

Ethical Theory

Humanity & The Kingdom of Ends

As you read the material for the 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 readings:

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 to these issues in the next class meeting.

Readings

- *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, editor's introduction, paragraphs 37–46 (pp. xxiii–xxviii) & second section, paragraphs 42–79 (pp. 37–51).

The book does not number the paragraphs, so you will need to number them yourself in the page margins. The editor's introduction has 59 paragraphs and the second section has 89.

Questions

1. According to Kant (in paragraph 46 of the second section), 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?
2. On the other hand, what does Kant mean (in paragraph 47 of the second section) by saying that something has absolute worth? Why are things of absolute value connected to categorical imperatives? According to Kant (in paragraph 48 of the second section), what has absolute worth and why? Finally, how does this provide (in paragraph 49 of the second section) make the second formulation of the categorical imperative (which scholars now call the formula of humanity) possible? How does Kant apply this formula (in paragraphs 51–54 of the second section) to his four examples?
3. Kant (in paragraphs 55–71 of the second section) 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 as such? Why does Kant believe that you can only truly respect and obey a law that you have imposed on yourself? How do these two ideas lead Kant to his third formulation of the categorical imperative (which scholars now call the formula of the kingdoms of ends)?
4. In the end, Kant seems to endorse three different formulations of the same categorical imperative. How does Kant (in paragraphs 71–75 of the second section) try to reconcile this paradoxical position?