KANT'S ETHICAL THEORY

PHIL 538, T 1:40-4:20 PM

Dr. Markus Herrmann, markus.herrmann@ps.uni-heidelberg.de

Kant revolutionized the ethical concepts of his time. With his famous "Categorical Imperative" he offered a non-instrumental account to moral philosophy that in contrast to merely intuition based approaches is grounded in the rationality of agency.

In two ways Kant offers a non-instrumental approach: On the one hand, moral actions are actions that have their end in their morality. They are essentially not instrumental to a further aim. On the other hand, Kant prohibits instrumentalization of human beings by his object formulation of the Categorical Imperative: It is morally wrong to use others only as a mean for one's ends. Kant expresses this fact by claiming that although objects may have a value, only humans have dignity. He is therefore crucial to the development of the modern concept of human dignity.

Especially his non-instrumental approach to ethics we will focus on curing the course. Kant's position will be uncovered from his writings "The Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals" and "The Critique of Practical Reason". Difficulties of its application an the tensions it creates within the Kantian philosophy will be discussed on the basis of the texts "Metaphysics of Morals" and "On the Old Saw". The texts will be read in English translation.

Parts of the following texts will be read:

- Kant, Immanuel: The Groundwork of Metaphysics of Morals
- Kant, Immanuel: The Critique of Practical Reason
- Kant, Immanuel: Metaphysics of Morals
- Kant, Immanuel: On the Old Saw: That may be right in theory, but it won't work in practice

Students will be responsible for three short papers (4-6 pages) and active class participation.