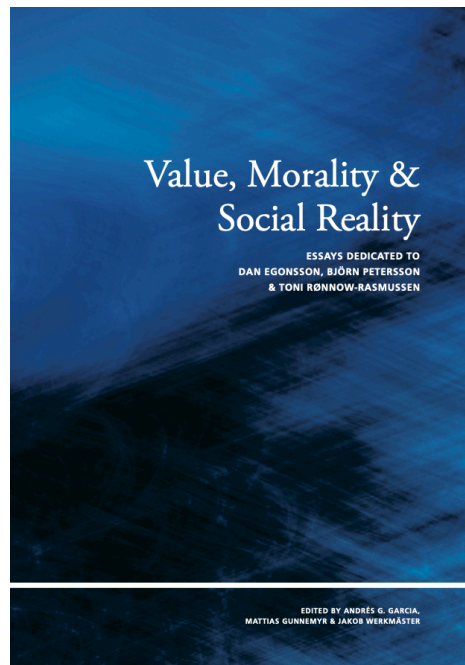


# A Kantian Reading of ‘Good’ and ‘Good For’ Some Reflections on Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen’s Fitting Attitude Analysis of Value

*Herlinde Pauer-Studer*

In: Garcia, A., Gunnemyr, M. & Werkmäster, J. (2023) *Value, Morality & Social Reality: Essays dedicated to Dan Egonsson, Björn Petersson & Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen*. Lund: Department of Philosophy, Lund University. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37852/oblu.189>

ISBN: 978-91-89415-65-2 (print), 978-91-89415-66-9 (digital)



Published by the Department of Philosophy, Lund University.  
Edited by: Andrés García, Mattias Gunnemyr, and Jakob Werkmäster  
Cover image by Fabian Jones. Cover layout by Gunilla Albertén.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37852/oblu.189.c530>



This text is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial license. This license allows reusers to distribute, remix, adapt, and build upon the material in any medium or format, so long as attribution is given to the creator. The license does not allow for commercial use.

(License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Text © Andrés García, Mattias Gunnemyr, and Jakob Werkmäster 2023.  
Copyright of individual chapters is maintained by the chapters' authors.

# A Kantian Reading of ‘Good’ and ‘Good For’

## Some Reflections on Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen’s Fitting Attitude Analysis of Value

Herlinde Pauer-Studer

**Abstract.** The paper argues that Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen’s fitting-attitude analysis of ‘good’ and ‘good for’ allows us to interpret and justify Kant’s Formula of Humanity (FH) in a constructive way. His classification of ‘good’ as a non-relational intrinsic final value and ‘good for’ as a relational extrinsic final value sheds light on two main features of FH, namely that it requires us to display a specific attitude to human beings, while also obligating us to recognize this value in the relational dimension. Based on a reflection of what attitudes toward persons are fitting, we might well come to endorse that persons are “ends in themselves” and merit respect and recognition. I then argue (by way of an ethical reading of Kant’s demand to leave the state of nature and move to a rightful civil condition) that we have, in addition to a fitting attitude, deontic normative reasons (not mere pro tanto reasons) for making this very attitude toward persons the principal standard for our relations to others and to ourselves.

### 1. Introduction

A widely accepted assumption is that not everything we consider valuable may depend on our desires and preferences. This is especially true of the basic values that govern our social life, foremost the idea that persons have special value. Kant

articulated this thought in his famous Formula of Humanity (FH), which requires us to treat 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”. In other words, the appropriate attitude to persons is one of respect.

Exactly how this Kantian formula is to be understood remains controversial among moral philosophers to this day. In this paper, I will show that Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen’s taxonomy of values, in combination with his fitting attitude analysis of value (FA), offers an attractive way to interpret Kant’s requirement. In particular, Rønnow-Rasmussen’s distinction between ‘good’ as a non-relational intrinsic value and ‘good for’ as a relational extrinsic value enables us to flesh out the full potential of Kant’s principle and, moreover, to read Kant’s conception of morality in a relational way, thus overcoming the limitations of a first-person only understanding.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the main features of Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen’s analysis of value. In section 3, I present Kant’s derivation of the Formula of Humanity (FH). Section 4 argues that Christine Korsgaard’s attempt to ground this formula in the constitutive conditions of agency is not successful. I will then argue (section 5) that Rønnow-Rasmussen’s distinction between a relational and a non-relational reading of value does justice to both aspects of FH, namely that it requires us to display a specific attitude to human beings, while also obligating us to recognize this value in the relational dimension. That persons have value in themselves thus guides our relations to ourselves and to others.

## 2. Two Kinds of Final Value: ‘Good’ and ‘Good For’

In his impressive book *The Value Gap* (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022), Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen proposes a fine-grained taxonomy of values that exceeds the classic opposition between what is valuable for its own sake and what is instrumentally valuable. It is beyond the scope of this paper to do justice to the details of Rønnow-Rasmussen’s intricate analysis. In what follows, I will only sketch those aspects that are relevant to our topic, namely how to understand the full scope of the Kantian principle that persons deserve to be valued as “ends in themselves”.

The hallmark of Rønnow-Rasmussen’s analysis is the distinction between two basic values, ‘good’ and ‘good for’. The meaning and scope of these notions become clearer when we examine how Rønnow-Rasmussen specifies them in terms of other concepts commonly used in value theory, such as final and non-final, intrinsic and extrinsic, relational and non-relational.

