



# “A Reflection on Kant’s Concept of End and Duty”

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**Abstract:** *In Kant moral philosophy, there is a misconception on his explanation of ‘End.’ What is the mean of ‘objective End’ that is ‘ends in themselves.’ Here I will try to differentiate between ‘subjective end’ and ‘objective end.’ Here is also possibility in subjective action to make universal rule that has capacity to be objective end that is ‘ends in themselves.’ By using Kant examples in the context of categorical and hypothetical imperative, we shall try to look deeply and find a clear-cut answer about ‘ends in themselves.’*

**Keywords:** ‘Ought,’ ‘End,’ ‘Categorical Imperative,’ ‘Objective End,’ ‘Subjective End,’ ‘Duty,’ ‘Ends in Themselves,’ ‘Universalizability.’

In *Groundwork*, Kant carries out a specific project, which in turn forms part of the argument of the whole. Kant says that his first section will be “to proceed analytically from common cognition to the determination of its supreme principle”(AK 4:392). In the other words, Kant is trying to start from ordinary ways of thinking about morality and analyse them to discover the principle behind them. Here Kant does not try to prove that human beings have obligations. Instead, he is trying to identify what it is that he has to establish in order to prove that. There are many uses of the word “ought,” not all of which are moral uses. Sentence like ‘the car ought to go,’ ‘the flower ought to bloom’ are not a use of moral ought.

On the other hand, Moral use of ‘ought’ is something like for example; ‘you ought to teach your brother not to disrespect of aged people,’ ‘you ought to speak truth,’ ‘you ought not to insult teachers,’ you ought not to laugh on the poverty of your friends,’ you ought to look your daughters to avoid not to take drug.’

Now we will see, what does mean by ‘objective ends’ according to Kant. Kant introduces the expression “objective ends” in (Gr. 427), where he says, to paraphrase, that ‘objective ends’ in contrast to ‘subjective ends’- are given by reason alone, hence they must be equally valid for all rational beings; further they depend on motives valid for all rational beings. Kant distinguishes three kinds of motivation by inspiring these you may perform an action from duty.

- Do it because you think it is the right thing to do.
- You may perform it from immediate inclination, because you want to do it for its own sake, or you enjoy doing actions of that kind, or
- You may perform an action because you are ‘impelled to through another inclination,’ that is, as a means to some further end.

Kant invites us to think about the contrast between right action done from duty and right actions motivated in these other ways.

The first involves a merchant who is refraining from overcharging to daily customer that will give them good reputation among the others. This is example of third point that highlights doing or performing any action as a means to get other result as an end. The difference between doing the right thing from duty and doing it to promote some other end is obvious, for someone who does the right thing from duty does it for its own

sake, and not for any other motive. Further Kant says, an action should evince a good will, it is not enough that it should be done for its own sake. These are the points of three examples, in which Kant contrasts someone who does an action from immediate inclination with someone who does the same action from duty. Kant says, “so sympathetically attuned that without any other motive of vanity or self-interest they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy around them and can take delight in the satisfaction of the others so far as it is their own work.”(AK 4:398)

A person like this helps others when they are in need, like the dutiful person, does so for its own sake and unlike the merchant who does for the inclination of some other good. A person who does not have any ulterior motive is helping; he just spreading joy around him. Further Kant says yet the sympathetic persons action does not have the moral worth of the action done from duty. According to Kant, reflection on this fact leads us to see that the moral worth of an action does not lie in its purpose, but rather in the “*maxim*” on which it is done, that is, the principle on which the agent acts.

Kant claims that the difference between the naturally sympathetic person and dutiful person rests in their maxims. Sympathetic person does action because he enjoys that doings. Helping is something that he enjoys. The point is not that his purpose is simply to please himself. His purpose is to help, but he adopts that purpose- he makes it his maxim to pursue that end because he enjoys helping. The reason his action lacks moral worth is not that he wants to help only because it pleases him. The reason his action lacks moral worth is that he chooses to help only because he wants to: he allows himself to be guided by his desires in the selection of her his ends. The person who acts from duty, by contrast; makes it his maxim to help because he conceives helping as something that is required of him.

Now we get to know what gives actions done from duty their special moral worth. they get their moral worth from the fact that the person who does them acts from respect for law. A good person is moved by their thoughts that their maxim has to form of a law. The principle of a good will, therefore, is to do only those actions whose maxims can be conceived as having the form of a law. Kant himself says, “duty is not to be everywhere an empty delusion and a chimerical concept”(AK 4:402)

We will look of ‘*ought*’ Kant thinks an ‘*imperative*’ was involved. Kant picks up that ‘*ought*’ which to be for moral uses. The subject is a person and what is referred to by the ‘*ought*’ is a proposed ‘*action*.’ Kant says only morals are categorical and all the rests are ‘*hypothetical*.’ Kant introduces the distinction between an imperative which commands hypothetically and one which command categorically. Former is conditional command upon a reference to a specified end and later one is not a conditional command upon a reference to some specified end. Kant gives the four formulations of the ‘*Categorical imperative*’: the first in the terms of ‘*Universalizability*,’ law of rules; the second in terms of ‘*Human dignity*,’ treating people as ‘*Ends*’ and not mere ‘*Means*,’ third in the terms of ‘*Autonomy*,’ giving oneself rules (Self-legislation) and last is in terms of ‘*Kingdom of end*.’

