Welcome back. Today we’re going to start our discussions of the ethics of moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant. Kant is the second great moral theory of the modern era. Actually, Kant is earlier than Mill. The reason we do utilitarianism first, frankly, is because it's much easier. It's a nice way to ease students into moral philosophy, to get them thinking about sort of the big issues and questions. And because Kant’s moral philosophy and Mill's moral philosophy are so influential today and, in a sense, represent two poles of a single modern worldview, ethical worldview, it’s sort of doesn’t matter which one you do first. And so I always elect to do the easiest one first just to ease students into the subject.

But Kant’s moral philosophy represents other great tradition in the modern west and I think it’s not at all an exaggeration to say that to this day Kantianism on the one hand and utilitarianism on the other are the two most prevalent, most influential moral theories today.

Like the utilitarians, Kant is trying to offer an account of the rightness and wrongness of actions, an account which will yield moral principles and rules. Now, also like utilitarianism Kant’s moral philosophy embodies some of the core assumptions, the core modern assumptions, about human nature. In a lot of ways, between the utilitarian and the Kantian, we really have almost all of the elements of the modern conception of human nature and, especially in Kant’s case, of the individual. And I will talk a little bit more about utilitarianism and Kantianism’s contribution to the modern conception of human nature and of the individual when we start our discussions on political philosophy with which we’ll end this course.

Suffice it to say for now that Kant’s moral philosophy is really Kant complementary to Mill’s. The two of them together really sort of represent the entirety of the modern way of thinking about ethics — or at least the vast bulk of the modern way of thinking about ethics. But they are indeed complementary in that each of them
is sort of an opposite of the other. Each fills a void that the other leaves open.

So, for example, where utilitarianism is consequentialist, Kantianism is
deontological. Utilitarianism focuses on increasing human misery, Kantianism is
concerned almost entirely with the autonomy and integrity of the individual. So
utilitarianism is considered with the general good, with the welfare of human beings as a
whole. Kantianism is an ethic that focuses very much the integrity and the autonomy of
the free individual.

In almost every respect where the one theory goes left, the other theory goes
right. Where one is lacking, the other is strong. In that sense, what I like to tell
students when I teach this in a live class is that really Kant and Mill each have one piece
of the truth. The trouble is that they don’t have the whole of the truth and to the extent
to which their theories are mutually incompatible, they can’t really be combined to sort
of complete the truth. It’s my view that the phenomenon that we call morality is a much
more fragmented, heterogeneous phenomenon than any of these moral theories make
out. These moral theories make out that morality can be systematized almost in a way
like mathematics, that there can be a complete, unified, coherent, logically grounded
theory of morality, and I just tend not to think that that’s the case. And so whenever we
encounter any of these great moral systems, it always seems to me that they’ve got a
piece of the truth but that they’re missing a great many other pieces.

And there has actually been a thread within ethical — within moral philosophy
over the centuries — there has been a thread of sort of skepticism about the very
endeavor of moral philosophy, the very practice of trying to — of theorizing in a
systematic way about morality. One of the most famous critics of moral philosophy of
this type was the philosopher, H. A. Pritchard, who in the first part of the 20th century
wrote a very important paper called “Does Moral Philosophy Rest on a Mistake,” in
which a critique is levied against the very idea of systematic ethics of the kind that both
Mill and Kant are producing. If we were in a course solely devoted to ethics, I would certainly flesh out those criticisms. Because, in my view, those criticisms are very powerful and, in my view, as of yet there have not been satisfactory responses on behalf of a systematic ethical theory, I will just have to leave it as a tantalizing possible line of critique for now.

Let’s just say a few things about Immanuel Kant by way of biography. Kant is the last major philosopher of the Enlightenment. After Kant we begin what’s called Romanticism in philosophy. That doesn’t mean that there aren’t any philosophers after Kant who might be considered Enlightenment thinkers. In many ways I think that John Stewart Mill and Jeremy Bentham who come in the next generation are Enlightenment thinkers. But Kant is really the last great Enlightenment philosopher.

