

**Introduction to Western Political Thought**  
**Professor Mithilesh Kumar Jha**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati**  
**Lecture No. 21**  
**Kant – II: Morality, Autonomy & Freedom**

Hello and welcome everyone. This is the second lecture on Kant. Today, we are going to discuss his views on morality or the source of morality that would guide individual practical actions or activities. In Kant, there is a kind of combination of morality with individual freedom and autonomy. As we have discussed in the previous lecture, he considered human beings are capable of reasoning and rationality. It is only through reason and rationality that individual can become enlightened and overall enlightenment can be brought in the society or community.

In the previous lecture, we have discussed his views on enlightenment, the use of reason and rationality as the source of valid knowledge that would ultimately bring about enlightenment within the self and in community. Today, we will see how Kant combined reason and rationality as the source of human action or human knowledge to a moral duty or a sense of morality that he combined with individual free will and autonomy. And thereby, individuals led a more harmonious or happy, permanent life. It is a kind of continuous and there are no contradictions or enviousness or violence in the human interrelationships.

So, overall, Kantian objective of combining the morality with freedom and autonomy is to create a society which would be a kind of peaceful or republican society, where every individual will treat other as an end in themselves. These are some of the things which we will discuss in the next or concluding lecture on Kant, while discussing his ideas on 'kingdom of ends' or perpetual peace. Then we will discuss in the second part of that lecture the critical assessment on Kantian thought.

Today, we will begin with his views on morality, ethics, and why we should be moral or what is it to consider human being as a moral agent. Then what should be the basis of such moral laws or moral codes that would guide individual action. Before doing that, we will also discuss his views on 'categorical imperative'. That is a kind of a priori maximum in Kant which enabled the individual to decide for themselves about what would be the moral code or moral laws that should be binding on their practical activities. So, in the first part of the lecture, today, we will

discuss his views on 'categorical imperative' and its contrast with 'hypothetical imperative'. In the second part, we will discuss how he combined his views on morality with freedom, autonomy, and rationality.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:11)

➤ Kant develops a very distinct concept of morality, which he combines with the freedom and autonomy of the individual – whom he projected as a rational and moral agent. The basis of such morality was not the religion or established social norms, but human reason and rationality. Thus the moral codes are based on the 'free' and autonomous 'good' will of the individual.

➤ Reason or rationality, according to Kant, is the only source of all knowledge. It allows individuals to self-legislate their 'duty' towards self and others in the community. This, they will do when they are free and autonomous. To explain this interconnection between morality, freedom, and autonomy, Kant provides a *a priori* maxim, which he calls Categorical Imperative (Henceforth, CI).

➤ This CI is the source of morality, virtue, and happiness for the human being. According to Kant, an individual's actions and practical reason should be guided by this imperative alone. He explains his positions on morality, autonomy, and freedom in *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Hereafter *Groundwork*).

In Kant, we have a very distinct concept of morality which he combined with the freedom and autonomy of individuals. So, being moral is not something to be guided by a code of law which has set by others in the society. This kind of morality is something which individual as a moral, free and autonomous agent set for themselves. That is a very distinct conception of morality that we have in Kant. It is distinct from the ordinary sense of morality, that is the prevalent norms and codes in society. It would not lead to enlightenment as we have discussed in the previous lecture.

The individual must be capable of deciding for themselves what should be the guiding force of their life or what should guide their practical action. The basis for such a decision is human reason and rationality. So, human beings (a) should be capable of reasoning or thinking for themselves and (b) this would have the courage to follow what they think is right, not what others think for themselves. That would be the condition of immaturity. It would be the condition of dependence and that would not lead to enlightenment either at the individual level or at the societal or community level.

In Kant, we have a unique conception of morality and the notion of freedom and autonomy. So, individual as we have discussed is a rational or moral agent and the basis of such morality is not

like ordinary sense of religion or established social norms that should guide human behaviour or human activities. But only human reason and rationality. So, it is a kind of beautiful, eloquent combination of reason and rationality with morality. And within the limits of morality then human beings realize or actualize his own self. That is the whole purpose of enlightenment tradition in Europe.

Thus, the moral codes are based on free and autonomous goodwill of the individual. So, there is a kind of inherent assertion of goodwill in the human being and how human being lead his life, according to that goodwill. It would be a kind of transcendence from the actual particular circumstances of life to the universal being. So, individual through his goodwill or notion of morality can see in himself the universal men. That 'kingdom of end' or perpetual peace which we would discuss in the next lecture. It is based on a distinct sense of human being as a rational, moral agent endowed with goodwill. And it is acting, according to the goodwill that individual in the particular circumstances become the universal man or part of the universal community.

So, reason and rationality, according to Kant is the only source of all knowledge. It allows individual to self-legislate. That is the another characteristic of Kantian morality or sense of duty that no external body either society or person or a group of body tells the individual what to do. It is the individual themselves by using their own reason and rationality who decide what they should do. In deciding that, this would guide their action on the basis of a priori maxim which he called the 'categorical imperative'. The reason and rationality allows the individual to self-legislate their duty towards their own self and others in the community.

