

Ethical Theory

Humanity & The Kingdom of Ends

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, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, editor's introduction, paragraphs 37–46 & second section, paragraphs 42–79 (pp. xxiii–xxviii & 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 the second section, paragraph 46), 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 by saying (in the second section, paragraph 47) that something has absolute worth? Why are things of absolute value connected to categorical imperatives? According to Kant (in the second section, paragraph 48), what has absolute worth and why? Finally, how does this justify (in the second section, paragraph 49) the second formulation of the categorical imperative, which is typically called the formula of humanity? How does Kant apply (in the second section, paragraphs 51–54) this formula to his four examples?
3. Kant introduces (in the second section, paragraphs 55–71) 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? How do these two ideas lead Kant to his third formulation of the categorical imperative, which is typically called 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 the second section, paragraphs 71–75) attempt to reconcile this paradoxical position?