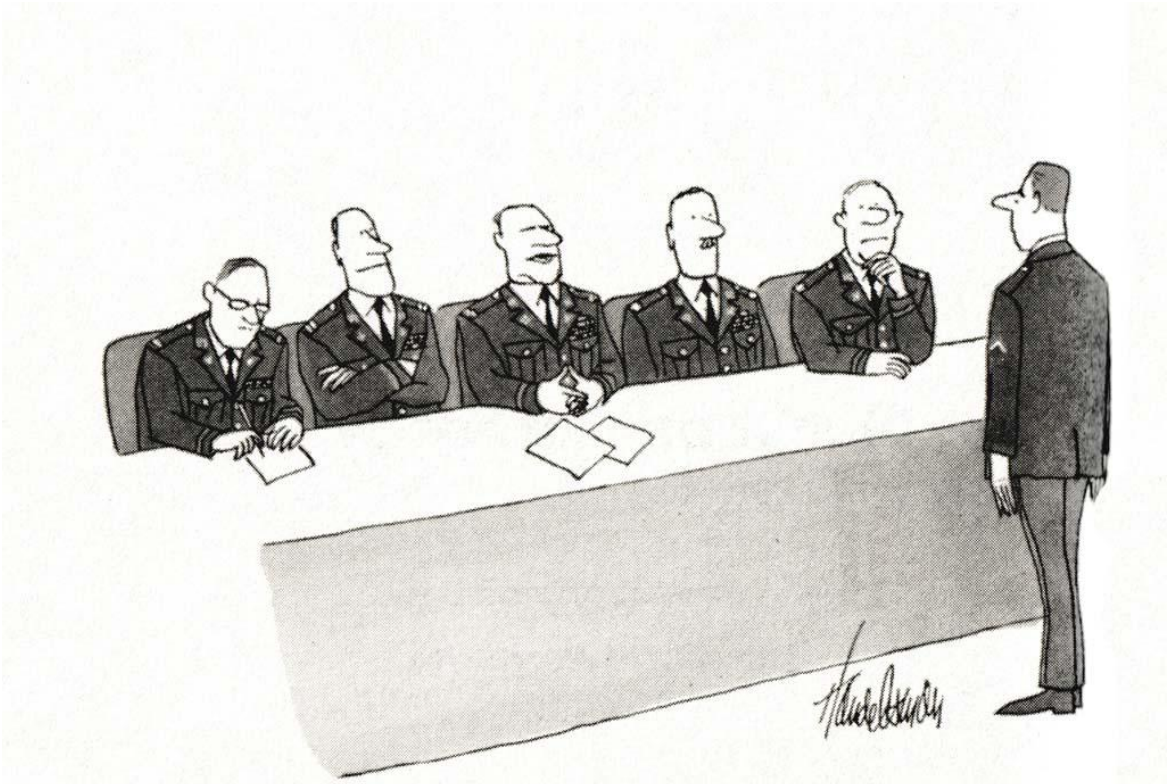
It is worth considering that one could avoid lying in such a scenario by refusing to answer the Gestapo’s questions, either through silence or a forthright refusal to provide the information sought. However, these alternatives are not without significant risk, as they could endanger both the lives of those in hiding and one’s own safety. Speaking the truth under such circumstances would lead to grave suffering and yet it would, at the same time fail to uphold the fundamental principles of societal order and respect, both philosophically and legally.

A more judicious approach might involve skilfully misleading others without resorting to outright lies. However, even such tactics—whether through misrepresentation or omission—remain inherently deceptive.

This tension highlights a paradox: we are hesitant to adhere strictly to Kant's principles because the human world is far from perfectly virtuous. Conversely, the world remains imperfectly virtuous precisely because we do not consistently uphold Kant's principles. Were Kant's guidelines universally followed, his vision of Kingdom of Ends would materialize, eliminating the existence of malevolent individuals, such as murderous Nazis, or others who compel us to consider lying as a moral recourse.

The debate over Kantian ethics endures and is unlikely to find a definitive resolution. Nonetheless, alternative moral frameworks to Kant's offer interesting arguments, suggesting that there may indeed be circumstances where actions such as lying, stealing, or even killing are morally justified.

Thus, one is left with the challenge of navigating these competing theories—ultimately adopting an eclectic approach, selecting principles that resonate most effectively with the complexities of human morality.



"Aren't you being a little arrogant, son?
Here's Lieutenant Colonel Farrington, Major Stark,
Captain Truelove, Lieutenant Castle, and myself,
all older and more experienced than you,
and we think the war is very moral."

Empiricism is a philosophical view which maintains that all concepts originate from experience. It asserts that genuine knowledge or justification is acquired exclusively or primarily through sensory perception and empirical evidence.