

Deriving the Formula of Humanity: 427.19–429.13

1. 'Translation'

- ¶46.1 [1] Will is the capacity to determine itself to action in line with the representation of certain laws.
- ¶46.2 [2] Only rational beings have a will; can will anything.
- ¶46.3 [3] End is the *objective ground* of the will's self-determination. It applies to all rational beings if it is given by pure reason (*blosse Vernunft*).
- ¶46.4 [4] Means is the potential or *possible ground* for an action whose effect (or outcome) is the end.
- ¶46.5 [5] *Subjective ground* of desiring something is the incentive (*Triebfeder*); the objective ground of willing something is the motivating ground. Hence the difference: subjective ends depend on incentives, objective ends depend on motivating grounds. Given [3], motivating grounds apply to all rational beings.
- ¶46.6 [6] *Formal* practical principles abstract from subjective ends; *material* practical principles depend on subjective ends, and thus on incentives.
- ¶46.7 [7] Material ends, or ends that a rational being posits as the effects or outcomes of an action, are relative: i.e. bound to specific desires and inclinations [5]. These ends have value or worth (*Werth*) that is likewise relative—and thus subjective, contingent, and particular. Hence, these ends cannot constitute or become practical laws, which would have to be universal, necessary, and objective.
- ¶46.8 [8] This is why relative ends appear in hypothetical (but not categorical) imperatives. [So, what ends could be universalised?]
- ¶47.1 [9] Suppose there is something that has *absolute* (i.e. non-relative) value; this would be a thing with intrinsic value—a value unconnected to further ends as a means: such a thing would be an end in itself. This would fit the requirements for a practical law, i.e. the CI.
- ¶48.1 [10] There is such a thing: the human being, or the rational being in general. Rational beings exist *not only* as means to be used by some will, *but also* as ends in themselves. Rational agents are thus always to be considered at the same time as ends.
- ¶48.2 [11] Objects of inclinations have (relative) value only insofar as they are desired; without these, they have no (intrinsic or absolute) value [9] (e.g., a cup for drinking coffee).
- ¶48.3 [12] Inclinations as such, as sources of desires, have no worth or value either—in fact, rational beings wish to be without inclinations.
- ¶48.4 [13] Given [7], the value of the objects we aim for through our actions is thus always conditional.

- ¶48.5 [14] Natural non-rational beings (including animals) have relative value as means [4]. They are called ‘things’. Natural rational beings that have non-relative or absolute value are called ‘persons’. So, by exclusion, persons are ends in themselves. This status limits what can be done to them, and it also makes persons objects of respect or reverence (*Achtung*).
- ¶48.6 [15] These ends are thus not subjective, in that they have value for us as means to effect certain outcomes [4], [7]; they are *objective* [5], as ends in themselves such beings have absolute or unconditional worth/value. The possibility of a CI rests on beings that have such unconditional and thus necessary value.
- ¶49.1 [16] The supreme practical principle, or with a view to the human will, the CI, must be objective and universal, and this is possible because of the fact that ends in themselves are ends for everyone.
- ¶49.2 [17] The ground (foundation, reason) for this principle is that a rational being essentially is an end in itself [10, 14].
- ¶49.3 [18] This is a subjective principle insofar as it pertains to human nature.
- ¶49.4 [19] Since in this way every rational being represents its existence to itself, the principle is also objective. *Note*: For now, this is a postulate, and will be justified in Section III. Since it is a supreme practical ground, all laws of the will must be derivable from it.
- ¶49.5 [20] Hence, the practical imperative must be this (FH): so act that you use humanity (yourself and others) always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means.

2. Argument

- (1) The CI prescribes certain actions as necessary.
- (2) All actions aim at an end.
- (3) So, the CI prescribes ends that *must* be pursued: everybody necessarily aims at those ends when he/she acts.
- (4) *Corollary*. These ends cannot be subjective, or relative to an particular individual’s perspective; and they do not depend on incentives or desires.
- (5) So, these ends are objective and non-relational: they are ends in themselves. They are never pursued as means for further ends, or for the sake of something else: they are complete or final (cf. *NE* 1097a31–b2).
- (6) Objective ends have intrinsic value: worth or dignity; they deserve respect.
- (7) *Postulate*. Rational beings are ends in themselves. (Insofar as rational beings self-determine their wills, and thus do so autonomously, they also are spontaneously free: they set themselves their own ends, and, insofar as they are objective, these ends are absolute, or non-relational, or unconditional.) This will be further defended in *GMS* III.
- (8) The collection of human rational beings is humanity.
- (9) So, the final or objective end is humanity.
- (10) *Corollary*. Through FH, the CI prescribes actions that promote humanity.

