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KANT'S HUMANITY FORMULA IN THE *GROUNDWORK*

by

ZEYU CHI

Under the Direction of Eric E. Wilson

ABSTRACT

In this paper I argue for an alternative reading of the humanity formula that Kant presents in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. The standard reading takes “humanity” to mean the capacity for setting ends. I suggest this reading is problematic for it does not offer a satisfactory explanation for what it means to use humanity as mere means. My reading considers “humanity” as the capacity for appraising one’s maxims from the perspective of pure practical reason. On this reading, to use humanity as mere means is to look at one’s maxims from the wrong perspective, i.e., the perspective of happiness. Further, I argue that it is mistaken to take Kant’s claim about an end in itself as a claim about any ultimate value. Instead, the claim should be construed as a claim about the role of pure practical reason in moral appraisal, which should be understood in terms of Kant’s metaphysics of the mind.

INDEX WORDS: Humanity, An end in itself, Groundwork, Kant

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DEDICATION

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant states that “moral law requires us to act in such a way that we use humanity, whether in our own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (G 4:429).¹ Commentators often refer to this formulation of the supreme moral principle (aka as the Categorical Imperative) as the humanity formula (FH) and distinguish it from the universal law formula (FUL) that Kant presents earlier in the same section. The standard reading of FH considers “humanity” as the capacity for setting ends and contrasts it with personality as the capacity for setting morally obligatory ends. This reading is supported by textual evidence outside the *Groundwork*. In particular, it is supported by Kant’s claim in *The Metaphysics of Morals* that “the capacity to set oneself an end—any end whatsoever—is what characterizes humanity (as distinguished from animality)” (MS 6:392). In this paper I argue that the standard reading of “humanity” is problematic for it does not offer a satisfactory explanation of what it means to use humanity merely as a means. Consequently, it is unclear how humanity or rational nature can serve as the limiting condition of all merely relative and arbitrary ends (G 4:436). Instead, I suggest that “humanity” should be read as the capacity for appraising one’s own maxims from the perspective of pure reason. Further, Kant identifies humanity as an end in itself (G 4:428). This claim is usually taken by commentators as a claim about an ultimate value. Depending on how one understands the ontological status of the value that humanity possesses, the value of humanity is either said to be conferred by rational nature or it is seen as pertaining to humanity objectively, i.e., regardless of the way that humanity is thought or conceived. I argue that the value reading of an “end in itself” is misleading for it confounds the value of a rational capacity with two different senses of value: the value of an object of desire and the value of an end that we set by reason. On my reading, humanity is a capacity that we possess in virtue of reason. The criterion that we use in assessing humanity is not identical with the criterion by which we assess the value of

an object of desire. Nor is it identical with the criterion by which we appraise the value of an end set by reason. I argue that the evaluation of humanity should be distinguished from both the assessment of desirable objects and the assessment of ends. The evaluation of humanity presupposes a faculty-based understanding of the mind, which must be understood in view of Kant's conception of capacity (*Vermögen*) and his broader teleology of the mind.

2. THE STANDARD READING OF HUMANITY AND ITS PROBLEMS

According to the standard reading of FH, by "humanity" Kant means the capacity to set ends by reason, which includes the capacity to set morally obligatory ends but is not limited to it.² This reading seems to be supported by clear textual evidence outside the *Groundwork*. In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant claims that "the capacity to set oneself an end—any end whatsoever—is what characterizes humanity (as distinguished from animality)" (MS 6:392). In the *Religion*, Kant distinguishes the predisposition to humanity from the predisposition to animality. Kant identifies the former with a practical sense of self-love, i.e., to derive one's own worth by comparison with others, for which reason is required. The latter, in contrast, is a mechanical self-love that we express through self-preservation, the propagation of the species and the formation of community with other fellow-humans (R 6:26-7). In the *Anthropology*, Kant lists three predispositions that distinguish the human being characteristically from other inhabitants of the earth: the technical predisposition, the pragmatic predisposition and the moral predisposition (VA 322-5). Allen Wood suggests the pragmatic predisposition—understood as the capacity to use reason prudentially for the purpose of culture or self-perfection—is subsumed under the predisposition to humanity. The latter is different from the predisposition to personality, i.e., the capacity to legislate morally and to obey the moral law. Further, Wood contends that "humanity" in the *Groundwork* should be read as the pragmatic (prudential) rationality rather than merely as the capacity for morality.³ This is consistent with saying that Kant uses "humanity" primarily to designate the capacity of ends-setting.

This reading has several problems: first, Kant uses “humanity” (*die Menschheit*) in these works in contrast with animality (*die Tierheit*). “Humanity” in this sense covers a wide spectrum of capacities that we possess because of reason and they all distinguish us from beasts. Clearly Kant considers ends-setting as a capacity that requires the exercise of practical reason and to that extent it distinguishes us from animals that can never set themselves any end.⁴ But being different from animals is not the same as being something of a distinct worth. “Humanity” in the *Groundwork* is not merely different from animality; it is an end in itself, that is, something of an absolute worth (G 4:428). Kant states explicitly that although a human being can set himself ends by means of the understanding, this only grants him an *extrinsic value* for his usefulness, which is different from the dignity (an absolute inner worth) of a human being regarded as a person (MS 6:434-5). Second, ends-setting is not the *only* capacity that separates us from animals. Unlike most animals, we are also able to manipulate things and use other people for our own purposes (VA 322). Experience suggests that these capacities bring us misery as often as they contribute to our happiness: the capacity to manipulate things enables us to wipe out a large population by high-tech weapons, and the capacity to use others for our own purposes frequently leads to selfish exploitation of other members of our society. Similarly, we can set for ourselves ends that are short-sighted or evil by the capacity to set ends. Intuitively one might wonder why Kant would attribute *an absolute worth* to any capacity that yields such mixed consequences. Third, the most serious problem with the standard reading is that it does not offer an adequate explanation for what it means to use humanity merely as a means. If as Wood suggests, humanity is the capacity to set any end and this capacity is of unconditional worth, meaning that it should always be respected to the same extent no matter how badly one exercises the capacity, it would seem to follow not only that we should appraise the imprudent as highly as we appraise the prudent, but also that we ought to consider those who coerce or enslave others in the same terms as we consider those who practice beneficence. The problem is not merely that intuitively we consider the maxim of coercion or slavery as directly contradicting what FH

requires, but that “humanity” understood as the capacity to set ends does not seem to provide a clear criterion that allows us to see coercion or slavery as misusing humanity. But any reading of “humanity” in the context of the *Groundwork* must offer such a criterion for normative assessment, for otherwise it is unclear how humanity or rational nature could serve as the limiting condition of all merely relative and arbitrary ends (G 4:437).

One way to defend the standard reading is to suggest that we use humanity merely as a means whenever we set for ourselves an end that cannot be endorsed by every rational agent. This qualification would rule out maxims of coercion and exploitation on the account that they cannot be endorsed by all sides involved as their end. In the examples following the humanity formula, Kant claims that the person who plans to promise falsely sees at once that another human being is used merely as a means since that person cannot possibly agree with the way that he is behaved toward, and so contains the end (of false promise) as his own end (G 4:429-30). This claim seems to support the qualified standard reading of humanity, which appeals to the proper attitude (respect) that we owe to any person due to his or her capacity for ends-setting in its answer to the charge of arbitrariness. The problem with this qualification, however, is that it is not very clear what it exactly means for any end to be endorsed by all parties involved. According to Christine Korsgaard, to say that an end should be able to be endorsed by all is to say that the end must be able to be co-desired or co-valued by all rational agents.⁵ But presumably many of ends that we set are motivated by values that cannot be co-desired by all (e.g. my decision to get sushi for dinner for it is good to satisfy my craving for wasabi). If Korsgaard were right, then it would be irrational at least for me to pursue such an end for it does not embody a universal value appreciated by all rational beings. Yet this suggestion seems overly-demanding for any ordinary human agent, and it sits poorly with Kant’s view of happiness. Kant thinks that happiness defies a priori legislation, for “only experience can teach what brings us joy” (MS 6:215). For this reason the general precepts for pursuing happiness allows a wide range of discretion based on the individual’s choice of life and par-

ticular inclinations (MS 6:216). Korsgaard's suggestion that an end is permissible only if it can become an object of the faculty of desire for everyone does not seem to square with Kant's view of happiness.

