

## ‘TRUE DIGNITY’ AND ‘RESPECT-WORTHINESS’<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** In the *Groundwork*, Kant seems to make two paradoxical claims about the source of human dignity. First, he claims that if “rational nature exists as an end in itself” (Kant, 1998, p. 36), it is because “humanity is... dignity, insofar it is capable of morality” (Kant, 1998, p. 42). Second, he claims that although “autonomy is the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature” (Kant, 1998, p. 43), the human being can only have “dignity... insofar he fulfils all his duties” (Kant, 1998, p. 46). This paper argues that neither claim is repugnant because Kant seeks to advance two kinds of dignity. Kant intends to elucidate that the human being possesses a basic ‘entitled dignity’ in virtue of his capacity for morality, but that he needs to become a moral being in order for him to realise his ‘true dignity’. This paper claims that the formal condition under which a person can be worthy of respect is identical with the condition of realising his ‘true dignity’.

**Key words:** entitled dignity; true dignity; respect-worthiness; morality; good will; humanity

### Introduction

In the *Groundwork*, Kant seems to make two paradoxical claims about the source of human dignity. First, he claims that if “rational nature exists as an end in itself” (Kant, 1998, p. 36), it is because “humanity is... dignity, insofar it is capable of morality” (Kant, 1998, p. 42). Second, he claims that although “autonomy is the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature” (Kant, 1998, p. 43), the human being can only have “dignity... insofar he fulfils all his duties” (Kant, 1998, p. 46). Some Kantians have observed that these claims are repugnant, especially those who favour the first claim: that it is in virtue of the capacity for morality that the human being has dignity and deserves respect from others, regardless of whether or not he obeys the moral law. It must be emphasised here that this view is widely held among Kantians (Herman, Wood, Hill, Korsgaard, and even Sensen, and a large number of others) with the exception of Richard Dean.

Many Kantians have raised sceptical notes about the legitimacy of moral constraints as the condition for having dignity, specifically about Kant’s insistence that all human beings

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should act only on maxims that they concurrently will as a universal law. The scepticism of these Kantians about maxims and universalizability is especially driven by what they describe as ‘the need to rescue’ Kantian ethical theory from the shackles of two specific criticisms: the formalism and rigorism objections (Pippin, 2001, pp. 313-14). For instance, Alisdair MacIntyre has claimed that the Categorical Imperative is too formalistic to the extent that it cannot be action-guiding.<sup>2</sup> Others have critically contended against the rigoristic concept of “acting from duty alone” as the condition of having dignity and morality. In sum, there have been a large number of Kantians, namely Barbara Herman, Allen Wood, Christine Korsgaard, Onora O’Neill, Thomas Hill, Marcia Baron, and Nancy Sherman who have, in one way or another, questioned numerous components of Kant’s ethics. So, in order to rescue Kant’s ethical theory from the controversies that surround maxims and universalizability, these scholars (Herman, Wood, Hill, & Korsgaard) have trenchantly argued in favour of the principle of humanity and autonomy (and perhaps more significantly, the kingdom of ends) over the principle of universalizability, to such an extent that they (Herman & Hill) allow that a morally ideal person can firmly commit himself to moral ends, but not to moral constraints resulting from such ends. In this paper, I shall refer to this view as the ‘New Kant’.

The ‘New Kant’ claims that human dignity and the justification for respect-worthiness are in no way connected with the principle of universalizability. To put it differently, human dignity and the reason why we must treat others as ends are not grounded in universality but simply in the human capacity for morality and not its actualisation. It is claimed that the moral duty to respect others is exactly the same justification for respect-worthiness because it is commanded by the Categorical Imperative. By this, they intend to assert that the Categorical Imperative is not primarily associated with the principle of universalizability but with the other principles of the Categorical Imperative which command that we should respect others for the sake of humanity, autonomy, and equality. In a nutshell, they opine that the moral duty to respect others is incompatible with the demand to always obey the moral law.

In this paper, I shall rebut the claims of the ‘New Kant’ by arguing that human dignity is connected with the principle of universalizability, specifically with the second kind of dignity, that is ‘true dignity’. I shall argue that to say a man has ‘true dignity’ is another way of saying he is worthy of respect from others. This is because the formal condition for a man to be worthy of respect is identical with the condition of realising his ‘true dignity’. This argument rests on Kant’s idea of a man as a moral being. Kant says a man is an end in himself and worthy of everything good insofar that he is a moral being (Kant, 1991, pp. 218-19; 1998, p. 42; 2000, p. 309; 2005, pp. 441, 457), and he must be respected for this reason. This suggests that the moral duty to respect others does not primarily rest on the human capacity for morality and the principle of humanity (that we should not treat others as a mere means, but as ends in themselves), but more significantly on the condition that the others become moral beings.

I have sketched this paper as follows: first, I defend two kinds of dignity in Kant’s ethical theory: ‘entitled dignity’ and ‘true dignity’; second, I argue that in order for the principle of humanity to be realisable, the human being must commit himself to moral principles; and

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<sup>2</sup> But his criticism has provoked a vigorous response from Onora O’Neill: see (MacIntyre, 1981; O’Neill, 1983).

third, I defend the claim that what we are to treat, as an end in itself, is only actual obedience to the moral law. In other words, it is imperative to respect others insofar as they are moral beings.

