Phil 104, Third Paper Assignment

Maximum Length: No more than three pages, double spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins

Due: Monday, November 8, by 10:10am (before the lecture starts). Please hand in your paper, in person, to your GSI. ***Please see the syllabus for other relevant policies.***

Choose one of the following topics:

1. Hume writes:
> Since morals, therefore, have an influence on the actions and affections, it follows, that they cannot be deriv'd from reason; and that because reason alone, as we have already prov'd, can never have such influence. Morals excite passions, and produce or prevent actions. Reason of itself is utterly impotent in this particular. The rules of morality, therefore, are not conclusions of reason.

Explain *both* Hume's argument in this passage *and* his arguments for its premises. Raise an objection to Hume's argument. Then explain how he might respond.

2. Kant claims that the categorical imperative, in its various formulations, implies that we have a moral duty to help others in need. Explain *both* how this moral duty is supposed to follow from the formula of universal law *and* how it is supposed to follow from the formula of humanity. Which formula, if either, provides a more plausible justification for the duty to help others in need? Why?

3. Hume concludes that if we actually had "liberty of indifference," then we would not be morally responsible for our choices. What is Hume's argument for this conclusion? By contrast, Kant argues that we can view ourselves *both* as not compelled to choose as we do by our desires (or our character, or any other part of our empirical psychology) *and* as morally responsible for our choices. How, then, does Kant try to avoid Hume's conclusion, which seems to suggest that viewing ourselves in this way is incoherent? Does Kant succeed in avoiding it?