Another way to interpret the idea of being endorsed by all rational beings is to identify the containment with the proper response to the objective value that humanity possesses. According to this view, an end is not endorsed by all parties if the setting of the end fails to recognize the objective value that pertains to all parties as end-setting creatures.⁶ This view is subtle and it may be seen as supported by Kant's claim that humanity exists as an end in itself, and that respect is the proper attitude that we owe to creatures of such a status (G 4:429; 4:436). It avoids the difficulty that Korsgaard faces by locating the requirement of the humanity formula on the capacity for setting ends (in particular, the objective value of this capacity) rather than an individual act of ends-setting. Hence, to see whether my plan of getting sushi conforms to the humanity formula is not to ask whether sushi can become a universal object of desire, but rather to ask whether in my decision-making I have taken into account the capacity of others for setting their ends, the exercise of which may or may not be similar to that of mine. The problem with this view is that the idea that the capacity for ends-setting has an objective value which must be respected regardless of the way that humanity is exercised sits uneasily with the normative implication of the moral law. The question whether the humanity of a scoundrel should be respected is different from asking whether the scoundrel is misusing the humanity in his person. The task of FH understood in the context of the *Groundwork* is to answer the latter question rather than the former. In other words, to insist that the humanity of a scoundrel is worthy of respect for its objective value would not help us see how the scoundrel has misused his humanity.

In his criticism of Korsgaard, Jens Timmermann suggests that instead of reading "humanity" as the capacity to set ends, it should be read as the rational creature who is capable of setting morally obligatory ends, for the adoption of moral ends alone is the paradigmatic expression of human autonomy.⁷ This suggestion fits with Kant's claim that the rational being could be thought as an end in itself only if

the will of the being is regarded as law-giving (G 4:434). It is also supported by his statement that “morality is the condition under which *alone* a rational being can be an end in itself,” and the claim that “morality, and *humanity insofar as it is capable of morality*, is that which *alone* has dignity” (G 4:435). There is no ambiguity that in these places Kant considers “humanity” exclusively in terms of features that mark us out as moral creatures.⁸

I think Timmermann is right to point out that the idea that human choice is in charge of moral as well as non-moral ends blurs the distinction between pure and empirical practical reason. If there is anything that allows us to attribute to our existence a unique worth, it is what pure practical reason rather than empirical practical reason enables us to do.⁹ Further, I think Timmermann is certainly correct that the capacity of ends setting would spin in the normative void unless the standard of moral appraisal is firmly established before we start setting any end.¹⁰

However, Timmermann’s reading has two problems: first, the identification of “humanity” with the rational being who is capable of setting morally obligatory ends fills the normative void that Timmermann rightly sees in the standard reading at the cost of setting the bar too high. FH requires us to use humanity always at the same time as an end, *never merely* as a means. This does not seem to imply that we are using humanity properly only if we use it as an end in itself. In other words, Timmermann needs to explain how his reading leaves room for the setting of discretionary ends that are morally permissible. Second, from the exegetical point of view it is problematic to explain the argument for FH in terms of the principle of autonomy, which is presented by Kant as a further development of FH. The idea of the will giving law to itself is central to the principle of autonomy. This idea presupposes the basic principle of FH (rational nature exists as an end in itself), and in particular, the idea that every other rational being necessarily represent their own existence as ends in themselves (G 4:428). The latter, as Kant tells us, is put forward as a postulate and the ground for it shall be found in the last section (G 4:429n). In other words, the full exposition of the principle of autonomy requires a further step into

Kantian metaphysics. For readers who are not already Kantians or philosophers who have little sympathy with Kantian metaphysics, it is not clear how Timmermann's reference to autonomy would help clarifying the basic reasoning behind FH.

3. THE ALTERNATIVE READING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

For an alternative reading, I suggest that we take a look at Kant's use of "humanity" in the *Groundwork* and see whether it is equivalent to its usage in his other works. One thing to be noted is that Kant does not always use "humanity" in the same way. Though he frequently uses "humanity" to designate the pragmatic use of reason for cultural and social purposes, he also uses the word to mean personality. For example, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant talks about humanity as holy through its autonomous subjecting to moral law (KpV 5:87). There is no ambiguity that here by "humanity" he means personality, understood as the capacity for moral legislation through the will.¹¹

It is worth noting that although Kant identifies humanity or rational nature as an end in itself, humanity is not identical with its value. The question regarding the meaning of humanity is separate from the question about its value: in order to see why humanity has an absolute worth, that is, exists as an end in itself, we must first understand what Kant means by "humanity." The way that Kant presents FH implies several things about humanity: first, it is something that could be used or exercised by agents, and the way in which humanity is used is subject to the normative assessment for its moral implication. In Kant's words, humanity is misused when it is used merely as a means, and the use of humanity is morally justifiable only if it is used not only as a means, but also at the same time as an end in itself. Second, the expression of "humanity *in your own person or the person of any other*" seems to indicate that humanity pertains to the agent as an intrinsic quality or enduring state. Although one may misuse the humanity in one's person, one does not lose humanity by not exercising it or exercising it in the wrong way. The agent who fails to further humanity as an end by lying idly does not lose his humanity

because of his laziness. Nor does the agent who promises falsely possess less humanity than the agent who practices beneficence. In Kant's words, humanity is "an independently existing end" (*selbständiger Zweck*), which is different from any effected end, that is, end that we set by exercising reason (G 4:437). Further, Kant's broader discussion of humanity seems to suggest that humanity does not pertain exclusively to any particular group of agents (e.g. the intelligent or the virtuous). Rather, there is humanity in the intelligent and the stupid, in the virtuous and the vicious.¹² In contrast to the distribution of talents (e.g. the gift for mathematics) and favorable temperaments (e.g. the affectionate nature), the distribution of humanity is far more even: it is by no means restricted to the few favored by fortune.

Kant's identification with humanity with the *capacity* for setting ends in *The Metaphysics of Morals* sheds light on how humanity can be distinguished from its exercise and on how humanity might be regarded as residing equally in all full-blown human agents. A capacity in general is a potentiality that is not identical with its actualization: an agent who is competent in playing piano is different in his capacity from someone who never takes any piano lessons, even if both of them may not be playing piano at this very moment. Since a capacity is a more enduring state compared to its exercise, a competent piano player does not lose the capacity for playing piano by refusing to play it for someone he dislikes or by deliberately playing it poorly. Similarly, the fact that an agent might set an end that is imprudent or evil does not deprive the agent of the capacity for ends-setting. Further, although all capacities enable us to do things and accomplish tasks, they do not operate on the same level. Some capacities are more fundamental in the sense that they are necessary for the acquisition of more concrete first-order capacities. For instance, the capacity for speaking a language is more fundamental than the capacity for speaking Chinese in the sense that one must have the potential for understanding and manipulating abstract symbols in order to acquire the capacity to speak Chinese. Similarly, the capacity for setting ends is more fundamental than the capacity for having as one's end the completion of a master's thesis on Kant.¹³

Although the standard reading of “humanity” as the capacity for ends-setting is flawed for reasons I discussed in the previous section, the idea that “humanity” refers to a capacity that we have by virtue of reason is attractive. It not only explains how humanity might be regarded as dwelling in the person of any human agent, but it also explains why humanity can be preserved as an enduring feature of the agent despite of its misuse. If it is right to associate humanity with a particular capacity that we have as rational beings, what capacity would “humanity” refer to, if not the capacity for ends-setting? Since the FH is a formulation of the supreme principle of morality, to ask about the capacity that “humanity” refers to is to ask about the capacity that we engage with in making moral judgment in accordance with the supreme principle of morality.

In section II of the *Groundwork* Kant offers three distinct ways of formulating the supreme principle of morality. He claims that the principle to act with reference to every rational being as end in itself is at bottom the same as the principle to act on maxim that can at the same time become a universal law for every rational being (G 4:437-8). Earlier in the section, Kant also claims that the three ways of representing the principle of morality are at bottom formulae of the very same law, and any one of them unites the other two in it (G 4:436). There is debate among commentators about whether Kant is right about this.¹⁴ For my current purpose it matters little what stance one might take on this matter. Even if there are subtle differences between the formulae, it would still be helpful to take a look at FUL that Kant presents in the earlier part of section II and see if it sheds light on the particular capacity that we look for in understanding “humanity”.

FUL is sometimes considered by commentators as a defective formulation of the supreme moral principle, either because it is difficult to derive contradictions from maxims that are described in great details, or because the formula supports poorly positive duties such as the cultivation of talents and the beneficence toward others.¹⁵ But these criticisms of FUL overlook the main task that Kant assigns to the supreme principle of morality. As he tells us in the preface, the metaphysics of morals is necessary in the

practical sense for it offers the clue and supreme norm by which we can *appraise* morals correctly (G 4:390). The emphasis on the role of the supreme moral principle in guiding our appraisal of maxims is consistent throughout the *Groundwork* (G 4:397; 4:403; 4:407; 4:436; 4:449). These texts suggest that the service that the supreme principle of morality does us is not to offer any abstract test for practical deliberation. Instead, the job of the principle is to clarify or preserve the standard that all of us have already been using in determining the moral worth of our maxims. In Kant's words, the moral cognition of common human reason admittedly *does not think so abstractly in a universal form*, but the principle is actually what the common reason always has before its eyes and uses for its appraisals (G 4:403-4).