It’s sort of difficult to give a biography for Kant because so little of event actually happened in his life. He was a very — had a very sort of methodical, regular, in many ways predictable life. Of course, that doesn’t apply to his philosophy which is truly remarkable. He spent his entire working life as a professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Konigsberg. What’s interesting about Kant is, unlike some of the other philosophers we’ve read — like, for example, David Hume whose first great work, I think, appeared when he was something like 26 years old — all of Kant’s major works were written after he was 60. He was in this sense, I think, a late bloomer.

He’s most famous for his work in three areas: epistemology and metaphysics — that’s one; ethics; and aesthetics is the third. He had an enormous influence on the romanticism of the following century. That is, there’s a whole wave of philosophy that comes out of Kant that’s often called post-Kantian idealism, which is a romanticist — romantic form of philosophy that predominates in the generation after Kant into the 19th century.

And what’s sort of ironic about this is that the essence of Kant’s philosophy, at
least one of the centers of Kant’s philosophy, has to do with this idea of the limits of philosophical inquiry and scientific inquiry — indeed, all forms of rational inquiry. If you think about the beginning of the Enlightenment as representing infinite promise — all right. This idea that, well, you know, we’re just on the cusp of knowing everything there is to know about the universe which is not a surprising attitude if you think about the fact that in the early parts of the Enlightenment the scientific revolution had just hit and people were still sort of awed and impressed by the leaps in knowledge that were being made.

And so it’s not surprising that people who, at the beginning of the Enlightenment, people like Descartes and others, were sort of overly optimistic. But by the time we get to the end of the Enlightenment, people like Hume and now Kant — there was kind of a sobriety that sets in, a realization that human knowledge has limits, that inquiry has limits, that there’s a limit to what it is possible to know and that philosophy in particular should not attempt to push beyond those limits because the results are never good when one goes beyond those limits.

Hume certainly talks a lot about this, which we’ve discussed, and Kant — one whole part of Kantian philosophy is devoted to outlining these limits. So it’s a little ironic that a romantic tradition of philosophy claims him as an heir considering that one of the hallmarks of romanticism is a kind of limitless speculation, especially to the mystical and metaphysical speculation, all of which is the kind of stuff that Kant would have despised. And indeed, Kant publicly denounced one of these so-called followers of the philosopher Thickta. Kant publicly denounced him in a letter sort to the effect of saying, “Well, this guy may claim me as an influence, but I certainly don’t see him as my progeny.”

So he had an enormous influence on the following century, an influence that was somewhat ironic. His influence has remained very strong in continental Europe.
has had much less influence in the English-speaking world with one great exception and this is his moral philosophy. His moral philosophy has been incredibly influential. But his epistemology and metaphysics and his aesthetic theories have been more influential on the continent of Europe than they have been in England, America, Australia, and the other English-speaking nations.

Kant’s most important works — he’s got a huge roster. I would suggest that any of these philosophers we’re talking about — if you’re really interested, just go Google them or look them up on Wikapedia on one of the on-line sources and you’ll get a lot of interesting stuff. But I think that at least a number of works upon which there is consensus that they are amongst his greatest are The Critique of Pure Reason, the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, the Critique of Practical Reason, and the Critique of Judgment.

Let me just say right now that Kant’s work is vast, it’s intricate, it’s difficult, it’s paradigm shifting, and one can only deal with him inadequately in a class like this. I like to think that you’re going to get a glimpse of one tiny corner of Kantian philosophy but more importantly you’re going to get a glimpse at one of two major modern ways of thinking about ethical theory. But by no means feel yourself into thinking you’ve gotten an education in Kantian philosophy because two days worth of lecture certainly isn’t enough to be able to say that.

Let’s get started with the details. As Mill does, Kant’s moral philosophy begins first with sort of a discussion of value, with analysis and an investigation of what are the things that are of value and specifically what is of intrinsic value. Kant starts right off saying that the only thing of intrinsic value is a good will. I believe this is the very first sentence of The Groundwork, page 7 in your Kant. “It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world or indeed even beyond it that could be considered good without limitation except a good will.” He’s saying a good will is the only thing that is
unconditionally good, that is intrinsically good.

