



**To what extent, if at all,
is Kantianism a convincing
ethical theory?**

Evaluating Kantianism

07 November 2024

Evaluating Kantianism

Starter: What is your gut reaction?

Pros

Cons

Pros	Cons

Which is the most significant strength, in your view?

Which is the most significant weakness, in your view?

Issues, including:

- clashing/competing duties
- not all universalisable maxims are distinctly moral; not all non-universalisable maxims are immoral
- the view that consequences of actions determine their moral value
- Kant ignores the value of certain motives, eg love, friendship, kindness
- morality is a system of hypothetical, rather than categorical, imperatives (Philippa Foot).

Syllabus: 'Issues'

A

versus consequentialism

B

problems applying the CI

C

value of friendship,
kindness etc.

D

conflicting duties

E

morality as system of
hypothetical imperatives

**What do you
think is the
thrust of each
issue?**

<https://npapadakis.wordpress.com/2011/08/18/article-summary-morality-as-a-system-of-hypothetical-imperatives-by-philippa-foot/>

**A - versus
consequentialism**

**B - Problems applying
the CI**

**C - Value of some
desires/commitments**

D - Conflicting duties

**E - morality as system
of hypothetical
imperatives**



Issues with Kantianism

Kantianism (features)

Criticisms

**(Supposed) issues with
Kantianism**

**(Possible) Kantian
responses to those issues**

Responses

Evaluation

Issues, including:

- clashing/competing duties
- not all universalisable maxims are distinctly moral; not all non-universalisable maxims are immoral
- the view that consequences of actions determine their moral value
- Kant ignores the value of certain motives, eg love, friendship, kindness
- morality is a system of hypothetical, rather than categorical, imperatives (Philippa Foot).

**You can include
other issues**

**A - versus
consequentialism**

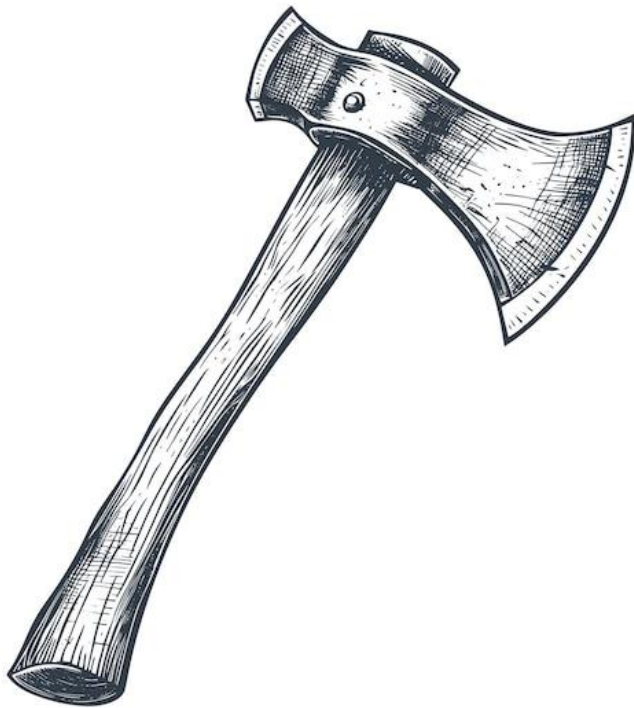
**B - Problems applying
the CI**

**C - Value of some
desires/commitments**

D - Conflicting duties

**E - morality as system
of hypothetical
imperatives**

Conflicting duties



Murderer

**How does Kant
respond?**

On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy (1797)

<https://bgillette.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/KANTsupposedRightToLie.pdf>

