**Themes in Kant’s Moral and Political Philosophy**

**Some of Kant’s works:**

*Critique of Pure Reason* (A ed. 1781/ B ed. 1787)

*Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)

*Critique of Practical Reason* (1788)

*The Metaphysics of Morals* (1797)

**Lecture 1: Right and ethics**

1. **Drawing the division**

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant draws the right/ethics distinction on the basis of (a.) the laws they command, (b.) the lawgiving that is appropriate/possible for them, and (c.) the latitude in the fulfillment of the obligation.

(a.) “In contrast to laws of nature…laws of freedom are called *moral* laws. As directed merely to external actions and their conformity to law they are called *juridical* laws; but if they also require that they (the laws) themselves be the determining grounds of actions, they are ethical laws…” (MM 6:214).

(b.) “All duties are either duties of right, that is, duties for which external lawgiving is possible, or duties of virtue, for which external lawgiving is not possible” (MM 6:239).

(c.) “Ethical duties are of wide obligation, whereas duties of right are of narrow obligation” (MM 6:390).

Question: Are these different distinctions reconcilable? Was Kant right to draw the division in this way?

1. **The place of right**

Categorical imperative (CI): “Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (G 4:421).

Universal principle of right (UPR): “Any 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” (MM 6:230).

Question: What is the status of the UPR if the CI is the supreme principle of morality (cf. G 4:392)?

1. **Possible solutions**

(i.) Simple dependence (Habermas)

The UPR is derivable from the CI through the restriction in application of the CI to the conditions of 1) free choice, 2) externality, and 3) enforceability.

(ii.) Independence: separate but equal (Wood)

The UPR is entirely independent from the CI.

(iii.) Complex dependence (Guyer, Ripstein)

The UPR cannot be *simply* derived from the CI, but the UPR does depend on the CI in some way.

(iv.) Right is not part of morality (Willaschek)

Right is non-prescriptive, and so not part of morality. Thus, no problem arises.

**Reading:**

Primary: Introduction to the *Metaphysics of Morals* 6:211-221.

Introduction to the *Doctrine of Right* 6:229-33, 6:236-242.

Introduction to *Doctrine of Virtue* 6:379-399.

Drafts for the *Metaphysics of Morals* 23:246-250, 23:257-269, 23:374-395.

Secondary: Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*. 105-106.

Guyer, “Kant’s Deductions of Principles of Right” in Timmons (ed.)

*Kant’s Metaphysics of Morals: Interpretive Essays*.

Ripstein, *Force and Freedom*. Appendix.

Wood, “The Final Form of Kant’s Practical Philosophy” in Timmons

(ed.) *Kant’s Metaphysics of Morals: Interpretive Essays*.

Willaschek, “Which Imperatives for Right?” in Timmons (ed.) *Kant’s*

*Metaphysics of Morals: Interpretive Essays*