## Two kinds of dignity

I begin with the clarification that Kant's conception of dignity is not radically different from what the ancient Roman called "*dignitas*", or the traditional reading by Cicero, St. Leo the Great, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Giannozzo Manetti, Samuel Pufendorf and David Hume (Lewis, 2007; Saastamoinen, 2010), as well as his contemporaries: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft (Meyer, 1987). As I see it, Kant's conception of dignity only expanded the 'traditional reading' into a substantive idea of humanity and morality. Before Kant, the term "*dignitas*" was used majorly to refer to the "supreme authority", "social status" or "position of nobility". While Kant adopts the key element of the traditional reading, he brought it from the realm of political life or aristocracy to the realm of morals. Within the traditional reading, a man has dignity if he holds a rank or status of influence that is worthy of recognition. It is important to stress that Kant uses similar expressions in many of his pre-critical writings. For instance, on a number of occasions, Kant talks about "the dignity of the supreme authority", "the dignity of the chief of state", "the dignity of the nobility", and so on (Meyer, 1987). But largely, Kant refers to human dignity in the *Groundwork* and the *Metaphysics of morals* as "the dignity of man", "the dignity of humanity", and "the dignity of a human being and a rational being" (Pfordten, 2009, p. 377). This signals a departure from what the ancient Roman called "*dignitas*". By this, I mean a departure from using the concept of dignity to refer to some people, based on their nobility in society, and to the humanity of every human nature and every rational nature.

For Kant, there are two kinds of dignity (my emphasis), 'entitled dignity' and 'true dignity'. I derive the terminologies behind these two kinds of dignity from the *Metaphysics of Moral*, Collins' notes on *Kant's Lectures on Practical Philosophy and Baumgarten and Vienna Logic* of the *Lectures on Logic*. The first kind of dignity that I call "entitled dignity" is derived from Kant's assertion that "the humanity [in a man] is entitled to respect" (Kant, 1997, p. 147) because it is an "innate dignity of man" (Kant, 1991, p. 216). The second kind of dignity, which I term 'true dignity', also emanates from Kant's assertion that "the true dignity of man rests on morality" (Kant, 1992, p. 347).<sup>3</sup> From these quoted assertions, I read Kant as saying that a man possesses an 'entitled dignity' insofar as he has the capacity for morality (through his inner freedom), but he needs to become a moral being in order for him to realise his 'true dignity'.

These two kinds of dignity are similar to Sensen's twofold notion of dignity: 'initial dignity' and 'realised dignity' (Sensen, 2011, pp. 153,162,168-9), but are different in two regards. First, it is distinctive in the sense that, unlike Sensen (2011, 2015), the basic "entitled

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<sup>3</sup> Notably, in that passage, Kant uses 'true dignity' and 'genuine dignity' interchangeably. This means the second kind of dignity could as well be regarded as 'genuine dignity', but I, henceforth, refers to it only as 'true dignity'.

dignity” is connected with a rightful claim to respect. I assert that in virtue of the basic “entitled dignity”, humanity and every rational being can lay a rightful claim to dignity and respect. Second, I argue (like Dean) (Dean, 1996, 2006, 2013, 2014) that what we are to treat as an end in itself is only actual obedience to the moral law, whereas Sensen thinks that it is the capacity for morality that is respected, whether or not the person obeys the moral law (Sensen, 2011, 2015).

The underlying presupposition of this paper is that in virtue of the capacity for freedom and morality, every human being is entitled to make a rightful claim to dignity and respect. The entitlement therein is predicated on the belief that all human beings are innately equal, their own master, and beyond reproach; so, they must enjoy a reciprocal rightful claim to dignity and respect. But this basic entitlement can be “subverted”, “denied”, or “forfeited” if the human being fails to make proper use of his skills and talents, i.e. his capacity for freedom and morality. For Kant, this basic ‘entitled dignity’ is merely an expression of superiority to other creatures. In other words, it is a ‘special form of judgement’ in respect of our place in nature (Sensen, 2011, p. 41). It is in virtue of having the capacity for freedom and morality, that the human being has a special kind of value that is above all price and admits to no equivalent. Unlike the animals, who only have natural instincts, and in turn, are powerful according to choice, i.e. their actions are necessitated by incentives and *stimuli* (Kant, 1997, p. 125). For Kant, in virtue of having skills and talents alone, the human being is not worthy of everything good until he makes proper use of his skills and talents. It follows that in order for a man to realise his ‘true dignity’, he must make proper use of his skills and talents to adopt the maxim of action that can pass the universalizability test.

Before I elaborate further, I shall clarify the key terms in respect to how these two kinds of dignity are acquired. The key terms are the prefixes to the two kinds of dignity, i.e. ‘entitled’ and ‘true’. For whatever reason, a man is believed to be entitled to something because he should be respected that way. For example, a minority student might be entitled to admission to Brown University because he satisfies all the requirements for admission through ‘affirmative action’. In this manner of entitlement, he is only entitled to admission to Brown if he meets the cut-off mark that is specifically designed for prospective students who are qualified to apply through ‘affirmative action’. But as soon as he is admitted, his suitability as a student of Brown or a graduate from this University ceases to depend on the basic entitlement that is derived from the ‘affirmative action’. He now needs to show that he is worthy of his admission in character and learning; otherwise, he shall be expelled for any expellable offence. So, one might be entitled to something by meeting the basic requirement for accessing it, but to sustain it, one needs to meet further requirements. This is exactly what ‘entitled dignity’ and ‘true dignity’ are all about.

