

## Robert Johnson

Moral indifference

### 1. *Meaning and location in Kant's works*

Kant used "moral indifference" to refer both to certain character traits, as well as to the deontic status of being neither forbidden nor required by the Moral Law.

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Wichtige Stellen: 6:22-3, 6:223, 6:408-9,

### 2. *Related keywords in Kant's work*

Rigorismus, Latitudinarianer, Tugend, moralische Apathie

### 3. *Philosophical function in Kant's philosophy*

As a character trait, the phrase "moral indifference" may be understood in two quite opposed ways. 6:408-9 Understood as "moral apathy", to be indifferent is to be uninfluenced by feelings because respect for the Moral Law has more influence. In this sense, moral indifference is moral strength of the sort required by virtue. However, understood as a lack of moral vigor, or a lack of power in one's respect for the Moral Law, then indifference is moral weakness. It is a requirement of virtue, for Kant, not merely to be morally apathetic and not to be governed by feelings and inclinations, but also to bring all of our passions, affects and inclinations under the control of reason. Perhaps surprisingly, Kant thinks the lack of this sort of self-control characteristic of virtue is compatible with having a good will.

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A morally indifferent action, by contrast, would be one neither required nor prohibited, but merely permitted. 6:223 Kant acknowledged the possibility that the Categorical Imperative

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merely permits some actions. However, he favored what he termed "rigorism", or the view that there is no possibility of anything morally intermediate between good and bad, either in actions or in characters. 6:22-3 Kant argued that merely permissible actions couldn't exist on the supposition that the Moral Law is an incentive in us. The only way in which the power of choice can be oriented with respect to the Moral Law is either for or against it. Since actions are to be evaluated in his view based on the orientation of the agent's will, every action is either good or evil.

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