

Autonomy

Immanuel Kant

Last weeks

- The development of ethical practice within the Counselling profession:
- The Belmont Report
- Ethical Principilism :- autonomy, beneficence, justice
- This week:
- Aim: To consider more fully the question of 'Autonomy'
- Objectives:
 - 1. Its relationship to an ethical position
 - 2. Its relationship to a therapeutic principle
 - 3. Strengths and limitations

Resources

- BACP Ethical Framework
- http://www.bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/
- Bond, T., 2000. *Standards and ethics for counselling in action*. 2nd ed. London: Sage Publishers.
- Jones, G., Cardinal, D., & Hayward, J., 2006. *Moral philosophy in focus; a guide to ethical theory*. London: Hodder Education. Pp.1-24
- Panza, C., & Potthast, 2010. *Ethics for dummies*. Indiana: Wiley Publishing – Chapter 8 Doing Your Duty: The Ethics of Principle

Cakes and toppings

Moral Theory/Cakes

- Principle of Autonomy – Kantian Deontology
- Principle of Beneficence – Utilitarianism
- Personal Qualities –
- Aristotelean Virtue Ethics

Ethical Application/toppings

- Informed Consent
- Do no harm
- Professional qualities

Autonomy:

- Respect for Persons
 - Individuals should be treated as autonomous agents
 - Individuals with diminished autonomy are entitled to protections
- Autonomy - Informed consent
 - Information
 - Comprehension
 - Voluntariness

Autonomy

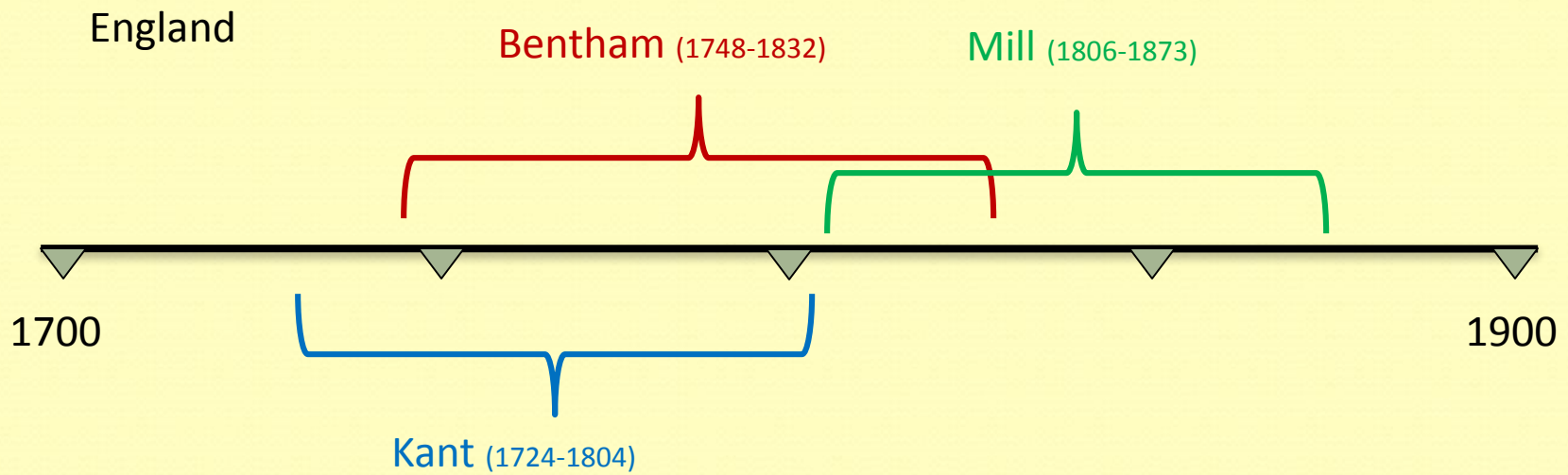
- Autonomy = Greek *autos* - **self** and *nomos* - **rule** – SELF RULE
- Lies at the heart of
- Kantian moral philosophy – deontology = moral duty.
- A moral law - universal
- Probably the most influential moral philosopher of the Western tradition

Immanuel Kant

- all persons have unconditional worth, and the capacity to determine their moral destiny and individual rights
- For this we need:
 - Freedom
 - Reason = Rational
 - Agency