These two kinds of dignity stem from what seems to be paradoxical claims in the *Groundwork*. First, he claims that if “rational nature exists as an end in itself” (Kant, 1998, p. 36), it is because “humanity is... dignity, insofar it is capable of morality” (Kant, 1998, p. 42). Second, he claims that although “autonomy is the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature” (Kant, 1998, p. 43), the human being can only have “dignity... insofar he fulfils all his duties” (Kant, 1998, p. 46) because he must make proper use of his freedom and adopt the maxim of action that can pass the universalizability test. The genesis of this paradoxical claim was Kant’s declaration that man is the source of value in the

world through the idea of freedom (Kant, 1998, pp. 58-9, 2003, pp. 1-3). Kant emphatically declares that:

Nothing in the world has dignity. It is the final end, for the sake of which the world has this arrangement. Some things in the perfection of man have a mediate worth [...]. But one thing has an immediate worth in man, and that is his dignity (Kant, 1992, p. 347).

The important question to ask now is in virtue of what does a man have his dignity? From the paradoxical claims he made in the *Groundwork*, Kant intends to elucidate that a man can have dignity by two means: by the means of his capacity for freedom and morality, and by the means of obeying the moral law out of respect for all his duties.

Now I shall provide an elaborate explanation of what I call 'entitled dignity'. Kant calls our inner freedom "the innate dignity of man" (Kant, 1991, p. 216) and refers to the first kind of dignity as "entitled dignity" in (Kant, 1997, p. 147) by declaring that all humanity and every rational being are entitled to respect. For Kant, the capacity for reason or freedom and morality set human beings apart from the rest of nature. It is on account of these capacities that Kant claims the human being (man) is the source by which other things in nature can have value (Kant, 2003, pp. 1-2). Accordingly, there is dignity in every human being and in every rational being because the human species is the only kind of creature that has these capacities (with perhaps the exception of the supreme being, i.e. God, who is more perfectly rational than human beings) (Dean, 2009, p. 83). This is why Kant says: "humanity applies to all human beings, and in all human beings lies dignity" (Kant, 1992, p. 191).

In the *Groundwork*, Kant asserts that "humanity and every rational being exist as an end in itself" because he is not "merely a subjective end, but an objective end" (Kant, 1998, p. 36). There, Kant is contemplating that something must exist that is an end in itself in order for anything in the world to have value as an end. As I indicated earlier, Kant opines that man is that thing which is an end in itself and, in turn, he must be thought of as having his own inner value (Kant, 2003, pp. 1-2). Consequently, Kant claims that if the Categorical Imperative must exist, it is because "rational nature exists as an end in itself" (Kant, 1998, p. 36). This claim has been read to mean the supreme principle of morality and of human dignity rests solely on the human capacity for reason alone. For instance, Herman and Klemme have interpreted Kant to mean that "if rational nature exists as an end in itself, it is because reason is the supreme limiting condition of all [free actions]" (Kant, 1998, p. 39; see also, Herman, 1981; Klemme, 2015). But if one reads further in the *Groundwork*, a new picture emerges because Kant clarifies that rational nature itself is made possible by the means of freedom as its foundational basis (Kant, 1998, p. 43). He clarifies this point further in the *Naturrecht Feyerabend* lecture notes. There, Kant says that "while only [a] rational being can be [an end in itself], he can be [an end in itself] not because [he has] reason, but because [he is capable of] freedom" (Kant, 2003, pp. 3-4). This explains why Kant should be read as saying that in virtue of having the capacity for freedom and morality, a rational being is absolutely valuable over mere things in nature, and therefore, has 'entitled dignity'. One claims that it is either by means of reason or freedom that a man has his 'entitled dignity' (and is capable of morality). This does not seem to be a controversial position for anyone to take. As there is no fundamental difference between them, and if there is any, it is "merely verbal" (Guyer, 1996, p. 421).

If the human being derives his 'entitled dignity' by means of the capacity for freedom and morality, where does he derive his rights to lay claim to respect from others? As Kant expresses the principle of humanity: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (Kant, 1998, p. 38). It is suggestive of this formulation that a man should not be treated as a mere means but as an end in itself. But this formulation, as I understand it, is also laden with a rightful claim to a sort of entitlement. Since the capacity for freedom and morality is equally possessed by all rational beings, there is a reciprocal rightful claim to respect (Kant, 1998, pp. 36, 41-2). Kant calls this "wonderful reciprocal relations". That is, "humanity applies to all men, and in all men lies dignity" (Kant, 1992, p. 191). For this reason, every rational being must treat others with respect as their dignity demands, and if one person fails to honour a reciprocal rightful claim, the other person has a legitimate rightful claim to demand that he should not be treated merely as a means but as an end in itself.

This rightful claim to basic 'entitled dignity', indeed, is first an innate right which belongs to everyone equally by nature, independent of action. As Kant defines it,

Freedom insofar as it can coexist with the freedom of every other in accordance with a universal law, is the only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his humanity (Kant, 1991, p. 63).

The entitlement therein lies in the fact that human beings are innately equal, their own master, and beyond reproach. For this reason, they all share one right, and only one right, which they have in common. It belongs to them all. Second, this right is merely an equity right to freedom and is not connected with human rights (Kant, 1991, pp. 57-60; 2003, p. 20). The expression of a rightful claim to "entitled dignity" and respect is necessary only to resist the violation of one's freedom by others. This is not necessary, however, if the human will act with respect for the inner disposition. So, the 'New Kantians' are only correct that dignity is independent of action if they are referring to basic "entitled dignity", but beyond this, "true dignity", as I see it, is dependent on performing morally good actions.