Kant makes distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperative. Hypothetical imperative is that commands a certain conduct with some condition any other purpose to be attained by it. Hypothetical imperative identifies actions we ought to take, but only if we have some goal; for example- “don’t steal anything, you want to stay out of jail.” A categorical imperative is something that have no conditions in terms of “if - then” form, they do have absolute command such as “Do x,” “You ought not do x,” “You ought to do x.” the example of categorical imperative moral action would be “don’t lie,” “you ought to help people when they need,” “you ought to speak truth.” It does not matter what you want or your goals, we must follow these rules that is universally acceptance. In categorical imperative, Kant talks about maxim that is universalizability.

Most of commentator interpret Kant in the following way, they take purposes to be purposes of individual agents, and as they take ‘*Purpose*’ to be synonymous with “*End*,” they take ends to be ends of individual agents. But this is not Kant view, in his view he does not identify the purposes of individuals with ends simpliciter. Kant takes them to be one sort of ‘*end*’ he does not take them to be the only ‘*ends*’ there are. Kant believes that as well as the goals, aims and purposes of individual agents to which hypothetical imperatives relate as prescribing means to them, there are ‘*ends in themselves*.’ These he calls ‘*objective*’ as opposed to ‘*subjective*’ ends. In saying that categorical imperatives do not relate to any end whatever. He holds that they

outrageous to construe categorical imperative as pointless, and even more so to construe them to be categorical because pointless.

It is very important to know ‘what does he mean by “End”?’ and what does he mean by “Objective.” As oppose to “Subjective” end?’ most of the scholars fail to understand the meaning and its analogy of using the word ‘objective’ and ‘end’ because treating a person as a mere mean is more transparent in meaning. It is very difficult indeed to see what treating a person as an ‘end in himself’ might be. This problem shown up clearly when it is stressed that we can propose of ours, say, “money in one’s pocket that will help him to food” is a subjective end but we cannot propose ourselves that may be ends in themselves.

Aristotle also accepts in opening stages of his book “*Nicomachean ethics*” ‘Good’ as synonymous with ‘end.’ Aristotle says that ‘such an end must be something for the sake of which we inspire to everything else’ even the thing we inspire to for their own self as well. He believed we have such an ultimate end, and that it consists in living a good life (*eudaimonia*).

In colloquial speech we use purpose, goal, end, as synonymous. If purpose and goal have to be someone’s purpose and goal so do ends. We roughly say that End is synonymous with ‘objects of value.’ If objects of value which are not purpose or goal of individual agents so in colloquial language ‘objects’ cannot be ‘ends.’ even if we accept that value of objects and ends are same or equivalent, there is a difference between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ ‘ends.’ Subjective ends are ends based on particular individual desires, an objective end would be end that one has to be set oneself simply in virtue of being a rational actor, regardless of one’s own particular desires.

Supposing that there was something whose existence has an itself an absolute worth, something which, man and usually all rational beings exist as an end in himself could be a source of definite law. All objects of the inclination and the wants founded on them did not exist so their object would be without value. On the other hand, rational beings are called persons, on their very nature points them out as end in themselves. So, we must not be used merely as means. Therefore, these are not mere ‘subjective ends’ whose existence has a worth for us as an effect of our action, but ‘Objective ends and this thing cannot be substituted by anything else. this and this alone would be lying the source of possible categorical imperative. Kant says: -

“When I think of categorical imperative I know at once what it contains. For since the imperative contains, beyond the law, only the necessity that the maxim be in conformity with this law, while the law contains no condition to which it would be limited, nothing is left with which the maxim of action is to conform but the universality of a law as such; and this conformity alone is what the imperative properly represents as necessary. (AK4:420-I)

### Conclusion-

Kant agrees that objective ends initially start with subjective action but not as mean but an end and has capacity to be objective because it is end in themselves. Kants position was to make objective ends because it has universal acceptability and everyone will want to pursue this because it is good. Kant clearly mentions and shows by using ordinary way of thinking how a normal person can make actions; action as mean for certain inclination, action for their-self because it gives enjoy to him and lastly action by performing duty. Performing duty with good will by using rational insight have universally acceptance that all Kant was trying to show by analysing many examples.

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