

2. Immanuel Kant

In his quote Kant ponders the question of war and its motives. Why there is war and why it should be forbidden? Kant's answer to this question is that "war is not the way in which everyone should seek his rights". One of the smaller questions is also the question of war's nature, to which Kant says there are two kinds of war: one between individuals in the state of nature and one between states. Kant uses such conceptions like a state, which I take to be a nation; a right that which I see as a lawful right; and "a morally practical reason" which is a reference to Kant's ethics.

The quotation however doesn't have much premises presented for the main assertion("war is not the way in which everyone should seek his rights") in addition to a ambiguous reference to "morally practical reason", maybe mostly so because they are so well-known and one of the Kant's great legacies to philosophy. In short, to understand Kant's view one must see his famous ethics behind it(and also political views, presented later). Kant was a supporter of deontological ethics, even the father of them. One of the main ideas was that an act is morally right only if it is done based on the motives of executing one's duty. Moreover Kant formulated in the spirit of moral objectivism the one moral rule that encompasses – and surpasses – every other: the categorial imperative. The categorial imperative has four different but closely related forms that are usually refereed into two forms: the formal and modal form. The formal form tells you to act so that your act could become an universal law; the modal form tells you to treat a human as an end itself, and never as a tool. From this basis it is easy to see one of the premises to Kant's reasoning, since in Kant's opinion the worst injustice is to hurt a human being.

In general no one is bound to disagree with Kant about the value of human life, and neither am I. The heated criticism is generally directed to the idea of motives. Does it really matter what my motives were, if the result is same? Kant argued it does, since the deed can't be moral if the motives are not pure. I must agree with Kant. For instance let's consider this example. I am walking on a street and I see a child playing on a driveway. The lights turn red and I see a car coming at a great speed towards the child. In a flash I dive to driveway, snatch the kid into my arms and run to the cover just in time before the car would have hit us. Now the kid's mother bursts out from a nearby house, and being deeply grateful offers me a big amount of money as a thanks of saving her beloved child. Would you call me a very ethical

person, if before the deed I would have anticipated some kind of a prize would wait me for the heroic deed and I would have acted solely on the purpose of acquiring it? Probably not (unless you support egoism), since my motives would represent pure egoism. I wouldn't have spared a thought for the child's life; only thing that mattered would have been my possible material gain from the deed. A strive to acquire money is not very noble or moral principle whereas endangering my life for the sake of a child is a superegalitarian deed, unquestionably an unnecessary act for me to do; therefore considered very noble and highly ethical. Indeed a law that would require people to save others on the purpose of acquiring money might produce quite chaotic results, at least to the economy after everyone would have a pay rescue fee for each occasion and saviour, but a law about saving others just for the sake of their life could be a more successful one since rescuers wouldn't expect the money and therefore nobody would have to give it (unless they want to).

While the categorical imperative has its pros, it also has its cons. Let's go back to the example of a child in the driveway but let us change the ending. This time I would have been too slow to act and the child would have tragically died in the crash. Now the mother would in her devastating grief blame me for the child's death and in order to avenge her child's death, she would ask do I have any children, siblings or such, and where do they live, so that she could murder one of them. According to the imperative I could not lie, so as a result one of my relatives would die. Not a very happy ending indeed, is it? Still I see the categorical imperative as the very road to goodness, for there is one loophole in this kind of a common counterargument. The mother, of course, would not support the categorical imperative! If the categorical imperative is universal, like Kant intended it, it follows everyone should adopt it as their moral rule, including the mother. In that case none of my relatives would be in danger, although the tragedy would still exist in the death of the child. For this humankind has not yet figured out a solution, otherwise than Epicurus's rather crude stoic advice of imagining it daily and so adjusting to the idea of it. Another problem of Kant's ethics is that it strictly forbids superegalitarian deeds which I presented in my example since I would consider my life higher than another's and see mine as a way to save another life, therefore breaking the rule; a reason which is exactly why I chose this particular example. Truly I don't support the categorical imperative in its most literal form for just this problem. Rather I make my own interpretation of it by adding these premises behind it: firstly all lives are equal; and secondly, human life should be protected due to its value, in practically reasonable measures aka according to Kant's principle. In that case the categorical imperative becomes more easily applicable and superbly ingenious, while allowing superegalitarian deeds, in my opinion the very peak of human courage and integrity.