Fundamental for Rønnow-Rasmussen are the categories final and non-final value (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 17). ‘Final value’ refers to objects that are valuable for their own sake. ‘Good’ and ‘good for’ might both refer to final values, according to Rønnow-Rasmussen. He endorses value dualism, according to which *final goodness* and *final goodness for* are both coherent value notions, though semantically distinct

(“they cannot be fully understood in terms of one another”, Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 35).

‘Good for’ might, as Rønnow-Rasmussen points out, refer to an instrumental or to a non-instrumental value. That something, *x*, is good *for* someone therefore either means that *x* is instrumentally valuable or it means that *x* is valuable for its own sake (yet valuable for someone). In the latter case, ‘good for’ is tied to a final value. An instrumental value is, as Rønnow-Rasmussen argues, a non-final value and not valuable for its own sake, but as a mere means.

Rønnow-Rasmussen also explains ‘good’ and ‘good for’ in terms of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic values; intrinsic and extrinsic are “subcategories within the class of final values” (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 17). Something has intrinsic value when it is valuable in terms of the bearer’s internal features alone; things do have extrinsic value when they are valuable because of the bearer’s external relational properties. ‘Good-for’ presents, according to Rønnow-Rasmussen, a relational value, while ‘good’ is a non-relational value. Moreover, ‘good’ amounts to an impersonal value (i.e. good period), while ‘good for’ is a personal value (good for someone), not least because of its extrinsic relational aspects.

To summarize the main points of this taxonomy: The set of final values, which includes what is valuable for its own sake, contains two kinds of value, namely ‘good’ and ‘good for’. ‘Good’ is a final intrinsic value insofar as it is valuable for its own sake in virtue of the bearer’s internal features alone, and it is a non-relational value. ‘Good for’, on the other hand, is a final extrinsic and relational value, given that it refers to things that are valuable for their own sake in virtue of “some of [the bearer’s] external relational properties” (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 17).

Rønnow-Rasmussen’s overall aim is to provide a fitting-attitude analysis (FA) of ‘good’ and ‘good for’. ‘Fittingness’ refers to the relation between an object and a response; relevant is whether an ‘object’ merits a certain response or is worthy of that response. A fitting-attitude analysis must take into account that the attitudes fit the different ‘objects’ at stake. Persons, for instance, merit respect or admiration (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 15).

An attractive feature of a fitting-attitude analysis is, according to Rønnow-Rasmussen, that it “connects our attitudes with valuable objects in a straightforward way” (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 5). We do not need to appeal to yet another value in explaining why something is valuable.

However, as Rønnow-Rasmussen emphasizes, the fittingness relation by itself does not provide a full account of values. Attitudes as such are not value-constitutive; they just indicate that something is worthy of being valued. According to Rønnow-Rasmussen, the missing element for a full account of FA is the notion of a reason. As he writes:

A person is valuable, according to the FA analysis, because there is something about this person that provides us with a reason to respect him or love him. The connection between value and attitudes is intermediate; you need to add reasons to the picture—only then do we have value (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 5).

For Rønnow-Rasmussen, it is the object that provides us with a reason to favour it (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 113). He thus understands ‘reason’ in a contributory sense. The reasons needed for a fitting-attitude analysis of value are, as Rønnow-Rasmussen states, pro tanto reasons, because it is important that the reasons that speak in favour of an object being valuable may be outweighed by other pro tanto reasons (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 114). This suggests that thinking about what is valuable is for him a matter of weighing considerations.

Rønnow-Rasmussen suggests the following principle as central to an FA analysis:

FA1: For something to be valuable is for  $x$  to be (or provide) a reason for an agent who is rightly placed to favour  $x$  (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 114).

And on the basis of this principle, he then proposes the following analysis of the final value ‘good for’:

For  $x$  to be finally good is for  $x$  to be, or provide, a reason for any agent who is rightly placed to favour  $x$  for its own sake *where this favouring is not for the sake of someone or something other than  $x$*  (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 137, italics in the original).

For  $x$  to be finally good for  $a$  is for  $b$  to be, or provide, a rightly placed  $b$  with a reason to finally favour  $x$  for  $a$ 's sake (where  $a$  and  $b$  might, but need not be, identical) (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 137, italics in the original).

All three formulations for defining the final values ‘good’ and ‘good for’ involve agents. Note, however, that Rønnow-Rasmussen restricts the role of agents to having a (pro tanto) reason to favour  $x$ .

This will not suffice when it comes to explaining the value of persons. The fitting attitude toward persons cannot be understood in terms of a mere favouring relation. Rather, the appropriate attitude toward persons is that of respect and recognition. Moreover, it is one we ought to have toward others. Since pro tanto reasons may be outweighed by other pro tanto reasons, they do not conceptually correspond to an ‘ought’ in the deontic sense.<sup>1</sup> Instead of pro tanto reasons that provide us merely with considerations in favour of valuing  $x$ , we need to rely on a special kind of normative reasons that reflect the deontic character of the fitting attitude when it comes to explaining the value of persons as persons. I will use the term ‘deontic reasons’ for this special kind of normative reasons.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Following Korsgaard, we might say that pro tanto reasons are tied to a weighing model of practical reason.

For a critique of such an understanding of practical reason see (Korsgaard, 2009b, 49-51).