How can FUL help us to determine the moral worth of maxims, if not by detecting any formal contradiction in them? According to Kant, the key lies in weighing all cases from *one and the same point of view*, namely that of reason (G 4:424). The universal standpoint of reason differs from the standpoint of a will affected by the inclination. The latter "permits ourselves a few exceptions that, as it seems to us, are inconsiderable and wrung from us" (G 4:424). The moral worth of a maxim, however, lies in its universal applicability to all rational beings, which allows no exception for any particular agent or embodied beings like human with desires influenced by pleasure and pain.¹⁶ The determination of moral worth in our case requires a sharp distinction between the requirement of reason and the demand of inclinations (habitual desires).¹⁷ Kant thinks that the common human reason is already in agreement with him on this point. In one example Kant presents earlier in section I, the agent who is pressed to make a false promise is able to distinguish easily two significances of the question at concern: whether it is *prudent* or whether *it is in conformity with duty* to make a false promise. Through this distinction the agent sees immediately that to be truthful from duty is something *entirely different* from being truthful from anxiety about detrimental results (G 4:402). Kant makes a similar observation in the *Critique of Practical Reason*: a person who has lost at play is only chagrined with his imprudence. However, if he has gained by cheating he would despise himself as soon as he compares himself with the moral law. Kant concludes

that the person who regards himself as worthless despite his gain must have *a different criterion of judgment* from that of prudence (KpV 5:37).

It is to be noted that Kant does not consider the distinction between prudence and morality as something that he needs to establish through argument. The distinction is seen as *already* firmly grounded in the natural sound understanding, which Kant regards highly for the accuracy of its appraisal of concrete morally relevant situations. (G 4:404). In view of this fact, the task of philosophy is not to teach the common human reason anything new but rather to make it *more attentive to its own principle* (G 4:404). This further suggests FUL should *not* be seen as an artificial invention of philosophy that aims at compensating any deficiency in our practical deliberation.¹⁸

One important upshot of adopting the universal standpoint of reason is that we detach ourselves from all empirical interests (that is, interests in our happiness). Instead, we find ourselves taking an interest in the mere worthiness to be happy, even without the motive of participating in this happiness (G 4:450). The fact that we do appraise ourselves in this way implies a distinct capacity that we have as rational beings, that is, the capacity to appraise our maxims in terms of the interest of pure practical reason rather than the interest of our inclinations. Humanity, as I suggest, should be understood as *the capacity for appraising one's own maxims from the perspective of pure reason*. To use humanity properly, according to my reading, is to put the interest that we take in being worthy of happiness prior to the interest that we take in happiness for the purpose of determining the moral worth of our maxims.

Of course, to say that the right use of humanity requires the precedence of moral worth over that of happiness is not the same as saying that we should renounce the claims to happiness. On the contrary, Kant thinks that aside from our humanity or rational nature, we are also creatures of needs. Our reason has a commission from the side of our sensibility which it cannot refuse, i.e., to attend to its interest and to form practical maxims with a view to happiness in this life and in the future one (if there

is any) (KpV 5:61). What FH does rule out is the use of reason *merely* for the interest of one's inclination. It is in this sense that the agents in Kant's famous examples of suicide and false promise are using humanity as mere means: in both cases the agents fail to examine their maxims from the perspective of reason. Consequently, they let the interest of their predominant desire override the interest of pure practical reason. Further, to use humanity as an end in itself requires the agent to act for reason's own sake, that is, to adopt maxims that promote the interest of reason. The interest of a faculty, according to Kant, is the condition under which alone the exercise of the faculty is promoted (KpV 5:119). The maxim of insolence and the maxim of indifference toward others do not "harmonize with humanity as an end in itself" for the agents overlook the interest that pure practical reason takes in one's own perfection and in the happiness of others. The example of beneficence suggests clearly that the correct estimation of the interest of pure practical reason requires the promotion of happiness, at least the happiness of others.¹⁹

However, it must also be noted that the maxims have moral worth only if morality (the law of reason) is regarded as the end for the sake of which the maxims are adopted. In other words, the maxim is morally worthy only if the agent puts the interest of pure practical reason above the interest of anything else. This means that any spontaneous action that we perform as a result of any given natural propensity (e.g., to help others out of a generous temperament or to preserve one's own life instinctually) cannot be moral.²⁰ My reading of FH also rules out maxims that we adopt on mere prudential grounds, even if the adoption of those maxims involves the exercise of practical reason. For instance, it is inconsistent with FH to refrain from free riding merely because it is likely to hurt one's advantage in the long run. The agent who obeys the rule of justice for future advantage is still acting for the sake of his inclination, though it is the satisfaction of his more enduring needs that is at stake. The point is not that the agent is acting immorally: the agent who adheres to the counsels of prudence against great temptation may deserve praise for his self-command and even love for the benefiting social effect of his action.²¹

However, the principle that the agent acts upon lacks moral content. Kant thinks that the common human reason is fairly sharp in discerning the worth that we attach exclusively to morality by means of respect. Respect is special in the sense that we do not deem any effect of the action or any inclination in itself as things that deserve respect. Rather, respect has the law of morality alone as its object (G 4:400). The agent who acts resolutely for the sake of the moral law regardless of any advantage and even the unfavorable circumstance exhibits a disposition (*Gesinnung*) or a cast of mind that commands our respect (G 4:435-36). Kant emphasizes that in the law-giving of the will of every finite rational being, it is the disposition that really matters (KpV 5:82).

Again, we must not forget that what is at issue here is the correct *appraisal* of our maxims rather than acting on them. An agent is an end in itself insofar as he is able to appraise his maxims according to the interest of pure practical reason, even if he is deprived of the opportunity to carry out what reason requires, or worse, acts in opposition to the moral law. This is why we can never deny respect to even a vicious man as a human being (MS 6:463). The reason is that even the most hardened scoundrel, once being exposed to the examples of honesty and beneficence, shall see his inclinations as burdensome and wish to get rid of them (G 4:454).²² He cannot accomplish any of these unless he is a member of humanity, i.e., creatures capable of judging the worth of their maxims from the perspective of reason. By means of this perspective the scoundrel is able to transfer himself in thought into a different order of things, where he can expect a greater inner worth of his person than none of his actual or imaginable inclination can furnish (G 4:454). In other words, the scoundrel is now able to put things in the right order by seeing the interest of pure practical reason as more primary (i.e., determining his personal worth) than that of his inclination.

The essential implication of FH, I suggest, is to establish the priority of the interest of pure practical reason by connecting it with a thought of oneself as rational being. Kant describes this as to view the interest that we take in morality as deriving from our *proper self*, that is, from the conception of

ourselves as autonomous in our willing (G 4:461). In this sense Timmermann is right to associate FH with the principle of autonomy for the former is necessarily implying the latter. Yet it must be noted that the basic idea of FH resides not so much in the idea of autonomy understood in terms of self-legislation, but rather in the clear distinction between the interest in happiness and the interest in being worthy of happiness. This distinction is first recommended to us by FUL through the universal perspective of pure reason. Hence, FUL is indispensable for understanding both FH and the principle of autonomy.

The reader might wonder according to my reading what it would mean to use the humanity of others as mere means. On the standard reading, I use the humanity of another person as mere means by setting an end that cannot be endorsed by everyone. But as I mentioned previously, this reading has difficulty with explaining what it means for an end to be endorsed by all, and the existing explanations are flawed for different reasons. However, if as I suggested, by “humanity” Kant means the capacity to appraise one’s own maxims by the perspective of pure reason, how would it be possible for anyone to misuse the humanity in another person? Obviously, I do not have any immediate access to the self-appraisal of others. Nor does the exercise of my power of self-appraisal seem to have a direct impact on the practice of moral appraisal in others. The first half of the worry touches upon the question whether the misuse of the capacity of moral appraisal presupposes consciousness understood from the first person perspective. The second half of the worry concerns the question whether the practice of moral appraisal is able to have any influence across agents. Since the answer to the second question relies on a clear view of the first, I shall begin with the relation between the misuse of humanity and the first person perspective.