Thus, with the use of reason, we not only decide or think for our own self. But also, our obligation and duty towards others in the society. And the 'kingdom of ends' and the idea of the 'kingdom of ends' is that kind of society, where everyone would treat everyone else as an end in themselves. Thereby, acknowledging and respecting the dignity of all and that kind of society would be a society which would be a peaceful and harmonious society. This reason and rationality allows the individual to self-legislate their duty towards self and others, and this they will do when they are free and autonomous. The other condition of deciding for oneself is that individual is free not under any form of subjugation, to other men or society or any other authority.

Individual is free and autonomous, and then using their own reason, they decide the codes of morality that govern their actions towards themselves and society. So, to explain this inter-connection between the free and autonomous will of the individual with morality, Kant provided a priori maxim. We will discuss what is 'a priori' means. It is prior to any human experience or consideration of any empirical context. It is a kind of abstract idea - a priori, prior to everything else. So, the moral codes and morality requires that principle that would be free from isolation of any given practical empirical situation in which human beings act, behave, and lives.

He explained this inter-connection between morality, freedom, and autonomy through a maxim, which is a priori maxim. He called it the 'categorical imperative'. Henceforth, we will refer to it as CI. So, we discussed what this 'categorical imperative' is. This 'categorical imperative' is for human being or the individual who is rational, a kind of practical reasoning. So, in the given practical context, what course of action one should follow to decide that one needs to understand or guide one's action, according to this 'categorical imperative' is the source of morality, virtue, and happiness for the human beings.

According to Kant, an individual's actions and practical reason be guided by this imperative alone. So, this is merely a maxim - an imperative through which human being legislate for themselves, what course of action this will follow. It does not really tell them do this or do that. It just gives them a framework. By using them, they decide for themselves what is the best possible action they should follow in a particular given circumstances. And to do that they have to apply reason and see themselves as part of the universal self, whether there is a kind of intelligibility by others. This would act upon those principles which they want others also to follow in the given context.

That is the 'categorical imperative' that we will discuss. It is based on the practical reason or circumstances of human life and yet it is part of the universal. That is a kind of paradox. You develop your codes of morality in a particular context and yet you act on the principle which you want to be universal. That means, others should also be following the same course of action in the given context. So, this is kind of this paradox of being particular and at the same time, universal. He explained this position on morality, autonomy, and freedom in this work, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* which we will refer to as *Groundwork* in this lecture, today.

(Refer Slide Time: 13:16)

#### Moral Philosophy: Its aims and objective

- The primary objective of philosophy is to provide us a set of moral laws and principles that would enable us to lead a good, happy, and dignified life. Search for such codes and norms to lead a life of *eudaimonia* was there in the classical Greek philosophers' writings such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle. More importantly, Aristotle combined the general and universal concept of ethics with the practical context of human life and community. And according to him, human beings develop the ability to correct judgement by living among the free and equal members in the community. Kant, in modern times, provides a more comprehensive and thorough account of universal morality guided by practical reason. The moral laws in Kant's philosophy have transcendental characteristics.
- We human beings are moral agents. And therefore, we could not avoid moral questions and dilemmas that we face in our practical, everyday life. Now, the question is, what should be the codes of morality that would guide our practical life? What should be its source? Who should formulate it?
- In the *Groundwork*, Kant provides a deontological and categorical account of our fundamental moral 'obligation' or 'duty' towards the self and others in society. Moral philosophy seeks to identify and realize the ultimate end or 'highest good' possible to accomplish by human beings. It requires moral virtue with complete happiness. Thus, moral philosophy sets out to first identify what is 'good will', 'obligation', and 'duty' toward the self and others.

Now, let us discuss, why do we need moral philosophy? What is its aims and objectives? So, if you look at the very objective of any philosophy whether it is the political philosophy or moral philosophy, they aim to provide a society or condition or set of norms that would enable the individual to lead a good life and definition of good life. It will vary. But all human beings want to live a good, dignified, and happy life. Now, how to lead that life? What kind of society that life is possible? What kind of state structures would be there? These are some of the reflections that we have seen from the classical Greek times in Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant, and many other thinkers that is there in the course.

They are all engaged in answering this question that in which kind of society, individual life would be more dignified, equal, just and happy. So, the primary objective of philosophy is to provide us a set of moral laws or principle that will enable us to lead a good, happy, and dignified life. So, all human beings across the context universally want to lead a life that would be good, happy, and dignified. The search for those principles or norms to lead a life of 'eudaimonia', if you remember our first few lectures on the Greek philosopher. It was there in the Greek philosopher's writings such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

And particularly, if you focus and recall our lecture on Aristotle and his views on judgment, you will note that how he was also searching for a code of law. So, did Plato and Socrates and other thinkers that we have discussed in this course so far. They all searched for those codes or the

principles which would enable the human being to lead a life which would be the life of 'eudaimonia' or a happy dignified life. Particularly, if you look at Aristotle's writings on ethics. He combined the general and universal concepts of ethics in contrast to Platonic. There is a kind of absolute knowledge or forms of ethics or morality in Plato.

