

The Ethical Corporation
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Lecture - 07
Normative Ethical Theories: Deontological Ethics

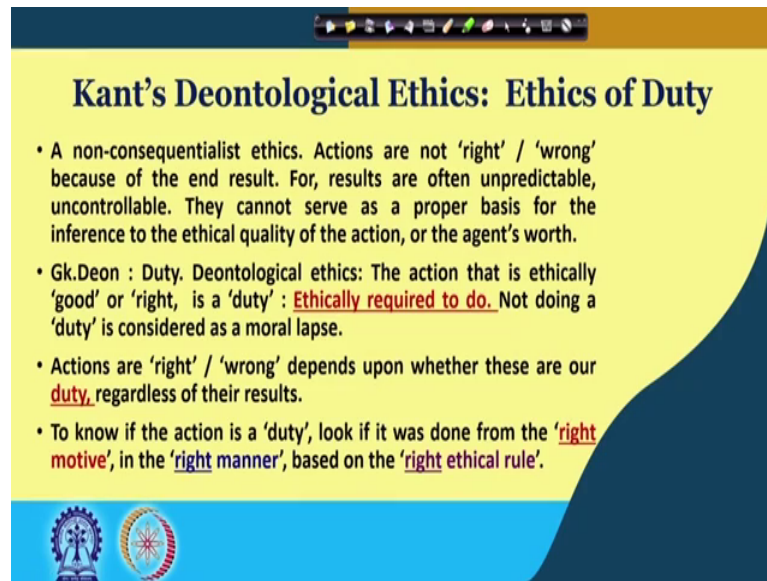
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Hello, we are back and we are on the second week on our lecture number 7 and today, we are going to talk about deontological ethics. As we have already told you that there are this broad division namely consequentialist and non consequentialist ethics. So, we are going to propose today the Kant's Deontological ethics as an example of non consequentialist ethics.

So, this will be explained and there are certain technical concepts that we have to learn here. For example, Hypothetical and Categorical imperative; what does Kant mean by duty and then, slowly we will end with the limitations of this ethical theory. So, that is our plan for today's lecture.

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Kant's Deontological Ethics: Ethics of Duty

- A non-consequentialist ethics. Actions are not 'right' / 'wrong' because of the end result. For, results are often unpredictable, uncontrollable. They cannot serve as a proper basis for the inference to the ethical quality of the action, or the agent's worth.
- Gk.Deon : Duty. Deontological ethics: The action that is ethically 'good' or 'right', is a 'duty' : **Ethically required to do**. Not doing a 'duty' is considered as a moral lapse.
- Actions are 'right' / 'wrong' depends upon whether these are our **duty**, regardless of their results.
- To know if the action is a 'duty', look if it was done from the '**right motive**', in the '**right manner**', based on the '**right ethical rule**'.

Let us start like this that you know non-consequentialist ethics will tell you that in order to know whether an action is ethically right or wrong, you should not look at the consequences. So, certainly consequences or the end result is not going to be where you will be looking for the identification of ethical rightness or wrongness. Why? Because in general this kind of ethical theories will tell you that you may start an action with certain kind of a result in mind. But it may go in a completely different trajectory that is because the you know once it leaves your hand, it actually follows a fortuitous series of events and there may not be any predictable result at all. It may result into something that you never even thought about.

So, that is not where to look for ethical goodness or wrongness Kant's deontological ethics is an example of non-consequentialist ethics. The Deon in deontological ethics stands for the Greek term Deon means duty. So, this is going to be the central concept of deontological ethics. So, very simply put this ethics is going to tell you that, that action is ethically good or right which is actually a duty. What does duty mean? We will try to explain it following the theory, but then what is wrong is not doing a duty that is how they are going to propose this.

So, this is the point to keep in mind that actually we have identified a central concept here and that is duty. Not only that you need to also pay attention here that first of all duty means (Refer Time: 03:24) is the right action, but the right action has to be done

from right motive. First of all in the right manner and based on the right ethical rule, all of this we will try to explain. This is what the theory actually says.

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Duty

1. Duty is usually understood as compliance to the orders given by someone else in authority: **MILITARY model**

In this, duty is externally imposed. Compliance is by force, in fear, because of power asymmetry. If not done, answerable to that external authority. Orders from outside: 'You should / should not do this'.