For Kant, obedience to the moral law is a necessary condition for a man to realise his 'true dignity' and become worthy of the respect of others. The capacity for reason, freedom, and morality are not enough for a man to realise his 'true dignity' and become respect-worthy. Kant makes this very claim in the *Vienna Logic*. There, he asserts that without proper use of reason and freedom, a man cannot have 'true dignity' (Kant, 1992, p. 347). In that passage, he emphasises how important it is that a man makes proper use of his reason and freedom, and if a man fails to use them properly, Kant said: "[it would be obvious that]... that is not a genuine dignity [because]... what constitutes 'true dignity' is only that the will is good" (Kant, 1992, p. 347). Kant was concerned that since the human being is imperfect, it is most likely he will misuse his skills and talents against the freedom of others. As he puts it:

For what would be the use of skill if man were to use it deceitfully? The true worth of the will is its use of this skill. All the cognitions that contribute to the dignity of man are far from constituting his highest worth; instead, his worth is in using all his talents well. The true dignity of man rests on morality (Kant, 1992, p. 347).

It is on this note, I think, Kant intends to elucidate that there are two distinct kinds of dignity, although he never puts it as such. Nonetheless, we can see that the paradoxical claims in the *Groundwork* can be reconciled if we acknowledge that Kant intends to elucidate that there are two kinds of dignity. First, that every rational being is entitled to dignity, in virtue of our capacity for freedom and morality. Second, that “the true dignity of man rests on morality”, that is, the will that is good.

In his *Reflection Notes*, Kant clearly states that a man can only be worthy of everything good when he makes proper use of his reason and freedom. As he puts it:

The dignity of human nature lies solely in freedom; through it, we alone can become worthy of any good. But the dignity of a human being (worthiness) rests on the use of freedom, whereby he makes himself worthy of everything good. He makes himself worthy of this good, however, when he also works toward participating in it as much as lies in his natural talents and is allowed by outer agreement with the freedom of others (Kant, 2005, p. 441).

In the just quoted passage, Kant could be read as saying that the will of a man needs to be restricted to the conditions of the universal agreement so that the freedom of one person can coexist with the freedom of others, but the will of a man cannot be restricted by no means in nature, “except by the will of other men, since every man is itself an end and can therefore never be a mere means” (Kant, 2003, pp. 1-2). So, it behoves every man to make proper use of his freedom so that it can coexist with the freedom of others under a universal law of freedom because “there must be a universal rule under which the freedom of [one person] can coexist [with the freedom of another]” (Kant, 2003, p. 3). Our actions must be conducted in agreement with a universal rule. That is, they must be derived out of respect for the moral law without any incentives for the sake of inclination. Therefore, actual obedience to the moral law is a requirement for a man if he is to be worthy of everything good in life and to realise his ‘true dignity’.

In Collins’ notes, Kant explains further, stating that “all men are equal, [but] only he that is morally good has an inner worth *superior* to the rest” (Kant, 1997, p. 215). To have a superior worth, a man must be conscious of himself and practically make himself a person. All human beings have the equal privilege to reason (and freedom), but only those who make proper use of these capacities have superior worth. From the foregoing, Kant is simply emphasising the need for the human being to make proper use of his skills and talents in order to become worthy of everything good in life and have a superior worth over his animality. Our superior worth is over and above not only non-rational beings, but also over rational beings. A man can have a superior worth over his fellow human being if he is a moral being and the other is not. Kant, however, warns that every man should be humble and avoid arrogance, for no one can lay claim to having a supremacy of value over others.

Having established the two of kinds of dignity in Kant and defended the argument that obedience to the moral law is the formal condition under which a man can realise his ‘true dignity’, it is clear his freedom of the will can coexist with the freedom of another. In what follows, I commence with the argument that humanity does not apply to all human beings, just rational ones. After that, I go further to argue that we should only treat actual obedience to the moral law as an end in itself. I argue that in order for the principle of humanity to be realisable, the human being must commit himself to moral principles.



## Humanity and obedience to the moral law

Richard Dean observed that Kant's ethics have been read mistakenly by those who insist that we should treat humanity as an end in itself, instead of a good will. Here, I endorse Dean's argument that humanity means good will, i.e. a will that is committed to moral principles. So, I reject the 'New Kantians' reading of Kant's ethics—what Dean calls 'minimal reading' because it has mistaken humanity for an intrinsic value that is possessed by all human beings prior to human life (Dean, 1996, p. 268). This misguided reading has a huge implication on how Kant's arguments for moral obligations should be understood.

Dean has shown that something which possesses humanity and must earn our respect or be treated as an end in itself, not only includes rational beings, who are biologically human, but also all those species with a rational nature, such as God (who is more perfectly rational than human beings) (Dean, 2009, p. 83). Some types of human species must also be exempt from having humanity in their own person because they lack the capacity for rationality; these include "patients in permanent vegetative conditions that lack most minimal sort of rationality" (Dean, 2009, p. 84) and babies who could not immediately use their rationality. Lee and George would consider these people as having compromised dignity (Lee and George, 2008, pp. 174-175), but as I have argued earlier, dignity cannot be compromised—a man can either have an 'entitled dignity' or a 'true dignity' through his capacity for rationality and freedom or through proper use of these capacities. Indeed, Kant emphasises this point in his *Reflection* notes. As he puts it:

The dignity of humanity in one's own person is personality itself, that is, freedom; for one is only an end in oneself insofar as one is a being that can set ends for oneself. The irrational, who cannot do that, have worth only as means (Kant, 2005, p. 476).

