

Lecture Notes 4 : Autonomy and Freedom

Groundwork 2

The Formula of Autonomy (FA)

A 'complete determination of all [law-conforming] maxims'

The ground of all practical lawgiving lies objectively in the rule and the form of universality which makes it fit to be a law (possibly a law of nature; subjectively, however, it lies in the end; but the subject of all ends is every rational being as an end in itself (in accordance with the second principle); from this there follows now the third practical principle of the will, as supreme condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law. (*Groundwork 4: 431*)

FA: everything be done from the maxim of one's will that could at the same time have as its object itself as giving universal law (G 4, 432)

FA-conforming maxims contain the very volition that they be universal laws.

The Formula of the Kingdom of Ends (FKE)

FKE: A rational belongs as a member to the kingdom of ends when he gives universal laws in it but is also himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as sovereign when, as lawgiving, he is not subject to the will of any other. (*Groundwork 4:433*)

Under FKE all individuals are to treat themselves, and each other, as kings. What follows?

Groundwork 3

Negative vs. positive freedom

Can't define, or demonstrate the possibility of, freedom by showing how an absolutely good will is possible, or vice versa. That would put us into a circle. Need an independent proof that such freedom is possible.

Acting under the idea of freedom

every being that cannot act otherwise than under the idea of freedom is just because of that really free in a practical respect, that is, all laws that are inseparably bound up with freedom hold for him just as if his will had been validly pronounced free also in itself and in theoretical philosophy. (*Groundwork 4: 448*)

What is Kant saying?

- (1) If I act for a reason, then my action cannot be causally necessitated by anything other than me, or my own will.

But now we're in a hole because Kant also thinks that:

- (2) Rational beings are capable of acting for reasons, and sometimes do so act. But
 (3) The world of experience is closed under natural causation.

How, then, is freedom possible?

Transcendental Freedom

A reconstruction:

- (4) There is a difference between the nature of the world of appearance, given to us through experience, and the nature of its causes (the 'intelligible' world).
 (5) The most essential feature of self, reason, is part of the intelligible world (the 'noumenal' self).
 (6) The intelligible world makes room for determination by non-natural causes.
 ∴ (7) The noumenal self is 'transcendentally' free.

Kant's 'two standpoints'

Does the account make sense?

What is the connection between the experiential self and the noumenal self? If, as Kant sometimes claims, the noumenal self is the *ground* of the experiential self how can you fail to do what's right? Moreover, it is a mystery why Kant thinks he *needs* these two realms to show that freedom is compatible with natural causality.

Study questions

What is transcendental freedom?
 Is the FA a test of moral permissibility?

Suggested Reading

Groundwork, sections 2 and 3.

Guyer, P. (2009). 'Kant's argument in Groundwork III and its subsequent emendations' In Timmermann (ed), *Kant's Groundwork: A Critical Guide*. CUP.

Wood (1999), ch. 5.