In contrast to that, in Aristotle, we find a kind of combination of the universal or abstract notion of ethics with the practical context of community. And it is the combination of the universal with particular that human beings developed as correct political judgment. So, in Aristotle, we have this combination of general and universal concept of ethics with the practical context of human life and community. According to Aristotle, human beings developed the ability to correct judgment. Judgment is something that guides our action.

We subject our life to our judgment and then realize the potentialities or full potentialities of our life dependent on the correct judgment and the correct judgment requires, first, the understanding of the general or universal code of ethics. And the practical context of human life or community. According to Aristotle, human beings developed the ability to correct judgment by living among the free and equal members. So, life in the polis or city-states or public life is the best life that enabled the individuals to realize his true potentialities.

That is why, living among others who are equal and free in the community. So, the correct judgment, according to Aristotle, is the outcome of associational life of individual with others who are free and equal in the community. Kant, in modern times, provided us a more comprehensive and thorough account of universal morality, and also that morality should be guided by the practical reason. So, the Kantian 'categorical imperative' guided the practical reason. How individuals should act in a practical given context?

The moral law in Kant's philosophy had transcendental characteristic and this transcendental characteristic in Kantian morality was dead. Even when they act in their particular context, the transcend need to act in the principle which they want at the same time to become universal. That means, the other person without any consideration to the context should act, according to the same principle. So, that particular person should follow the particular context. So, there are kinds of transcendental ethics or transcendental characteristic of Kantian morality.

Now, let us discuss, this question why do we need morality and why moral codes applies to the human being or human species. So, the reason for that is that we are moral agent and what does it mean to be a moral agent. It means that we have a sense of justice or a sense of discretion which tells us what is good or bad, what is desirable or undesirable. So, there is a kind of intuitive innate sense in the social contract tradition thinkers as well.

Even in the 'state of nature', where there is no society, no association, and yet human beings have a sense of morality or justness, and if you recall Aristotle, again, that human beings are neither God nor beast. Unlike God, they do not know everything or unlike beast, it is also not true that they do not know anything. So, we know something. But there are the domains of life, which we do not know. So, human beings have a peculiar situation of existence. Here, they have a sense, but they are also prone to making a lot of immoral acts or you know, undesirable behaviour.

Whole moral philosophy tries to provide us a set of norms, which would make human life more perfect, enable it to lead a more virtuous life, happy life and to lead that human beings then have to learn or develop for themselves what is good, what is desirable, what is moral for them to do and the source of such morality or desire is not based on religion or any other things enlightenment thought. But on human reason itself. So, the codes of morality, therefore, applies only to the human being, not to the beast or other species on the earth. They are driven by their desire or passion alone.

It is the human being who have the capacity to reason and this is the capacity to reason that tells them the distinction between actions or behaviours. That is morally justified. And actions and behaviour are morally unjustified. So, they have this intuitive sense of morality and ethics. Therefore, the moral laws and moral codes are applicable to the human being. Human being is then not just a rational being who constantly try to actualize himself in isolation of society or from the society or community.

Individual as a rational agent or a rational being is a moral agent, having a sense of good and bad, desirable or undesirable, just an unjust. Therefore, human beings could not avoid the moral questions and dilemmas that we face in our practical everyday life. So, the question that we face every day is the moral dilemmas and moral philosophy that tells us how to overcome those

dilemmas, how to perfect our action, according to the moral codes, and what should be the source of that moral code.

The question is what should be the codes of morality that will guide our practical life. What should be its source? For a very long time, religion or religious treatises used to provide that set of codes through which human being perfect or correct their behaviour or actions in the society, towards themselves, family, society, and state. A lot of moral codes were enshrined in the religious text. But in the enlightenment, there was a new mode of thinking. We are human beings for themselves regarded as a rational agent who would decide for themselves, what is moral code or sense of duty towards which they have the obligation?

As we have discussed in the theory of political obligation with the social contract traditions that human beings themselves consent to a particular form of authority and the moral obligation or the political obligation they have is based on the consent and not on any divine right theory or religious prescription. They obey certain commands or certain rules and forms of authority. So, the question with the moral philosophy is that what should be the code of morality that should guide the practical life. What should be its source and who should formulate it? It is the society, community, or the religious texts or preachers or individual themselves?

In Kant, we see that he formulated a notion of morality. We are individual as a free and autonomous being who decide and legislate for themselves, what is the duty or their sense of morality to which they should subject their life, or perfect their life in a way. So in the *Groundwork*, Kant provided a kind of deontological and categorical account of our fundamental moral obligation or duty towards the self and others in the society. A moral philosophy seeks to identify and realize the ultimate end or highest good possible to accomplish by human beings.

And human beings, in many other writings have the capability to behave like a beast and also to perfect his or her life, to lead a dignified or respected life by following certain codes of morality that they themselves legislate using their own reason. Then constantly, tries to perfect their lives. Let us think of it in this way. Human beings are also sensuous being. They have their desire and passion, and those desire and passion may not necessarily lead to moral behaviour or moral action. Yet human beings have in its search for something ultimate or permanent. That is the source of ultimate peace or satisfaction.