<sup>2</sup> In his book *Personal Value* (2011), Rønnow-Rasmussen speaks of normative reasons in connection with favouring. He explains, for instance, the final value of an object  $x$  in terms of normative reasons favouring  $x$  for its own sake and personal value in terms of normative reasons for favouring  $x$  for a person's sake (Rønnow-Rasmussen 2011, 27, 48, 78, 90). This means that for Rønnow-Rasmussen pro tanto reasons are normative reasons in so far as they are considerations in favour of something, for

However, I think that Rønnow-Rasmussen's account allows us to make room for normative reasons (deontic ones) that provide a warrant for obligatory fitting attitudes.

In the next two sections, I will first outline Kant's derivation of the Formula of Humanity (FH) (section 3) and then Korsgaard's reformulation of Kant's argument (section 4). Both attempts run into serious problems. Subsequently (section 5), I try to show how Rønnow-Rasmussen's fitting-attitude analysis of value (in a slightly modified form) offers an illuminating interpretation of Kant's Formula of Humanity.

### 3. Kant's Derivation of the Formula of Humanity (FH)

Kant seeks to justify the categorical imperative in the following way: first, he outlines the conditions the highest principle of morality has to meet, then arguing that the categorical imperative (particularly in the Formula of Law formulation and the Formula of Humanity formulation) fulfills those conditions. Second, he provides an additional argument (Kant calls it a deduction) for why the categorical imperative is indeed the principle of morality.

We might describe the structure of this complex argument as a two-step procedure: first, to lay bare the conditions for the possibility of *x*, and, secondly, to provide a justification that provides (deontic) normative reasons for the reflective endorsement of the principle that embraces those conditions.<sup>3</sup>

---

instance, that object *x* has value. Note, however, that in *Personal Value* Rønnow-Rasmussen does not tie the FA analysis to pro tanto reasons; he relies on a general notion of normative reasons. He considers it as a specific strength of fitting attitude analyses that they do not appeal to a "specific 'reason notion'", but "understand value in terms of a general notion of reason or normativity" (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2011, 91). In *The Value Gap*, Rønnow-Rasmussen is more specific in tying his FA analysis of value to pro tanto reasons as a specific kind of normative reasons. In order to distinguish my understanding of 'normative reasons' from Rønnow-Rasmussen's use of the term 'normative reasons', I will speak of 'special normative reasons' or 'deontic normative reasons'. The difference between a pro tanto reason and a deontic reason is that the former amounts to a consideration in favour of something and considers deliberation as a weighing of those considerations, whereas the latter provides a more robust warrant since a deontic normative reason for *x* (e.g., for the acceptance of a principle which attributes special value to something) is backed by an argument that aims to provide a justification for why *x* (e.g., a principle attributing special value to something) is normatively binding. Deliberation is here more complex, involving a reflective assessment of reasons in light of principles and testing procedures. Let me add that in *Personal Value*, Rønnow-Rasmussen argues that the FA analysis suggested by him seeks to reduce evaluative claims to deontic claims about the attitudes that are fitting and that, therefore, one ought to have (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2011, chapter 2). In my view, his account misses the deontic level. My approach in this paper, which relies on deontic normative reasons, can be seen as an attempt to do justice to this deontic element in the FA analysis (my discussion is restricted to the attitude we owe human beings). I thank two anonymous referees for pressing me to clarify my understanding of 'normative reasons'.

<sup>3</sup> My understanding of a transcendental argument is that such an argument consists not merely in the exposition of necessary presuppositions of *x* (i.e. the conditions of the possibility of *x*), but also in an additional justification why the principle that meets those conditions is justified. In the process of laying bare the presuppositions we gain some insight why those presuppositions are indispensable and

Kant's reasoning in the *Groundwork* leading to FH follows that line. The first step, namely exposing the categorical imperative as a condition for the possibility of moral reasoning and, thus, of acting morally, is performed by what Kant calls a 'regressive argument'.<sup>4</sup>

With respect to FH, the regressive argument consists of depicting the conditions that underpin our self-valuing as human beings and rational agents. The argument begins by claiming that characteristic of rational beings is the capacity of self-determination by a will.

Kant then states that the ground of the will's self-determination has to be an objective end, not a relative end. The latter would be merely conditionally valuable since its worth would depend on certain subjective desires and incentives. Relative ends are "only the ground of hypothetical imperatives" (GMS, AA 04: 428.02).<sup>5</sup> But the ground of a categorical imperative as a practical law must be something that, as an end in itself, has absolute worth—for "if all worth were conditional and therefore contingent, then no supreme practical principle for reason could be found anywhere" (GMS, AA 04: 428.31-33).

Kant concludes by maintaining that all rational and human beings exist as ends in themselves and, thus, possess unconditional—i.e., absolute—worth. This is so since human beings can never have merely conditional value and can never serve merely as means. Kant adds that all human beings must see themselves in this way, given that we all share the rational basis for this kind of self-understanding (GMS, AA 04:429.05-07).

Given "the representation of what is necessarily an end for everyone because it is an end in itself", the sought principle has to meet the following conditions: it must hold categorically, it must be "an objective principle of the will", and it must be able to "serve as a universal practical law" (GMS, AA 04: 428.36-37, 04: 429.01-02). Kant concludes that the categorical imperative maintains: "*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*" (GMS, AA 04: 429.10-12, italics in the original).

