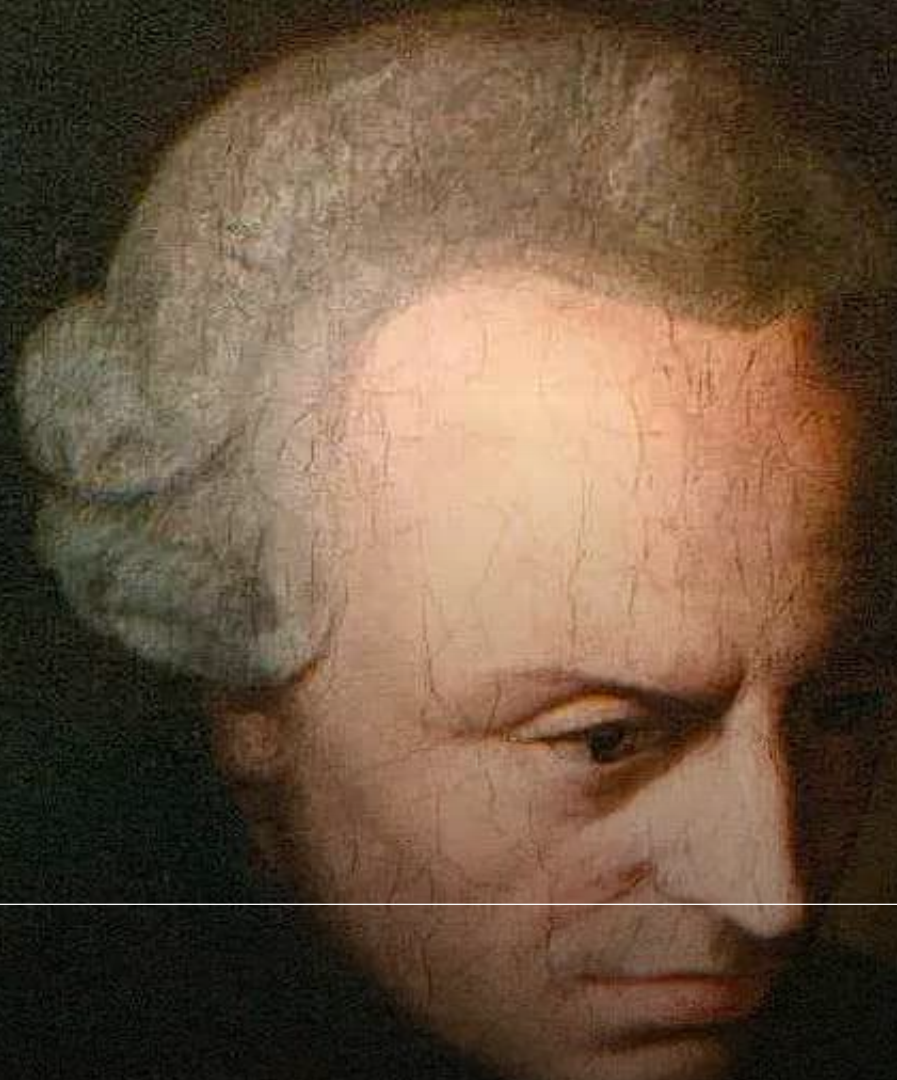


# MORAL LAW BETWEEN REASON AND REVELATION: KANT AND THE QUR'AN IN DIALOGUE

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Immanuel Kant  
*1724-1804*

## WHO IS IMMANUEL KANT?

He is one of the most important thinkers of the Enlightenment period.

# WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

- The Age of Enlightenment aims to separate reason from all traditional and religious dogmas.

In other words, humans will get rid of the all learned dogmas and come under the guidance of reason.

# WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

- Kant defines enlightenment as the individual beginning to use their own reason.

According to him, enlightenment is the emergence from the state of immaturity, which is one's own fault. Here, "immaturity" (*Unmündigkeit*) refers to an individual's inability to use their own reason and thinking under the guidance of external authorities.

The call "**Sapere Aude**" (*Dare to know!*) emphasizes the individual's courage to use their own reason.

- I believe that what makes Kant so important is how he uses philosophy. I think the best way to get to know a philosopher is by understanding the question they try to answer.

- ☐ 1781 - *Critique of Pure Reason*
- ☐ 1783 - *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics That Will Be Able to Present Itself as a Science*
- ☐ 1784 - *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*
- ☐ 1784 - *What is Enlightenment?*
- ☐ 1785 - *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- ☐ 1788 - *Critique of Practical Reason*
- ☐ 1790 - *Critique of Judgment*
- ☐ 1793 - *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason*
- ☐ 1795 - *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*
- ☐ 1797 - *The Metaphysics of Morals*

- Before delving into the details, we must take a few steps back to first see the entirety of Kant's philosophical system. When we look at this structure, there is one thing we must recognize: this structure, in Kant's philosophy, is a moral life.