Now, obviously we haven’t defined what the good will is yet, and I’m gonna ask you to hold off just one moment and just sort of have an intuitive sense of what he means. Why does he think this? Well, he’s got a very interesting argument. He says look. Anything else that you might want to call good, whether it’s a commodity (money), a character trait (courage), fortune (long life, good health are partly matters of fortune), anything that we might consider to be good can be turned bad if attached to a bad will.

All right. So think about the things I just mentioned. Money. Is money goo? Well, it’s good if a good person is making use of it, right? Money in the hands of a bad person is not a good. If anything, it’s an evil. We don’t want rich tyrants. We don’t want rich mass murderers. We don’t want rich bad people, right? Because what are they gonna do? They’re gonna use their wealth to bad ends.

Similarly, you take a character trait like courage. Is courage good? Well, again, it’s good in a good person. But you don’t want a courageous Nazi general, right? Because that means he’s going to succeed in advancing the dastardly causes of his masters. So even a character trait like courage, Kant wants to say, is only good if one presupposes that the will behind the courage is a good will. And the same thing with fortune. It’s great fortune if you’re blessed with good genes and you’re gonna live to be 100. But again, if you’re a bad person, nobody wants you to live to be 100. They’d rather you’d die young — you know, have heart failure.

So Kant says anything that we deem good, its goodness is dependent upon there being a good will operating behind them. Where the will is bad, none of these goods are good any longer. Let me just read the rest of that passage to see where he says this. He says, quote, “Understanding with judgment and the like, whatever such talents of mine may be called, or courage, resolution and perseverance in one’s plans as
qualities of temperament, are undoubtedly good and desirable for many purposes but they can also be extremely evil and harmful if the will which is to make use of these gifts of nature and whose distinctive constitution is therefore called character is not good. Power, riches, honor, even health and the complete well-being and satisfaction which one calls happiness produces boldness and thereby often arrogance as well unless a good will is present which corrects the influence of these in the mind and in so doing also corrects the whole principle of action and brings it into conformity with universal ends."

So Kant thinks that the only thing that's intrinsically good, the only thing good in itself, the only thing unconditionally good is a good will. His main reason is that everything else — the good of everything else, the value of everything else, depends upon its being employed by good will and that bad will has the power to turn any potential good into an evil.

We're also going to see as we continue on fleshing out Kant's position — we're also going to see that Kant — the development of the good will, the development of the moral character, represents the pinnacle of human fulfillment. And in this sense Kant is very much like Aristotle. Although Kant's conception of reality is very different from Aristotle's — there's gonna be no talk about moderation; there's gonna be no talk about, you know, balancing desires and things like that — Kant is very much going to say that moral duties pushes against desire, in opposition to desire.

In the larger sense of this idea that morally developed character or personality represents the ends of a human being, represents sort of the pinnacle of human development and thus constitutes human fulfillment and achievement, this the two philosophers have very much in common. And so we'll want to keep an eye on that, especially because of the way that Kant thinks about — construes the good will, which is what I want to talk about now.
So what exactly is a good will? We’ve just been told that the only intrinsic good — he’s given us some interesting reasons for thinking about that although we still haven’t really defined it. We’re still working with only an intuitive sense of the concept. So what is a good will? Well — and I’m gonna put it in a formula which we’ll then unpack — good will, Kant thinks, is a free, rational will that acts from duty rather than desire. So the good will is a free, rational will which acts from duty rather than desire. And we want to break this down into elements, this account into elements, and then we can discuss each of the elements.

So for one thing the good will represents the moral personality. What a moral person is is someone with a good will. He says the good will is always a free will and so there’s a connection here between the idea of morality on the one hand and the idea of freedom on the other. Kant thinks — and this is another sort of interesting aspect of his philosophy — Kant thinks that it’s only we obey the moral law that we are actually free. Now, this sounds somewhat paradoxical. How can you construe freedom as a matter of obedience? And this is sort of one of the most interesting aspects of Kant’s philosophy. Kant really thinks that we are least free when we are most free. That is, when we are unrestrained by the moral law is when we are the least free, Kant thinks. It’s when we are voluntarily constrained by the moral law that we are most free. And this is something we’ll have to tease out as we go along and I promise you that we will.