In the passage just quoted, it is clear that Kant does not regard people in vegetative conditions as having compromised dignity but as having no dignity at all. Since he said they have worth only as a means, it means that they are not worthy to be treated as ends in themselves. Therefore, it is inconsistent with Kant to say that all human beings have humanity and dignity in themselves, rather Kant intends to say that only rational beings have humanity and dignity.

Kant further buttresses this point in an earlier passage in the *Reflection* notes. There, Kant says that "the world has no worth where there are no rational beings by whom it can be used" (Kant, 2005, p. 449). One particular reason for this is that only rational beings are the final ends in nature, with 'an absolutely necessary presupposition of pure reason'. It is on the idea of a fully rational being that the world can have value. Nevertheless, this value is not unique to only rational beings who belong to the human species, but also spatiotemporal beings, all finite beings (Ameriks, 2000, p. 13) (insofar as they are capable of rationality) and most perfectly rational beings, that is, God. Therefore, Richard Dean is correct to point out that not all the human species exclusively have humanity in themselves as humanity also includes a more perfectly rational being (i.e. God) and excludes irrational human beings.

For Kant, irrational beings have worth only as a means because they cannot be thought of as having freedom of the will. Kant laid the ground for this viewpoint in the *Groundwork*. There, he said, "[freedom of the will cannot be ascribed to a will on whatever ground



because there must be a sufficient ground for attributing it to every rational being]" (Kant, 1998, p. 53). He went further to say that morality is a law for us only because we are rational beings, and since morality originates from freedom, freedom must be a property of a rational being. Then Kant says, "now I assert that to every rational being having a will, we must necessarily lend the idea of freedom also, under which alone he acts" (Kant, 1998, pp. 53-54). Therefore, for Kant, it is unfathomable to think of how irrational beings can act under the idea of freedom. Having clarified this point, I shall next argue that actual obedience to the moral law is what we should treat as an end in itself, not humanity.

According to Kant, having a good will connotes possessing a capacity to seek actions on certain moral principles (Dean, 1996, p. 269). What distinguishes a good will from humanity is the fact that actions done for the sake of good will are done on a principle that is good for their willing alone and not because of a result, in view of such action. This is my reading of Kant's understanding of a good will and why the rational being must obey the moral law (Kant, 1998, pp. 7, 14). The human will is good only when he acts on moral principles. Due to our imperfect rationality, we might at times use our will to choose actions that are morally impermissible. We, however, have a predisposition to respect the moral law, one that is meant to be a motivating guide to act on moral principles. But our desires, inclinations, and self-love are powerful enough to sway us toward satisfying our desires, rather than acting on moral principles. Specifically, this is because we have both incentives to satisfy our empirical choices and an incentive to act unconditionally only according to the moral law, and respect and obey its command. As I understand Kant, the determination of whether an action is done for the sake of good will or satisfying a man's personal desires depends on whether he actually obeys the moral law or acts contrary to it.

Kant's ethical theory places a high demand on moral beings, a demand of unconditional moral duties that includes, in particular, the demand to make proper use of their skills and talents (by placing the highest priority on morality over any other considerations). Doing this always creates tension in every human being because he has imperfect rationality, which constantly urges him to satisfy his desires. This leads him to consider the moral demand of always acting from duty as "a never-ending striving for the better" (Kant, 2009, pp. 54-5; see, also Dean, 2012, p. 579). Yet, Kant strongly believes only those who can survive this tension can acquire a good will.

The 'New Kantians' tend to suggest that the capacity to act for a reason should give a moral being room to use reason to his own advantage. For instance, Barbara Herman is inclined to say that a moral being is entitled to have a legitimate nonmoral motive as a motive of duty (Herman, 1993, p. 149). For her, Kant's principle of morality simply rests on the supposition that "as the final end of rational willing, rational nature as value is both absolute and nonscalar" (Herman, 1993, p. 238). According to Herman, having a good will does not give anyone a greater value than someone with an ordinary will since every rational being has the capacity to act for a reason. The good will is nothing but the capacity to act for a reason which contains the condition of its own goodness. "The goodness of the goodwill resides in the principle of its willing, not [in actual obedience to the moral law]" (Herman, 1993, p. 138). For Herman, like Guyer, Wood, and Reath, *the moral law is a means to preserve and promote our (reason and) freedom* (Herman, 1993; Guyer, 2000; Reath, 2003; Wood, 2008). And, in particular, our own choices and ends.

The implication of the 'New Kantians' reading is that Kantian ethical theory must be considered as one that is open to instrumental reasoning. As I understand Kant, instrumental reasoning is not Kantian. Richard Dean perfectly captures this point when he notes that rationality has become an "instrumental reason" that is designed after the economic model (Dean, 2009, p. 85). For Kant, however, instrumental rationality is not welcomed because every rational being must always strive to perfect his imperfect rationality by obeying the moral law.

Perhaps, the 'New Kantians' should be deemed to be promoting a new frontier for Kant. This new frontier has been criticised by Karl Ameriks and Jerome B. Schneewind. Ameriks observes that the 'New Kantians' tell us to refrain 'Back to Kant' but instead promote 'Away from Kant!' (Ameriks, 2000, p. 6). In his final analysis, Ameriks concludes that the 'New Kantians' are principally driven by their commitment to liberal political and ethical agenda, rather than Kant (Ameriks, 2000, p. 6). Dean has made a similar allegation against the 'New Kantians', particularly Korsgaard and Wood (Korsgaard, 1996, pp. 17, 110, 346; Wood, 1999, pp. 118-20), stating that they overemphasise the magnitude of the power of choice because of their commitment to "political liberalism's emphasis on the foundational importance of choice" (Dean, 2009, p. 86). In the same vein, Jerome B. Schneewind has hinted that the 'New Kantians' are asking us to depart from Kant himself and follow a general and historically repositioned Kantianism (Schneewind, 1996, p. 288).