In Kant, you have the response that human beings when he or she uses his own reason or rational faculty, only then he is capable to guide his life and relationship with others, according to moral laws that will give them a sense of obligation or duty to which they must perform their actions or subject the reaction to rationale basis which would enable human beings to realize his true or highest possible potentialities in life. So, it requires moral virtue with complete happiness. We will discuss it, when we will discuss the 'categorical imperative' and 'hypothetical imperative'.

That means, some actions may give us immediate satisfaction. But in the long term, it has devastating consequences. There are certain codes which leads us to behave and act in a manner which would have permanent peaceful consequences or enable the condition of life which would be everlasting happy or a kind of perpetual peace or constant happiness. It is possible when we try to lead a life of happiness by combining it with virtue. There is a combination of human reason and rationality, and reason and rationality in itself is not sufficient.

It must subject itself to a set of codes or morality which individual themselves legislate or define. So, this moral philosophy, first, identify what is goodwill, obligation, and duty towards the self and others.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:19)

**Kant on Morality: Categorical and Hypothetical Imperative**

- Kant's conception of morality is based on a a priori maxim – Categorical Imperative. It is a priori in the sense that it is based on the abstract principle that does not take into account the actual context of human existence. It is imperative in the sense that it is a command. It obliges the rational and moral agent to behave and act in a particular manner. It is categorical in the sense that it must be followed compulsorily, universally, and unconditionally.
- So, as an imperative, it does not tell the individuals exactly what to do in a given context. Instead, as an abstract maxim, it provides them with a formula to choose a particular course of action in a particular given context which they want others too to follow in the same context without exception. Thus, the characteristic of the categorical imperative is its abstractness, general or universal, and unconditional. It wants the individual to 'act according to those principles through which you want others to guide their actions in a similar context, universally and unconditionally'.
- Thus, CI, according to Kant, is not a moral law in itself. It is a maxim that enables free and autonomous moral agents to use it as the basis to guide their practical actions. CI is not, like utilitarianism, a consequentialist argument. One has to follow CI regardless of the consequences, inclinations, or feelings. It helps the moral agent develop a sense of 'duty' which s/he must perform. This sense of duty among the free moral agent is based on the moral laws within.

Now, we look at particularly, how Kant defined morality or what should be the source of morality in individual, everyday practical situation or circumstances by understanding his views on 'categorical' or 'hypothetical imperative'. So, Kant's conception of morality as we have discussed is a kind of a priori maxim which he called the 'categorical imperative'. It is a priori in the sense; it is based on an abstract principle that does not take into account or consideration the actual context of human existence or human being. This imperative in Kant is based on abstract principle that does not take into account any consideration of the actual circumstances in which human being lives.

It is imperative, in the sense, it is a command or a kind of order which is compulsory for the human being to follow. So, it obliges the rational and moral agent to behave and act in a particular manner. It is a priori. It is imperative that it fools or obliges the individual to act or behave in a particular manner, in a particular circumstance, and it is categorical in the sense that it must be compulsorily, universally, and unconditionally followed. That is the defining characteristic of 'categorical imperative', that is, it is binding. It is compulsory and it should be followed universally and unconditionally. There should not be any condition to follow the 'categorical imperative' or the rules based on 'categorical imperative'.

So as an imperative, it does not tell the individual exactly what to do in a given context. Unlike, any other commands or order which is very specific set the door open the window, close the

window, switch on the light. So, these are the commands very specific and exactly tells the other individual what to do. In contrast to that, 'categorical imperative' is not something which is precise or exactly telling the individual what to do. It is basically, a maxim, a kind of framework, a kind of principle using which individual as a rational moral agent will arrive at a particular action, they want others to follow universally and unconditionally. That is a kind of complex argument there in the 'categorical imperative', that is also universal and unconditional.

Instead, as an abstract maxim as I said, it does not take into account any particular, empirical circumstances of human living. It provides them with a formula to choose a particular course of action, in a particular given context, which they want others to follow in the same context without exception. Now, let us discuss this idea. Say, telling lies is not acceptable or morally acceptable at least and yet we tend to speak lies if it is beneficial to us. Now, how we will arrive at a moral code that would be applied universally without any exception to us and also to others, and that is the whole idea of 'kingdom of ends' in a way.

It would be possible to argue that we speak lies, if it is beneficial to us. But then we do not want others to speak lies that leads to conflicts. So, to avoid those conflicts and contradictions, the moral code that individual as rational beings should arrive at is based on the maxim that he/she wants others also to follow the same course of action, which he or she is following in a particular given circumstance, universally and unconditionally. That means, let us take the other example. So, in the exam, you want to cheat or copy from others to secure more marks. But at the same time, you do not want others to cheat or copy from others to get more marks.

So, there is a kind of moral contradictions here. But 'categorical imperative' tells you to follow only those course of action, which you want others to follow in that same circumstances universally and unconditionally. That means, speaking truth is better, treating others as an end in themselves better, not cheating in the exam is better that applies to you and you want it to be applied universally to others as well. That is the whole basis of 'categorical imperative' in a sense. Thus, the characteristic of 'categorical imperative' is its abstractness. It is not specific to any particular circumstance yet it guides practical action.

