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BARBARA HERMAN, *MORALITY AS RATIONALITY: A STUDY OF KANT'S ETHICS*, ROUTLEDGE, ABINGDON AND NEW YORK, 2016.

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In her book *Morality as Rationality: A Study of Kant's Ethics*, Barbara Herman set a clear goal: to show that the central claims of Kant's ethics can be properly understood only if we accept the thesis that morality is a form of rationality. In other words, Herman argues that within Kant's practical philosophy all moral principles are rational and when we act in accordance with them we act rationally. In order to justify her main thesis, she focused primarily on two aspects of Kant's ethics (volition and imperatives) and divided her book into six chapters: the first offers introductory remarks, the second provides an explanation of Kant's understanding of maxims, the third is devoted to hypothetical imperatives, and the last three chapters deal with different formulations of the categorical imperative. This book offers a very detailed and systematic account of Kant's theory of moral motivation and represents the result of a careful and lengthy analysis of Kant's ethical theory. Offering at the same time an innovative and faithful interpretation of Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Herman introduces us to new possible ways of understanding Kant's argument.

In the introductory chapter, the main focus is on the analysis of the relationship between volition and imperatives in Kant's ethics. Herman shows that the notion of volition that Kant uses leads us to the notion of imperatives as objective principles of rational willing. To have a will is to have the ability to be moved by the laws and principles of the reason. Imperatives express the relationship between will and objective principles of reason; they command the will to follow the laws of the reason. The author emphasizes that will is the core of practical rationality, and that our actions can be characterized as rational or irrational only because of the fact that we, as human beings, possess the will. When assessing the rationality of an act, we must interpret that act as it stems from the will.

Given that the volition is one of the main subjects of inquiry in Herman's book, it is understandable why she devoted the entire second chapter to the analysis of maxims – subjective principles of action. She believes that the existing accounts of maxims are incomplete and that even Kant himself does not offer a clear and precise definition of this term. For this reason, the author tries to provide an adequate account of

maxims. In her opinion, each maxim must contain a description of the act, the relevant circumstances, the agent's motives and the expected outcome. If it is too general, the maxim cannot perform its function – it cannot be used to assess the rationality of an action. Herman emphasizes that determining the agent's motives are very important for specifying the maxim of an action.

The hypothetical imperatives, which are the main topic of the third chapter, offer the answer to the question whether the subjective maxim is at the same time objective. In order to determine whether an agent's action is rational, it is necessary to assess her maxim via the hypothetical imperative. The author critically examines the nature and correct method of application of hypothetical imperatives and seeks to show how these imperatives govern our actions. Herman thinks that Kant places the source of the authority of hypothetical imperatives in the nature of human rational will. She analyzes the relationship between maxims and hypothetical imperatives and tries to determine how that relationship fits into the account of human volition that she attributes to Kant.

Although interpreters most often emphasize the differences between hypothetical and categorical imperatives, Herman believes that pointing out similarities between the two types of imperatives is of great importance. It is usually said that hypothetical imperatives prescribe what we need to do if we want to achieve a specific goal, while a categorical imperative prescribes what we should do regardless of the goals we set. While this is true, the author thinks that such an explanation of imperatives does not show what their similarities are and does not point out that both types of imperatives are the principles of rational volition. To give us an insight into the relationship between the two types of imperatives, after analyzing the hypothetical imperatives in the third chapter,

Herman devotes the second part of her book to the examination of the categorical imperative. In this way, the author follows the order of argument presented in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

The goal of the fourth chapter (the first of the three devoted to the categorical imperative) is to introduce and explain the concept of the categorical imperative, as well as its first formulation – the Formula of Universal Law. Herman shows how Kant comes to the first and most popular formulation of the categorical imperative, and how he defines it in the light of previously introduced concepts, such as maxims, volition and hypothetical imperatives. She tries to explain why Kant claims that there is only one categorical imperative, and at the same time offers us different formulations of this imperative. Herman does not address the question of whether Kant succeeded in proving that a categorical imperative is possible, but rather tries to show that Kant's notion of a categorical imperative is coherent. In her opinion, the two basic features of the categorical imperative are independence from the agent's ends and identification with practical law.

After analyzing the basic features and the first formulation of the categorical imperative, the author pays attention, in the next chapter, to the second formulation of the categorical imperative – the Formula of the Law of Nature. Herman argues that the introduction of the Formula of the Law of Nature is plausible and is a necessary supplement to the first formula – the Formula of Universal Law. Another important topic of this chapter is the derivation of duties from the categorical imperative as a source of moral principles. If this derivation can be performed, then the notion of a categorical imperative can help us to explain the notion of duty.

The last chapter is devoted to the concluding remarks and the examination

of the main objections addressed to the notion of the categorical imperative. Herman argues that the primary function of this imperative is to assess proposed actions rather than to prescribe one particular action. This imperative has clearly moral content that is closely related to the agent's moral motives. In addition to analyzing the proper conditions of employment of the categorical imperative, the author tries to show that the objections raised to this principle regarding the consequences of actions are not adequate. The general conclusion that Herman draws is that if there is to be a connection between rationality and morality, it must be evident in the various formulations of imperatives. If there are imperatives, then there are rational principles which provide norms of action that are independent of the goals that the agent has set.

It is noticeable that the author referred to surprisingly few relevant books and texts from the secondary literature devoted to this topic. The reason for this is twofold: first, at the time the author was writing her book, there was incomparably less literature devoted to Kant's moral theory than today, and second, Herman emphasized that in order to provide a faithful interpretation of Kant's ethical doctrine, she wanted to devote most attention to Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Her methodology relies on interpreting Kant's original text, not on analyzing

and comparing existing interpretations of Kant's ethics. It is significant and interesting to note that the author's view is that the arguments made in the *Groundwork* are more convincing and stronger than the arguments Kant offered in his other ethical works. Therefore, we cannot say that this book is a work that provides a complete historical account of Kant's ethical theory, nor a comprehensive review of previous interpretations, but we can say that the author tries to resolve one of the major concerns of Kant's ethics: the relationship between morality and rationality. For a correct and complete account of Kant's conception of morality, it is necessary to understand what were Kant's assumptions about rationality. If we try to interpret Kant's account of morality by using, for example, Hume's understanding of rationality, we will be on the wrong track and this is something we must always be aware of. Barbara Herman's book provides us with a comprehensive insight into all the factors that, according to Kant, influence human actions such as the circumstances of the agent and the motives that move her to act. This book undoubtedly represents a valuable contribution to the understanding and interpretation of Kant's theory of moral motivation offered in the *Groundwork*. This study is most useful for students of philosophy, but also for anyone who wants to deepen their understanding of Kant's ethics.