



On The Implications Of Kant's Categorical Imperative For Contemporary Society

Paulinus Chikwado Ejeh, PhD

Philosophy Unit,
General Studies Division,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper is an examination of Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative with a view to showing its implications for contemporary society. The quest for this paper was influenced by the fact that Kant's ethics has been highly overrated such that one hardly looks at the other sides of the ethics. The paper discovered that Kant was a racist who denied Africans and other non-whites rationality or the ability to reason thereby excluding them from the threshold of moral agents. It equally found out that Kant's categorical imperatives is not only inadequate but also one-sided and cannot be a universal moral standard or principle of morality for man especially man who lives in our contemporary African society. Hence, this paper examined the categorical imperative and came up with certain positive and negative implications for contemporary society.

Keywords: *Implication, Categorical, Imperative, Africa, Society*

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I. Introduction

Kant's most distinctive contribution to ethics was his insistence that our actions possess moral worth only when we do our duty for its own sake. He first introduced this idea as something acceptable by our common moral consciousness and only then tried to show that it is an essential element of any rational morality. Kant's ethics is based on his distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives. He called any action based on desires a hypothetical imperative, meaning by this that it is a command of reason that applies only if we desire the goal. For Kant then, the commands of morality must be categorical imperatives: they must apply to all rational beings, regardless of their personal wants and feelings.

From the time of Socrates till date, there has been a disagreement among moral philosophers as to what constitutes morally right or wrong actions. In his moral philosophy, Immanuel Kant, was concerned with finding whether the actions we tend to perform is morally right or wrong as well as determine the yardstick for distinguishing right from wrong. In his attempt to find solutions to these ethical questions, Kant posited a theory which he calls the categorical imperative that explains what makes an action right or wrong as well as the yardstick for distinguishing what is right from what is wrong. This categorical imperative according to Kant is a universal moral principle which applies to every rational person. The problem which this paper tends to tackle is to ascertain if Kant's categorical imperative is universal as he claims as well as to show the implications of the categorical imperative for contemporary society. In other words, the work tends to find out in particular, whether Kant's universal moral principle applies to Africans and to all races without exception or conditions.

The Categorical Imperative

Immanuel Kant's ethics rests on the argument that morality is the function of reason. For him, to be fully human is to be a rational being capable of exercising both reason and free will in making decisions and choosing actions. The Categorical Imperative, according to Kant, is an unconditional imperative which immediately commands a certain conduct without having as its condition, any other purpose to be attained by it.¹³ In other words, the Categorical Imperative commands actions as good in themselves and not as means to other ends. Kant gave three different formulations of the Categorical Imperative. He formulates the first Categorical Imperative as follows: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will, a universal law of nature" (Kant, 1978). Maxim for Kant, is the subjective principle of action. In the other words,

maxim means a rule of action a man follows as part of his own policy of life, whatever rules of living other men may have. The first formulation of the Categorical Imperative means that, in formulating a principle of conduct, a rational being is constrained to postulate an ideal, and in postulating such an ideal, and himself as part of it, the agent sees himself in relation to other rational beings as one among many, of equal importance with them, deserving and giving respect on the basis of reason alone, and not on the basis of those empirical conditions which create distinctions between men.¹⁵ The basic formulation of this imperative is the test of universalizability, which states that you must act so that the rule or principle guiding your action can be willed to be a universal law. That is, could I take this action in all similar circumstances without being logically inconsistent? For example, telling a lie violates this maxim because you could not logically will that people be free to lie whenever they wanted without rendering the concept of truth useless.

The second formulation of the Categorical Imperative is thus: "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always and at the same time as an end and never simply as a means (Kant, 1978). What this means is that, a rational being is constrained by reason, not to use his fellow human beings simply or merely as means to achieve his own purposes; not to enslave, abuse or exploit them, but always to recognize that they contain within themselves the justification of their own existence, and a right to their autonomy. The second formulation of the Categorical Imperative forbids such things as murder, rape, theft, dishonesty, and fraud, etc. Consequently, a universal duty to respect the rights of others is imposed on us by this principle.