Kant does not consider these as ethical duty. ✗

2. DUTY can be also SELF-imposed / internally imposed: Compliance is by one's own choice. The source is the sense of obligation is within the agent. If not done, answerable to no one else, but to oneself.

This is Kant's conception of ethical duty ✓

Orders to oneself: Imperatives, commands . E.g. 'I should do this', 'I should not do this'.

So, duty; what does duty mean? Now, usually when we talk about duty, we have this in mind that it is that the order is coming from somewhere outside of me; somebody else is barking orders at me that you should do this or you should not do this and so on. External; the force of that duty is external to me, it is imposed on me and why do you listen to that because you might be in awe with that authority or you may be afraid of that person or you may think that you are under the control. There is a power asymmetry here.

So, you do the compliance because of these reasons and Kant surely will not consider these as ethical duty. Kant would rather remind us that there can be also duties that we impose on ourselves; internally imposed, self imposed orders. You choose that I should do this. The nature of this command from you to yourself will be like this that I should do this or I should not do this and the source of this obligation therefore, is out of your own voluntary choice. If you do not do these duties, there is nobody external that you have to answer to, but you are answerable to yourself and this is where Kant says we first get the glimpse of what an ethical duty means.

So, once more the summary of this is that in Kant's ethics, deontological ethics duty means self imposed orders or imperatives.

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Kant's view of human beings as moral agents

- Human beings have a unique trait: They are capable of making their own rules, and of binding themselves to it by their free choice:

AUTONOMY, Self-legislation

Making one's own rules, and voluntarily submitting to it, being ruled by it

Kant: This is why humans are different from other natural things. This is why humans deserve 'respect' and treatment with dignity.

From Kant's view, ethics is based on voluntary choices.

Why do we; why does Kant think that there are self imposed duties or that we are even capable of committing ourselves to this kind of self imposed rules that is because Kant holds that we are very different from other species other things. Human beings have this special characteristic, unique trait he would call it. What is that? That they follow rules that are imposed from outside just like any other object. For example, if you look at this object, then it will follow the law of gravitation.

So, shall a human being; if you drop a human being, the human being will also drop because it has to follow the law of gravitation that is the physics law. But human being unlike this kind of objects have this capability to make their own rules. They can tell them such that I should do this that is going to be my life guiding principle. And they commit themselves to that role, the one that they have met for themselves by their free choice and that is what Kant would call autonomy.

See typically when we say autonomous or autonomy, we seem to think it means freedom, but what does autonomy mean? It means to be ruled by one's own rule; self legislation, legislated by oneself, but not by anybody else. So, autonomy does not mean ruthlessness. It just means that you are ruled by your own rules. This is a characteristic that conscious

actually sets human beings completely apart from any other natural things and this is the reason, this capacity to make rules for themselves and to commit themselves to that rule is why human beings deserve respect; why they deserve to be treated with respect and why we talk about human dignity?

So, this is the key to open this idea. So, therefore, from all of this we get one thing very very clearly; one is that we are talking about a class of agents who are capable in a way that nobody else can namely our autonomy; our capability to be autonomous and ethics has everything to do with this voluntary choices. So, duties are not imposed externally.

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Kant's Classification of self-imposed duty

- Two kinds. Not all self-imposed rules are ethical duties.

1. **Hypothetical or Conditional Imperative:** Self-imposed Duty conditional upon what I seek
E.g. If I want the job, then I should prepare for the job interview. X
[My self-imposed duty is dependent on a desire or inclination] Kant does not consider these as ethical duties. For, ethical duties are not supposed to be dependent on any desire / inclination. That desire may change. And then the duty will no longer remain obligatory.
2. **Categorical or unconditional imperative:** Self-imposed duty based on rational realization alone. **Obligatory by itself**, apart from whether we desire or not, whether it brings good result or not. No clauses, a duty is duty no matter what.
E.g. I should do.... Or I should not do ... ✓

Even self imposed duties that we have just talked about can be of two kinds and you will see that Kant is going to make this distinction very clear, that not all self imposed rules are qualified to be ethical duties. For example, the first class is called hypothetical or conditional imperatives. Imperative means order and conditional because it is contingent upon some conditions. So, it is a self imposed duty; it is a self imposed order, but it is conditional upon what I desire or what I am seeking and so on. Here is an example.

