

ABSTRACT

In Immanuel Kant's essay "On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns" (1797) he famously argues that it is never permissible to tell a lie, even when lying could save someone's life. This view has met with a great deal of criticism from philosophers, who argue that his ethical theory must be flawed if it leads to such an undesirable conclusion.

In this report, I explore this claim, arguing that this conclusion does not, after all, follow from Kant's ethical theory. I focus in particular on the three formulations of the categorical imperative – the Formula of the Universal Law, the Formula of Humanity and the Formula of the Kingdom of Ends – and argue that none of these versions of Kant's key ethical principle requires him to make the rigorous claim that we may *never* lie under any circumstances. Although lying turns out to be morally wrong in the majority of cases, based on a proper application of Kant's theory, there are likely to be some situations in which lying is permissible or even obligatory, as I hope to show in this research.