---

hence why their assumption seems justified; however we need an additional argument for why the principle embracing those presuppositions seems justified. A detailed discussion of transcendental arguments is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> The most transparent form of a regressive argument is, in my view, Kant's reasoning in the *Groundwork* leading to the Formula of Universal Law (FUL). FUL comes up at the end of an analysis intended to identify the principle underlying the good will. Kant proceeds by exposing the conditions such a principle has to meet (to have the form of a categorical, not a hypothetical, imperative; to be a formal law holding universally). The argument ends by stating that those conditions – formality, universality and categorical bindingness – are exactly met by FUL. Kant's formulates (FUL) as follows: "*(A)ct only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time can will that it become a universal law.*" (GMS AA 04:421; italics in the original).

<sup>5</sup> Note: All references to Kant's *Groundwork* follow the notations of the Academy edition of the *Groundwork*, reprinted in Kant (1785/1996).

Kant's argument relies on two assumptions. The first is that our capacity for setting ends defines us as human beings. Pursuing ends involves that we, as rational agents making choices, confer value on our ends. The second assumption holds that the rational capacity of ascribing objective value to ends presupposes that one must ascribe objective and unconditional value to oneself and to one's rational will, which amounts to respecting the humanity within us. The source of all value lies in our human and rational nature.<sup>6</sup>

The derivation of FH rests on the self-legislation of the rational will and thus on the principle of autonomy. Kant confirms as much when he states:

For, nothing can have a worth other than that which the law determines for it. But the law-giving itself, which determines all worth, must for that very reason have a dignity, that is, an unconditional, incomparable worth; and the word respect alone provides a becoming expression for the estimate of it that a rational being must give. Autonomy is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature (GMS, AA 04: 436.01-07).

The importance of autonomy for grounding FH is also made apparent by Kant's caveat that his regressive exposition of the conditions leading to FH merely amounts to a conditional justification. Kant's derivation relies, moreover, on the assumption that "rational nature exists as an end in itself", which, as "the ground of this principle", i.e. FH, holds equally for all other rational agents (GMS, AA 04: 429.05-07).

In an annotation to the text, Kant tells us that he introduces this assumption (rational nature exists as an end in itself) as a mere postulate, and that he is going to provide its full justification, a "deduction", in section 3 of the Groundwork. The argument offered there proceeds from the claim that a rational will is an autonomous will, and that an autonomous will and a moral will are one and the same, to the conclusion that a rational will is a moral will.

Kant himself was uneasy with his argument; he suspected it to be circular, simply presupposing the autonomy of the will without further argument. That he indeed

---

<sup>6</sup> Allen Wood reconstructs Kant's argument for the derivation of FH in the following way:

- (1) This (that rational nature exists as an end in itself) is how the human being necessarily represents his own existence; to this extent, therefore, it is a subjective principle of human actions.
- (2) But every other rational being also represents its existence consequent to precisely the same rational ground which is valid for me;
- (3) Therefore, it is at the same time the rational ground of an objective principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, all laws of the will must be able to be derived.
- (4) The practical imperative will therefore be the following: *Act so that you use humanity in your own person, as well as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end, never merely as a means* (Wood, 1999, 124f.).

For a discussion of Kant's argument for FH see also (Korsgaard, 1996d, 122 f.).



had every reason to be concerned is evident given his underlying assumption: “If, therefore, freedom of the will is presupposed, morality together with its principle follows from it by mere analysis of its concept” (GMS, AA 04:447.08-09). Kant’s argument just relies on an analytic connection between autonomy and morality.

The upshot is this: Kant’s deduction, which is meant to complete the transcendental argument, is not successful, because it simply postulates that morality follows analytically from autonomy. Kant fails to provide additional reasons for why the reflective endorsement of FH seems inevitable.

However, there is an alternative for justifying FH. Based on a reflection of what attitudes toward persons are appropriate and fitting, we might well come to endorse that persons are “ends in themselves” and merit respect and recognition. This much is the specific contribution of a fitting-attitude analysis of value. The additional task, however, is to identify the normative reasons that make this attitude toward others also normatively compelling and binding. As we will see, Rønnow-Rasmussen’s FA analysis of value provides some essential tools for accomplishing this task.

Before exploring this in more detail, let us look at another attempt to justify FH, namely Korsgaard’s proposal to ground FH in the constitutive conditions of agency. The difficulties of her account provide additional motivation to turn to a fitting-attitude analysis of value.

#### 4. Korsgaard’s Grounding of the Formula of Humanity (FH)

Korsgaard tries to ground the categorical imperative in our conditions of agency, arguing that the categorical imperative amounts to a constitutive condition of agency. The idea is that constitutive conditions cannot coherently be called into question. This way she tries to complete what Kant seeks to achieve by a transcendental argument, namely that the categorical imperative amounts to a principle that is indispensable for human agents. Here I am not discussing the strengths and weaknesses of this methodological program. I have done so elsewhere (Pauer-Studer, 2018).

Korsgaard reconstructs Kant’s ethical theory as a form of ‘constitutive internalism’ (Korsgaard, 1996a, 2009a). The principles of practical reason—the instrumental principle and the categorical imperatives—are constitutive for the person as a rational agent.<sup>7</sup> The self-legislation of an autonomous will is the source of normativity. The capacity to be an autonomous agent—an agent recognizing the force of universality and valuing her or his humanity as an end in itself—is indispensable to having reasons for action at all.

