

Beyond the dualistic model of moral judgement. The idea of Respect in Kantian philosophy as a normative foundation in neuroethics



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“Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within” (KpV A 289)

“Neuroscience purports to offer scientific explanations of important aspects of moral thought and judgement” ... but “Philosophical analysis fosters understanding of the use of the main scientific concepts and thus complements scientific interpretation of theories and data” (Evers, et al. 2017:90).

The concept of Respect presented by Kant can be a solid normative framework for guiding and evaluating moral decision-making.

Dualistic process of moral judgement

Two cognitive processes for ethical decision-making:

Intuitive process (System 1)

- Independence of working memory
- Fast and high capacity
- Unconscious
- Automatic
- Independent of cognitive ability
- Contextualized,
- Experience-based
- Emotional

Brain areas: Amygdala, basal ganglia, ventromedial prefrontal cortex (VMPFC) lateral temporal cortex (LTC) and dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC)

Reasoning process (system 2)

- Reliance on work memory
- Slow
- Conscious / deliberative
- Normative
- Abstract
- Controlled
- Consequentialist
- Dependent of cognitive ability

Brain areas: lateral pre-frontal cortex (LPFC), medial prefrontal cortex (MPAC), Medial temporal lobe (MTL) and rostral anterior cingulate cortex (rACC)

Deontology (Kant)

- Independent of consequences
- Focus on duties, rights and obligation.

Consequentialism / Utilitarianism

- Focus on impartial maximization of aggregate welfare as the criterion for moral act.

Theoretical weakness

- Natural fallacy
- Oversimplification and misinterpretation of moral theories
- Ignoring relevant moral theories (Aristotelianism / virtue ethics)

Dangerous implications

- Legitimation of “Denkenlosigkeit” (Arendt, 1963).
- Emotivism and relativism
- Subjectivism
- The idea that consequentialist judgement more “correct” (Dubljevic, 217).

The ADC model of moral intuitions

An honest person (A+)	lies (D-)	benefit an innocent person (C+)
A thief (A-)	tell the truth (D+)	harm an innocent person (C-)

Agent (A)

Virtue ethics

Deed (D)

Deontology

Consequences (C)

Utilitarianism

Integrative approach

Isolate analysis = limited moral evaluation
Different combinations = different moral evaluation

Best reflect the complexity of moral life

“The contribution of the integrative ADC approach to the issue of normative justification is in the recognition of the fallibility of any single type of intuition and the need to align several types of intuitions in order to increase accuracy and comprehensiveness” (Dubljevic and Racine, 2014:16)

How can we deciding between different actions taking by agents in concrete situations?
What action deserves better ethical evaluation?: [A+ D- C+], [A- D+ C+], [A+D+C-], [A-D-C+]

The Kantian idea of Respect

“The immediate determination of will by law and awareness of the same is called respect” (Kant, 1785, BA17).

Respect is seen as a feeling that emerges spontaneously from a concept of reason and is manifested in a willingness to comply with practical law. (Kant, KpV, A 130)

Kant uses “respect” in three different ways (Sensen, 2011):

1. The esteem one might have for other’s appearance (Appraisal respect)
2. The moral feeling of respect for the Categorical Imperative (Recognition respect)
3. A commanded maxim of not exalting oneself above others (commanded respect)

Two main categorization of respect:

- a) As behavior (obey external rules)
- b) As an attitude with a cognitive, affective, conative and evaluative dimension (Dillon, 2014).

Conditions for agents to act morally = capability of action (Autonomy) + external freedom (Freedom).



Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.
(Groundwork, BA 67).

Theoretical implications of Kantian respect for moral evaluation and moral action:

- Respect implies emotion and reason
- Respect is grounded in freedom and requires de protection of external freedom and the development of autonomy.
- Sensitivity to emotions and sentiments is transcendental condition for moral judgement and action (MS 399).

Practical implications of Kantian respect for moral evaluation and moral action:

- Treat every person with dignity.
- No manipulation or instrumentalization. Respecting other’s people external freedom and helping them to develop autonomy.
- Understanding other peoples’ emotions and not ignoring, despising or ridiculing them.
- Self-criticism and rational evaluation of cultural practices and own behavior.

Conclusions

- The dualistic model of moral judgement is inaccurate and dangerous.
- The Integrative model ADC capture much better the moral intuition process and the complex of moral life.
- The concept of “Respect” presented by Kant could be a good normative framework for complementing the ADC model.

A person who act with respect:

Has Good will and conscience of duty based on reasons
Agent

+

Has awareness and reflection about actions and its nature
Deeds

+

Evaluates concrete situations and possible outcomes
Consequences

Essential literature

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