The third formulation is: "Always so to act that the will could at the same time regard itself as giving in its maxims universal laws (Kant, 1978). This third formulation is quite similar to the first formulation. Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, we shall limit our discourse to the first and second formulations of the Categorical Imperative. Meanwhile, the first and second formulations demand from us the duty to help others and the duty to refrain from false promises. The Categorical Imperative requires practical judgment for its application in every situation. The rule of judgment is therefore, that in any action one wants to perform, ask yourself whether, if the act you have in mind were to take place in accordance with a law of nature, of which you yourself were a part; you could regard it as possible through your will (Kant, 1978).

For Kant, the Categorical Imperative is the fundamental principle that determines which possible principles can be objectively valid for the decision of our will. It is a law, which neither depends on our desires or feelings, nor prescribes any particular action. It rather imposes an abidingness to law for its own sake. Thus, it speaks about the conformity of one's action to the universal law. Therefore, for Kant, a morally good man is he who seeks to obey a law valid for all men and follow an objective standard not determined by his desires.

Kant's Theory of Race

In order to fully comprehend the implications of Kant's categorical imperative, it is important that we examine Kant's earlier work on anthropology which forms the foundation of his ethics. This is because, Kant's anthropology together with his physical geography is meant to provide holistic or full range of total knowledge on the subject of man and his environment.

In the *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, Kant outlines a *geographical* and *psychological* (moral) classification of humans. He classified humans into four races thus: white (Europeans), yellow (Asians), black (Africans), and red (American Indians) from the geographic standpoint (Kant, 1978). Having classified humans into these four different races, Kant provides a psychological or moral description of the characteristics of each of the races. He argues that different nations have different aesthetics and moral sensibilities, hence the "beautiful" and the "sublime" are various qualities of aesthetic and moral "feeling." Having catalogued, categorized or classified the rest of the races showing their strengths and weaknesses, Kant did not see or say anything good about the black race. In fact, Kant's descriptions of Africa and African people are the worst and the most humiliating and disdainful of all the races already discussed. Not even a single good comment or positive characteristic was attributed to the black race. In the classifications of the different human races, Kant writes of the black people thus:

The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art and science or any other praise-worthy quality even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between the two races of man, and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour (Kant, 1960).

Kant noted that the religion of fetishes is so widely spread among the Negroes, a sort of idolatry that sinks as deeply as into the trifling as appears possible to human nature. Kant describes the Negroes as animist – "a bird feather, a cow's horn, a conch shell, or any other common object, can be consecrated to become an object of veneration and of invocation in swearing oaths" (Kant, 1960). In Kant's table of moral classifications,

the Africans unfortunately can only be "trained" as slaves and servants. The race of the Negroes is, according to Kant, completely the opposite of the Americans; "they are full of affection and passion, very lively, very vain in the Negroes way, and so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with thrashings. They can be educated but only as servants (slaves); that is, they allow themselves to be "trained" as servants. They have many motivating forces, are also sensitive, are afraid of blows and do much out of a sense of honor" (Kant, 1977).

It is to be noted that for Kant, to be "educated" or to educate oneself, and to "train" somebody consists purely of physical coercion and corporeal punishment. This can be seen in Kant's writings about how to flog the African servant or slave into submission. Hence, Kant advises that in order to control and bring the African servants to total obedience or submission "a split bamboo cane be used instead of a whip, so that the 'negro' will suffer a great deal of pains (because of the 'Negro's thick skin, he would not be racked with sufficient agonies through a whip) but without dying"(Kant, 1977). Kant gives reason why it is necessary to beat the African servants with a split bamboo cane instead of a whip. According to him, "to beat the Negro efficiently requires a split cane rather than a whip, because the blood needs to find a way out of the Negro's thick skin to avoid festering" (Kant, 1960). To justify his view, Kant argues that the African deserves this kind of "training" (corporeal punishment) because he or she is "exclusively idle," lazy, and prone to hesitation and jealousy. Kant attributes all these negative qualities of the Negro to the fact that he (the Negro) through some climatic and anthropological reasons lacks "true" (rational and moral) character. Kant further stated that "all inhabitants of the hottest zones (which include Africa) are, without exceptions, idle"(Kant, 1960). Obviously, Kant's views above about the African was informed by the transatlantic slave trades in which he observes that African slaves are flogged, and in his words "trained" as European labour.