If I want the job; then I should prepare for the job interview. Who is telling that? You are telling yourself fine, but notice that this is the duty that you are setting for yourself, this is the rule that you are setting for yourself. But why, if I want a job, it is dependent the duty is dependent on this condition. And this is where Kant says that I do not consider

them as ethical duty. Why not? Because this duty then it is dependent on this whether I want the job or not. For example, if I say I don't want the job, the duty vanishes and Kant says that is not the nature of ethical duty. It does not vanish suddenly depended on my wanting it or desiring it or so on.

So, how does Kant see a duty that is the second version; categorical or unconditional imperative. This is conditional imperative which Kant says is not ethical duty and this is categorical absolute or unconditional imperative. It is a self-imposed duty, but why do you do that? There is no ifs and buts connected to it. You do that because you rationally realize that is the right thing to do. Kant wants only that much motivation to be there. It is obligatory by itself not because what kind of result it brings, not because whether I want it or not and there are no clauses, you know it is a duty no matter what.

So, here is the schematic form of a categorical imperative. I should do this or I should not do this and as you can see there are no clauses here. So, this is first let us clear that.

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Doing the right action from the right motive

- Duty is the right action, but in Kant's ethics it must be done from the right motive: A rational realization that it is the duty.

What cannot be right motive: ←

1. Self-interest: If someone does what seems to be 'good' action out of self-interest, it cannot be regarded as a genuinely, ethically worthy action.

E.g.: A shopkeeper who does not cheat his customers, because in the long run it will harm his business. The customers would come to know eventually and avoid buying from him.

Such actions deserves praise, can be called 'practically wise', but it does not deserve 'esteem'. It has no genuine moral worth.

Now, we have just got an inkling about through the categorical imperative that what Kant considers as ethical duty, but we are still not complete because I told you that for Kant, doing the right action is not enough it also has to be done from the right kind of motive. What is the right motive here? I told you that Kant only allows that it has to be the

realization that it is the duty, that realization should be based on reasoning alone which is why I am calling it a rational realization.

So, duty for the sake of doing duty; this is what Kant wants. What cannot be the right motive? First of all Kant says not self interest. If somebody does an action no matter how good it looks from the outside, but if the person knows that he or she is doing it because of some sort of vested self interest. Then, Kant is not ready to call it a genuinely ethically worthy action. This is his example in fact, which we can look into; for example he says that you know if you know of a shopkeeper in your neighborhood, who does not cheat his customers. So, from the outside he looks like a good person because not cheating his customers is a good thing to do.

But why Kant says ask him, why does he not cheat his customers? If the answer that the shopkeeper gives is that because he is aware that in the long term it is going to harm his business because you know if he cheats his customers, the word would go around, get around and the neighbors would be speaking to each other and sooner or later people will start avoiding his shop altogether, that is strategic and that is based on self interest.

So, he is doing something good, but out of self interest and Kant says well, if you ask me then this action certainly deserves praise. He is not cheating his customers and can be called practically wise prudent he says, wise he says. But it does not deserve esteem, it does not deserve moral respect and it has no genuine moral value.

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Doing the right action from the right motive

- What **cannot be** right motive:

2. Emotions /feelings/ impulses: Kant considered these as too unstable, too unreliable to serve as a stable basis for duty.

E.g. One day I feel pity, and I feel I should help 'x', next day I don't feel the same way about 'x'.

What is the right motive: **Respect for the moral law**. Based on reason.

Similarly, what else cannot be the right motive is emotions, feelings or impulses. You know sometimes we say that we feel good, I mean we do something good because it makes us feel good. We feel a genuine good feeling about ourselves. So, emotions or kindness, stirred by kindness, some sort of feeling a good about oneself; these are the motivations because of which we now engage in doing good action and Kant says this entire group are not the right kind of motives for doing ethical duty; why not?

Because Kant says these are too unstable and too unreliable, you cannot command that the same feeling will be there the next time. You cannot command that the same emotion is going to stir you to do the same action next time because they come and go these are fleeting mental states, and Kant says they cannot serve as the stable basis to act as the motive for doing ethical duty.

So, which means that he is looking for a permanent commitment to do ethical duty; so, therefore, the only motive that he allows is respect; rational realization and the respect that you feel because of the rational realization that this is the right thing to do. That is the only motivation, right motivation for doing the right action. Duty for doing duty; for duties sake and this is what Kant would allow.