It is abstract, general, universal and unconditional. So, you subject your action, your practical activities to this reason without any condition. It wants the individual to act, according to those principles, through which you want others to guide their actions in a similar context universally

and unconditionally. So, that is the whole point of 'categorical imperative' that the moral code you arrive at is specific to a particular context and yet it has universal application.

The legislation of moral code that is done by individual in a particular situation has its universal application at the same time. There is a kind of this transcending the particular context to the universal community of individual. Thus, 'categorical imperative', according to Kant is not a moral law in itself. The 'categorical imperative', as we have explained is not telling the individual what to do in a particular context. But how they ought to do as a moral rational agent that is acting, according to the principle which we want others to follow in the same context universally, across the context and unconditionally. That is the kind of formula. That is a kind of maxim. But in itself, it does not tell the individuals what to do and what not to do.

Individuals themselves decide what they should do on the condition that they want others to follow it also, the moral conflicts in life. In economics, we use the term free rider, we should pay the tax. But what if out of millions or billions, 1 or 10 percent do not pay tax. It will not affect overall. But then if suppose in the millions, 90 percent or 50 percent of the people will start thinking that in the similar way, the free rider what if rest of them should be and I am not paying. So, I will be the beneficiary of not paying the tax. But that 50 60 percent will create a devastating influence on the revenue of the government.

Similarly, in terms of voting, you should vote for electing new representatives. But many voters think, what if I do not vote would it make any large difference. But if say 45 or 30 percent of enlightened or rational citizens refrain from voting. Then you get the representative which you do not like most of the time. This is a guide to the practical condition by following this 'categorical imperative', which should not be contradictory within. It has to be morally consistent. That means, you subject your practical activities on the principle, which you want others to follow as well. You do not make exception for yourself or others, while subjecting your practical action to a set of moral codes or a sense of obligation.

So, 'categorical imperative' in itself is not a moral law. It only provides the framework through which individual has a rational agent developed for themselves, what is their duty or obligation to self and others. It is a maxim that enables free and autonomous moral agent to use it as the basis to guide their practical actions. The 'categorical imperative' is not like utilitarianism as a philosophy that only those policies should be followed by the government which would be in the

benefit of the maximum number of people. In that sense, the 'categorical imperative' is not a kind of consequence that released argument, or the success of a policy or a rule that is based on the consequences. The moral laws should be just in itself.

It does not require any further justification or justification on the basis of the consequences. In the Kantian ethics, what you have is once you decide for yourself, what is your duty, you ought to perform it without any consideration of its consequences. That is the moral law. That is how you lead a dignified life and how it is possible to lead a happy life that would be peaceful, free from violence, conflicts, and enemies. One has to follow 'categorical imperative' regardless of the consequences, inclinations, and feelings. So, all the feelings, inclinations, and consequences should be subject to human reason and moral sense of duty.

So, it helps the moral lesson to develop a sense of duty which she or he must perform. This sense of duty among the free moral agent is based on the moral laws within and not from outside.

(Refer Slide Time: 39:29)

➤ Thus, Kant provides a deontological (science of morality, duty, or ethics) foundation for the CI. Human beings as a moral and rational agent remain free and autonomous by following laws legislated by themselves using this *a priori* maxim, CI. And therefore, CI is to be followed by everyone universally and unconditionally. One could better understand the full import of the Kantian meaning of Categorical Imperative by contrasting it with hypothetical imperative.

➤ Ethics and morality, based on CI, enable individuals to live a virtuous and happy life. It is so as the codes of moral norms that guide their practical actions are based on CI, which they themselves legislate. These are good in itself. It does not require any further or external justifications.

➤ In contrast, the hypothetical imperative is based on certain pre-determined goals or objectives. In this sense, it is conditional. Its success or failure is then based on whether or not it achieved the pre-set desired goals or objectives. Thus, external objects or consequences of once action are the legitimizing grounds for the hypothetical imperative. According to Kant, it may lead to conflicts and enviousness. It could not lead to permanent peace or happiness either for the individual or for society. However, CI being a god in itself and free from the conditions could lead to lasting peace and happiness within the self and also among others in society.

Thus, Kant provided a kind of deontological a sense of morality, duty, or ethics foundation for the 'categorical imperative'. So there is no consequentialist justification for this imperative. Human being as a moral and rational agent remain free and autonomous by following laws legislated by themselves using this *a priori* maxim called the 'categorical imperative'. These three makes the argument of freedom, similar to Rousseau. That is by following the 'general will', you

will be free and if you do not want to follow the 'general will', you will be forced to follow it and thereby, individual can be forced to be free in a sense.

Therefore, 'categorical imperative' is to be followed by everyone universally and unconditionally and we can better understand by contrasting it with the 'hypothetical imperative'. So, ethics and morality are based on 'categorical imperative' that enables individuals to live a virtuous and happy life. Remember the Greek philosophers who explained what kind of life is called a happy life? That kind of life is happy which is virtuous. And what is virtue? Knowledge is virtue and how one pursue knowledge. It is through reason. So, this is kind of similar argument. But in a more complex manner, where one subject one's reason to a set of codes or morality, which one decide for oneself.

