

## Abstract

### Death, Dignity, and Respect

Philosophers attracted to Kantian ethics have recently followed Kant himself in focusing on the Formula of Humanity as a basis for specifying our moral obligations. This principle commands us so to act that we always treat humanity as an end in itself. According to a prominent way of interpreting the principle, advocated by Allen Wood, we treat humanity as an end in itself just in case our actions express respect for the value it possesses, that is, for its dignity. But if we employ this respect-expression interpretation, the Formula of Humanity has implausible normative implications. Sometimes an action is right even if it leads to a person's death. The paper specifies cases in which killing in self-defense, withdrawing life-sustaining medical treatment, and sacrificing one's life for others are each morally permissible, or so many of us believe. But on the respect-expression interpretation, Kant's principle yields the conclusion that these actions are wrong. We therefore have grounds for skepticism regarding the Formula of Humanity interpreted in this way.