The idea that I cannot misuse the power of self-appraisal in another person assumes that there is a gap between my humanity, that is, my capacity for self-appraisal and that of yours. The gap is brought about by the reflection that although I have an immediate access to my humanity through consciousness, I do not have the same access to the humanity of anyone else. Hence, it seems to follow that

any exercise of the power of self-appraisal would only result in the misuse of my humanity, not the humanity of another. The mistake of this view resides in confounding two questions: (a) whether the exercise of humanity presupposes self-consciousness; (b) whether humanity as a capacity belongs to me exclusively due to my immediate access to its actualization. The answer to (a) is yes. The answer to (b) is no. It is a necessary condition for the exercise of many of our capacities that we must be self-conscious, that is, we must be able to distinguish my exercise of the capacity from your exercise of the same capacity. I am self-conscious of my capacity to speak English in the sense that I would not take the news reporter's speaking of English on TV as the actualization of my capacity. Yet it does not follow from this distinction that the capacity for speaking English is a special talent that pertains to me exclusively as individual. Analogously, it does not follow from the fact that I need self-consciousness in order to misuse humanity that the humanity that I misuse pertains to me exclusively. Humanity, according to my reading, is the capacity to appraise one's own maxims from the perspective of reason. It is crucial for the exercise of this capacity that we detach from anything that distinguishes us as an individual. In other words, when appraising ourselves by from the moral point of view, we consider ourselves in exact the same terms in which we would consider another. Humanity differs from talents in their power for distinguishing the achievement of individual from that of multitude: the meticulous exercise of one's humanity does not single out anyone from the multitude in the way that an unusual gift for playing piano does. On the contrary, humanity, when exercised rightly, brings us closer to the awareness of the commonality that all of us share with each other, which transcends differences that separate us (e.g. social rank, wealth, intelligence and etc.). Consequently, unlike talents that frequently serve as the source of self-conceit, the awareness of my humanity humbles me by declaring that all claims to a higher self-estimation are unwarranted without first proving the moral worth of my own person.²³

Now I shall turn to the objection that the exercise of self-appraise has little impact across agents. For this question it is worth noting that morality for Kant is the self-constraint of a free being (MS 6:380).

If the moral duties can be seen as having any impact, the impact must be considered different from the impact of any non-moral law (e.g. the juridical law of property). In other words, whether I appraise myself rightly cannot and should not be expected to have the same impact that the action of a burglar would have on me or on my property. However, impact does not need to be understood in this narrow sense, that is, as the measurable damage that one may incur on the interests or welfare of others. Reasoning, as Herman points out, is not the same as reason understood as a universal human capacity. The difference is that human reasoning is immediately located in individuals, but *qua* human reason is not.²⁴ It follows that reasoning is dependent upon the reasoning of each individual in the way that human reason is not. This point may look a bit abstract. But it is less so when we consider examples such as trying to figure out the solution for a difficult derivation as a class. Obviously, the capacity of every student for doing derivation is not in any sense dependent upon how well others exercise their capacity. One does not become less competent in doing derivation because others in the class fail to solve the question. However, the way that each student exercises his capacity does have a great influence on how well others students exercise their capacity. A brilliant solution to the problem is likely to inspire ingenious responses from others as much as a bad solution with many detours may very likely confuse the reasoning of the rest. Although the influence at concern is not as tangible as the damage that you cause by spilling coffee on my computer, it seems difficult to deny that the exercise of most of our higher faculties (e.g. understanding, imagination and reason) is, in a non-metaphorical sense, dependent upon how well others exercise theirs. The same can be said for the exercise of humanity. We must remind ourselves that for Kant we do not practice self-appraisal in isolation from other fellow-humans. Instead, the idea of the kingdom of ends suggests that we must always understand the practice of moral appraisal as having an impact on the rest of the community of rational agents. This does not mean that one can never appraise oneself accurately within a society where most members are deprived. Rather, the idea is that the cultivation of virtue in case of human is subject to the mutual reinforcement of people who reason like me:

examples of self-discipline and fairness encourage the development of similar virtue in others; whereas the practice of debauchery and partiality in people around us frequently dampens our incentive toward duty.

4. WHAT IS AN “END IN ITSELF”?

Aside from a clear explanation of what “humanity” is, any reading of FH must also explain what it means for humanity to exist as an end in itself. So far I have argued that “humanity” should be understood as the capacity to appraise one’s maxims by the perspective of reason. Yet one might still wonder what it exactly means for “humanity” thus understood to be an “end in itself”, that is, something of an absolute worth. Commentators who regard “humanity” as the capacity to set ends differ in their views on this issue. One important proposal suggests that humanity has an absolute worth because the capacity to set ends serves as the source of all value. The value of any end that we set, according to this view, is conferred by the act of ends-setting. Another proposal rejects the idea that humanity or rational nature confers value on ends that we set. Instead, it argues that humanity, understood as the capacity of ends-setting, must already be seen as something of an absolute value if we are to exercise the capacity for ends-setting at all. Korsgaard defends the first proposal; Wood supports the second.²⁵ Though both of them agree that Kant’s claim about an end in itself is, in one way or another, a claim about an ultimate value, Korsgaard considers the ultimate value as constructed by reason; whereas Wood contends that the ultimate value that rational nature possesses is intrinsic to humanity itself, regardless of the way in which humanity is thought or considered. In the following sections I shall examine these proposals and suggest reasons for thinking both of them as flawed. Then I shall offer a third option, which understands the concept of an end in itself in terms of Kant’s teleology of the mind.

Kant defines an end in itself as something the existence of which in itself has an absolute worth (G 4:428). Earlier in the section he has argued that if there is a supreme moral principle, then the princi-

ple can only be found in a categorical imperative. Now he tells us that if there is such a thing as a categorical imperative, that is, an imperative that commands without the mediation of any further purpose, then there must be an end in itself that functions as the ground for the possible categorical imperative (G 4:416; 4:428). This presentation is puzzling in at least two senses.

First, it is not clear what exactly it means for anything to have an absolute worth. One way to understand the “absolute worth” of humanity is to compare it with things of a relative or conditional worth. In arguing that humanity or rational nature alone is an end in itself, Kant eliminates three other candidates on the account of their lacking an absolute worth. They are: (1) objects of inclination; (2) inclinations themselves, and (3) non-rational beings (G 4:428). The reason that objects of inclination only have a relative worth is obvious: if an object of desire is valuable only because it is desired by an agent, then the value is dependent upon the desire of the agent: the removal of the desire will also remove the goodness of the desired object. However, the reason that inclinations lack an absolute worth is less self-evident. An object of desire can be valued for the pleasure that it brings. For instance, a movie can be valued because it is pleasing to watch. But inclinations are states of the mind that are neither pleasing nor displeasing. The excessive zeal for fame may indeed cause agony and misery, but the zeal in itself cannot be said as painful more than my tooth pain can be described as zealous. Further, to say that inclinations are objects of relative value does not seem plausible, if by that Kant means it is up to us whether or to have any inclination. I may find my ambition to gain recognition from my peers tormenting for the constant disappointment it brings, yet it is not up to me to cleanse myself “particles” of ambition in the sense that it is up to me to extract a decayed tooth.

Second, it is unclear how an end in itself would *ground* a possible categorical imperative. A simple way to answer this question is to consider an end in itself as the reason for any agent to follow a categorical imperative. The assumption behind is that any practical imperative is binding only if the agent sees a reason to abide by it. The doctor might advise that I take the medicine three times a day, but the

advice becomes a practical imperative for me only if I am able to see a reason for me to be cured and consider that reason as rationally justified. When being asked why following the doctor's advice, I quote not only my subjective desire to recover but also the objective value of staying healthy. Analogously, if there is a categorical imperative (i.e., an imperative that commands obedience without further ado), I must be able to see the reason for acting upon the imperative as sufficiently justified. This is roughly the route that Korsgaard follows. One problem with this answer is that it does not seem to distinguish an ordinary end from an end in itself. An end in itself, as Kant tells us, is not something that an agent has a sufficiently justified reason for bringing about. Rather, it is an independently existing end, which can only be thought negatively, that is, as something that must never be acted against (G 4:437). An end in itself is not any end that we set by reason. It is identified by Kant with the subject or possessor of a good will (G 4:437). Korsgaard needs to show how her reading explains this puzzling equation between an end in itself and the subject of a good will.

Korsgaard's explanation is sophisticated. Rational nature, according to Korsgaard, has what she calls "a value-conferring status." The idea is that if we are to use humanity to set any end, the end cannot be good unless it is fully justified by reason. Kant claims that every practical law represents a possible action as good, and he also suggests that every action, insofar as it incorporates a practical principle, always contains an end (G 4:414; 4:436). In view of these texts, Korsgaard argues that for Kant good is a rational concept. That is, an end is good if and only if reason determines the end and provides a sufficient justification for adopting the end, that is, a justification that can be agreed upon by everyone.²⁶ Rational nature or humanity alone is good without qualification, for it is through the exercise of humanity that any end derives its value.