---

<sup>7</sup> Note that Korsgaard eventually claims the categorical imperative to be the only principle of practical reason. The hypothetical imperative amounts, in her view, to a sub-principle; its normative force derives from the principle that there are objects (i.e., human beings) that are valuable for themselves (see Korsgaard, 2008, Appendix).

*A Kantian Reading of 'Good' and 'Good For'*

The assumption of autonomy is crucial for justifying the categorical imperatives, foremost the Formula of Universal Law (FUL) and the Formula of Humanity (FH). In vindicating FUL, Korsgaard closely follows Kant's reasoning from autonomy to the first formulation of the categorical imperative in the *GMM*. Her argument, in short, goes thus: A free will or an autonomous will acts according to its own principle or norm, that is to say, it is guided by a self-given law. The principle of a free will is henceforth a law, and this condition, of being a law, is exactly fulfilled by the categorical imperative in the universal law formulation.

In her justification of the Formula of Humanity (FH), Korsgaard equally relies on her methodological assumption that the categorical imperative, as morality more generally, is anchored in the constitutive conditions of agency. She presents an argument (she herself calls it a "fancy" reformulation of Kant's own derivation of FH) based on the notion of 'practical identity'. This concept refers to the particular norms and commitments that define you, for instance, whether you are a mother, a father, a teacher, a national citizen, etc.

Korsgaard's argument, in short, goes like this: To be an agent, we need a normative structure, a practical identity. But we cannot develop practical identities unless we attribute value to ourselves, that is, unless we value our own humanity. Yet, to value our own humanity we must equally value the humanity of others. In other words: Behind our particular practical identities stands our identity as human beings who value themselves, that is, our moral identity. To value ourselves and others as human beings constitutes us as moral agents.

Here are the most important steps of her argument:

- 1) In order to be an agent, you must act on reasons.
- 2) In order to act on reasons, you must have *some* conception of your practical identity and you must be committed to it. For otherwise you "would lose your grip on yourself" and you would not have "any reason to do one thing rather than another" (Korsgaard, 1996a, 121).
- 3) The reason to commit yourself to a practical identity does not spring from another contingent practical identity; it springs from your humanity, i.e., your identity as a human being (as someone who needs reasons to act and to live).
- 4) It is a kind of reason you only have "if you treat your humanity as a practical, normative form of identity, that is, if you value yourself as a human being" (Korsgaard, 1996a, 121).
- 5) But to value yourself as a human being involves valuing other human beings as well. An agent must therefore value herself and others in exactly the way articulated by the Formula of Humanity, i.e., "always to treat humanity... as an end in itself, never merely as a means" (Korsgaard, 1996a, 121).

A version of the argument can be formulated in terms of valuing ourselves and others: In order to be agents and have a reason to act, we must consider our ends as

important and put value on them. Our ends only have value insofar as we confer value on them. This entails that I can value my ends merely by valuing myself. But if I have reason to value myself, then I have a reason to value all others. The publicity of reasons (reasons are public not private, according to Korsgaard) forces us to consider others as likewise valuable if we consider ourselves as valuable.

How convincing is this argument? What about its underlying assumption that we—qua our value-conferring capacity—are a source of values?

The latter assumption is due to Korsgaard's defense of metaethical constructivism and her rejection of realism. Values, she states, are only in the world insofar as we put value on things. Realists are wrong when they assume that values are ontologically given entities and that it is our task to detect them. It is us who create and construct values.

Korsgaard's argument thus depends on her endorsement of a first-personal normativism: the source of values and, more generally, of morality, lies in our autonomy as agents. And this autonomy consists in both our capacity for self-legislation and our capacity of valuing, i.e., our capacity to confer value on objects.

However, Korsgaard's line of reasoning does not seem successful in grounding FH. Even if we accept her claim that being an agent entails valuing oneself as a person and, because of reasons being public not private, also valuing other persons, that argument by itself does not imply that one must value the persons around one in the specific and demanding way that is prescribed by Kant's idea of treating others and ourselves as ends in themselves.

I can value myself as an agent also by following the principle that my own interests should simply precede those of others—and the publicity condition might lead us in this case to make concessions, but it does not commit us to the deep form of respect for others that Kant had in mind. Moreover, it seems difficult to imagine why I should be denied identity as an agent because of making an egoistic strategy my principle.

The main problem is that a substantive normative principle such as FH cannot merely be justified by reflecting on individuals' capacities of valuing. We need to add additional arguments for why valuing humans as "ends in themselves" is, or should be, the principal standard for our relations to others and to ourselves.

That Kant's principle that humans have value in themselves is intuitively convincing and consistent with our considered moral judgments seems beyond question.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore worthwhile to explore alternative ways of justifying it.

---

<sup>8</sup> William FitzPatrick, for instance, claims that the principle that humans have special value as ends in themselves is true; it needs, he maintains, metaethical realism to recognize it as a normative truth (FitzPatrick, 2005, 688f.). There is no space here to discuss in detail the strengths and weaknesses of metaethical realism. Let me just mention that I consider it problematic to assume that ethical principles and/or value statements are true. This amounts either to a mere a priori claim or to the claim that ethical principles and/or value statements are true in virtue of objectively given values. Both accounts are problematic; the first one relies on a crude form of rationalism; the latter assumption raises the worry about the ontological status of such entities as objective values (Mackie called them "queer objects").

