

Looking at *Justine* through a Kantian perspective

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Duration of video clip: 5 minutes and 12 seconds

Kant would ask completely different questions and here comes the baseball bat, because Kant is difficult for all of us, you know, he argues that what matters most is our intentions. Let me tell you this, as just as again as a lame viewer, I could feel that your intentions are good, I don't even know how to tell, I mean I can, but I want to stay in that non-reflective, real world, really I could feel that your intentions were good. From so many reasons we don't have time to discuss now, but I could semiotically analyse the film and show you how it goes through. But Kant would ask two difficult questions. One, were you willing that what you were doing there, would become a universal law, in terms that everybody would do the same at any given time to anybody. Will you be willing that a camera will follow anyone, and it will become a universally accepted law to your close ones, your remote ones, to everybody? Now he tells us, if your reason tells you that you are willing to accept it, out of rational, a rational feeling, then it's a sign that you're doing the right thing.

These people were not in the middle of the scale of the human or logical and behavioural scale, have been an object of desire of the human, of the filming gaze from the start. So I understand that, yet I cannot stop from asking myself, is it right? Why are we doing it? I mean, I know we mean good, but aren't we deceiving ourselves? I mean, I know the whole story that the camera looks for something that has to be exotic, different, it has to go to the extreme to make a case for the normal. It has to reach out to people, therefore it has to go to the extreme, in order to make a case for both, to become empathetic and etc. But still, it is a difficult issue. I don't know if (Kant's) the categorical imperative would have been approved or would have in favour of our documentary enterprise in general, and I don't know how he (Kant) would react.

All I'm saying is that it's a good point for thinking about what we do, about the ontology of what we do, that we have to go to these people who don't necessarily understand like us what we're doing, and we are at a position where we look at them. And you know what, I'd rather remain uncomfortable to the end of my life with it and leave it to that specific film, to each specific film to say, "was it done gracefully, was it done generously, was it done with respect?" I could say one thing, I think *Justine* was made with respect and dignity, and I can analyse that as well, but no need to do that

now. I think it was, I could just feel it by the way you kept a distance, that distance you kept is the key element – if you got too close, I would have had to condemn you for not maintaining that space of dignity. But that kind of inner respect you have toward people is manifested there, so that's the only thing I can say about Kant.

And then he would ask us another very critical question: “Is what we're doing succumbing to using people as ends, as means to an end, or do we treat them as ends in themselves?” This is a difficult one, he understand the fact that we have to communicate, and use one another. Now the question, and the tough question with these kinds of films, and I mean you talked about it yourself, is, “don't we use her, don't we use her?” And this will remain open, I don't have an answer because, as I said before, the wider context indicates that your goodwill was there before anything. Let me remind you that Kant is all about goodwill – he said that the only condition for human society for understanding of morality is through goodwill. I could feel that goodwill in your actions. Other than that, I would like to leave it open for anyone who sees films in general, this film in particular, were you willing that this would become a universal law, and was it a means to an end treating, or also as an end in itself? Was *Justine* an end in itself, or was she becoming a means to an end? And if so, to what degree, because there is an acceptable degree to which she can become a means to an end, you know, means to an end is not bad, insofar as it doesn't become manipulation, and so forth. I think she was manipulated – you know, my sense of it, but I think the question is a big one and should engage in the wider conversation.