There are problems with this proposal. First, according to Korsgaard, Kant is holding a rationalist view of reasons, which considers reason not only as deriving internally from the agent but also carrying with it a burden of justification. To act for a reason, on Korsgaard's view, is not only to act from psycho-

logical states (e.g. desires and wants) that are internal to the agent. It is more primarily to act for an end which can be sufficiently justified by reason. Rational nature or humanity is the source of value, for it offers the sufficient justification for any reason that the agent endorses.²⁷ Exegetically there is difficulty to map the contemporary discussion of reasons for action onto Kant's discussion of practical rationality. Kant does not define practical rationality in terms of reasons for action. Instead, Kant defines practical reason (or the will) and humanity in terms of capacities. The former is the capacity to act in accordance with the representations of reason's law (G 4:412); the latter is the capacity to set ends (MS 6:392). Neither practical reason nor humanity justifies reasons for action in the way that Korsgaard suggests. Rather, humanity understood as the capacity to appraise oneself by the perspective of reason is what enables us to offer an adequate justification for our actions. Humanity does not itself justify reasons for the action; it is what enables us to do so.

Second, in her argument, Korsgaard follows Kant in claiming that neither objects of desire nor inclinations in themselves have any absolute value. According to Korsgaard, the reason that inclination lacks absolute value is because inclinations, unlike humanity, cannot offer any normative justification for rational action. My desire for sweets only says that it is desirable to have a lime pie, not why I should get it. The idea that desires merely offer proposals for reason to endorse seems to deprive desires of the push and pull that they exert on the agent. I certainly cannot step back from my desire for the lime pie in the same way I may step back from a false proposition and examine it in a cool manner. It is the essential feature of desires that they exert psychological impact that is absent in the disengaged contemplation. Korsgaard's rationalist account of desires seems to underestimate the actual pull and push that is intrinsic to any desire.²⁸ Further, inclinations do not merely propose by painting rosy images of objects in one's mind, for Kant all inclinations contain precepts of reason which distinguish them from affects such as anger.²⁹ The idea that inclinations cannot be the source of value (i.e., source of its own sufficient

justification) is misleading for there can be no inclination in Kant's sense without the exercise of reason. Inclinations are not something separable from reason. They are products of practical reason.

Third, Korsgaard's reading suggests a constructivist view about value, which considers value as brought about by the exercise of humanity. This view seems to conflict with Kant's definition of an end in itself as something the *existence* of which has an absolute worth. In particular, Korsgaard's constructivism sits poorly with Kant's claim that "the essence of things is not changed by their external relations; and that which, without taking account of such relations, alone constitutes the worth of a human being is that in terms of which he must also be appraised by whoever does it, even by the supreme being" (G 4:439). No matter how one understands the "absolute value" that an end in itself is said to have, Kant is quite explicit that this value is not *produced* by the exercise of rational nature. The absolute value belongs to rational nature as what it is. As Wood puts it, human beings have absolute worth, which belongs to them essentially. This worth is not something conferred on them by themselves, or by God, or by anybody else. Humanity, according to Wood, has an absolute worth in its essence by virtue of the nature of the will. This worth is not in itself brought about by the exercise of the capacity.³⁰

In his objection to Korsgaard's constructivism, Wood argues that the humanity, understood as the capacity for setting ends, does not confer value on any end by setting it. Rather, setting an end is an exercise of practical reason only if we think there is already some good reason for us to set that end. For Wood we choose ends because they are good. The practice of choice does not confer or construct the value of the ends that we set. Reason recognizes rather than constructs the value of the thing that we choose. In Wood's example, we value healthy food because they do actually nourish us. The property of being nutritious pertains to the food as its intrinsic property; the agent does not confer that value by choosing the food. Wood further argues that if the act of choice does not confer value on the end we set, it does not confer value on humanity either. We necessarily regard humanity as an end in itself objec-

tively and unconditionally, that is, our basic act as rational beings, the act of setting ends and regarding them as good necessitates our representing ourselves as already ends in ourselves.³¹

Wood disagrees with Korsgaard on two questions: first, whence any end derives its value; second, what it means for humanity to have an absolute value. For Wood Korsgaard's constructivism is mistaken in its answer for both questions. Reason does not confer or construct the value of any end that we set. Still less does reason confer value on humanity. In both cases the value must already exist either in the object that we choose or in the capacity by means of which we make rational choice. One distinct merit of Wood's proposal is that it squares well with Kant's emphasis that the value of an end in itself is inherent in humanity itself, and that the value of humanity commands respect from every rational being. Further, Wood's reading also avoids some difficult questions that Korsgaard is faced with, for instance, why it is rational to confer more value on one end rather than another (provided that both ends are morally permissible). However, Wood's proposal is flawed for several reasons.

First, an end is not identical with an object of choice. In both Korsgaard and Wood's discussion of humanity, "setting an end" is frequently used interchangeably with "choosing an object". Although sometimes Kant uses "end" as if it is identical with an object of desire (for instance, in *The Metaphysics of Morals* 6:381) they are not identical. To set an end may involve the attempt to obtain objects of desire or bring about desired a state of affair in some cases. But the end that one sets is not the same as the object that one desires to obtain or the state of affair that one intends to produce. To see something as an end implies a normative view of the desired object or state of affair as causally connected with one's capacities and resources. To consider completing a MA thesis as my end is not the same as desiring the completion of the thesis. The end not only contains a content that the desired state of affair represents (the completion of the thesis), it also implies rules or precepts that one ought to follow in order to attain the desired state of affair. I am not considering finishing the thesis as my end unless I see the state of affair as setting constraints on the way in which I exercise my capacities and manage my re-

sources. For instance, the end may require me to exercise the cognitive capacities to set up a writing schedule and believe that sticking to the schedule is causally related to finishing up in time. The execution of the insight of cognition in turn sets constraints on the way in which I act on my desires so that my desires to rest and play won't get in the way of my writing schedule. The normative structure that the concept of end implies does not depend on the actual execution of the end. The end of completing a thesis requires one to devote a certain amount of time for writing regardless of the actual time that one actually spends or is able to afford.

Second, to have a desired object or state of affair is less essential than the practical rules that the end involves. The satisfaction of ends such as self-preservation and staying healthy do not involve the attainment of any particular object or the production of any particular state of affair. But in order for self-preservation to be my end it must be seen as implying rules that regulate the exercise of my capacities. In short, the end that we set is not the same as the object that we choose. It follows that the reason by which we judge any end as good is not the same as the reason we consider any object of choice as valuable. The reason that cultivation of one's talent as an end is good is not the same as the reason for which we consider a ship or a painting as valuable. Ends involve practical principles that are absent in the object of choice. The appraisal of an end necessarily involves assessment of the practical policies that the end implies: to see an end as good, either prudentially or morally, is to subject the policies implied by the end to normative assessment. Hence, even if Wood is right that the value of any object of choice does not depend on the capacity of rational choice or its exercise, it does not follow that the value of an end is not dependent on humanity, that is, the capacity to appraise one's maxim from the perspective of reason. If I am right about my reading of humanity, then the moral worth of any end must depend upon the existence of humanity. An end, after all, is not something that exists in space and time. It is a product of practical reason. Similarly, there is no moral worth that exists out there, independent of the practice of moral judgment.

Third, the value of any particular end that we set by reason is not the same as the absolute worth of humanity. The former has to do with the evaluation of the principles that the end implies; whereas the latter is concerned with appraising the rational capacity by means of which we determine the moral worth of our ends. To appraise a faculty or capacity is not to determine whether the capacity benefits us. Rather, to appraise the value of a capacity is to reason about the purpose of a capacity, in virtue of which the exercise of the capacity can be normatively assessed. Wood does not draw a distinction between these two assessments. As a result, he attempts (mistakenly) to give a single answer to two different questions: either both the value of any end and the value of humanity are conferred by rational nature, or both have their value existent prior to the exercise of rational choice. Wood denies that the former is the case. Accordingly, he argues that the way that humanity has its value independently from the way in which it is thought or considered is similar to the way that a valuable object is choice-worthy regardless of the concrete act of choice. But whether the object can still be valuable has little bearing on the nature of the absolute worth that Kant attributes to humanity. The analogy does not hold, for humanity is not an object of which we choose. Rather, it is the capacity in virtue of which we determine the moral worth of the principle that we follow in our choice. In other words, to determine the worth of humanity is not to gauge the usefulness or moral import of the rational capacity that humanity implies. Rather, it is to trace humanity back to the more fundamental capacity of the mind (i.e. pure practical reason) and to establish the priority of this capacity over other capacities (the capacity for desire and the capacity for feeling pleasure) for the purpose of moral appraisal.