## 5. Fittingness and Deontic Normative Reasons: An Alternative Grounding of Kant's Formula of Humanity (FH)

In the following section, I will show that Rønnow-Rasmussen's fitting-attitude analysis of values is helpful for making sense of the principle that humans have value as ends in themselves. However, we need to make some modifications of his account.

Before starting, let us recall the crucial elements of Rønnow-Rasmussen's analysis: Rønnow-Rasmussen assumes that there are two kinds of final value, 'good' and 'good for'. 'Good' is an intrinsic, non-relational, impersonal value, whereas 'good for' is extrinsic and relational. Both values can be explained in terms of a fitting-attitude analysis (FA).

The first modification I suggest concerns Rønnow-Rasmussen's notion of reasons. Fittingness is, as we have seen, the relation between an object and a response, given that the object is worthy of the response or the response is merited. Recall that Rønnow-Rasmussen holds that fittingness alone does not provide sufficient support for an object having value. The move to values, he argues, requires additional backing. And the normative elements that provide this necessary support are reasons. The kinds of reasons doing the work are, as Rønnow-Rasmussen assumes, *pro tanto* reasons.

Rønnow-Rasmussen is right when he insists that the FA analysis of value needs to be completed by introducing reasons. However, he is wrong when he states that *all* the reasons here at stake are *pro tanto* reasons. The FA analysis, he writes, "elucidates why we are (at least *pro tanto*) justified in our concern for objects that are valuable for us" (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2022, 92). This suggests the following picture: we first need to weigh *pro tanto* reasons in order to determine whether an object is valuable, from which it follows that a certain response is apt and fitting because the object is worthy of that response.

This explanation does not sit well with the idea that humans are valuable as "ends in themselves". There is something wrong with the suggestion that it might be a matter of weighing *pro tanto* reasons as to whether humans do have special value and are therefore worthy of respect and recognition. Rather, to put the point in terms of Rønnow-Rasmussen's taxonomy of values, that humans as humans do have special moral standing, amounts to a final value, more precisely a morally central final value. Such a value does not depend on mere considerations in its favour. Instead, the apt kind of reasons here are deontic normative reasons, i.e. reasons that are part of a normative argument for why it is appropriate to accept a principle that attributes to human beings special value as "ends in themselves" which entails that the overriding fitting relation between humans is one of respect and recognition.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Note that we are talking here about a basic moral relation. This does not rule out that there are a variety of particular fitting relations in concrete interactions between persons, relations that also

I want to suggest a second modification, which amounts to an extension of Rønnow-Rasmussen's account. It seems obvious to classify the assumption that humans have special value as "ends in themselves" as an intrinsic, non-relational, and impersonal value—a classification Rønnow-Rasmussen seems to endorse. Now, my suggestion is that this idea—humans have special value as "ends in themselves"—should be read in a non-relational sense as well as a relational one. To formulate the point in terms of Rønnow-Rasmussen's value taxonomy: 'good' and 'good for' mark two dimensions of the Kantian principle (FH). That humans are "ends in themselves" is an intrinsic, non-relational, and impersonal value (first dimension). However, that humans have this special standing is also important in a relational sense (to name the second dimension). It is 'good for' human beings to live together in a way that is committed to a principle of mutual respect, acknowledging that respect and recognition are the appropriate fitting attitudes.

As I will now show, together with these two modifications (deontic normative reasons instead of pro tanto reasons; 'good' and 'good for' as two dimensions of final value), Rønnow-Rasmussen's FA analysis of value contributes greatly to our understanding of the meaning and scope of Kant's Formula of Humanity. I will first turn to Kant's own derivation of FH, and then to Korsgaard's grounding of FH.

To return to our discussion of Kant (section 3), recall that he tried to justify the Formula of Humanity (FH) by an argument involving two steps: first, to lay bare the conditions (embraced by the FH) that underpin our valuing of human beings as autonomous rational agents and "ends in themselves"; second, to provide an additional justification (deduction) of the categorical imperative. As mentioned, Kant's deduction is problematic because it rests on an analytic connection between autonomy and morality (a fact that troubled Kant himself).

If, however, we take the relational dimension of FH into account, we get another picture. The idea is simply to ask why it is good for us to introduce and accept the principle that humans have special value.

Kant himself addressed this relational dimension when he stated that FH leads to what he called a "realm of ends". The term refers to a community in which human beings relate to one another in terms of respect and recognition.<sup>10</sup> Although Kant stressed the importance of that ideal (it contains all other aspects mentioned in the

---

include negative reactions. For instance, in some situations resentment and anger might be a fitting response. But such responses to ordinary moral failures do (at least in general) not question the special normative status of human beings.

<sup>10</sup> The requirement contained in the idea of a realm of ends can, I think, be formulated in the following way: Act according to principles on which you and others can agree to act since they are constitutive of the moral community as a systematic union of human beings who respect one another and each one's autonomy. (For a more detailed discussion see Pauer-Studer, 2016).

Kant's own formulation of the Formula of a Realm of Ends (FRE) holds: "(A)ct in accordance with the maxims of a member giving universal laws for a merely possible realm of ends" (GMS AA 04:439).

different formulas of the categorical imperative<sup>11</sup>), he did not present the full argument for why we should adopt that ideal.