What is unique about this new frontier is the claim that the highest duty the human being has is to look after the welfare of others and treat them with the respect their dignity demands, regardless of whether or not they respect their own moral predisposition. It is this sort of reasoning that Dean describes as "instrumental reasoning", one that is associated with the satisfaction of our own desire or that of others. For instance, a moral being may perform a nonmoral act in order to achieve a moral end. Suppose that I lie to an immigration officer on behalf of my friend in order to help him immigrate to a developed country, specifically to help him to have a better economic situation (i.e. to lift him out of poverty in his home country). Provided that I do not lie out of self-interest and it is not a routine means, but solely for the sake of my friend, my lie may still be considered to have moral worth or be justifiable in moral deliberation (Herman, 1993, p. 149). Rationality, in this sense, has become a means to an end. But Kant never used or associated rationality with instrumental reason because the constitution of an end in itself is by no means associated with the satisfaction of our own desires or those of others. Neither does he associate rationality with emotions nor contrast them.<sup>4</sup> So I think (like Dean) that Kant does not hold that the human being can have moral worth if he suppresses his emotions or has compassion for the well-being of others. Rather, he can have moral worth only by obeying the moral law.

Contrary to the 'New Kantians' claim, rationality, for Kant, is a very active faculty (Dean, 2009, p. 85). He, specifically, distinguishes rationality into two: theoretical reason and practical reason. Theoretical reason provides us with guiding principles for coherent and understandable patterns of our sense impressions, i.e. for perception and scientific

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<sup>4</sup> Kant only thinks that we should have autocracy over all inclinations by ruling ourselves because good actions are not done from inclinations but maxims, and that it is required of us to harbour no emotions and passions whatsoever; for such is the rule. See (Kant, 1997, pp. 143-4).

investigation. Theoretical reason allows us to respond to passively received data and provides us with principles that make it possible for our sense impression to be coherent (Dean, 2009, p. 85). Practical reason, on the other hand, provides us with more than just finding the best means to satisfy contingent desires (Dean, 2009, p. 85). Practical reason relates to using one's will in a manner that can lead to actual obedience to the moral law. This is the reason why Kant opines that practical reason must be prioritised over theoretical reason, because it contains an aspect that can make possible the unconditional necessity of obedience to the moral law. As Kant indicates, since theoretical reason begins with empirical laws and sense impressions "it falls into sheer incomprehensibilities and self-contradictions, which results in uncertainty, obscurity, and instability" (Kant, 1998, p. 17). It is only with the help of practical reason that the human will can exclude incentives to satisfy his desires for self-love and appreciate the benefit of pure reason. This appraising enables him to admire the incentives to unconditionally obey the moral law.

According to Kant, practical reason has two aspects. One of these is the basis of obeying the moral law (which is the *Wille*) and Kant emphasises the singularity of this aspect. The first aspect relates to the capacity to make choices (about adoptable ends), also known as the *Willkür*. The second aspect relates to the capacity to either make available or legislate moral principles categorically, also known as the *Wille*. According to Kant, every rational human being possesses both the *Willkür* and the *Wille*. As a result of his imperfect rationality, the human being will use his *Willkür* at many times to perform actions that are contrary to the command of the *Wille*. Kant argues that a perfect rational being would always make proper use of his *Willkür* in a manner that is consistent with the recommendations of the *Wille*. Kant's reasoning is predicated on the belief that since his own capacity for reason makes available these moral principles as unconditional reasons for his action, he would obey the moral law unconditionally because it originates from himself (Dean, 2009, p. 85). But due to the fact that his rationality is imperfect, he often admits that "the moral law commands unconditionally, [but] still [he] seek[s] a reason to obey it—a reason that is looking for some further good beyond the law itself" (Shell, 2009, p. 3).

It remains controversial among Kantians how these two aspects of practical reason can be understood and applied. Generally, the controversy is about whether we should treat the *Willkür* or the *Wille*, or even both, as an end in itself, or whether practical reason is just overrated, that what we treat as an end in itself is just theoretical reason. Owing to their commitment to the liberal political and ethical agenda, the 'New Kantians' (such as Herman, Wood, Hill, Korsgaard, Nussbaum, and a large number of others) consider the *Willkür* as what we are to treat as an end in itself, as was earlier observed. Contrary to the 'New Kantians' claim, I maintain here that, for Kant, the rational being must commit himself to actual obedience to the moral law. However, there is no way that he can commit himself on the basis of the *Willkür* alone as he is very likely to misuse his *Willkür* deceitfully to satisfy his impractical reasons. These are the reasons for action that he may choose in disobedience to the moral principles recommended to him by the *Wille*.

For this reason, I deny the 'New Kantians' claim that the *Willkür* is what we are to treat as an end in itself—that in virtue of the capacity to make a choice for himself, he has humanity and dignity which must be respected unconditionally. Rather I posit that the *Willkür* is incomplete without dutiful obedience to the moral law—the moral principles that

are recommended to him by the *Wille*. My argument rests on Kant's unapologetic demand that every rational being must strive to attain complete adequacy to the moral law, which is to obey the moral law unconditionally. For Kant, this demand can only be achieved: 1.) if he allows his practical reason to take precedence over his theoretical reason, and 2.) if he uses his *Willkür* to act only on moral principles recommended to him by the *Wille*.