The three *Critique* books of Kant are not actually a doctrine. Rather, they are texts that investigate whether a doctrine is possible and how it is possible, based on the state of our faculties. In other words, they are studies not on being, but on the possibility of knowledge. In philosophical terms, we could say that they are epistemological rather than ontological.

- - If we return to the arrangement of these books, we can notice that Kant, much like an architect, first laid out a plan for where he intended to go and then went back to establish its foundations. His ultimate goal, however, is to reach the *Metaphysics of Morals*.

So, what does Kant mean by reason? Kant considers each faculty in its own domain and function. In other words, if our object is the physical nature studied by physics, he deals with pure reason. But if we are talking about freedom or action, then we are referring to practical reason.

- Well, what is Kant's main concern? It is to transform the realm of nature into a moral realm—to see the human being, a natural being, also as a moral being. When we talk about humans, we are not just referring to them as a biological species, right? We are also talking about being a person who leads a moral life.
- So, what makes this moral world possible? Of course, the moral law—a law by which we can evaluate our actions. And here, we are talking about a universal moral law, one that is independent of situation, culture, era, gender, or any other condition.

- When we talk about a behavior or a way of life being moral, we cannot link it to causality. If it follows a causal necessity—like dropping a pen and it falling—it is no longer moral. At this point, Kant expects a rational being, as a moral agent, to take full responsibility for all choices in the practical realm and to make them meaningful.

Kant emphasizes the importance of freedom in the moral law, in contrast to the necessity and causality of natural law.

So why moral law should be based on reason?

- According to Kant, we cannot know a thing in itself; we can only know the phenomena that our mind constructs through experiences and projects onto the external world. In other words, we do not directly access the thing itself (noumenon) but rather its appearance as it forms in our minds (phenomenon).
- Kant argues that knowledge is not given by nature but rather constructed by human reason. Instead of discovering nature, knowledge emerges through the categories that reason imposes on it. Therefore, the limits of knowledge must be defined—since we cannot know things as they are in themselves, we must confine knowledge to phenomena.

- In moral philosophy, Kant seeks the universal moral law not in nature but in the structure of human reason. While nature is subject to variation, reason contains universal and necessary principles shared by all humans. Thus, morality should be based not on individual experiences but on universal rational principles.

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REASON AND MORALITY

- **The foundation of morality is reason** → Moral laws are discovered purely through reason.
- **Categorical Imperative (Unconditional Command)** → "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."
- **Freedom and autonomy** → As a moral being, a person must use their reason to determine their own moral law.
- **Reason, not emotions, is important** → Moral decisions should be based on universal principles determined by reason, rather than personal emotions or self-interest.



# WHAT IS QURAN?

IS THE HOLY BOOK OF ISLAM AND IS REGARDED BY MUSLIMS AS THE FINAL REVELATION OF ALLAH.

- So, who is Allah? For Muslims, Allah is the Creator." And Quran revealed during age of ignorance.

# THE QURAN AND REASON

- The Quran also encourages people to use their reason.

For example, the frequently repeated question in the Quran, "*Will you not reason?*" advises people to think critically and consciously.

*"Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" (Zumar 39:9)* emphasizes the value of knowledge and reason.

*"Do they not reflect upon the verses?" (Muhammad 47:24)* supports individual thinking and questioning.

In Arabic, the word "**āyah**" ( verses ) “ آية ” literally means:

- **Sign – Evidence - Proof**

# WHAT IS AGE OF IGNORANCE?

- The "Jahiliyyah" Period refers to the pre-Islamic era, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula before the emergence of Islam. This term comes from the Arabic root meaning 'ignorance' and is generally defined as a period associated with moral, religious, and social corruption.

- After providing some basic information about the Qur'an, I would now like to discuss the similarities between Kant and the Qur'an (Islam). What was the most important principle for Kant? That a person should be free and use their own reason. Similarly, the Qur'an also considers the use of reason as a fundamental principle. Now, let's examine these similarities under three main headings.

# 1. REASON AND FREE THINKING

- According to Kant, an individual must make decisions by using their own reason. Similarly, the Qur'an emphasizes that a person is responsible for using their intellect and distinguishing between right and wrong.

*"Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Indeed, only those of understanding will take heed."*

*(Zumar, 39:9)*

*"Will you not use your reason?"*

*(Baqarah, 2:44)*

*Do they not reflect upon the verses?"* (Muhammad 47:24) In Arabic, the word "āyah" ( verses ) “ آية ” literally means: Sign – Evidence – Proof

## 2. FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

- According to Kant, moral responsibility is based on an individual's free will. Similarly, the Qur'an emphasizes that a person must have free will. However, unlike Kant, the Qur'an states that a person who is not free cannot be held accountable for their actions.
- For example: Lying is considered wrong both in Kantian ethics and in the Qur'an. However, if a person is under pressure and forced to lie, it is not considered a sin in the Qur'an because the individual is not acting with free will.

