

ETHICS of LEADERSHIP

Respect for Persons

As you read the material for our next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the reading:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.

Reading

- Immanuel Kant, "Transition from Popular Moral Philosophy to the Metaphysics of Morals".

Background

In the second section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Immanuel Kant introduces the idea of imperatives, that is, commands that apply to rational beings like us with a free will. In particular, Kant introduces the idea of a **categorical imperative**: a command that holds for all rational beings regardless of their subjective desires, inclinations, and appetites. The categorical imperative discussed by Kant in this reading states that a person's actions are right if and only if the maxim it is based upon is such that it treats all people as ends in themselves and not merely as means to whatever ends the agent may have. According to Kant, this is the essence of respect for a person.

Kant then uses this to explain an ideal **kingdom of ends**, which is a democratic republic that is "the systematic unity of several rational beings through common laws" (p. 45) which the citizens make for themselves. In this kingdom, every person is both a follower (subject to the law) and a leader (making those laws). Kant concludes that the essence of free will and autonomy is to only obey those laws that I have set down for myself in accordance with reason. The categorical imperative therefore demands that I respect my autonomy as well as that of others.

Questions

1. Kant begins this reading with a discussion about the different types of principles that command rational beings like us. According to Kant, what does it mean for beings like us to have a will? What is a "holy will" and how is it different from our will? Why does this lead to a discussion of imperatives? What are the differences between hypothetical and categorical imperatives?
2. According to Kant (on page 40), what does it mean for something to have relative worth? Why does Kant believe that many of the things that a rational being pursues only have this type of value? Why are things of relative worth only connected to hypothetical imperatives?
3. On the other hand, what does Kant mean (on page 40) by saying that something has absolute worth? Why are things of absolute value connected to categorical imperatives? According to Kant what has absolute worth and why? Finally, how does this provide the ground for the categorical imperative that "*you use humanity, in your own person as well as in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means*" (p. 41)?
4. Kant (on pages 43–48) introduces the idea of a legislating will. Why does Kant believe that all our choices involve, in some sense, creating laws for all rational beings? Why does Kant believe that you can only truly respect and obey a law that you have imposed on yourself?