

Reading Guide #6

Kant Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals(7-17) (23-33)

Please read the following carefully:

pp. 7-8 “There is no possibility.. to determine its value.”

p. 9-15 “The concept of will... ..made a universal law.”

OK, now go back and reread the first section trying to answer the following questions.

1. Paragraph 1 (7): “There is no possibility ... worthy of happiness.”):

- a) Aristotle and Plato talked about instrumental goods versus final goods. An instrumental good is something that is good because it brings about something else which is good. A final good is something that is good in itself, and not just good for what it brings about. Give an example of something that is only instrumentally good and then something that is a final good.
- b) Kant distinguishes between unconditional goods (as he puts it “good without qualification”) and conditional goods (i.e. goods with qualification). Is Kant’s distinction between the unconditionally good/conditionally good, the same as Aristotle and Plato’s distinction between the instrumentally and the finally good? That is to say, does instrumental good = conditionally good and finally good = unconditionally good? Can you provide an example of something that is finally good but not unconditionally good (i.e. something that is good for its own sake and not because of what it brings about, BUT not good without limitation).**

2. Paragraph 2 (p. 7):

- a) What is Kant’s method of criticizing proposed unconditional goods. [Hint: It is not merely that every good can have bad consequences, because a good will could also have bad consequences, and besides does it attack the goodness of a thing that it happens to have bad consequences.] Use this method to decide whether pleasure is an unconditional good.

3. Paragraph 3 (p. 7-8) (“A good will... determine its value”):

- a) In Paragraph 3, after dismissing all other candidates as only conditionally good, Kant tries to defend the claim that the good will is, indeed, unconditionally good. In order to do this he invokes the test from Par. 2, a), and decides that the good will passes this test. In so doing, he imagines a man, lets call him. Clousseau, who “by the niggardly provision of stepmotherly nature.., should be wholly lacking in the power to accomplish [his] purpose.” What is Kant talking about here? Flesh out a more complete picture of Clousseau. Provide examples of purposes that Clousseau might have that he would fail to accomplish.
- b) Now imagine that Clousseau comes across some moral dilemma? Suppose for example, that Clousseau comes across a man who is drowning. What will Clousseau try to do? What will he end up doing? Do you agree that Clousseau will “shine like a jewel?

4. Paragraph 9: (p. 9-10) "I here omit...for a selfish purpose"

- a) **Kant begins to defend his claim that a dutiful will (i.e. a good human will) is a will that acts *from* the motive of duty. Using the example of the prudent merchant(p 10), explain Kant's distinction between acting *from* the motive of duty and acting *in accordance with duty*. Come up with another example where it is clear that someone is acting *in accordance with duty* but not *from* the motive of duty.**
- b) In the example of the prudent merchant, what actually is the thing that is motivating the shopkeeper to be honest? Does the merchant have a "direct inclination" to be honest?
- c) What is wrong with merely acting in accordance with duty and not *from* duty. [Hint: Will the merchant *always* act honestly? Is there an essential relationship between his action and his motive or is it merely accidental?]

5. Paragraph 11: p. 11-12, ""To be beneficent where one can... not from inclination but from duty" (skip paragraph 10, you can come back to it later, if you like and see if it makes more sense), :

- a) Alright now imagine a situation UNLIKE in 4.b. where we actually have a "direct inclination" to do some action. Provide an example that is neither moral nor immoral where we have a direct inclination to do this kind of action
- b) **Alright lets turn to Kant's example in Paragraph 11. He introduces us, to a new character, who he calls "the friend of mankind", lets name her Felicity. As the name implies, Felicity has a mind "so sympathetically constituted that, without any further motive of vanity or self-interest, [Felicity] finds an inner pleasure in spreading joy around her, and can rejoice in the satisfaction of others..." In other words, Felicity always has a direct inclination to help other people. Sounds good right? Wrong! Ultimately, Kant criticizes Felicity as not acting *from* the motive of duty, but merely acting in *accordance* with duty. According to Kant, Felicity's motive "lacks moral content." What does Kant mean when he says that Felicity's motive "lacks moral content?" Consider your answer to 4.c, can you see why Felicity's motive is in an important sense the same as the shopkeeper's? Explain, (and perhaps provide a situation which will clarify what you mean.)**