The third element of this — notice I said a good will is a free rational will that acts from duty rather than desire. A third element of this is the idea that the demands of duty are the demands of reason, that the morally right thing to do is always the rational thing to do. This is also gonna be an important part of Kant’s moral philosophy because when we finally get around to formulating Kant’s supreme moral principle which is really sort of a test for whether an action is right or wrong, the chief attribute that’s gonna be looked for in our actions is a kind of consistency of principle, a logical
consistency of principle, and this is the sense in which — this reflects the sense in 
which for Kant moral obligation is always a rule of reason. The laws of morality are 
laws of rationality. They are laws that bind all rational creatures.

Okay. So let’s now start discussing each of these elements separately. Let’s 
talk about moral obligation and the good will. This idea that one of the things that 
defines good will is that it’s a will that acts from duty and what this all says about moral 
obligation and about us.

Kant believes that it is our capacity to recognize and freely choose to act upon 
the moral law that defines us as human beings. What it is to be a human being in the 
fullest sense of the word is to be a creature that recognizes moral obligation and 
voluntarily chooses to act upon it. So the autonomous individual, the free individual 
who follows the moral on his own accord, this represents the pinnacle of human 
evolution for Kant. It represents the human good for Kant in the Aristotelian sense of 
the human good. Kant thinks we are literally designed for morality. We are designed 
as duty followers, he thinks. We are not designed, Kant says — we are not designed 
for the pursuit of happiness. This is a fascinating point.

So take happiness in the utilitarian sense, this idea — all right. Happiness for 
the utilitarian is when one’s desires have been satisfied. When one’s desires have 
been satisfied and when one’s pain and frustrations have been eliminated. That’s 
happiness for the utilitarian. Kant says human beings are not designed for this or at 
least not primarily for this. Kant is not denying that people are capable of being happy. 
What he says is being happy does not constitute the fulfillment of human nature. It 
does not represent the fulfillment of man’s essence. We are designed for morality. 
We are not designed, at least primarily, for the pursuit of happiness.

Now, why on earth does Kant think this? His argument is interesting though it 
goes a bit around in order to get to the point. I’ll try and summarize it the best I can.
Kant begins with the assumption that nature is supremely efficient. In other words, he says nature does not create anything whose chief characteristics are at odds with their functions. So, for example, think about — let’s take an internal organ. Take a heart. A heart is designed in a certain way. It’s got a certain number of essential attributes that comprise its form, its structure. Those essential characteristics are directly related to its function. Indeed, it’s because these are a heart’s essential characteristics that this is its function.

What Kant wants to say is that this is a universal principle. See, I’m talking about functions and it makes me think of Aristotle. Kant thinks this is a universal principle of nature, that nature is always efficient. Nature does not create anything in such a way that its chief attributes are not in harmony with its function. Now, given that general principle of nature, Kant says the following about human beings. “The standout characteristic of a human being is his or her capacity for rational reflection and deliberation.” In this Kant is just sounding the same horn as so many philosophers have sounded. Human beings are defined by their reason. What distinguishes us from the animals is reason.

All right. So human beings are defined — so in talking in this way about nature and about central characteristics being tied in an essential way to functions, the central characteristic for a human being for Kant is the capacity for rational deliberation and reflection. So reason is the chief attribute of a human being as designed by nature. Kant then goes on to observe the following. He says, “Reason as a faculty, as a capacity, is not very well suited to the pursuit of happiness.” The pursuit of happiness involves the satisfaction of desire, the elimination of pain and frustration, right? What Kant is saying is for those jobs — for the job of increasing pleasure and reducing pain, reason is not well suited.

Indeed, he says that the pursuit of happiness is much more efficiently
accomplished by uninterrupted, unreflected upon instinct. The best example of an efficient desire satisfier is an animal, an animal with a highly tuned set of instincts. Human reason, Kant says, gets in the way of the pursuit of happiness. It’s when we deliberate and reflect that we consider what we desire, that we consider what it is we’re going to do, what it is we ought to do. It’s in deliberation and reflection that we ask ourselves the question ought I to do this or should I do that? This does not facilitate the pursuit of happiness. It, if anything, obstructs it. It gives us pause in the course of action we’re considering.