Thus, to lead a happy life, one has to be virtuous. Without virtue, happiness, or being happy, life is impossible to have or even if you have it, it would not be permanent. So, to lead a permanent happy life, one need to be virtuous, and to be virtuous, one has to be moral and that moral law then limits the reason and rationality which otherwise lead to chaos or undesirable consequences for individual or community. It is the codes of moral norms that guide the practical actions that are based on 'categorical imperative' which they themselves legislate. And these laws and codes are good in itself. It does not require any further external justification.

So, by using the 'categorical imperative' on the basis of one's reason and rationality, one arrive at a sense of duty or obligation which is good in itself regardless of its consequences. One ought to perform it without any consideration of its consequence. Now, let us contrast it with the 'hypothetical imperative' that is based on certain pre-determined goals and objectives. That is, you see in the practical life. Most of the time human beings are rational, they first set certain goals and objectives, and then they guide their actions in a manner which help them to achieve those goals and objectives.

That is the 'hypothetical imperative' that is opposite of 'categorical imperative'. In the 'hypothetical imperative', you already set certain goals and objectives, and choose that course of action which helps you achieve those goals and objective. In this sense, 'hypothetical imperative' is conditional, not unconditional like 'categorical imperative'. That is the success of any course of action or failures of that action is based on the consequences of it. That is, whether that action

help the individual to achieve or not to achieve the pre-desired goals and objective. So, the 'hypothetical imperative' would be conditional on the consequences of certain course of action.

As a rational agent, by using rationality and reason in the instrumental sense, to achieve certain purpose which you decide beforehand and then a particular course of action is good or bad, successful or a failure depending upon whether it helps you to achieve that desire or pre-decided goals and objectives or not. So, that is the 'hypothetical imperative' and 'categorical imperative' is very opposite of that. That means, you set a set of objectives or a sense of duty which is good in itself.

It does not require any further justification or any consideration of the consequences and it is in a sense of truth, beauty, life, happiness, dignity. It does not depend on the consequences of your action. But the law that you follow is good in itself regardless of the consequences. 'Hypothetical imperative' is different that is dependent on the consequences. One of the philosophy that we have discussed, the utilitarian philosophy is the best example of 'hypothetical imperative'. That is, the course of law and public policy. It should be followed which would be in the maximum benefit of maximum number. So, it depends and the justification for that course of action is the consequences of that action.

So, the external objects or consequences of one's actions are the legitimizing ground for 'hypothetical imperative'. Whether a course of action is right or wrong, depends on its ability to achieve certain pre-decided goals and objectives. According to Kant, 'hypothetical imperative' may lead to conflicts and enviousness among the people. We have supposed, as I have given the example of free rider, while paying the tax or while going for voting in may create conflicts, it may create enviousness in the society. Whereas, the 'categorical imperative' would create a condition or society, where everyone would follow a code of law which would be just in itself.

It would be applicable to everyone in the similar context, unconditionally, and universally and that would be a society of perpetual peace, without violence, conflict or enviousness among its inhabitants. So, 'hypothetical imperative' could not lead to permanent peace or happiness either for the individual or for the society. Thus, as the individual is using 'hypothetical imperative' or reason, you may get some instant satisfaction. But it may not give you permanent satisfaction or permanent happiness. You may repent later or you may develop a sense of guilt. While doing it you may have certain satisfaction. But then after doing it you develop some sense of guilt.

There is a kind of innate moral sense of just and unjustness in human being, and human being must subject reason, rationality, practical actions, behaviour, desire and passion to a certain code of duty and obligation to self and others. That they can do on the basis of 'categorical imperative', not on basis of the 'hypothetical imperative'. So, according to Kant, 'categorical imperative' is being good in itself and free from the condition. It is not on the basis of any conditionality's that would lead to lasting peace and happiness within the self and among others in their society or community.

(Refer Slide Time: 47:30)

**Morality, Autonomy, and Freedom**

- For Kant, the goal of human actions is the attainment or realization of maximum freedom or autonomy. Such freedom or autonomy for the individual is possible by following the moral laws that themselves have legislated. Thus they are free from external control and interferences. In *Groundwork*, Kant describes the notion of free will and relates it to the idea of autonomy, rationality, and morality. He writes 'freedom will be identical with autonomy; and since autonomy is the principle of morality, a free will would be a will under moral laws'.
- For Kant, freedom is a necessary presupposition of all activities as well as of all thinking. A rational agent must regard himself/herself as capable of thinking on his own rational principles, and only so can s/he regard his/her will as his/her own. This free will is good in itself, without further qualifications. This will is conceived as a power of determining oneself to act in accordance with the idea of certain moral or ethical laws.
- Emphasizing upon rationality Kant maintains that only a rational being has the power to act in accordance with his idea of laws – that is, in accordance with the principles – and only so has he a will. Then Kant explains that freedom and autonomy can be realized only in the kingdom of ends. In this kingdom of ends, we treat our own person and others as an end in itself, not as a means for further ends.