Fourth, it is a false dichotomy to suggest that if humanity is valuable at all, the value must either be conferred by rational nature or it is inherent in humanity regardless of the way in which humanity is thought or considered. The value of humanity is surely not conferred by the exercise of reason in the sense that Korsgaard suggests. Yet it does not follow that the value of humanity is therefore entirely independent of the way in which we consider or think about ourselves. The principle that humanity ex-

ists as end in itself is a way by which rational beings necessarily represent themselves (G 4:429). In other words, whether human exists as an end in itself is dependent upon the way in which we understand ourselves. It is contradictory to say that humanity as end in itself is a necessary way of representing ourselves and that the absolute worth of humanity is independent of how we represent humanity. Wood's suggestion that the ultimate value of humanity must be presupposed regardless of the way we consider humanity is difficult to fathom. Of course, to say that the absolute worth of humanity is dependent upon our self-representation does not mean that our representation confers value on humanity in the same way that my craving for sweets confers value on the lime pie. Humanity is a rational capacity to appraise the moral worth of one's maxims. Whether this capacity has an absolute value, that is, whether the faculty (pure practical reason) that humanity depends upon functions legislatively in relation to other faculties of the mind is not in any sense dependent upon the way in which we represent ourselves. Further, to say that the worth of humanity depends upon a way that we represent ourselves is not to say that we may determine the worth arbitrarily. Representations are themselves conceptually structured and to that extent subject to the regulation of rational principles. If we have no choice but to represent our physical body in terms of the conceptual framework that modern biology and physiology has offered us, there is no reason to believe that we can represent the worth of humanity in whatever way we like. From an exegetical perspective the important question is to figure out what exactly it means for humanity—a rational capacity—to be represented as an end in itself. In the following section I will propose an alternative reading of an end in itself that connects the claim with Kant's teleological conception of the mind.

5. PRACTICAL REASON AND THE HIGHEST END OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

The key to understanding the concept of an end in itself resides in separating the question whence any end derive its value from the question how a rational capacity such as humanity ought to be

appraised. Korsgaard's claim that rational nature is the source of all value deals with the first question. Wood's reply to Korsgaard is flawed by trying to deal with these two questions jointly. For an alternative reading I suggest we set aside the first question and focus instead on the sense that humanity can be assessed for its value. Humanity is a rational capacity to appraise one's maxims by the law of reason. To see why humanity has an absolute worth, we need to answer what exactly it means for any capacity to have a worth or value.

Wood's discussion of autonomy is helpful. In his account of autonomy, Wood connects the absolute value that humanity embodies with the nature of the will. Kant defines the will as the capacity to act in accordance with representation of laws, and he attributes the will to rational beings alone (G 4:427). In the argument for the autonomy formula Kant recasts the idea that humanity exists as an end in itself by attributing to rational beings a dignity, that is, an inner worth that cannot be derived from any comparison. The ground of the dignity of human nature and every rational nature, Kant claims, is autonomy (G 4:435-6). Autonomy is a property of the will (G 4:440). Hence, a closer look at the way in which the will grounds the dignity of a rational being may shed light on the sense in which humanity can be seen as valuable without qualification. To understand the connection between dignity and the will, first we need to take a look at Kant's view of capacities.

A faculty or capacity (*Vermögen*), according to Wood, is the way that a living being achieves something through processes or actions that are normatively conceived and normatively guided.³² This reading is supported by Kant's discussion of capacities. In the *Groundwork* Kant talks about the natural end of will as to give a universal law. The principle of autonomy, accordingly, illustrates the way in which the will functions in accordance with its natural end (G 4:432-3). The idea that there is a natural end for every capacity has already been suggested in the first section, where Kant argues that happiness is not the proper end for a being with practical reason. According to Kant, "in the natural constitution of an organized being, that is, one constituted purposively for life, we assume as a principle that there will be

found in it no instrument for some end other than what is also most appropriate for that end and best adapted to it”(G 4:395). In other words, for an organized being, that is, a being constituted by various components, not only must every component be seen as having its own particular end, but the being as whole must also be understood as having an end for the sake of which the organism as a unified being exists. In the case of human, not only that we have components such as organs that constitute our physical body, we also have parts that constitute the mind, i.e., faculties of the mind.

Like the “end” that we set by reason, the “end” of a faculty is a normative concept. To see a faculty as having an end is to subject the exercise of the faculty to normative assessment. In Kant’s words, “to every faculty of the mind one can attribute an interest, that is, a principle that contains the condition under which alone its exercise is promoted” (KpV 5:119). For instance, happiness is the end of the faculty of desire in the sense that it offers a standard or perspective which enables us to distinguish the proper function of the faculty from its mal-function. An ambitious man who sacrifices love, friendship and financial security for the sake of his ambition is not exercising his faculty of desire properly, for if he were to evaluate his situation by the sum total of all his inclinations (happiness), he would have agreed that his passion for fame has blinded him to his other needs (VA 266). Further, in order for there to be an organized being that exists as a unity of various capacities, the ends of different capacities must harmonize with each other. According to Kant, reason is the faculty of principles in the sense that it determines the interest of all other powers of the mind but itself determines its own (KpV 5:120). In other words, reason not only designates the ends of all other faculties and put them in order; it also prescribes its own end. The latter, accordingly, constitutes the ultimate or supreme end that all other ends must give way when a conflict arises, and it alone can determine the end for the sake of which a composite being like human being exists.

In the first section of the *Groundwork*, Kant tells us that the true vocation of reason is to produce a good will (G 4:396). Later, he defines the good will formally as a will that can never contradict

itself when made a universal law (G 4:437). The possessor of the good will has a dignity only by taking his maxims from the point of view of himself as law-giving beings, that is, beings subject to the law of the will (G 4:438). Two things are worth noting in the way that dignity is connected with the nature of the will. First, the locus of the dignity is the rational being with a particular capacity, namely, the will. Like any other capacity of the mind the will is a capacity the exercise of which is subject to normative assessment. Hence, the idea of dignity is inseparable from a normative conception of the mind. Second, the representation of oneself as a having dignity requires in the case of human the subordination of the interests of different capacities to the practical interest of reason. Humans are composite beings. Kant thinks that humans are not only endowed with higher faculties such as reason and the understanding, but also faculties such as cognition, desire and feelings in respect to which the higher faculties function as the source of principles (KU 5:177). Human being is not merely rational being. We have needs by virtue of the lower faculties (the faculty of desire and the faculty of feeling). The will for a human being is the faculty of desire that operates in accordance with concepts (KU 5:172). Concepts are norms according to which the exercise of the faculty of desire can be evaluated. In order for the being to have dignity, however, the exercise of the faculty of the desire must not only be able to be appraised by principles of imagination such as happiness. It must also be able to be evaluated according to a higher set of principles the application of which does not depend upon the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. In Kant's words, for there to be a higher faculty of desire, pure reason must be able to determine the will by itself, without presupposing anything that we might subsume under the concept of happiness (KpV 5:23-4).

Now I am in the position to answer the question that I raised at the beginning of this section. To see that a capacity has a worth, considered through Kant's metaphysics of the mind, is to see the capacity as having an end, in accordance with which the exercise of the capacity can be normatively assessed. The organism constituted by different capacities can be seen as existing for an ultimate end only if the exercise of capacities with diverging interests harmonizes lawfully with each other for the sake of a

higher interest. Kant identifies the highest interest of man with the interest that we take in our own moral worth. He thinks that creatures like us are capable of seeing ourselves from the moral standpoint because of the nature of the pure reason. When Kant says that inclinations themselves only have a relative worth, what he means is that the end of inclinations—happiness—does not constitute the ultimate end of rational beings with needs. Analogously, to say that humanity or rational nature alone has an absolute worth is to say that the rational capacity that humanity hinges upon prescribes the highest interest of a human being that overrides the interests of other capacities whenever a conflict arises. Given that humanity is the capacity to appraise one's maxims from the perspective of pure practical reason, it follows that the end of the pure practical reason, that is, to produce a morally good will, must always be prioritized over the ends of other capacities. Simply put, to claim that humanity has an absolute worth is to say that whenever we appraise the moral worth of our maxims by the perspective of reason, we necessarily prioritize the end of pure practical reason (being worthy of happiness) over that of other faculties, in particular, the end of inclinations (happiness). I think this is how we should understand Kant's claim that good will alone has an unlimited worth at the beginning of the *Groundwork* (G 4:393). The idea that good will is good without qualification is puzzling unless the good will, together with other gifts of nature and gifts of fortune, are construed teleologically in terms of their position in a good human life. This explains why Kant talks about the cultivation of a good will as something for the sake of which reason is *properly destined* (G 4:396). The idea that good will alone has an unlimited worth is inseparable from Kant's belief that the pure practical interest of reason alone constitute the highest end for our existence.