And think if you reflect upon — just think about your own experience. I think this is very true of people in general. You’re most likely to efficiently follow your desires when you don’t think about it too much, especially when the desires are leading — the desire is pointing you in bad directions. Think about it. When a person wants to do something, wants to pursue a desire that they shouldn’t, that they shouldn’t pursue, the most efficient way to do it is to do something to turn your rationality off. So, for example, a person may get drunk. One of the things that drunkenness does is it blunts the capacity to deliberate. It blunts the rational mind.

And so I think that Kant is on to something with this idea that reason is not a facilitator of desire, it’s not a facilitator of happiness. If anything, it represents an obstruction. Another layer of consideration, of decision, of deliberation, of contemplation that opens up the possibility that the desire will not be pursued after all.

Let’s read what Kant says about this. Bottom of page 8 over to page 9. He begins by talking about this general principle that nature does not create anything with a chief characteristic that it’s not in harmony with that thing’s ends, and then he’ll move on to the business about reason. Bottom of page 8, quote: “In the natural constitution of an organized being — that is, one constituted purposefully for life — we assume as a principle that there will be found in it no instrument for some end other than what it is
also most appropriate to that end and best adapted to it. Now, in a being that has reason and a will, if the proper end of nature were its preservation, it’s welfare, in a word its happiness, then nature would’ve hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose. For all the actions that the creature has to perform for this purpose and the whole rule of his conduct will be marked out for it far more accurately by instinct, and that end would have thereby been attained much more surely than it ever can be by reason.”

So here he’s just said, look. Nature doesn’t make any creature with an essential characteristic that’s not best suited to its function. If the function of a human being is to be happy, then nature has designed a very poor instrument for it. Because we are creatures of reason and reason is not a very good faculty for personal pursuit of happiness. The pursuit of happiness is most efficiently accomplished by instinct.

If you think about animals, they’re desire/satisfaction machines. They have a honed set of instincts, and automatic sort of lightning fast reflexes, and they just sort of — you know, the desire comes up in an animal’s brain and every aspect of that animal’s being is directed toward satisfying it. A human being, though, that rational mind starts to think and to deliberate, and then that leads to worry and that leads to reconsidering, and the whole pursuit of happiness may be derailed.

He continues on in the next paragraph: “In fact, we find that the more a cultivated reason purposefully occupies itself with the enjoyment of life and with happiness, so much the further does one get away from true satisfaction.” This is just simply a variation on the argument that ignorance is bliss. He says, “Notice, the smarter the person, the less happy they tend to be. And from this there arises in many and indeed in those who have experimented most with this use of reason, if only they are candid enough to admit it, a certain degree of misology — that is, hatred of reason.”

So Kant thinks that being a moral being — bad English — being a moral being
represents the fulfillment of human nature. That we are designed for morality, not for
the pursuit of happiness. And the reason he thinks this is because he thinks that our
chief characteristic as human beings, this capacity for rational deliberation and
reflection, is not suited to the pursuit of happiness. It is best suited to the identification
of duty. The role that rational deliberation and reflection play, what Aristotle called
practical reason, the role that practical reason plays is the identification of our duty.
And in any given state of affairs, it’s reason that identifies what we ought to do and
distinguishes it from what we ought not to do.

Okay. So we’ve discussed element of the good will and that is this idea that
good will is the moral will, the will that acts from duty rather than desire, and we’ve
talked a little bit about the relationship between the good will and Kant’s conception of
human nature and his ideas of human fulfillment. Let’s now focus on this notion acting
from duty, right? We said the good will is the free rational will that acts from duty rather
than from desire. Let’s talk about the difference between acting from duty, acting from
desire, and we’re gonna tie it in to the Kantian conception of freedom.