Now, if we look at how he combined freedom, morality, and autonomy together. For Kant, the goal of human actions is the attainment or realization of maximum freedom or autonomy. So, all our life, individual want to maximize his freedom and autonomy. That means, freedom from the external interference and controlled by others. However, such freedom or autonomy for the individual is possible by following the moral laws that they themselves legislate.

Thus, they are free from the external control and interferences, and in the *Groundwork*, Kant described the notion of free will and relate it to the idea of autonomy, rationality, and morality. He writes 'freedom will be identical with autonomy and since autonomy is the principle of morality, a free will would be a will under moral laws'. So, the free will is not free from all kinds of restraints. It must be subjected to a set of moral laws which individual themselves legislate by using their own free will and autonomy.



For Kant, freedom is a necessary presupposition of all activities as well as for all forms of thinking. So, you cannot have enlightenment unless individual are free to think or choose a particular course of action. A rational agent must regard himself or herself as capable of thinking on his own rational principles and only so can she regard her will as his her own. So, most of us really live our life by following the norms and values set by others. Kant was residing in a society or community, where individual would think for themselves as a free, autonomous subject. While doing so, they will subject themselves to a set of moral laws which they themselves legislate and not the society, community and any other body.

This free will is good in itself without further qualifications. So, once you have that goodwill, you develop that goodwill by using your sense of obligation, duty by following 'categorical imperative' or by using the reason that would be good in itself. It does not require the consequences or outcomes. This will be conceived as a power of determining oneself to act in accordance with the idea of certain moral and ethical laws. By emphasizing upon rationality, Kant maintained that only a rational being had the power to act in accordance with his idea of laws that is in accordance with the principles and only so has he will.

So, having a will requires individual to act, according to one's own thinking and considering himself as free from any kind of external control and interference. Thus, free will starts with thinking. First, free from any kind of subjugation by the society or external authority. Kant explained that freedom and autonomy could be realized only in the 'kingdom of ends' which we will discuss in the next class. Indeed, in this 'kingdom of ends', we treat our own person and others as an end in themselves and not as a means for our further ends.

(Refer Slide Time: 51:18)

➤ 'A will operating on this principle would be free from any ground determination in nature and hence truly free. A moral subject is thus autonomous in a radical sense. He obeys the dictates of his own will'.

➤ The *Categorical Imperative*, Kant suggests, gives subjective reality to human freedom. It instructs us as to how we ought to act to confirm our autonomy. No matter what the actual circumstances of man are, he ought to act in a manner that reflects his own dignity and worth as a moral and rational being. As an end in himself, man is only bound by those laws which he himself enacts. For Kant, rationality involves thinking in universal terms and thinking consistently. Hence the maxim underlying any proposed action must be such that we can universalize it without contradictions.

➤ CI is the source of moral actions for the men with a good will. That is, as a rational agent, he guides his practical life by an absolute and compulsorily binding moral sense of duty. In doing so, an individual in his/her particular context simultaneously acts as a member of the universal community. And thereby, they make themselves known to the intelligible world.

So, a will operating on the principal would be free from any ground determination in nature and hence, truly free. A moral subject is autonomous in a radical sense. He obeys the dictates of his free will by using his own reason. This is a kind of sophisticated argument in Kant by combining both the freedom and autonomy, subjecting both to the moral codes or a sense of moral duty and obligation in the human being by using his idea of 'categorical imperative'. The 'categorical imperative', Kant suggested gave subjective reality to human freedom.

This really does not give the individual a moral code. Using it, individual can themselves decide for what they should do in a particular given circumstance or in the practical life. It instructs us as how we ought to act to confirm our autonomy. The laws or sense of moral duty and obligation is given to us not by any other body. But by our self, by using our own reason and rational faculty, and subjecting it to the moral code and obligation that we decide for themselves. That freedom and autonomy is realized by following certain moral codes which you yourself have legislated.

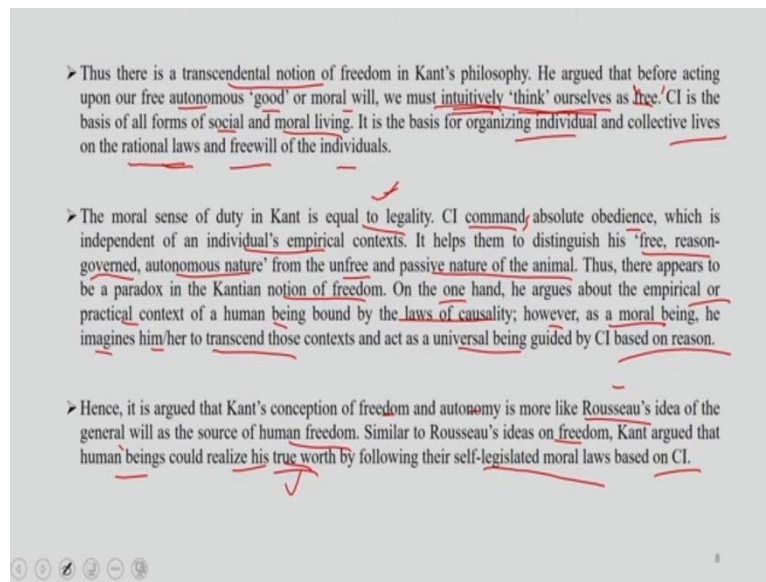
So, no matter what the actual circumstances of man are, he ought to act in a manner that reflects his dignity and worth as a moral and rational being. As an end in himself, man is only bound by those laws which he himself enacts and this has the wider acceptance also. In modern democracy, we are governed by laws and legislation. The basis of that laws and legislation is formulated by the representative which we ourselves have elected. For instance, in the Parliament, laws or policies are formulated.