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Three versions of the Categorical Imperative

The right action or duty must be done from the right rule, and in right manner.
Try testing the principle behind the action for:

- 1. Universalizability:** What if everybody did that? Can I rationally want that principle to become a universal law?
 - Typically, people like to make an exception in one's own case. But what is fair, should be fair for all.
- 2. Reversibility:** How would I like to be treated in the same way? Putting oneself in shoes of the other. The golden rule: Do unto others...
An action, which passes through both of these tests, is the duty.
If I cannot will my action to be universalizable or reversible, then it is not a duty.
- 3. Ends-in-themselves test:** Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether yourself or others, always as an end, never as a means only. People are never to be treated as means for advancing one's own interest.

Now, there are other things to also notice here one is that. So, we so far we have heard that the right action has to be done from the right motive and we know; now know what he means by right motive, but there is also the fact that it has to be done from the right rule and in the right manner. So, bringing a good result is not never enough if it is done in a wrong manner. So, what would be the right rule and right manner? For these things, Kant has given us three formulations of the categorical imperative. Take a look now first of all let me explain what do I mean by the rule? The principle behind the action say let us take an example. So, suppose you take an instance that you promised somebody you are going to help all right.

So, this now if you promised somebody, the action that you are considering at certain point that I promised, so I should help the other person. And behind this if you help, then the rule behind that action would be everybody who has promised should keep their promises. This is the rule behind the action.

Let us compare with another scenario that you have promised somebody that you are going to help, but on that very day that the person is seeking your health, there is a very interesting match on TV or you have some other engagement at in your office or are somewhere in the family and you are thinking whether you should keep your promise or not.

So, there the action that you are contemplating behind that the rule would be that I have met the promise, but maybe I can make an exception that I do not need to keep the promise. The rule is everybody who has made the promise, need not keep their promises. See that, this is the rule behind action.

Now, what does Kant say? That Kant says that all such rules you need to put through this kind of test. He has given us three tests; one is what is known as Universalizability, not universality; universalizability, it simply says that you need to run through your mind a sort of a thought experiment that whatever rule I am currently considering what if everybody did that; what if that rule became a universal law of some sort that everybody keeps doing it.

Now, take the second case for example, that everybody who makes a promise need not keep it. What if it becomes the entire world starts to follow that and would you like to live in that world is basically what Kant would ask you. Now, typically what happens Kant notices that typically we make exceptions for ourselves. We would like to say that everybody else must keep their promises made to me, but I; because I have another engagement you know it is an exceptionally serious engagement, I am allowed to break my promises and Kant says that is exactly what I am trying to stop.

If it is an universal rule it means that it applies to everybody; no matter who you are including you. So, this is the basis of the universalizability rule. Reversibility, it is much easier for us to understand is how would I like to be treated; would I like to be treated in the same way as I am considering to treat the others now. You know this is known as the golden rule do unto others as you would have them done unto you.

So, putting oneself in the shoes of the other person, this is reversibility. What if we reverse the positions; And the rule, for example, if you say that everybody need who makes the promise need not keep the promises is also can be put through the reversibly. How would I like to be treated? Would I like to be treated in the same way, if somebody makes a promise to me and that then does not keep the promise; would I like to be treated in the same way.

So, these are the tests and remember an action has to pass through both of these tests in order to be considered as a duty. If the rule or the action does not pass through both of

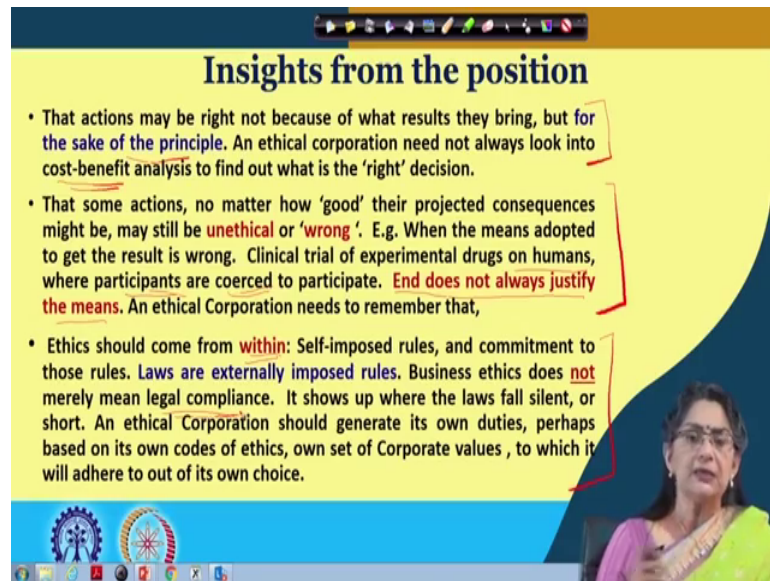
these states then, it is not a duty. And the third one the third formulation of categorical imperative clearly talks about the manner, the right manner. It says that you must always act in a way so that you are not treating humanity or human beings merely as a means.