However, a justification in terms of deontic normative reasons can be provided. The idea is to apply Kant's famous argument, developed in his political philosophy, for why we have to move from a state of nature in which no normative regulations hold to a politically rightful condition to the moral domain. The argument then is: Given that we affect each other by our actions, we need moral principles that require us to live together by entertaining relations of mutual respect. Otherwise, we would be in a social and moral state of nature, i.e. a state without any moral principles and regulations, far from a morally rightful condition.<sup>12</sup> That insight yields a compelling deontic normative reason for endorsing the ideal of a realm of ends. Forming our social interactions on the model of a realm of ends grants us the status of being agents who (ought to) relate to each other in terms of respect and recognition.

The argument also yields a justification of the Formula of Humanity, given that FH is part of the idea of a realm of ends. With respect to FH, we can flesh out the argument in the following way: In order to escape an ethical state of nature, we have a deontic normative reason to accept FH. Otherwise, the safeguards for our bodily and psychological integrity would be missing, with possibly grave consequences such as being degraded, humiliated, and misused by others.

The fitting-attitude analysis further supports accepting FH, as well as the associated ideal of a realm of ends. Recall that the fittingness account invites us to reflect on whether an object merits a certain response. Fittingness is not limited to direct factual experiences, but for the most part works via mental representation. When we imagine the full range of humiliating and hurtful, let alone violent, behaviors that would be possible in a moral state of nature, we already react with rejection and disgust to such a hypothetical thought scenario. Confronted with such experiences in real life, these reactions seem fairly evident.<sup>13</sup> Fittingness makes us aware of moral wrongs. Thus, in addition to a deontic reason-based justification, fittingness provides a crucial form of warrant for FH and the ideal of a realm of ends.

---

<sup>11</sup> According to Kant, the idea of a realm of ends includes FUL and FH, but also the Formula of Autonomy. Kant's Formula of Autonomy (FA) states: "(T)he third practical principle of the will" is "*the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law*" (GMS AA 04:431; italics in the original).

<sup>12</sup> Kant develops this argument in his political philosophy (TP, AA 08:293-297).

The only way to escape the state of nature, which is for Kant a state without normative regulations (no rights exist) is to establish, politically and legally, what Kant calls "a rightful condition". This is a condition in which individuals enjoy the same rights protecting their equal freedom. Interventions by the state are only permitted in case they are necessary to protect, possibly restore, individuals' equal freedom.

<sup>13</sup> Note that there might of course be gravely distorted conditions that pervert individuals' responses (a point I am not going to discuss here).

Let us turn to Korsgaard's argument for FH as outlined in section 4. As I have pointed out, its shortcomings are primarily due to the fact that Korsgaard locates the source of normativity exclusively in the rational will of the person. With respect to FUL, it is the self-legislating will that provides the justification; with respect to FH, the warrant is provided by the will as a value-conferring entity. However, as I have argued, our capacity to confer value on objects does not yet commit us to value others (and ourselves) as ends in themselves. There needs to be an additional argument for why we should do so. Moreover, as I maintained above, such an argument must be couched in terms of deontic normative reasons and the fittingness relation.

Interestingly enough, Korsgaard comes close to a justification that heeds the relational dimension of FH. The relevant part here is a passage in *The Sources of Normativity*, in which Korsgaard introduces the notion of moral law. As she writes (note that Korsgaard uses the term 'Kingdom of Ends' instead of 'realm of ends'):

The moral law, in the Kantian system, is the law of what Kant calls the Kingdom of Ends, the republic of all rational beings. The moral law tells us to act only on maxims that all rational beings could agree to act on together in a workable cooperative system (Korsgaard (1996a, 98-99).

In the passage cited above, Korsgaard associates the ideal of a realm of ends with Rawls's idea of society as a fair system of social cooperation. Moreover, she points in the direction of an agreement-based justification of the realm of ends, which also provides a justification of the Formula of Humanity that is part of the realm of ends. Such an agreement, to a "workable cooperative system," would be based on deontic normative reasons.

This fits nicely with our reconstruction of a relational argument for accepting the Formula of Humanity, which relies on the deontic normative reasons for escaping a moral state of nature.

Korsgaard, however, does not pursue her own suggestion and does not develop an argument drawing on the relational dimension of the Formula of Humanity. Instead of exploring the resources of her notion of the moral law, she sticks to a first-person standpoint, locating the source of normativity, and eventually morality, in individual agency and rational willing.<sup>14</sup>

Before concluding, let me address a possible objection. Why, one might ask, introduce the notion of fittingness at all? Why not simply work with the categories 'final value' and 'normative reasons'? Why not just rely on the justification normative reasons provide for assuming an object to have final value?

---

<sup>14</sup> The passage on the moral law remains an isolated passage in Korsgaard's work. In a reply to Stephen Darwall's defense of a second-person moral standpoint, Korsgaard stresses again her endorsement of a first-person account of morality. She sticks to her assumption that the source of normativity lies in rational autonomy and self-legislation (Korsgaard, 2007).

The answer, as Rønnow-Rasmussen emphasizes, is that a fitting-attitude analysis of value takes into account the relation between valuable objects and attitudes. More generally, fittingness reminds us that we, as subjects, need to respond in a specific way to the valence of objects and given facts. In other words, valuable objects are not inert entities of our social world. Rather, they appeal to us and demand a certain response and reaction.