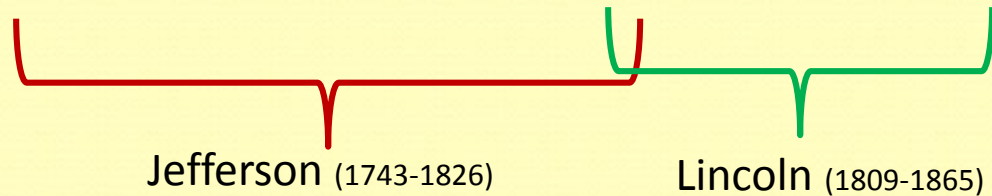
Autonomy

- **BACP**
- **Autonomy** - *respect for client's right to be self-governing*
 - addresses power imbalance, informed consent, confidentiality, clients as ends in themselves -not means to an end - ie rejects manipulation for beneficial social ends
- Properly **informed** individual can give **informed consent** on a voluntary basis. Must be a **competent** individual.
- Competent – rational = autonomous



Germany

America
For
comparison



The Age of Reason -- The Enlightenment

Immanuel Kant

: “Enlightenment is man’s leaving his self-caused **immaturity**. **Immaturity** is the incapacity to use one’s intelligence without the guidance of another.

Such immaturity is self-caused if it is not caused by lack of intelligence, but by lack of determination and courage to use one’s intelligence without being guided by another.

Sapere Aude! [Dare to know!] Have the courage to use your own intelligence! is therefore the motto of the enlightenment.”

Question

- Do these sentiments have resonance with the ambitions of Counselling?
- To become mature and self-supporting.

The Age of Reason: **PROGRESS**

For the first time, we see an optimistic view that humans can use reason to create a new and better world than had existed before. In the field of science in particular, there was a clear break from the past traditions and a belief that the best was yet to come, that scientific progress was possible.

Moral Objectivism

- For Kant '**Moral facts**' are like '**physical facts**'.
 - Facts are independent of what anyone thinks
 - They have to be discovered like the laws of physics
 - Discovery may be difficult (again, compare to physics)
 - How does he find this out?
- (*cf Hume when we come to him*)

MAN, NATURE, AND RATIONALITY

- Kant notes that “everything in nature works according to laws.” However, humans differ from other parts of nature in that humans alone can **reason** according **to principles**.
- Thus, Kant recognizes the **rationality** of human beings.
- Humans are rational in having a “*conception* of laws,” or principles.
- Our **rationality** enables us to understand the correctness of moral laws such as “keep your promises,” and to know the difference between right and wrong.
- Which is what makes us different from animals

FREE AGENCY

- Human beings are also free agents, that is, we have free will, or can freely choose between options, including moral options. That is, we can freely choose to do right or wrong.
- Because of our rationality, we can understand the difference between right and wrong. And, because of our rationality, we can understand moral laws which it is our *duty* to accept as binding(otherwise we would be like the animals who don't have rationality)
- Our *freedom* to choose means then that we are capable of *freely acting* on this knowledge. That is we can freely choose to do what is proper.

REASON AND AGENCY

- Knowing how to act morally requires **reason**. Thus we must be able to deduce and understand **the principles (laws)** of correct moral behavior.
- Having **understood what is the right thing to do**, we then act in a morally correct way when we freely choose to act according to the moral law which reason has recognized to be correct.
- Kant calls our ability to act according to **principles**, or our capacity to use our free will to do the right thing, *practical reason*.

What does the moral law say

Maxims

- Duty is determined by the **principles** (maxims) according to which we act
- An ethical maxim is one in which every ethical person would necessarily act if reason were fully in charge of his or her actions
- Kant's most famous maxim:

I should act in a way that I would want everyone else in the world to act.

- Categorical Imperative/Objective/Universal

Ethic of client autonomy -strengths

- Challenges assumptions about professional power
- Strengthens client power and influence by directing attention to the client's right to be self-governing
- Directs attention to importance of free and informed consent, confidentiality, rejects manipulation for social ends

But

- Are we all free?
- Are we all rational – and is this the most significant principle (law) on which our ethical practice is based?
- Do we all have the same capacity of agency?