

Kant and the Categorical Imperative: the Outline of an Argument
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1. What is morality?
 - a. it is meant to guide our actions; maxim: principle of action
 - b. it is universal, the same for everyone
 - c. it is categorical, not optional
2. There are (only) two things that influence what we choose
 - a. happiness
 - b. reason
3. Morality cannot be based on happiness
 - a. what makes people happy differs
 - b. happiness can be good or bad
4. So morality must be based on reason
 - a. everything that morality applies to is rational
 - b. reason is also universal in content
 - c. reason is not dependent on what we want
5. The Categorical Imperative
 - a. If morality is based on universal reason, then it can't mention what varies
 - b. Any moral law must hold for *all* rational beings; if it depends on something contingent and variable, it is not a law
 - c. so "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law"