Let me end this section with some general remarks on the merits of a fittingness account. Fittingness is important in the following respects: It heightens our moral awareness, and it enriches our moral thinking. Reflecting on the features of objects and their demands on us in terms of fitting responses enhances our moral knowledge and understanding. It deepens our sense of owing others, and also ourselves an attitude that takes other persons' moral standing and needs seriously. By representing in thought the relations to others that go wrong and arouse our disapproval, we are motivated to re-think our responses and attitudes toward others, as well as to ourselves.<sup>15</sup>

## 6. Concluding Remarks

This paper sought to show that Rønnow-Rasmussen's fitting-attitude analysis of value offers important clues for an interpretation of the idea that human beings are valuable in themselves, as expressed in Kant's Formula of Humanity. I argued that Rønnow-Rasmussen's assumption of two final values, i.e., a non-relational final value ('good') and an extrinsic and relational final value ('good for'), allows us to determine two dimensions of the principle that humans are valuable as ends in themselves, namely to flesh out its importance as a basic intrinsic value, but also its importance for a relational understanding of morality.<sup>16</sup> I also argued that the fitting-attitude analysis of value, as presented by Rønnow-Rasmussen, contributes to our understanding of the Kantian idea and thus to a central standard of morality.

The paper also indicated why the combination of deontic normative reasons and fittingness is important for a justification of normative principles. A rather intricate question is whether the two notions, deontic normative reasons on the one hand,

---

<sup>15</sup> In seeing the relevance of a fittingness account for moral theory, I am deeply indebted to Fabienne Peter's work (see Peter, 2022). In a preceding published paper (Peter, 2019), Peter also discusses an entitlement-based form of warrant that is distinct from a reason-based normative justification. Although Peter interprets the entitlement-based warrant in terms of direct support by facts, her insightful analysis of this form of justification can be applied, I think, to the kind of warrant fittingness provides.

<sup>16</sup> There is no space here for discussing the relevance of relational accounts of morality. Just let me note that first-personal justifications of morality often run into the dilemma of relying on a rather limited first-person perspective that does not sufficiently consider the interpersonal perspective and the moral claims of others.



fittingness on the other, amount to two distinct forms of warrant for normative principles. Rønnow-Rasmussen, as I understand his account, tends to the view that reasons are part of the FA analysis and do not present a distinct form of justification. The picture I have developed rather suggests a two-track interpretation, according to which deontic normative reasons and fittingness yield two forms of warrant. However, I will leave the discussion of this issue to future work.<sup>17</sup>

## References

- FitzPatrick, William J. (2005), “The Practical Turn in Ethical Theory: Korsgaard’s Constructivism, Realism, and the Nature of Normativity”. *Ethics*, 115(4): 651-691.
- Kant, Immanuel (1785/1996) “Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals”. In I. Kant, *Practical Philosophy* (Mary Gregor, Trans. and Ed.) (273-309). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (cited as GMS AA:04, according to the Academy edition of Kant’s works).
- Kant, Immanuel (1793/1996) “On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory, But It Is of No Use in Practice”. In I. Kant, *Practical Philosophy* (Mary Gregor, Trans. and Ed.) (37-108). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (cited as TP AA:08, according to the Academy edition of Kant’s works).
- Korsgaard, Christine M. (1996a) *The Sources of Normativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. (1996b) *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Korsgaard Christine M. (1996c) “Morality as Freedom”. In Ch. M. Korsgaard *Creating the kingdom of ends* (159–187). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. (1996d) “Kant’s Formula of Humanity”. In Ch. M. Korsgaard *Creating the Kingdom of Ends* (106–132). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Korsgaard Christine M. (2007) “Autonomy and the Second-Person within: a commentary on Stephen Darwall’s The second-person standpoint”. *Ethics*, 118(1): 8–23.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. (2008) “The Normativity of Instrumental Reason”. In Ch. M. Korsgaard, *The Constitution of Agency* (26-68). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. (2009a) *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Korsgaard, Christine M. (2009b) “The Activity of Reason”. *Proceedings and Addresses of the APA* 83(2): 23–43.

---

<sup>17</sup> Acknowledgments: Research for this article has been funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 740922, ERC Advanced Grant ‘The Normative and Moral Foundations of Group Agency’.

*A Kantian Reading of 'Good' and 'Good For'*

- Pauer-Studer, Herlinde (2016) "'A Community of Rational Beings'. Kant's Realm of Ends and the Distinction between Internal and External Freedom". *Kant-Studien* 107(1): 125-159.
- Pauer-Studer, Herlinde (2018) "Korsgaard's Constitutivism and the Possibility of Bad Action". *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 21(1): 37-56.
- Peter, Fabienne (2019) "Normative Facts and Reasons". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 119(1): 53-75.
- Peter, Fabienne (2022) "It's Not All About Reasons: The Fittingness of Actions and Attitudes", unpublished manuscript.
- Rønnow-Rasmussen, Toni (2011) *Personal Value*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rønnow-Rasmussen, Toni (2017) "Good and Good For". In H. LaFollette (ed.) *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell.
- Rønnow-Rasmussen, Toni (2022) *The Value Gap*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Street, Sharon (2012) "Coming to Terms with Contingency: Humean Constructivism About Practical Reason". In J Lenman & Y. Shemmer (Eds.) *Constructivism in Practical Philosophy* (40-59). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wood, Allen W. (1999) *Kant's Ethical Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.