

The Condition of Universal Validity as Kant's Ethical Razor

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Even though the modern criminal law claims to cover the minimum of morality, it does not concern itself with ethics. Its value judgements are based on experience, tradition and the democratic legislative process that reaches its conclusions by voting. On the other hand Kant's ethics seeks the truth about good and evil. Kant believes that the categorical imperative clearly defines the limits of ethics and grounds the possibility of rational ethical judgements. The formula of the universal law demands the radical equality of each and every man: the ethical maxim cannot qualify as such if it is not valid potentially for everyone. The universalizability test, which is composed of several phases, classifies maxims according to their ethical potential. Evil is observed in the form of logical contradiction. In his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* Kant illustrates the universalization test with examples concerning suicide, false promise, cultivation of talents and helping others in hardship. Even though the universalization test opens many questions and possible objections it clearly grounds ethics on the complementary reciprocity of all humans and rejects inequality and exclusion as legitimate basis of value judgements.

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