

Reading Guide #6: Kantian Deontology

This reading guide is provided to assist you in your reading. I encourage you to read the material through, first, then go back to answer the questions. You are not expected to submit written answers. You are expected to have responses ready for class discussion. Only the boldfaced questions will appear on exams. Page numbers refer to Louis Pojman, *Moral Philosophy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Hackett.

Immanuel Kant, "The Foundations of Ethics," pp 194-213.

1. What is the difference between practical rules and moral laws?
2. **What is the only thing Kant thinks good without qualification? Why are intelligence and wealth not good without qualification?**
3. Why is the good will good?
4. Does our use of reason lead us to happiness? What does this show about reasoning?
5. **Contrast Kant's notions of inclination and duty. When does an act have moral worth?**
6. Why is it a duty to seek our own happiness?
7. **"An action done from duty has its moral worth, not in the purpose that is to be attained by it, but in the maxim according to which the action is determined." (199) Explain.**
8. What is our duty?
9. How is truthfulness out of duty different from truthfulness out of fear of bad consequences?
10. **Why can lying not be willed as a universal law?**
11. Are most actions done from pure duty? What does this show about Kant's notion of duty?
12. How are the inner principles which motivate our actions unseen?
13. Why are examples not useful in determining the moral law? What is the role of examples?
14. How does a perfectly good will differ from a human will?
15. **What is the difference between an hypothetical and a categorical imperative?**
16. **Explain the categorical imperative in the formula of universal law.**
17. **Why is false promising wrong, according to the formula of universal law? (See Illustration 2)**
18. **Why may you not neglect others in need, according to Kant? (See Illustration 4)**
19. **How are the answers to the previous two questions different? That is, what are the two ways in which one can fail to be able to will a maxim?**
20. **Why can we not will a universalized transgression to a moral law? What can we will about the transgression?**
21. How do we discover our moral principles?
22. **"Now I say that man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will." (209) Explain.**
23. **What is the difference between things and persons?**
24. **What, specifically, is the second formulation of the categorical imperative?**
25. Why are systems of morality based on hypothetical imperatives heteronomous? How is Kant's system autonomous?
26. **What is a "kingdom of ends," according to Kant? In the third version of the categorical imperative, in what does morality consist?**
27. **What is Kant's distinction between price and dignity? What kinds of things have dignity?**
28. **What is autonomy, for Kant? What is freedom?**

Fred Feldman, "An Examination of Kant's Ethics," pp 214-228.

- 1. How is the common response to the tax cheat non-utilitarian? What general principle underlies this response?**
- 2. What is a maxim? What is the generalized form of a maxim?**
3. What is the difference between a universal law of nature and a universal law of freedom?
- 4. What is willing? How can one will inconsistently?**
5. What is the first version of Kant's categorical imperative?
- 6. How is the categorical imperative different from the golden rule?**
- 7. What is the difference between perfect and imperfect duties? Why is the development of one's natural talents an imperfect duty?**
8. How does Kant's suicide example depend on the function of self-interest ("self-love")? Be specific.
- 9. For Kant, why is borrowing money on a false promise morally wrong? Which considerations are irrelevant to Kant, but relevant to the utilitarian assessment of the morality of false promising?**
10. Why, according to Kant, may we not neglect our talents? Why, according to Feldman, is Kant's example not persuasive?
- 11. Does the maxim of neglecting those in need lead to a contradiction in the will? Explain.**
12. Why would Kant's theory be worse off if he had succeeded in showing suicide and neglecting one's talents to be morally wrong?
13. How might the term-paper cheater trick the categorical imperative test?
- 14. How are some morally acceptable maxims non-universalizable?**