The wording actually is act in such a way that you always treat humanity whether yourself or others always as an end. End isn't the final ultimate goal and never as a means only. What does treating people as means, means? It means that you are using people as a stepping stool for getting to some other goal, may be those are your personal goals and you are using people to get there.

So, the operative word here is never. Never as a means only ok; only is also another operative word. So, to treat somebody merely as a means you are exploiting that person, using that person for your own altarium goal. On the other hand, this says that people are to be treated as final goal. You know the example might be that you know you can make friends with somebody because you want to make friends, that is treating the person as the end the other person as an end. But if you are making friends with somebody so that this person can introduce you to somebody else, then this friendship is nothing, but using the other person merely as a means.

Once the introduction is done, you are soon going to cut off the relationship with the second person perhaps and Kant does not like that. So, what is the message here? The message here is ethical duty will never be involving a treatment to peoples, where you are using people merely as a means. If it does, then it cannot be a duty. So, that is not the right manner.

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Insights from the position

- That actions may be right not because of what results they bring, but for the sake of the principle. An ethical corporation need not always look into cost-benefit analysis to find out what is the 'right' decision.
- That some actions, no matter how 'good' their projected consequences might be, may still be unethical or 'wrong'. E.g. When the means adopted to get the result is wrong. Clinical trial of experimental drugs on humans, where participants are coerced to participate. End does not always justify the means. An ethical Corporation needs to remember that,
- Ethics should come from within: Self-imposed rules, and commitment to those rules. Laws are externally imposed rules. Business ethics does not merely mean legal compliance. It shows up where the laws fall silent, or short. An ethical Corporation should generate its own duties, perhaps based on its own codes of ethics, own set of Corporate values , to which it will adhere to out of its own choice.

So, what do we learn? Now this is a very what should I say very big theory in terms of its philosophical worth and their enormous complexity here. I have tried to present it in a nutshell and making it as simple as possible. So, that all everybody can understand now what do we get; what are the insights that we can take away from here. And I think there are important lessons here to learn. For example, that you know first of all that we can notice here is that the actions can be considered as right not because what the fetch as result, but for the sake of the principle.

There may be actions which are right because of the underlying word, an ethical corporation need to understand that. That every action need not be understood in terms of some sort of benefit that it brings to it, but sometimes the right action needs to be done because it is the right action. The second one is the points out that you know, that some actions can be dead wrong ethically; no matter how much good, they promise to bring as their result. Think about you know bringing the right result, but using a very wrong means.

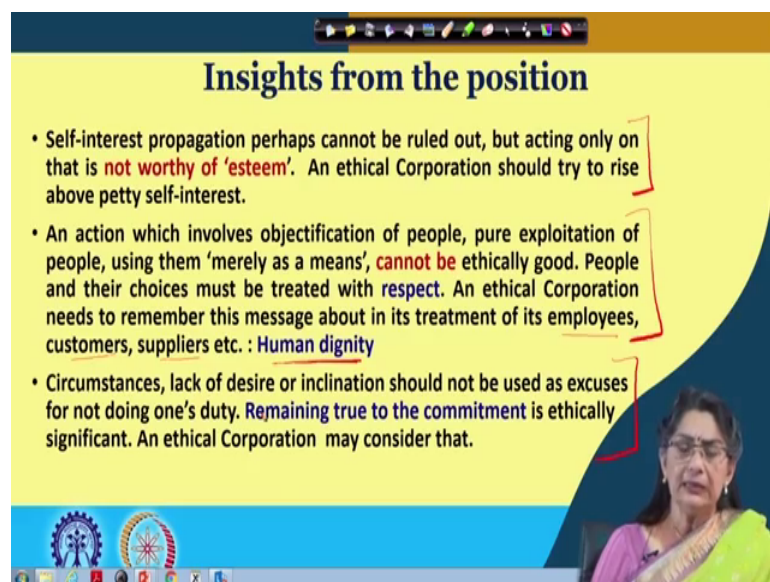
So, this is not, this theory would not come down that. For example, think about you know a clinical trial pharmaceutical companies do clinical trial on experimental drugs and sometimes they have to do the human trial and the end result or the outcome that the thing is going to do a lot of service to humankind. But, what if you in order to reach that human good, you use human participants forcefully without their consent. In fact, you