**Problems applying the
categorical imperative**

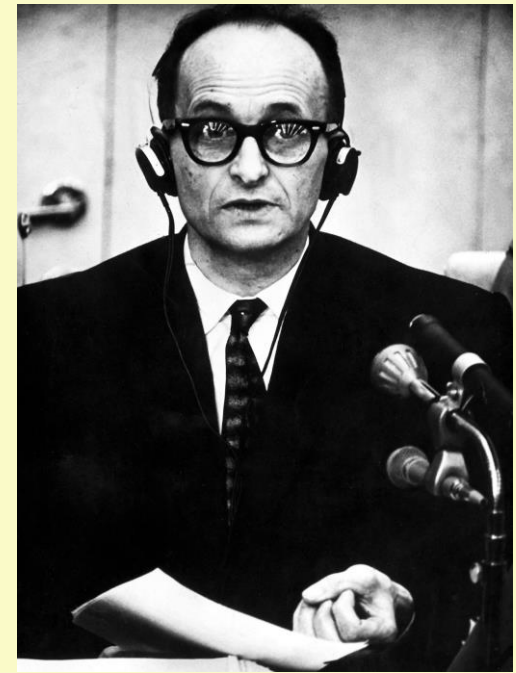
**Problem 1: some moral
maxims can't be
universalised**

**"Give more than
average to charity"**

Derek Parfit



Problem 2: some
immoral maxims
can be
universalised



Eichmann

Consistent
Nazi



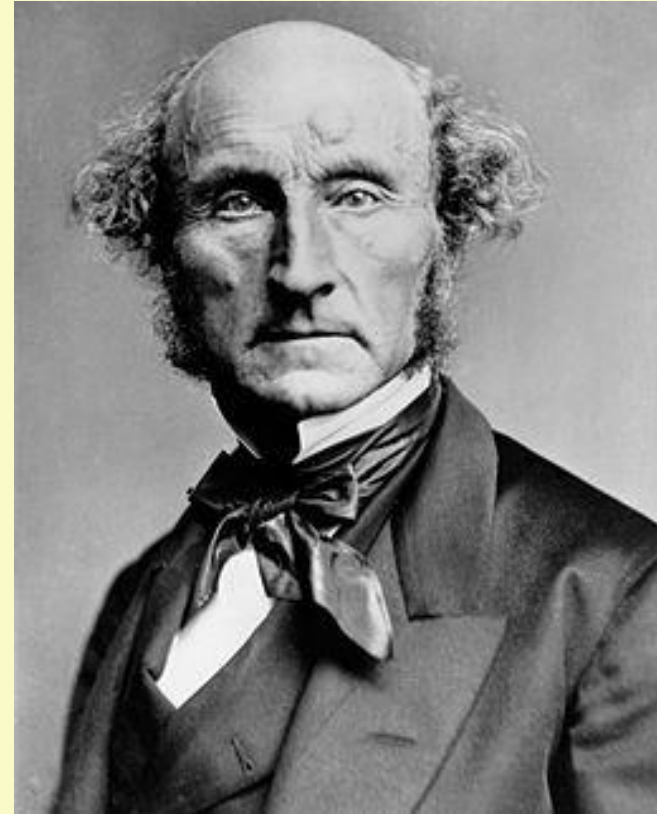
Hannah
Arendt

Problem 3: some non-moral, trivial maxims can be universalised

“I will chew my food 32 times before swallowing to aid digestion.”

Problem 4: not demonstrating any contradiction

"But when he begins to deduce from this precept any of the actual duties of morality, he fails, almost grotesquely, to show that there would be any contradiction; any logical (not to say physical) impossibility, in the adoption by all rational beings of the most outrageously immoral rules of conduct"





Philippa Foot

**Morality as a system
of hypothetical
imperatives**

moral rules function like other practical rules, e.g. etiquette



Rules of etiquette

“If you want to stay healthy, you should exercise” depends on the desire to stay healthy

Moral law depend on the desire to be a good person

(or to live a flourishing life).