First of all, the difference between acting from and acting in accordance with
duty. We’ll do the second first. When one acts in accordance with duty on Kant’s
view, one does what duty requires but not because it is one’s duty but in order to satisfy
some other desire. In other words, when one acts in accordance with duty, one is not
motivated to do P, where P is some action, because it’s one’s duty but rather because P
will produce a desirable outcome.

So I think I gave an example last time about a lady drowning in a lake. So
imagine that, you know, I see a lady drowning in a pond. Certainly I have a moral duty
to try and save her life if I can. And suppose that I do go ahead and try to save her life
and suppose I succeed. But suppose that the reason I did it was because I figured that
if I saved this woman I’d become a local celebrity. If I became a local celebrity, it would
increase my business. Suppose I own a store. And I figured, “Well, if my name is in every newspaper and I’m sort of, you know, the town good Samaritan, then that will increase my business.”

Kant would say I’ve acted in accordance with duty. I’ve done what duty requires — I’ve tried to save this woman’s life — and yet I didn’t do that because it’s my duty. I did that for another reason. I did that in order to satisfy desire. What desire? The desire to be famous and rich. So there I’ve acted in accordance with duty. I haven’t acted contrary to duty. To act contrary to duty would be to not try to save the woman at all. I did try to save the woman but I don’t really care about her. I don’t really care about the fact that I’m morally obligated. I just figured that if I save her that things will come to me.

Now, to act from duty is to do what duty requires because duty requires it. So to use this same example, suppose in another instance another person comes along — a better person than I am, of course -- and this person sees another lady drowning in the lake. This is the lady-eating lake. She sees another woman drowning in the lake and dives in to save her, and does it for no other reason than that she believes that it is her duty to save a drowning person if she can. Now, this person has indeed acted from duty and not merely in accordance with it.

Notice, the acting in accordance with versus acting from goes directly to the question of motivation. What is the motive for your action? Are you doing this because it is the right thing to do, because duty demands it, or are you doing it because doing it will satisfy some desire that you have, will produce some desired outcome?

Kant discusses this distinction on page 11. Look at the top of the page. He says, “It certainly conforms with duty that a shopkeeper not overcharge an inexperienced customer. And where there’s a good deal or trade, a prudent merchant does not over-charge but keeps a fixed general price for everyone so that a child can
buy from him as well as everyone else. People are thus served honestly. But this is not nearly enough for us to believe that the merchant acted in this way from duty and basic principles of honesty. His advantage required it. It cannot be assumed here that he had the size and immediate inclination towards his customer, so as from love as it were, to give no preference over another in the matter of price. Thus, the action was done neither from duty nor from immediate inclination, but merely for purposes of self-interest."

So in the case of the shopkeeper, right, the shopkeeper has only acted in the course of duty. Sure, duty requires that you not cheat your customers, but he didn’t refrain from cheating because he thought it was his duty to do so, to not cheat. He refrained from cheating because he figured that it’d be better for business to keep things aboveboard. That is, it’s the desire for a successful business that’s motivating him to do what duty demands. It’s not that he thinks he ought to do his duty that is the primary motivation.

So you might think, “Well who cares what his motivation is?” Kant cares. Because for Kant, only acting from duty has moral worth. I’ll say that again. Only in action that is done from duty has moral worth. That doesn’t mean that we might not be happy by the outcome. Even if someone was acting in accordance with duty, it certainly may be the outcome is desirable, is beneficial, that everyone benefits from it, but Kant thinks that this has no moral relevance whatsoever. That morally speaking, only the action that’s done from duty has moral worth.

Now, we want to ask, “Well, why does he think that?” There are a number of reasons. And a big one has to do with freedom, Kant’s idea of freedom. Kant thinks that it’s only when we act from moral duty that we’re acting in a truly free way. Here’s one of the most interesting and counterintuitive aspects of Kant’s philosophy. I think today when we use the word freedom we tend to think of freedom as liberty from rules
or liberty from authority. And so we think of freedom is our ability to do what we want. To put it in Kant's words, we think that we're most free when we are left to pursue our desires.