The idea that we necessarily represent ourselves in terms of the Kantian teleology of the mind needs explanation. It would be obviously false to suggest that whenever we make moral appraisal we always think explicitly about our mind as divided into different faculties or that some faculties carry higher interests than others. For most of the time we simply judge the moral worth of the maxims with-

out appealing to any metaphysical view of the mind. But it is unlikely that by “we necessarily represent ourselves in this way” Kant means that the teleology of the mind is the content of our thoughts when we make moral judgments. We need to bear in mind that FH is a formula of the supreme moral principle that Kant derives from taking a further step into metaphysics. He is fully aware that any formula as it appears in the philosophical analysis does not represent the way in which common human reason operates in making moral judgment (G 4:403). However, this does not mean that the moral judgment of common human reason can actually dispense with the insight that philosophy draws from metaphysical speculation. Common sense needs the teaching of philosophy that makes more accessible and durable the precepts that the common sense follows in a confused and unreflective manner. In particular, the sound common sense needs philosophy in order to overcome the natural dialectic between the need for happiness and the requirement of duty (G 4:405). On this view, the teleology of the mind that underlies FH does a service for the self-understanding of common human reason by providing a conceptual framework which enables us to preserve the fruit of sound moral judgment. If Kant is right, then the conception of the mind as constituted by capacities that are subject to normative assessment is indispensable for the accurate self-understanding of any ordinary agent.

Of course, appraising the moral worth of one’s maxims is not the same as measuring the temperature of the room. What we appraise is not a physical entity located in space and time. There is no maxim to appraise unless we see our actions as governed by principles and laws that only beings with certain capacity can pick out and apply in their self-assessment. Further, to appraise one’s maxims is not a mental episode that one passively undergoes (e.g. read the temperature from a thermostat). It is an exercise of the mind in which one sees the maxims as regulated by principles that are not instantiated by nature in the same way that laws of physics are instantiated. But the principles are not fantasies of the mind either. Virtues such as justice and benevolence are not mere figments of the fancy; they are supposed to have implication about how we should live our real life. Further, it seems fair to say that the

standard for judging anyone as virtuous is universal in the broad sense, i.e., it applies not only for people with particular talents or wants, but for all of us. As I understand Kant, the reason that we can see the moral law as having a universal implication is because we assume it hinges upon a capacity that all of us share in common, regardless of differences in our talents, temperaments and social stations. This capacity, according to Kant, is pure practical reason. It is the capacity that rational nature or humanity hinges upon. To see the moral law as universally applicable is to think that the interest that we all share by virtue of pure practical reason should determine the most primary worth of everyone, in comparison to which the worth that we attach to various gifts of nature and gifts of fortune deserve much less (or as Kant thinks, nothing). To think about the fundamental principle that we apply in moral appraisal in this way is, in the Kantian term, to represent humanity as an end in itself.

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued for a reading of FH that takes “humanity” to mean the capacity for appraising one’s own maxims from the perspective of pure reason. This is different from the standard reading of FH that takes “humanity” as the capacity to set ends by reason. Further, I have argued that the idea that humanity has an absolute worth is not a claim about the ultimate value as the standard reading suggests. Instead, it is a metaphysical claim about the mind, according to which the faculty that humanity relies on—pure practical reason—is regarded as determining the highest interest for all faculties. The standard reading of an end in itself confounds the evaluation of a capacity with the evaluation of objects of desire. I argued that the worth of a capacity cannot be construed in the same sense that we conceive the value of any object of desire or the value of any end set by reason. Instead, the former must be understood in view of Kant’s teleological conception of the mind. My proposed reading has the following benefits.

First, it explains clearly what it means to use humanity as mere means. One uses humanity merely as a means whenever one fails to appraise his maxim according to the interest of pure practical reason. The key to appraising one's maxim correctly is to look at it from the universal standpoint of reason, by means of which we detach ourselves from the interest in happiness and focus instead on the interest that we associate with being worthy of happiness. In this way, FH rules out any maxim that fails the impartial examination of reason. This includes not only maxims that we adopt merely for the satisfaction of inclinations (e.g., to promise falsely for an immediate gain), but also maxims that give precedence to the interest of empirically conditioned reason (e.g., to abide by the rule of justice merely for long-term advantage). Further, as I have explained in section 3, humanity as the capacity for self-appraisal cannot be seen as owned by any individual. Properly speaking there is no difference between your humanity and mine: it is the same humanity that I use as mere means in debasing myself and coercing others. The differences that separate us as individuals are morally irrelevant when we examine our maxims from the perspective of pure reason.

Second, my reading accommodates the setting of discretionary ends provided that they do not deviate from the interest of pure practical reason. There is nothing incompatible between the instrumental use of reason for one's happiness and the requirement of FH: humanity may still be used as an end in itself even if one exercises reason instrumentally for the sake of happiness. The only limitation that FH sets for the instrumental use of reason is that it does not diminish our inner worth as moral creatures. In other words, whenever a conflict arises between our well-being and our moral desert, the supreme moral law requires us to give precedence to the latter rather than the former.

Third, my reading identifies the main task of the supreme principle of morality as to guide the moral appraisal of any ordinary human agent and help the agent with his cultivation of a moral disposition throughout the course of one's life. On this reading, the reason that Kant thinks it is necessary to establish the supreme principle of morality through pure rational cognition is not because reason can

teach us anything new about how to be moral. Terms such as an “end in itself” or “autonomy” would never have any grip on us if the healthy human reason were not already well acquainted with the basic distinction between prudence and morality in its practice of moral appraisal. Kantians sometimes tend to explain an obscure claim such as “humanity exists as an end in itself” by appealing to Kant’s view of freedom and self-legislation. Though I believe the recourse to Kantian metaphysics is unavoidable to some extent, I think it is also important to remind ourselves of the more modest side of Kant’s project. Kant starts the *Groundwork* with the moral cognition of the most common understanding. The exposition of any abstract notion in the Kantian ethics must not overlook the fact that for Kant it is plain to everyone what duty is. As he puts it, the boundaries of morality and self-love are so distinctly and sharply drawn that even the most common eye cannot fail to distinguish whether something belongs to one or the other (KpV 5:36). The service that philosophy does for practical appraisal, properly understood, is nothing more than preserving and defending the achievement of the natural sound understanding by tracing it back to the nature of pure practical reason. Were we deprived of the basic knowledge of what duty is and how it differs from self-love, it would have been hopeless for philosophy to compensate such loss by any abstract formula. I think this is the deeper reason why we should not read FUL or any other formula of the supreme moral principle as a mechanical tool for practical deliberation. This is also where I diverge from Timmermann in our interpretive strategy. As I see it, both the conception of “humanity” and the principle of autonomy must be understood ultimately in terms of the achievement of the sound natural understanding, not the other way around. Hence, a proper reading of “humanity” must start with the basic distinction between prudence and morality rather than the Kantian notion of autonomy.

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¹ Citations to Kant's works will be given by volume and page number in the Royal Prussian Academy edition, which are found on the margins of the English translations that I use. I am following Wood for the abbreviation of Kant's works and the formulae of the supreme principle of morality. For the complete table of abbreviation, see Wood (1999: xvii-xxiii).

² For commentators who follow this reading, see Hill (1980: 85-86), Korsgaard (1996:111-14), Wood (1999:118-20; 2008:88), and Hills (2005:66).

³ Wood (2008:88). For a different interpretation of Kant's use of "humanity" in the *Groundwork*, see Guyer (2000: 192).

⁴ In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant defines "end" as the object of free choice. To set any end for oneself is an exercise of the freedom on the part of the agent. Since only the agent himself can make something his end, it is impossible to be constrained by others to have an end (MS 6:381; 6:384-5). In his article Timmermann seems to suggest that some ends are set by nature without the exercise of reason, see Timmermann (2006:82). But this may not be right. In MS Kant clearly states that freedom is required for us to set any end. Further, Kant also suggests elsewhere that the desire by itself cannot set any end unless it is determined by concepts of reason (KU 5:220; 5:370). Though Kant does occasionally talk about the "end of affects" (a species of desire) and "ends prescribed by inclinations" (VA 253; 266), it is not clear that these ends are produced by desires alone. The act of ends-setting seems to imply a practical principle (i.e., an imperative) that reason alone can furnish (G 4:415-16).

⁵ See Korsgaard (1996:115-16, 241).

⁶ This is how I read Wood's claim that the objective value of humanity must exist before one sets any end by reason. See Wood (2008: 92-5).