What she **could** add is

If you want to be rational, then
act on universalisable principles

But there is nothing necessarily
(morally) wrong---or contradictory---
--to now want to act on rational
principles

Moral duties can
get their binding
force from the
way we are
taught and
internalise them

**Value of some
desires/commitments**

Love, friendship, kindness

versus

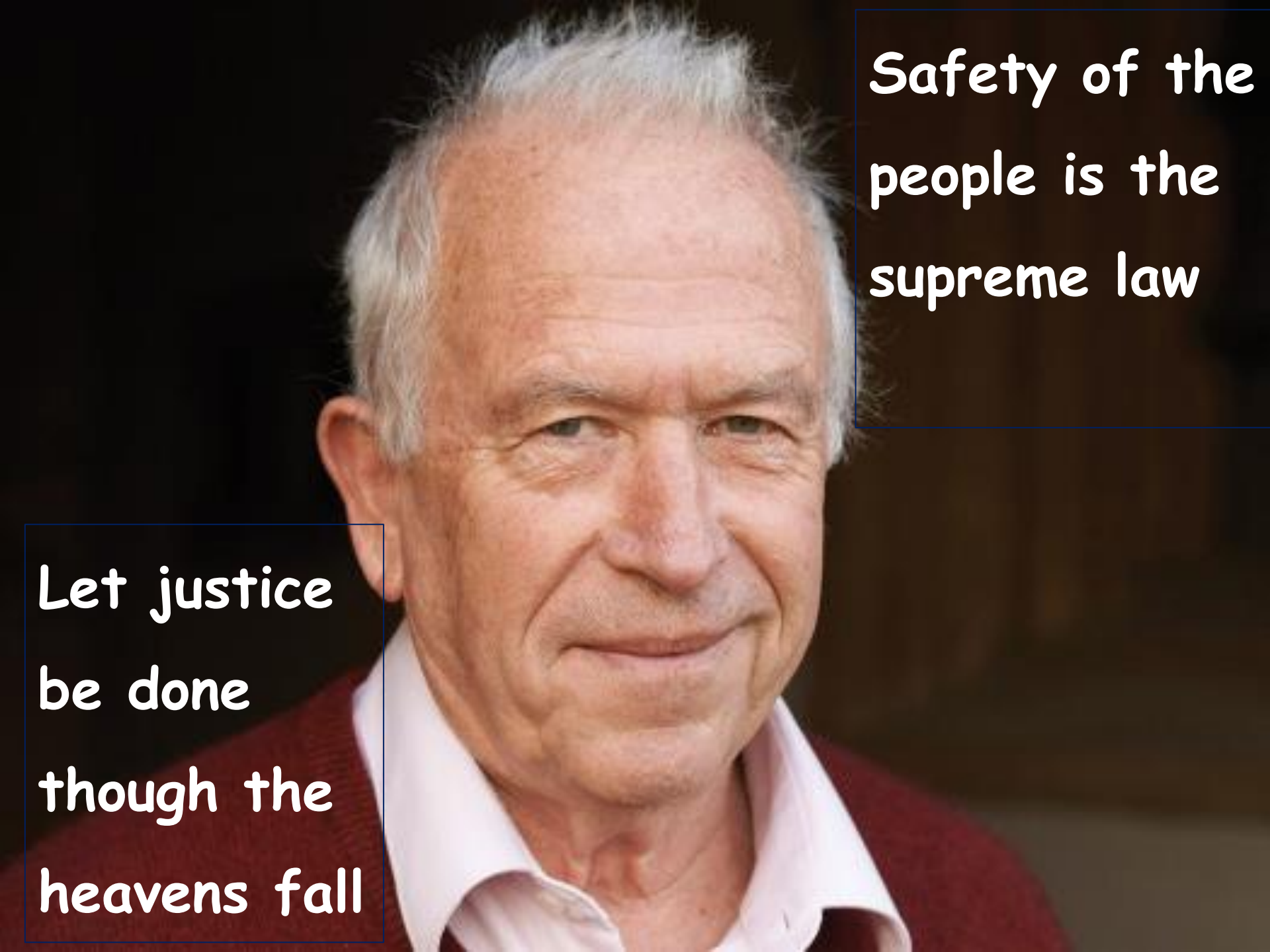
consequentialism

Encourages comparison

with utilitarianism



Hume



Safety of the
people is the
supreme law

Let justice
be done
though the
heavens fall