While considering the relation of the sexes, Kant notes that "the European alone has found the secret of decorating with so many flowers the sensual charm of a mighty inclination and of interlacing it with so much morality that he has not only extremely elevated its agreeableness but has also made it very decorous."²⁹ In other words, Kant implies that it is only the Europeans who have mastered the art of treating women with respect and esteem. Speaking of 'treating women with respect', Kant himself did not have a favourable disposition towards the female sex. In fact, Kant's feelings towards women in spite of all the nice things or qualities he ascribed to them could be regarded as one of aversion. For instance, in the *Observation on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, Kant asserted that women are "inferior" to men in some important way; that, because of this weakness or inferiority, women need (for their own good, or for the good of the marriage, or for the good of society) to be constrained in some way; that marriage automatically makes the wife the servant of her husband; that, also because of this weakness or inferiority, women lack a requisite for active participation in the political life of the society.³⁰ By this Kant affirms a belief that women lack intellectual ability and political wisdom and as such should be excluded from active citizenship.

As for the Orient, Kant notes that he has very false taste with regards to the relation of the sexes because he has no concept of the morally beautiful. He thrives on all sorts of amorous grotesqueries. Among this race says Kant, a woman is always in a prison. In the lands of the blacks Kant had exclaimed: "what better can one expect than what is found prevailing, namely the feminine sex in the deepest slavery!" (Kant, 1978). Kant cites Father Labat's report in which a Negro carpenter whom he reproached for haughty treatment toward his wives answered: "You whites are fools, for first you make great concessions to your wives, and afterwards you complain when they drive you mad"(Kant, 1978). Rather than addressing the issue raised by the Negro carpenter, Kant avoided the issue and instead makes a universal racial declaration thus: "it might be that there were something in this which perhaps deserved to be considered, but in short, this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid" (Kant, 1978).

From the ongoing, it is clear that for Kant, Africans, Asians and even women are not rational. If they are not rational beings according to Kant, then they can be used as a means to an end. What this means is that the principles of Kant's categorical imperative do not apply to Non-Europeans particularly the Blacks. It is on this note therefore, that we discuss the implications of Kant's categorical imperative for contemporary society.

Implications of Kant's Categorical Imperative for Contemporary Society

We have seen how Kant in his neglected or forgotten works (*Anthropology and Physical Geography*) denies Africans and other non-whites the ability to reason. We note that Kant's moral philosophy – the Categorical Imperative does not apply to Africans and other non-whites because it has been proven that Kant did not envisage the blacks, the Native Americans and other non-whites in his "Kingdom of Ends." Therefore, the following are the implications (both negative and positive) of Kant's categorical imperative for contemporary society:

(1) **Africans and other non-Europeans can be used merely as means to some ends.** Kantian ethics seems to strengthen and lend support to European colonization, slavery and racism against Africa. Following Kantian

moral principle, a European is asked not to use his fellow Europeans simply as means but always and at all times as ends because he is a member of Kant's 'kingdom of ends' – that is, the union of all rational human beings. But Africans are not rational human beings according to Kant; so by implication, Africans are to be used simply as means to the European ends. And this is probably one of the reasons behind the ideology of colonialism and trans-Atlantic slave trade that lasted for many decades. Since Kant had excluded Africans and other non-Europeans from the threshold of his "kingdom of ends", they are therefore at the mercy of the white-Europeans who are ever ready to use them merely as means to satisfy their racist and selfish ends. However, although Kant may not have regarded Africans and other non-Europeans as rational and moral people, it is therefore, their responsibility to prove or establish that they are rational and moral agents like other races of the world. So instead of bemoaning Kant's apparent insult or discrimination against Africans and other non-Europeans, what should be done is to vividly and categorically prove or show the rest of the world that we are not irrational. This among other things, is what we seek to establish in this paper. After all, the fact that we are able to engage in this academic study is undoubtedly an evidence of rationality. Besides, we think that Kant's racial views directly or indirectly challenge Africa and other non-European races to come forth, re-discover and assert themselves in the world in which they find themselves instead of over-dependency on the white man for their self-identity and recognition.