In this point, having covered the ethical basis for the main assertion, it is time to change the topic; in essence head for the part where the quotation heads for the field of political philosophy and where we have to look for the other premise founded in the context; in

word, Kant's views on society. Kant, like many colleagues of his time, was a supporter of social contracts. How Kant justified and defined a social contract though, differs (more or less) from ideas of his peers such as Locke and Hobbes. Kant, before anything, saw the social contract as means to end the war. Even if there is no state in a natural condition(which to Kant refers in the quote as "the state of nature"), people will not want to fight each other(the very claim found in the quote) for living is more important. So in order to have security for their lives humans will give up their natural freedom and form a social contract that guarantees there is no war between them; and thus a state is born. Then why any state wars, if the state is supposed to protect its citizens from war and be an ethically right and justified state? Kant seems to think in that case the state is looking for its own rights and benefit by warring with other states, perhaps to secure to their own security. Then what does the sentence about external and internal lawful conditions mean? How can be that the state can lawful internally but not externally, even if it is warring? Now is time to bring in the last premise from Kant, because furthermore Kant argued that the state must encompass the whole world in order to produce proper results. The Kant's ideal state would of course base its laws according to the categorical imperative, and therefore warring, as an act breaking the imperative, would mean that there is no law between the states, so being lawful internally but not externally. To have both states externally lawful, the only possibility would be that states all commit to the categorical imperative like its universal nature demands, and in the end this procedure would produce one state that encompasses the world; a view goes nowadays more commonly by the term of cosmopolitanism and sporting "the citizenship of the world" as one of its headlines(although not always supporting the notion of one state encompassing the world but more commonly of equal human rights).

Now as the whole basis for Kant's assert has been covered, we can ask what we actually think of Kant's reasoning. I find it as a rather appealing option, but it has also its flaws. The biggest flaw in my opinion, or the most uncomprehendable claim, is the "one-world-state". Why I found it that way is that of its question about innate coherence and problems of pluralism. If the whole world shares the same laws, one must ask what these laws are, especially concerning the rights of which Kant speaks of. Do certain cultures have special rights, or does this violate the idea of equality? How about the rights of men and women as well? It is a very tricky question. One way to think about it would be to apply the ideas of equality of chance and the fair play from John Rawls, so that either no one or everyone should have special rights. How this would work in practice? Let's take a look at an example. If an ethnic group has the right to a holiday on one day of the year, according to a fair play everyone should have this right. The problem becomes when somebody doesn't want to have an holiday, but it is against the law to go to work. The state would therefore have to deny the individual's right to choose about their work (holi)days. Sounds specific, but the problem is general, concerning the individuals rights' in comparison to the collective's rights. . Moreover this kind of society would eventually end up in a uniform condition culturally,

since according to fair play every group or individual must possess same rights, so destroying the diversity of cultures and undermining the very concept of a special right. One way to solve this problem would be discard the idea of fair play, and allow just that one group have the special right to a holiday. This would mean that people are not equal when born, which could lead to political conflicts about rights within the nation. Some kind of solution could be the veil of ignorance, for then people would not set the problematical right in the first place. Sadly, the result could be the same even if the whole right would not exist; different ethnic groups could question their right to choose their religion and celebrate their god(s), bringing restlessness and problems to the country.

One good side of the Kant's notion is that it offers a reasonable explanation and solution to wars. How should it though be executed is the main question. I would offer this kind of a solution; instead of going the literal way again, let's take a broader angle to the idea. What if the states would all commit to the categorical imperative, but just not share other laws? That way we could have different culture areas without having the problem of equality of result or chance nor the fair play. It would also bring the result of having uniform culture within the state, but not lose the multiculturalism in the world. In that case there could be possibility of stable and secure environment without political problems. Now let's look at this in the modern world. The very closest example of this kind of approach is the United Nations and the agreement of equal human rights. The problem that is now present is not the possible political conflicts, but the fact not every state has signed to agreement or that it isn't working in reality. Otherwise it has been the best and most satisfying way of organizing the society so far, by supporting the rights of the individual but also granting some freedom to collective cultures.

Now this is something I could agree with, but not with the Kant's uniform and gigantic state. The only problem with my view, though, is the same that Kant had; its imminent unpracticality. How to have everybody to follow this, is rather simple. If everyone starts the change from his or hers own person by committing to categorical imperative, we could have brighter world indeed with no wars and still saving the multiculturalism. Every person is equal, and so is every culture. The real trick is not realising or accepting these facts, but starting to making them real, one by one. We are the world, truly!