Verses from the Qur'an:

- *"Allah does not burden any soul beyond what it can bear."*
- *"There is no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clearly from falsehood..."*  
(Baqarah, 2:256)

### 3- THE MORAL VALUE OF INTENTION

- For Kant, a moral action must be based not only on reason but also on good intention. Similarly, the Qur'an considers good intention as a fundamental condition for moral behavior.

*"O you who believe! Do not nullify your charities by reminders of generosity or by harm, like the one who spends his wealth only to be seen by people, and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day."*

*(Al-Baqarah, 2:264)*

*"Actions are judged by intentions." (Bukhari, Bad' al-Wahy 1; Muslim, Ijarah 155)*

# UNIVERSAL MORAL LAW –HALAL -HARAM

- In addition to all this, just as Kant's universal moral law includes certain principles, the Quran also defines concepts of halal and haram. The concept of haram refers to things that are absolutely inappropriate for any human being. A common example from both Kant's philosophy and the Quran is the consumption of alcohol.

Kant argues that people becoming intoxicated and consuming alcohol is not in accordance with the universal moral law. Similarly, in Islam, alcohol consumption is considered haram because it clouds the mind and impairs a person's ability to think clearly. Not only alcohol but any substance that obscures the mind and disrupts clear thinking is considered haram in Islam.

# RIGHT AND WRONG – HALAL AND HARAM

- One of the most distinctive features of Kant's ethical understanding is its **focus on duty ethics**. In this approach, moral rightness and wrongness directly determine actions. **Right actions are those we must perform (morally obligatory), while wrong actions are those we must not perform (morally prohibited).**

# HALAL AND HARAM

- ✦ **Halal** refers to everything beneficial and permissible for humans.
- ✦ **Haram** includes everything harmful and strictly forbidden by Allah.

But there is still a small difference. I believe the Quran is slightly more flexible than Kant's moral law. In the Quran, certain things are explicitly stated as haram, and in a way, we can consider everything that is not haram as halal. However, the rulings on these things are not always explicitly defined. For example, the Quran states that everything good and wholesome is made halal for people. But there is no specific limit to this, because what is considered good and wholesome can vary depending on culture, personal perspective, gender, age, and lifestyle. Essentially, apart from the things that God has explicitly forbidden as haram, we can think of everything else as halal.

# EXAMPLES FOR KANT'S PHILOSOPHY ;

- Moral (Right) Actions According to Kant
- **✓ Telling the Truth:**
- If everyone lied, no one could trust each other, and communication would collapse.
- It is moral because it can be universalized.
- **✓ Keeping Promises and Fulfilling Commitments:**
- If no one kept their promises, the act of promising would become meaningless.
- It is moral because it can be universalized.

## **✓ Helping Others:**

- If everyone refused to help those in need, social solidarity would break down.
- It is moral because it can be universalized.

## **✓ Respecting Others and Treating Them as Ends:**

- According to Kant, treating people merely as a means is immoral.
- People are ends in themselves and must be respected.

# EXAMPLES FOR KANT'S PHILOSOPHY ;

- Immoral (Wrong) Actions According to Kant

- **✗ Lying:**
  - If everyone lied, the meaning of lying would disappear, and trust would be destroyed.
  - It is morally wrong because it cannot be universalized.
- **✗ Breaking Promises and Making False Promises:**
  - If everyone made false promises, no promise would be reliable.
  - It is morally wrong because it cannot be universalized.

- **✗ Committing Suicide:**

- Kant believes that self-destruction is immoral because it treats a person as a mere means rather than an end.
- When universalized, it leads to contradiction.

- **✗ Acting Selfishly Toward Others:**

- If everyone acted solely in their own interest, social order would collapse.
- Using people merely as a means is against morality.

# EXAMPLES OF HARAM IN QURAN

- **✗ Consuming Alcohol and Intoxicants:**

- The Quran prohibits intoxicants as they impair judgment and cause harm.
- It is forbidden because it leads to harm and loss of self-control.

- **✗ Engaging in Usury (Riba):**

- Interest-based transactions are prohibited in Islam.
- It is forbidden because it leads to economic injustice and exploitation.

- **✗ Backbiting and Gossip :**

- Speaking ill of others behind their backs is strongly condemned in the Quran.

It is forbidden because it harms social relationships and spreads negativity.

- **✗ Suicide:**

- The Quran explicitly forbids taking one's own life.

It is forbidden because life is considered sacred and what if everyone commits to suicide?

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