(2) Africans and non-Europeans have no Rights. If Africans and non-Europeans are not rational, then implicitly they are not humans because according to Kant rationality entails morality and people without rationality and morality are not supposed to be human beings. And if they are not human beings, then they have no rights because only humans should be accorded rights (human rights). It is this kind of abominable conception of Africa which was made popular by Kant that sustained the white supremacy over the blacks and other non-Europeans till date. Obviously, the 'superior race' (Europeans) had irrationally applied or appropriated the writings of Kant and his predecessors in which blacks and non-Europeans are regarded as non-human beings (non-rational beings) incapable of mental capacity on the basis of their race and skin colour. The result of this is the continuous increase in racial attitudes and hate speeches spewing out from the white race against the blacks in our societies today. In many European countries and even in America, we have seen several reports of killings and violence against Africans and non-Europeans because of their race and skin colour. The truth is that the so called 'white' race is not superior in any way to the black race or any other race. White supremacy is a farce, a utopia and a theory held by people who are suffering from inferiority complex and fear of dominance by the black race. There is neither white supremacy nor black supremacy or any race supremacy for that matter. All human beings by nature are without exception equal and moral beings. Kant's writings had indirectly supported slavery, violence and sexual assaults on blacks and non-Europeans all over the world. For this and many other reasons presented in this paper, we strongly argue that there would have been a better and more race-tolerant society today had Kant and his predecessors (Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume, Hegel, Weber, Karl Marx etc.) not undertaken the ignoble task of championing a racist project of dividing the world into superior race/rational human beings (white-Europeans) and inferior race/non-rational human beings (Africans and other coloured people).

(3) Africans and other non-Europeans have no Philosophy. Kant's raciology alongside those of his predecessors account largely for the rejection of African philosophy especially from the European quarters and unfortunately, from a few Africans who were not only trained in Western philosophy and culture but also brainwashed and mentally colonized by the same Western culture that sustained their intellectual egoism and self-hatred and self-denial. Since Kant denied Africans and other non-Europeans rationality, the implication is that they have no philosophy because philosophy is a rational and critical enterprise and only those who are rational and critical or those who have mental ability to reason can engage in philosophy. Fortunately, Africa and other non-European races have philosophy and so are rational.

Thus to accept Kant's raciological conclusion is to accept that Africans indeed have no philosophy and if Africans do not have philosophy, they would equally not have ethics or morality because for Kant, to be rational is to be moral. Fortunately, the debate on the existence or non-existence of African Philosophy has been laid to rest after much struggles by concerned and enlightened African scholars and philosophers. The truth is that Kant's anthropological and geographical writings along with those of his predecessors as we have seen in this study were the tools with which the Western scholars used in not only questioning the existence of African philosophy but also rejecting it outrightly. Till date, even as the debate on the existence or non-existence of African Philosophy is presumed to have been laid to rest, African philosophy has not yet been acknowledged positively by the Western world. This is a continuation of the racist theory emanating from Kant and his predecessors which was properly hatched for the purpose of enthroneing white supremacy, which prominent Europeans and American leaders subscribed to, as can be seen in the narcissistic views of their leaders like Thomas Jefferson who says that the "Negro is incapable of understanding mathematics and philosophy". And

that “the natural differences between whites and blacks are prerequisites for them to be segregated “beyond reach of mixture”(Jefferson, 1972). Jefferson did not only believe that blacks are meant to be segregated beyond reach of mixture due to the differences between them and the white race, he also claims that: whether a black or a negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature, and it is real as if its seat and cause were better known to us. And is this difference of no importance? (Jefferson, 1972).

Abraham Lincoln equally shares similar views as Jefferson, when during one of the visits by black leaders to the White House when he was the president, he explains:

You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference that exists between any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffers very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence (Lincoln, 1987).

Kant, Lincoln, Jefferson and others who attribute the differences in skin colour as a mark of rationality or irrationality; superior or inferior are quite wrong because the differentiation in skin colour amongst humans on earth has been traced to the melanin and not an evidence of any biological or genetic inferiority or superiority. J.C. Chukwuokolo notes that it was Anta Diop who, in criticizing constructively the racist notion of development proffered by David Hume, discovers why there are differences in skin colours of humans. According to Chukwuokolo, Diop defines melanin as: the biochemical substance which gives the skin a black or dark brown colour, and which absorbs and scatters the sun's ultraviolet rays, preventing their penetration to the deeper layers of the skin. The ability to produce melanin is genetically determined and without its protective effects, hairless tropical man would have absolutely perished from devastating skin cancer (Chukwuokolo, 2008).

