

Immanuel Kant

Practical Philosophy. Trans. Mary J. Gregor.
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This volume of the comprehensive Cambridge Edition of Kant's works contains excellent translations of all of Kant's main and minor writings on moral and political philosophy. A 'General Introduction' written by Allen W. Wood precedes the chronologically ordered texts and allows the reconstruction of the development of Kant's thought. Jean-Jacques Rousseau provides a guiding thread for all the texts in founding the concept of morality on the autonomy of the will. For Rousseau it is '... moral liberty, which alone makes him [man] truly master of himself; for the mere impulse of appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law which we prescribe to ourselves is liberty' (*The Social Contract*, Book 1, chr. 8). Recall that this emphasis on the autonomy of the will could not be found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which Kant develops only a 'negative' conception of freedom as an empirically unconditioned condition which is '... disclosed as being possible' (CPR B580).

The volume incorporates the theme of 'pure' moral judgment into the larger context which allows to maintain the significance of formalism in all of Kant's writings on practical philosophy. In the *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals* (1785), the first of the main writings on moral philosophy, Kant develops a 'positive' autonomy-based concept of moral freedom as a principle of moral philosophy without, however, being able to explain how freedom is possible. A problem which is common to both, the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* is that the emphasis on the 'purity' of moral judgment has to be contextualized through the doctrine that man is both, of intelligible and sensible nature. Moral judgments are 'pure', i.e., they cannot be empirically determined. For the *Groundwork's* 'kingdom of ends' formula of the Categorical Imperative, i.e., '... every rational being must act as if he were by his maxims at all times a lawgiving member of the universal kingdom of ends' (87), the kingdom of ends remains a mere idea which humanity rather than the individual is bound to realize (83f, 87f). The edition emphasizes the continuity of the formalism of moral principles throughout the writings in spite of its replacement of 'purity' by the application of the conception of freedom as a basic theme.

The first text of the volume is the review of Heinrich Schulz's 'Attempt at an introduction to a doctrine of morals for all human beings regardless of different religions' (1783) which establishes a contrast between the Kantian and a speculative conception of freedom. Schulz's Leibnizian notion of freedom is deficient, for Kant, in that it does dispense with the notion of obligation: even the fatalist has to '... act as if he were free, and this idea also actually produces the deed that accords with it and can alone produce it' (10). In the publication 'On the Common Saying: That may be correct in Theory, but it is of No Use in Practice' (1793), Kant argues against Hobbes

for the non-coercive rights of subjects against their sovereign and against Mendelssohn for the moral progress of humanity. 'Towards Perpetual Peace' (1795) raises the question of the compatibility between the right of nations and the rights of persons as reasoned beings.

The *Metaphysics of Morals*' (1797) 'Doctrine of Right' follows 'Towards Perpetual Peace' thematically although it is not concerned with our duty to work toward perpetual peace but is limited to determining what our duties are. Kant emphasizes the distinction between the internal freedom of morality and the external freedom of right. The content of the 'Doctrine of Right' is *a priori* principles on which external (positive) laws are based. For Kant's conception of right, it cannot be required that the principle of all maxims is itself in turn my maxim, that is, it cannot be required that I make the principle of right the maxim of my action (388). The universal principle of right says that '[a]ny action is right if it can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law' (387). The volume concludes with Kant's papers 'On a supposed right to lie from philanthropy' (1797) and 'On turning out books' (1798) which both concern the restrictions to the execution of external freedom in the sphere of right.

A deficiency of the volume can be indicated briefly. The systematic differentiation between conceptions of political freedom involves the prior distinction between Kant's 'critical' and 'dogmatic' conceptions of realizing personal freedom through the process of history. The editor's emphasis on the continuity of the development of Kant's work, however, forbids the introduction of such sections into the text collection. The 'General Introduction' provides not only a historically oriented overview but also a systematic orientation by differentiating the 'mature' work and the 'final form' of the practical philosophy. The latter is concerned with the goodness of ends or the cultivation of virtues of character rather than the moral rightness of actions.

A German-English and English-German glossary of key terms and editorial notes provide ideal conditions for understanding the translation on the basis of the original text. The book is certainly important not only for Kant-scholarship in the English-speaking world but also for the dedicated student of the history of ethics. Allen Wood certainly expresses more than a mere opinion by saying that '... a comprehensive collection of all Kant's ethical writings in a single volume will help correct the false (often grotesque) images of his ethical theory that have been formed by reading only the foundational works (the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique*) and neglecting Kant's far more extensive writings that deal with the interpretation and application of the fundamental principles' (xxxiii).

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