But why must he obey the moral law unconditionally? Is it because he has reason that he is an end in itself or is it because he is capable of freedom that he is an end in itself? Since the moral law proceeds from him as a lawgiver through his reason and freedom, why should the moral law be a constraint on his power of choice? Why is it unconditionally necessary for him to obey the moral law if the principle of humanity has already established that he must always be treated as an end in itself and never as a mere means? Certainly, it is quite difficult to understand Kant's position considering his textual inconsistencies. The difficulties in interpreting Kant are both textual and philosophical, which is not peculiar to the present complexities (Kleingeld, 2016, p. 16).

Nevertheless, Kant does have an answer to these questions. I suggest here that when Kant says, rational nature or freedom exists as an end in itself, he is only affirming a "special form of judgement" (Sensen, 2011, p. 41) that we are to accord all rational beings for having the capacity for reason and freedom. But beyond this, for Kant, what constitutes an end itself is morality, not the mere capacity for it or striving for it, but the actualisation of it. As Kant puts it, "morality is the only condition under which a rational being can be an end in itself" (Kant, 1998, p. 42). This is why Kant says, "morality and humanity [...] alone have dignity" (Kant, 1998, p. 42). Kant connects morality with dignity because that what we treat as an end itself is not a man's personality but the recognition of morality in him. It is because we recognise him as a moral being that we are to treat him as an end in itself. As he puts it, what is "consistent with the idea of a man [is just that he is] a moral being" (Kant, 1991, p. 256). Kant elucidates this point further, stating that: "to annihilate the subject of morality in one's own person is to root out the existence of morality itself... [for] morality is an end in itself" (Kant, 1991, pp. 218-9). Kant again reasserts that "a man can be the final end of creation only when he is a moral being" (Kant, 2000, p. 309). Therefore, if we are to treat something as an end in itself, it is because we recognise that there is morality in it.

Kant emphasises the strictness of the moral law; specifically, actual obedience to it. According to Kant, "the veiled goddess, before whom we bow the knee, is the moral law within us in its inviolable majesty" (Kant, 2002b, p. 444). He added that "to sin is nothing other than to live contrary to the moral rules and law" (Kant, 1992, p. 108). He went further to say that "the moral level on which the human being stands is respect for the law. The attitude that he is obligated to have in complying with the law is to do so from duty and not voluntary" (Kant, 2002a, p. 109). Kant continues that "the moral law demands compliance from duty, not from predilection, which one cannot and ought not to presuppose at all" (Kant, 2002a, p. 197).

In what follows, I defend this claim further, stating that what we are to treat as an end in itself is actual obedience to the moral law, not the mere capacity for it or the striving for it. In other words, it is imperative to respect others insofar as they are moral beings.

## Respect for the worthy

We owe ourselves a duty to act as rational beings in the manner that is appropriate when choosing the cause of actions to pursue. Similarly, we also owe ourselves a duty to appraise our choosing action. These two forms of attitude were introduced by Stephen Darwall as “Two Kinds of Respect,” namely recognition respect and appraisal respect (Darwall, 1977). Both kinds of respect are attitudes that we can bear to ourselves in a distinct way. For example, when I ask someone: “Don’t you have self-respect?” I am appealing to his recognition self-respect which might help guide his behaviour, and is distinct from self-appraisal. I only appeal to his self-appraisal if I ask him: “Don’t you think it is beneath your dignity?” With that question, I am appealing to him to use his capacity for the reflective appraisal of his own behaviour (Darwall, 1977, p. 47). If he lacks recognition self-respect for himself, it might affect his life negatively, for it could considerably hinder his ability to continue to function as a human being. Such behaviour leads to self-destruction and thus reveals a lack of self-regard for himself as a human being. If it does not lead to self-destruction, such behaviour may be degrading in exposing his lack of self-regard for himself, showing that he is a being without a certain moral worth or dignity, which gives room for “subordination” or “indignities” (Darwall, 1977, p. 47).

According to Darwall, every human being has a task of self-appraising, a manifestation of self-respect for himself as a person, a being with a will who acts for reasons. The connection between a being and the respect he is to receive from others is about recognition respect; that he acts for reasons so that his action can have moral worth. Similarly, he must assess himself as a person and his character because a person’s character consists of his ability to guide himself in such a way that he acts for a reason. Not only that, he must scale his conduct in such a way that he acts on the higher order he takes to be the best reasons. Hence, he should be assessed by both himself and by others as worthy of respect, as a being who is capable of recognition respect (Darwall, 1977, pp. 48-49).

While I think Darwall’s “Two Kinds of Respect” reflect Kant’s idea of a man as a moral being who has a duty to have self-respect and self-appraise himself, he does not seem to me to have reconciled the paradoxical claims about “entitled dignity” and “true dignity”. For instance, Darwall still holds that there is an inviolable dignity of persons “which is a kind of value involving the right, claim or authority that persons have to demand that they are allowed to make their own choices and lead their own lives.” (Darwall, 2006, p. 268). Darwall thinks that the kind of value that persons have rests on the fact that they are ends in themselves; they have the authority to demand respect for their autonomy (Darwall, 2006, p. 268). Darwall argues that through their power of choice, they “can exact or demand respect from one another as equal moral persons” (Darwall, 2013, p. 197). No doubt, Darwall is correct to assert that, for Kant, persons have reciprocal rightful claims to dignity and respect. But the justification for realising their ‘true dignity’ and becoming worthy of respect does not rest on their capacity to make choices for themselves, but on actual obedience to the moral law.