grab them or abduct them and then, you conduct experimental drugs on to them a clinical trials on to them, and that Kant would say is completely against what we understand as ethical duty.

So, the result is not the idea. The end actually does not always justify the means if the means is wrong the matter ends there, it is a wrong action according to this kind of a theory. What else did we learn? We also learned that ethics has to come from within it has to be self imposed because we are autonomous creatures. Our organizations also be like that, that we do not need to understand business ethics, merely as legal compliance because laws are after all externally imposed orders.

Following the laws is not ethics, we have talked about it. So, where do you get to see business ethics? Where the laws fall silent or the laws do not even exist and that is where we start to see what the ethical corporation would do in those cases is to follow the dictates of its own conscience. Now, in an organizational setup what acts as its conscience and it might be you know the its own set codes of ethics perhaps or its own set of corporate values for example, and this would be directives that itself it would impose on itself.

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Insights from the position

- Self-interest propagation perhaps cannot be ruled out, but acting only on that is **not worthy of 'esteem'**. An ethical Corporation should try to rise above petty self-interest.
- An action which involves objectification of people, pure exploitation of people, using them 'merely as a means', **cannot be** ethically good. People and their choices must be treated with **respect**. An ethical Corporation needs to remember this message about in its treatment of its employees, customers, suppliers etc. : **Human dignity**
- Circumstances, lack of desire or inclination should not be used as excuses for not doing one's duty. **Remaining true to the commitment** is ethically significant. An ethical Corporation may consider that.

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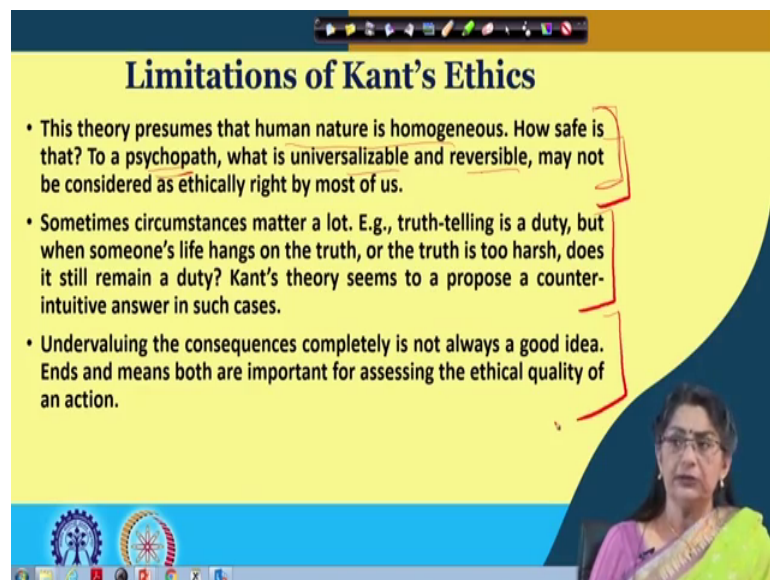
What else that you know self interest if it is the motive of the action, then it is not a worthy of moral respect; this is what we learned from Kant. So, an ethical corporation is

advised that it needs to rise above the set petty self interest. There is also that you know objectification of people is what Kant has told us not to engage in. So, even if the corporation is doing excellent work, but if it includes or involves you know exploitation of its people.

Say either its employees or its customers or at the suppliers or society in general; then, we cannot say that it's actually being an ethical corporation. Why? Because its violating a basic cardinal principle of treating people with dignity, they have to be given the respect; where, respect means that you respect their choices. You need to give them an opportunity to choose.