But Kant doesn’t see it this way because Kant sees the source of desire as, in a sense, being alien from the human will. So to be left to act on one’s desires, Kant thinks, is to be left to act under forces that are outside of one’s control. In other words, you as a person cannot control what you desire or what you like. You can control what you do. But you can’t control what it is you want, what it is you like, what it is that appeals to you. That is, in a sense, determined by nature.

And so Kant really sort of literally thinks that when you act from desire, you are acting under a set of causes that do not originate from your own will. They’re causes that stem from the material side of your body. They stem from inclination, desire, taste, all these things that you don’t have conscious control over. It’s only when we act from duty in defiance of all desires that we completely control what we do. Because Kant thinks that when we act from duty, when the sole motivation of the will is the moral law, that there is no element of outside or external causality. There is no element of coercion. The moral law and the will that chooses to follow it spring from the same self, the same conscious, rationally deliberating self.

And so Kant thinks that it’s when we defy our desire and insist upon following the dictates that our own rationality has laid out — remember, it’s our own reason that identifies moral duty and reason is within the purview of the will for Kant, unlike desire which is outside of it. Kant thinks those are the only times that we are really acting autonomously, the only time that we are truly free as when we are completely liberated not from duty but from desire and when we act solely upon the result of the deliberations of our own wills.

Now, surely we must all see kind of the dualistic implications here. Kant is not
explicitly a dualist although his position is sort of an odd one and, in my view, is in many ways dualistic. But certainly there’s an element here of thinking that — look. To act under certain influences is to be caused in a material kind of sense of causality. That to act under the duties identified by our own conscious mind, our own conscious will, that these don’t represent external causes but are purely internal, represent internal causality, causality that springs from our own personality, from our own will. This certainly sounds very dualistic. I’m not necessarily saying that that’s an objection. I’m just trying to sort of characterize the position so that it’s more understandable.

Obviously, we talked a little bit about the irony of the idea that one is most free when one is most consciously obedient. But remember, this irony disappears when we think about the sources of causality, right? When we are consciously obedient to the moral law, we are obedient to something that springs from own rational will. When we are instead passively obedient to desire, we are obedient to something that lies outside of our will in our natural material constitution — in our guts, so to speak — over which we have no control whatsoever. And so that’s why Kant thinks that the freedom/enslavement lines up the way it does.

And finally, this represents a focus on motivation — this distinction between acting from duty, acting in accordance with duty, this idea that we only act freely when we act the moral obligations that are identified by our own wills. This represents again a focus on motivation that demonstrates the extent to which Kant believes that the moral value of an action doesn’t lie in its consequences but rather in the motivation and in the principle behind it. This sort of intersection of motivation and principle Kant is gonna call a maxim, and we'll talk about this more in the next lecture.

So what we’re gonna do next time is we’re gonna — we’ve talked about Kant’s conception of the good will. We talked a little bit about his idea of human freedom and autonomy and the relationship between morality and the Kantian idea of freedom. Next
time we’re gonna focus fully upon Kant’s account of moral duty. So we’ve said that the
good will is a free rational will that acts from duty rather than desire. We’ve analyzed
all of those elements but we haven’t yet said what our moral duty is, what characterizes
moral duty for Kant, and that’s what we’re gonna do next time. So Kant’s kind of moral
duty and Kant is going to offer four examples, four ethical cases, in order to show his
theory in action and we’re gonna talk about two of those four examples, but of course
you’re gonna read all four.

Here’s a few things to think about while you’re reading. First, can you explain in
your own words why Kant thinks that the proper focus of moral attention should be on
maxims rather than on outcomes? That’s the first. And a related question, what do
you think of his reasoning in this area? Two, second question, do you think that with
respect to the four cases that Kant discusses he has succeeded in showing that the
moral wrongness involved is due to a failure of rationality? Do you think more
generally that rightness and wrongness are matters of rationality or irrationality of the
agent? This is a question that doesn’t only apply to Kant but to Aristotle as well, and to
many western moral philosophies.

There is an intimate relationship alleged between the capacity to reason and
rationality, on the one hand, and moral agency on the other. I’m interested in knowing
whether you see as close a connection between these two things as Kant and so many
of the other philosophers do. So I will leave you with that and we will pick this up again
next time. Thank you very much.