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Philosophy Journal

Duty and Reason as the Ultimate Principle: Kant

Question 14: Show the close ties that hold between the “categorical imperative” and Kant injunction that humanity is an “end in itself”.

Location is found in the middle to the end of page 511. Also found on page 510 (middle).

Kant’s categorical imperative is in such, a universal law. He states that  “I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become universal law”. He means that you can only do what can be universalized, meaning if it were done, existence would still occur. An example used was, would it make sense to universalize making false promises. The answer would be no, because trust would break down and life would become pointless. Everything that we do should be an “idea of something which is necessary an end for every one, because it is an *end it itself,* meaning whatever idea or law we have, it should be to treat people as ends in themselves. Further explained, making a universal law that we should all lie would be treating people as a means to an end. Whatever we do should be based on our duty and morals of treating someone as a person (rational being), not as someone to just serve our needs.

Question 15: When Kant claims that we are never to treat people “simply” as a means, what does he mean by “simply”.  Found on page 511 (middle and bottom).

Kant is saying that people are never to be used as means to an end. He is saying that if you have used someone before, it would be despicable to keep doing so. In terms of the question, simply means “merely” or only. We should value people, not merely using them to satisfy our needs. People are rational beings and only using them would be horrendous and extremely simple.

Hume’s *Human Feelings as the Source of Ethics*can be contrasted with Kant’s *Duty and Reason.*Hume believed that emotions, our reasons, our human nature determines our morality. On the other hand, Kant believed in duty. He did not believe our feelings, our inclinations; our human nature should play a role in our morality.