While I grant that every human being has a right claim to demand respect from others, based on their basic ‘entitled dignity’, I maintain here that the formal condition under which someone can be respect-worthy is identical with the condition of realising his ‘true dignity’.

We respect others because we *recognise* that they possess 'true dignity'. That is, they are respect-worthy. Every human being must strive to be respect-worthy in his actions. If an action shows unworthiness by inferring a of disregard for moral principles, the behaviour should simply be appraised as unworthy of respect.

According to Kant,

Man should regard himself as a person who has price above all price... Someone who possesses a dignity (an absolute inner worth) by which he commands respect for himself from all other rational beings in the world... Humanity in his person is the object of the respect which he can demand from every other man, but which he must also not forfeit... Since he must regard himself not only as a person generally but also as a man, that is, as a person who has duties his own reason lays upon him... he should pursue his end, which is in itself a duty... but always with consciousness of his sublime moral predisposition. And this self-esteem is a duty of man to himself (Kant, 1991, pp. 230-1).

From the just quoted passage, Kant was not saying that a man is unconditionally worthy of respect, but that humanity in him is the object of respect which he must always be conscious of as a sublime moral predisposition.

Kant does not say we should respect others unconditionally, independent of the other recognising his own moral predisposition. Kant only suggests that if I judge others as unworthy of my respect, I might be contemptuous because I have to show modesty in what I demand of others. My respect towards others or the respect that they can require of me is a recognition of dignity, i.e. a recognition of moral worth. For Kant,

every person has a legitimate claim to respect from others and in turn bound to respect others... that his dignity consists in being above all things... So, he is under obligation to recognise, in practical sense, the dignity of humanity in every other person (Kant, 1991, p. 255).

This passage has been read by some Kantians to mean that someone has the authority to demand respect unconditionally without recognising his own moral predisposition. The difficulties in interpreting Kant in that passage get even more clumsy when he says:

Nonetheless I cannot deny all respect to even a vicious man as a man; I cannot withdraw at least the respect that belongs to him in his quality as a man, even though by his deeds he makes himself unworthy of it (Kant, 1991, p. 255).

Indeed, texts such as these suggest that Kant does think that someone needs to obey the moral law in order for him to be worthy of respect.

But if one appraises those passages carefully a new picture emerges. They are connected to Kant's suggestion that we must show moderation in what we demand of others (Kant, 1991, p. 255 my emphasis; see also Kant, 1991, pp. 60-1, 209). Since judging others to be worthless is contemptuous, we must always avoid engaging in such activities. Therefore, Kant should be read as saying that a man must show modesty in what he demands of others by respecting the reasons that the others have adopted to pursue their actions. Kant is only saying that we should respect others for using their capacity for rationality and freedom, as this would help to improve their rational development. Although they might partially lose

their predisposition to the good, and could be worthy of punishment for dishonouring their humanity.<sup>5</sup>

As Sensen observed, Kant was not saying vicious people are morally good or that they have a will that is morally good, but that they simply still deserve respect as persons despite their immorality (Sensen, 2011, p. 128) (to avoid holding them in contempt, to show modesty, and to help them improve their rationality). Beyond those reasons, Kant holds that the condition for a man to be an end in itself and be treated as such is for him to be a moral being (Kant, 1991, pp. 218-9; 1998, p. 42; 2005, p. 457). To elaborate this point, Kant speaks of the dignity of morality three times, particularly when he talks about “the dignity of concept of duty (Kant, 1991, p. 271), the dignity of reason’s moral interest (Kant, 1991, pp. 259-60), and the dignity of one’s practical reason (Kant, 1991, pp. 230-1).”<sup>6</sup>

In Collins’ lecture notes, Kant furthers his argument that “everything that tells against candour, a man loses his dignity” (Kant, 1997, p. 206). In fact, he asserts that in order for the human being to avoid contemptuous acts, there must be a counter-obligation. According to Kant, while I must not hold the other in contempt, the other should not expose himself to contempt. Kant opines that the human being has no dignity if he makes himself a laughing stock to others because he has exposed himself to contempt (Kant, 1997, p. 211).

The counter-obligation, for Kant, relates to how we respect the dignity of humanity in our own person. As Kant puts it:

A true honour is what universally has a worth, and whomever has that kind of a worth possesses dignity. But a good will alone confers dignity upon us... So, the rule runs: so, act that in your actions you necessarily draw general respect upon yourself (Kant, 1992, p. 347, 1997, p. 246).

From the just quoted texts, Kant does believe that we, as human beings, have dignity that must be esteemed by others, but first, we have a duty to make ourselves worthy of esteem from others.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that, for Kant, there are two kinds of dignity: ‘entitled dignity’ and ‘true dignity’. The human being possesses a basic ‘entitled dignity’ in virtue of his capacity for morality, but he needs to become a moral being in order for him to realise his ‘true dignity’. I show that the formal condition under which he can be worthy of respect is identical with the condition of realising his ‘true dignity’, as Kant does think that he needs to obey the moral law in order for him to be worthy of respect. Consequently, I argue that what we are to treat as an end in itself is actual obedience to the moral law, not the mere capacity for it or the striving for it. In other words, it is imperative to respect others insofar as they are moral beings.

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<sup>5</sup> As Kant noted, “our actions will always have moral reward or punishment as their consequences.” See (Kant, 1991, p. 276).

<sup>6</sup> Kant talks about the dignity of morality three times in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. See (Sensen, 2011, p. 193).



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