

Topic: ETHICS

Subject: PHILOSOPHY

Prepared by

**Department of Philosophy
Silchar College**



Kantian Ethics —

Kant's Rationalism is akin to Philosophical intuitionism. Kant regards conscience as practical reason. It imposes the moral Law upon itself. The Moral Law is known intuitively. It is a priori — not empirical. It is self-evident.

According to Kant, the internal law of conscience or practical reason is the ultimate moral standard. The moral law is a categorical imperative. It is an 'imperative' or command as opposed to an assertion of fact. It is 'categorical' or unconditional. It is a priori and not derived from experience. It is free from empirical factors, and ~~is~~ ought to be done under all circumstances, it is known in advance of a particular situation.

Kant holds that the good will is the

only good. He says, "There is nothing in the world, or even out of it, that can be called good without qualification, except a good will." It is good without condition. A will is good, not because of its effects, but in itself and for itself. An action is moral if its motive is moral, if it is prompted by a consciousness of duty. Wealth and talents are not unconditionally good. Good will is an unconditional good, which is independent of other conditions. It is the rational will. It is the will that follows the categorical imperative. It should not be actuated by an inclination, feeling or desire for an end or consequence. It should be prompted by pure respect for the moral law.

According to Kant, the will is autonomous or free, when it is a law unto itself - when it acts solely from a sense of duty. The will is heteronomous when it is guided by some end or moved by desire. 'Duty for duty's sake' is the true rule of life.

Virtue lies in the cultivation of good will, or, rational will, the moral life is life of pure reason. Feelings and emotions have no place in it. They ought to be completely suppressed. Even to give way to love or compassion is immoral. Kant would condemn the act of a person who out of love or compassion, nurses a sick man or helps a poor man. Kant rejects all teleological ethics.