The other organs of the state such as the executive or judiciary help us in the implementation or correct implementation of those laws and policies formulated by the Parliament and the Parliament is the will of the people. Therefore, the laws and legislation enacted by the Parliament has the legitimacy and it reflects the will of the people. We must subject ourselves to those laws and legislation.

However, in Kantian ethics, it is not a kind of representative or a delegation of this legislation. 'Categorical imperative' does not mean such representation and delegation of legislative activity. It is like all individual as free or autonomous subjects who are rational and must legislate for himself about what is good and what code of action they follow in their practical life. For Kant, rationality involves thinking in universal terms, while acting in a particular context and thinking consistently. Hence, the maxim underlying any proposed action must be such that we can universalize without contradiction.

So, CI is the source of moral action for the man with a good will that is as a rational agent. He guides his practical life by an absolute and compulsory binding sense of duty or obligation. In doing so, an individual in his or her particular context, simultaneously, act as a member of the universal community. That is the kind of paradox which Kant transcended. In a particular context, but acting in a manner which you want to be universal. That means, you want other men to follow in the similar context and thereby they make themselves known to the intelligible world.

(Refer Slide Time: 55:52)



There is a kind of transcendental notion of freedom in Kant's philosophy and he argued that before acting upon our free, autonomous, good or moral will, we must intuitively think our self as free. So, this intuitive thinking of being free from any external restraints and controls is necessary for individual to act in an enlightened manner, to subject themselves, and their actions to a particular set of codes or moral codes or the sense of duty and obligation. They must perform towards themselves and others in the society.

So, first requirement is you must intuitively think yourself as free from any external restraints and control. 'Categorical imperative' is the basis of all forms of social and moral living according to Kant. It is the basis of organizing individual and collective lives on the rational laws and free will of the individual. The moral sense of duty in Kant is equal to legality. That is, it is compulsory. It is binding on the individual like laws and 'categorical imperative' that command absolute obedience independent of an individual's empirical context.

It helps them to distinguish his free reason and govern autonomous nature from the unfree and passive nature of the animal. Thus, there appears to be a kind of paradox in Kantian notion of freedom. On the one hand, he argued about the empirical or practical context of human beings warned by the laws of causality. However, as a moral being, he imagined him or her to transcend those contexts and act as a universal being guided by 'categorical imperative'. It is based on reason. There is a kind of transcendental logic or sense of ethics and morality here.

Hence, it is argued that Kant's conception of freedom and autonomy is more like Rousseau's idea of 'general will' as the source of human freedom. He was taking a lot of inspiration from Rousseau's conception of 'general will' and the idea of self-legislation. The legitimacy is based on the direct and active participation of its citizens in making the laws. Similar to Rousseau's ideas on freedom, Kant, argued that human beings could realize his true worth by following their self-legislated moral laws based on 'categorical imperative'. That is all in this lecture, today and for the themes that we have covered in this lecture.

(Refer Slide Time: 58:49)

**References**

Browning, Gary. 2016. *A History of Modern Political Thought: The Question of Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guyer, Paul (ed.). 2006. *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hoffe, Otfried. 1994. *Immanuel Kant*, tr. Marshall Farrier, Albany: State University of New York Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1784/1996. *What is Enlightenment?*, in Mary J Gregor et al. eds, *Immanuel Kant Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

✓ Kant, Immanuel. 1785/1964. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. H J Paton, New York: Harper and Row Publications.

Reiss, Hans (ed.). 1970. *Kant: Political Writings*, tr. H B Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scruton, Roger. 2001. *Kant: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

You can refer to some of these texts like Gary Browning's, *A History of Modern Political Thought*. Paul Guyer's, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant and Modern Philosophy*, Otfried Hoffe's, *Immanuel Kant* and from Kant, you can read this 'What is Enlightenment?' And also, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Most of the discussion is based on this text by, Hans Reese. You can also refer to *Kant: Political Writings* and Roger Scruton's, *Kant: A Very Short Introduction*.

So, these are some of the texts, you should refer to understand more on Kant's 'categorical imperative', how he differentiate it with the 'hypothetical imperative' and also, how he combined morality with freedom and autonomy. That is all in this lecture, today. Thanks for your patience. Thanks for listening. Do share your comments and feedbacks. We will be happy to respond. Thank you all.