From the above, Chukwuokolo explains how Diop traced the origin of the melanin⁵⁸ to the effect of harsh tropical condition the early men encountered. According to him, the result of this harsh condition was the loss of body hairs protecting the body from light rays. The natural response to this says Chukwuokolo, “was the emergence of the melanin substance. And as men migrated to the colder regions, the melanin substance became unnecessary and even a negative factor for the skin no longer needed shielding from the sun's meager rays available in the region, instead there was more need for the rays of the sun” Chukwuokolo, 2008). The implication of the above is that early men were originally black. But then, as Diop avers, “the fact that early men were essentially black should be cause for neither pride nor chagrin; it was an essential process of nature, a biological and evolutionary necessity” (Chukwuokolo, 2008).

Therefore, skin colour does not in any way determine rationality or irrationality; superiority or inferiority of races. All races are human beings endowed with rationality.

(4) Non-Europeans are not culpable or Responsible for their Actions. If Africans and other non-Europeans are not moral agents according to Kant, then they are not responsible for their actions and if they are not responsible for their actions then they cannot be punished for crimes they commit. It is only moral agents who can be punished for their crimes because they are culpable or should be responsible for their actions. But Africans and other non-Europeans are obviously culpable or responsible for their actions. Various prisons in different countries of the world including Europe have non-Europeans as inmates; meaning that they are responsible for their actions. And since they are responsible for their actions, then they are moral; and if they are moral, then they are rational.

(5) Morality does not exist. If as Kant argues, that it is the motive of an action not the consequences that determines its moral goodness, then it means that we are permitted to perform all sorts of immoral and evil acts in so far as it is the motive of our action (which is to act in respect of the law) is what makes our act good or bad and not the consequences. And if the consequences of our actions do not count, then morality itself would be non-existent because, without consequences, performing actions for the sake of duty would be quite difficult and probably impossible since duty for the sake of duty according to Kant, is not only empty but also sounds like saying: ‘doing something for the sake of nothing’. In fact, without considering the consequences of our acts, we would all become another Adolf Hitler who set out to exterminate all the Jews while applying Kant's ‘duty for the sake of duty alone’. If consequences of our actions are not important in determining moral goodness, why did the whole world condemn Hitler's action? We are not trying to show here, that the deontologists have no claims at all; rather, we are trying to show that a combination of both the consequentialists' and the

deontologists' claims would be better, else, Kant's deontologist's claim alone would imply that morality does not exist.

Meanwhile, the above implications of Kant's ethics for contemporary society are quite negative because of Kant's racial views. However, a reconstruction of Kant's ethics in which his racial views are bracketed off or excused on the basis that Kant was not quite informed or fully knowledgeable about the true nature of the different races of the world, given the time or era in which he lived, would reveal or show forth quite a number of positive implications. In other words, Kant's ethics has positive implications for our contemporary society if we ignore his racial views. Therefore, Kant's ethics has the following positive implications for contemporary society:

(1) **Gender equality:** Kant's ethics is vital for gender equality. His defense of the ultimate moral importance of our rational nature is something that feminists cannot afford to ignore. This is because, harms to one's rational nature are among the worst harms an oppressed person can face. It is critically important for feminists to have something to say about why harms to women's rational capacities are seriously morally problematic because these harms are among the most egregious problems that arise from women's oppression. Kant's ethics gives us a way to explain what is wrong with these harms. Despite what Kant might have thought, we know that women's rational capacities are no different from men's. Thus, we know that women are just as deserving of respect as men. And we know too that the respect that women are owed in virtue of their rational capacities is incompatible with the harms to women's rationality that can result from oppression. Feminists therefore have good reason to take Kant's ethics seriously since Kant's work on rationality gives us the conceptual tools to make sense of what is wrong with some of the worst harms of sexist oppression. Kant provides such a robust account of duties to the self such that his account is unparalleled in its ability to fully explain the moral importance of self-respect. Kant's account is also unparalleled in its ability to condemn certain gendered norms of self-sacrifice in the contemporary society.

(2) **Consistency, Impartiality, Rationality:** Kant's ethics emphasizes rationality and at the same time demands consistency, impartiality, and respect from and for persons in the way we live our lives. If Kant is correct that moral absolutes cannot be violated; and we think he is, then his ethics prevents any loopholes, self-serving exceptions, and personal biases common in our contemporary society in the determination of our duties.