And finally, that you know Kant has told us that you know desire or inclination are not the right motive for doing ethical duty. So, you cannot cite circumstances that held you back from doing your duty or you cannot cite lack of desire or inclination as excuses for not doing one's duty. So, if first of all the self imposed obligation is duty; second is that you remain true to the commitment not because you want your desire to its more like because you understand that, that is the right thing to do.

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Limitations of Kant's Ethics

- This theory presumes that human nature is homogeneous. How safe is that? To a psychopath, what is universalizable and reversible, may not be considered as ethically right by most of us.
- Sometimes circumstances matter a lot. E.g., truth-telling is a duty, but when someone's life hangs on the truth, or the truth is too harsh, does it still remain a duty? Kant's theory seems to propose a counter-intuitive answer in such cases.
- Undervaluing the consequences completely is not always a good idea. Ends and means both are important for assessing the ethical quality of an action.

So, this is what I thought would be the learning takeaways from our discussion for today about from the point of view of an ethical corporation. Are there problems in this theory;

are there shortcomings in this theory? Yes, there are some criticisms, I am not to mention all of them, but I am going to refer to few just to open your eyes to that.

That one is that you know when we try out the universalizability reversibility, there is a very basic claim in this theory that all human beings have the same kind of a nature. That all of us would agree on what is universalizable and what is reversible, but how safe is that presumption.

For example, think about a somebody who is very different from us they look like us, but the very different. I am talking about a psychopath; who does not understand other people's emotions, who does not understand other people's pain for example. So, for that person what is universalizable and reversible may not be an ethically right action. So, I am saying that there may be actions which would fill Kant's criteria from because it is all very person oriented, individual oriented.

So, according to that person, he will find many things you know inflicting pain on others as universalizable and reversible, but we would not condone it. And sometimes, you know this whole undervaluation of circumstances and outcome both are problematic as we all know very well. For example, think about truth telling.

Now, we all understand honesty is a good virtue and the truth telling is a duty, but there are circumstances when you start to question that, that you know whether we should tell the truth. For example, if somebody is terminally ill; do I go and tell the person that you are going to die tomorrow or when the truth is too harsh, should we really unleash that truth on somebody who is emotionally unstable.

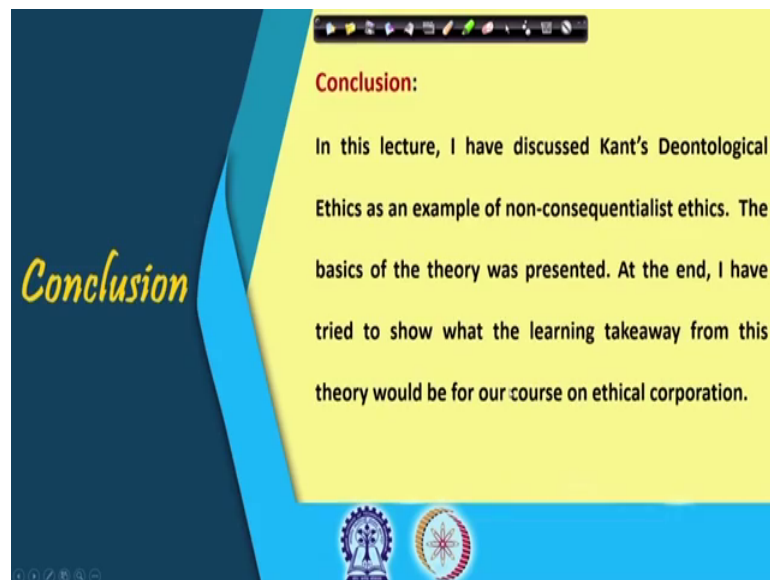
So, Kant theory seems to propose there something very counterintuitive; yes, that you should, but maybe we need to think a little about that. Similarly, the same point can be made about consequences that sometimes, we understand that ends do not justify the means; but it is also not the case that the ends, do not even be considered or not to be considered because both means an end are important for assessing ethical quality of an action.

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So, this is where I think we have reached the end of the discussion here. I have given some references for you in case you want to follow through.

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And in general therefore, we have looked into one example of non consequentialist ethics, Kant's deontological ethics. And I have talked about various facets and the limitations of this theory and the implications of this theory for our course ethical corporation. So, thank you this is where I am going to end this lecture.

Thank you.