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## Kant: Enlightenment and the Aesthetics of the Self

Kant believed that for enlightenment to be brought about, the individual would require freedom to think freely for themselves, and the ability to manifest their well-reasoned ideas. A concern arises from this belief; is it always acceptable to allow for people to manifest their reason, or are there situations where one's personal reasoning should not influence their actions?

Consider a person employed to maintain the wellbeing of the public, for example, a firefighter. If a firefighter is permitted to operate purely in accordance with her internal logic, the firefighter might cause unintended consequences. The firefighter might think it unethical to remove the roof of a burning car without the explicit consent of the owner of the vehicle. She therefore decides to manifest her reasoning, and to cease removing the roofs of cars without permission. A potential consequence of her reasoning may arise if a passenger is stuck in a vehicle, and unable to communicate with the firefighter. By following her reasoning, the firefighter would not be able to gain access to the passenger and save them, as she does not have explicit consent to remove the roof of the car. Kant would argue that in this situation, the individual should not be allowed to manifest their ideas.

This does not imply that in all situations individuals should not be allowed to spearhead change in the world around them. There are cases where one's internal reasoning should change public policy. A police officer who notices unethical police standard procedure should be encouraged to attempt to change the procedure.

In some cases, it is clear that the individual must be able to voice his or her concerns with how the society operates, and in other cases must be compelled to operate in a manner that may go against his or her personal beliefs.

Within Kant's explanation on enlightenment, he provides two useful definitions to differentiate between the two scenarios. Private reason is a limited form of reason that is intended to be used by people who operate within society. In the above example, the fire fighter is entrusted with an obligation to cut the roofs off of cars, regardless of her personal opinion on the matter. Therefore by doing her job is exercising private reason.

Public reason is the unrestricted form of reason where one may address society with concerns. In the above examples, the police officer who publically voices his concerns with unethical police procedures is exercising public reason.

By pure reason, Kant refers to a form of reason whose axioms are priori principles, or principles

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that are obtainable through rational thinking. Kant's goal with critiquing pure reason is to attempt to reach a verdict on the possibility of metaphysics. Kant believed that our ability to think was inherently limited, and was concerned with the utilization of pure reason in domains where it should not be applied. Kant offered a critique for pure reason that would address this concern. It was Kant's belief that to utilize pure reasoning, one must first understand where it is to be applied, and what are its limits. Therefore, to utilize "pure reason", one must know what pure reason is capable of. This is the spirit of Kant's critique. Kant stated that pure reason could be utilized to understand much of the world around you, but would not be useful in describing all of reality. This is due to the fact that the act of perception distorts the world around you, which we perceive as reality, but this reality may differ from the reality we all inhabit.

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