(3) **Intrinsic Worth of Human beings:** by virtue of being human beings, we all have rights, dignity, and intrinsic moral worth or value. Hence, Kant's ethics directly upholds and protects the rights, dignity and intrinsic worth of every human being without exception. This has direct positive consequences on the contemporary society in which citizens' rights, dignity and moral worth are daily challenged or violated.

(4) **Elimination of cultural relativism:** Kant's ethics has no problem with cultural relativism since moral rights and duties transcend all societies and all contexts. Therefore, our contemporary society should be such as to admit no cultural relativism with regards to our moral rights and duties.

(5) **Autonomy and ability to choose your moral projects:** Kant's ethics permits one to have the autonomy and the ability to choose his moral projects through reason as long as one is not lying, breaking promises or committing suicide or any of other vices that violate the principles of the categorical imperative. This is quite important in our contemporary society that is currently bedeviled with series of vices and crimes.

(6) **A moral framework for rights:** Kant's ethics offers our society a moral framework for rights. In other words, it helps us to see where we get them. This is because, duties imply rights, and rights imply legitimate expectations, and if every human being has intrinsic worth, then in our contemporary society, every human being should have the same rights, other things being equal.

(7) **Moral Responsibility and Sound Ethical and Moral Behaviour:** Kant's categorical imperative is based on an *a priori* metaphysics. Consequently, he sees every man as naturally capable of moral responsibilities with the capacity for sound ethical and moral behaviour. Hence, morality should be for our contemporary society not a matter of option but a natural responsibility.

(8) **Capacity for Discipline:** Kant's ethics recognizes the weaknesses of human nature capable of errors and defects. Hence, the categorical imperative contends principles of discipline on the human will and desires because the will and human desires are inordinate in nature and should be guided by reason. Therefore, our contemporary society should be able to have the capacity for discipline in order to guide our inordinate will and desires by reason.

(9) **A Moral and Ethical Sense of Values, Goals and Processes of a Free Society:** Kant's ethics recognizes good moral values, as well as "the other" in the society as an important aspect of the society. This is a principle that directly bears on tolerance and accommodation which is an imperative for moral rectifications in the contemporary society with multicultural situations.

(10) **Standard of Personal Character:** Kant's ethics represents the discipline of the will, rational action and duty for duty sake as principles of social morality. Hence the categorical imperative is a principle and standard of personal character, ideas, being law abiding and contributing positively to the contemporary society in different ways.

Finally, the principles of the three formulations of the categorical imperative especially the first and the second - *Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature* and *Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means* can be used as powerful tools to combat social ills that bedevil our contemporary societies such as rape, armed robbery, embezzlement of public funds, ethnic hatred or tribalism, that have become obstacles towards national unity; suicide, child-trafficking, examination malpractice (that have eaten deep and destroyed our academic institutions), bribery and corruption that have now become the identity of most nations especially Nigeria.

II. Conclusion

In this paper, we have critically examined Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy and found out that he presents what looks like a universal theory that says that every human being has an innate dignity and value and should be treated with respect. But then, as we have clearly argued and shown in the work, Kant's ethical theory is far from being a universal moral theory. In fact, Kant's ethical theory is an exclusive ethical principle structured for the white-Europeans only. Thus we have been able to show that Kant's ethical theory or the categorical imperative is not at all universal because scholars like Charles Mills maintain that Kant really has a universal moral theory but did not intend his theory to apply to black people. And our position is that Kant's moral theory is not and cannot be universal because it is a contradiction to say that Kant has a universal moral theory that he did not intend to apply to black people. Except if by the term 'universal' Kant restricts the sense only to White Europeans. But by the very sense of the term 'universal' it is all inclusive and not exclusive. Therefore, as Kant did not intend to apply his moral theory to blacks, his ethics at best would make meaning only to his fellow white Europeans.

Therefore, our study reveals that Kant's ethical theory or the categorical imperative does not apply to Africa and to other non-white races because Kant denies Africans, women and other non-whites the ability to reason or rationality, which according to Kant is the criterion for being moral. In other words, the work reveals that Kant does not consider Africans as moral agents and since they are not moral agents, they are simply brutes. Thus, we have been able to show The implications of Kant's categorical imperative (both positive and negative) for contemporary society.

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