⁷ See Timmermann (2006:81). Timmermann suggests it is terminologically implausible to read "rational nature" as any capacity. Instead, it should be read as the rational being or creature, see Timmermann (2006:71).

⁸ In G 4:438, Kant states that it is the fitness of one's maxims for giving universal law that marks one out as an end in itself, and he further associates this with taking one's maxims from the point of view of oneself as *law-giving being*. In G 4:440, Kant claims that there is no sublimity in one's subjecting to the law, but the sublimity comes from regarding oneself as *law-giving* and subordinating to the law only because of that. These claims support Timmermann's suggestion that it is our capacity for moral legislation that makes us ends in ourselves. Wood admits it is personality that gives us dignity, but he suggests dignity is not identical with the absolute worth of humanity, see Wood (2008: 88). This suggestion is puzzling, for Kant defines "dignity" by contrasting it with price, that is, any relative worth that we derive from needs or tastes (G 4:434-5). Dignity thus understood does not seem to differ from the absolute worth of humanity. Further, Wood himself seems to vacillate on this point by suggesting that humanity and personality are necessarily co-extensive, see Wood (2008: 94).

⁹ In the second *Critique* Kant draws a clear distinction between pure practical reason and practical reason that is empirically conditioned. There is pure practical reason insofar as pure reason alone is able to determine the will. The pure practical reason needs no critique once it is shown to exist (i.e., to determine the will by itself alone). In contrast, the use of empirically conditioned reason (i.e., practical reason influenced by pleasure or pain) must be checked by critique for its tendency to go beyond its sphere (KpV 5:15-6).

¹⁰ See Timmermann (2006: 84). Paul Guyer makes a similar point in his criticism of Korsgaard's proposal that rational nature confers value on objects. According to Guyer, one problem with this proposal is that it does not place any particular constraint on the conferral of value that explains why the agent must respect the value-conferring activity of other agents. See Guyer (2000: 150-1).

¹¹ In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant considers lying as the greatest violation of one's duty toward oneself as a *moral being*, i.e., the humanity in one's own person (MS 6:429). Through here he does not define "humanity" in terms of the autonomy of the will, it is clear that he has in mind the moral capacity of human beings, which is distinct from the general capacity of setting ends. For another similar use of "humanity" in MS, also see 6:435.

¹² Kant considers humanity as a capacity that dwells equally in every human being (MS 6:386; 6:462). Humanity enables a human being to raise himself above mere things, and it deserves respect even in a vicious man (MS 6:463).

¹³ My discussion of capacities is greatly indebted to Kenny's insightful account of abilities and faculties in his book

The Metaphysics of Mind.

¹⁴ Wood and Guyer both believe that Kant is wrong about the identity thesis of the formulae; whereas Barbara Herman in her recent article argues in favor of the identity thesis. For Wood's view on this question, see Wood (2008:82-84). I agree with Herman on this issue. Kant is not wrong in claiming that difference between the three formulae of the supreme moral principle is subjectively rather than objectively practical (G 4:436). The supreme moral law suggests that to appraise one's maxim correctly one must set aside any concern with happiness and focus instead on one's worthiness to be happy. The latter, as I have argued, is recommended to us by FUL through the universal perspective of reason. Therefore, FUL is most useful when it comes to the practice of moral appraisal. The distinction between prudence and morality is essential to FUL thus understood, and it is the same distinction that FH and the formula of autonomy (FA) are supposed to preserve/strengthen: FH does so by connecting the interest that we attach to being worthy of happiness with the self-representation of a rational being; FA does so by attributing the self-representation implied by FH to the autonomy of the will in a rational being. FA leads to the idea of a kingdom of ends. The latter is closer to intuition in the sense that it contains the idea of the unity of rational beings under the moral law, which parallels to our understanding of nature as governed by the physical law. Hence, Kant is right to think that the three formulae are at bottom different ways of representing the very same law (G 4:436). In this regard I disagree with Guyer, who holds that FUL is inadequate in itself and that FH and FA are necessary for explaining how an agent could possibly act apart from personal interest and how we could act in the way that sustains the freedom of everyone, see Guyer (2000: 206). Guyer considers FUL as a test applied in the procedure of decision-making; see Guyer (2000: 161). Yet as I have argued, it is mistaken to read FUL in this way. Instead, FUL should be seen as suggesting a universal standpoint of reason, which allows us to look at our actions differently from any prudential calculation. The standpoint of reason enables us to go beyond the feeling of pleasure and pain in our moral appraisal. In Kant's words, we come to the awareness of our freedom (i.e., independence from our sensible nature) through the consciousness of the moral law (KpV 5:29). Though I think Guyer is right to emphasize the fundamental value of freedom to Kant's ethics, it must be added that we only become conscious of the idea of freedom by the moral law. In the second *Critique* Kant considers freedom as a fact of reason, which we come to be aware by noticing that pure reason can determine the will immediately (i.e., motivate us to action or aversion without the mediation of pleasure or pain) (KpV 5:43).

¹⁵ Korsgaard, for instance, suggests that we should read the "contradiction" Kant talks about in G 4:424 as a practical rather than logical or teleological contradiction, though she admits that even the practical reading cannot meet challenges presented by natural actions such as murder. See Korsgaard (1996:101-2). For a more detailed discussion on the difficulty with deducing contradictions by FUL, see Wood (1999: 97-107).

¹⁶ According to Kant, the faculty of desire in human beings, that is, the faculty to bring about objects in accordance with representations of them is greatly influenced by the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. The dependence of the faculty of desire on feelings is called inclination and this dependence always indicates a need (G 4:413n). In the *Anthropology* Kant divides desires into affects and passions (VA 251). The former are more susceptible to the feeling of pleasure and pain and for that reason they are less likely to be checked by the reflection of reason (VA 252).

¹⁷ For Kant's definition of inclination, see MS 6:312 and VA 251.

¹⁸ This is so, if only because for Kant the power of judgment is a natural talent the lack of which cannot be remedied by the learning of rules (KrV A134/B173n). Further, Kant considers it pretentious for philosophy to claim for itself the job of introducing any new principle of morality, as if the world has been ignorant of what duty is or in thoroughgoing error about it (KpV 5:8n).

¹⁹ In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant counts the promotion of one's own happiness as an indirect duty, for adversity, pain and want are great temptations to violate one's duty (MS 6:388). Although Kant does think that one's own happiness cannot be considered as a direct duty without contradiction, for the concept of duty indicates constraint. Yet everyone already desires his own happiness without being compelled to do so (MS 6:386).

²⁰ In G 4:397 Kant claims that the maxim that most people follow in their anxious self-preservation lacks moral content. It is possible that here Kant is referring to the hypochondriac syndrome which is common in his time among intellectuals and from which Kant himself suffers. For an interesting report on this, see Kuehn (2001:152-3). In G 4:398, Kant claims that there is no moral worth in actions done by those who are sympathetically attuned in their nature, even if the action is not motivated by vanity or self-interest.

²¹ I borrowed the expression "self-command" from Adam Smith for prudence does seem to deserve some praise for

the self-denial that it often involves. For Smith's account of self-command as a virtue see Smith (2002: 29-30). Kant does not talk about self-command, though he does use the expression "self-constraint" to describe moral duties (MS 6:379-380). According to Kant, the precepts of prudence are counsels rather than laws, for whether or not to follow them depends on whether one regards something as attributing to his or her happiness (G 4:416). Yet Kant does consider the strict observance of strict rules (even if they are erroneous) as admirable for it characterizes what the human being makes of himself (VA 292).

²² In the third *Critique* Kant has an interesting remark about wish. Wish contains a representation of causality similar to that of the faculty of desire, even if in wishing the physical power to bring about the wished effect is knowingly lacking (KU 5:178n). For the account of the faculty of desire as involving a causal representation of the desired object, see KpV 5:9n.

²³ Here I am borrowing Kant's discussion of the impact of moral law on self-conceit in the second *Critique*, which can be found in KpV 5:73. Given that the humanity formula is a formulation of the supreme moral law, it is plausible to think that the correct exercise of humanity would bring the same effect on the part of the agent as the moral law.

²⁴ See Herman (2011:112-3).

²⁵ See Korsgaard (1996: 239-243); Wood (2008: 90-95).

²⁶ See Korsgaard (1996: 115).

²⁷ See Korsgaard (1996:225-8; 239-243).

²⁸ Julian Wuerth has an interesting discussion on this. See Julian Wuerth, "Sense and Sensibility in Kant's Practical Agent: Against the Intellectualism of Korsgaard and Sidgwick," in *European Journal of Philosophy* 21:1(Mar 2013): 17.

²⁹ See VA 251; 266.

³⁰ See Wood (2008: 112-15).

³¹ See Wood (2008:92).

³² See Wood (2008: 115).