

and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*, which already constitutes an enterprise whole in its aim and to be separated from every other moral investigation. To be sure, my assertions about this important and principal question, whose discussion has hitherto been far from satisfactory, would receive much light through the application of the same principle to the entire system, and of confirmation through the adequacy it manifests everywhere; yet I had to dispense with this advantage, which would also be basically more a matter of my self-love than of the common utility, because the facility of use and the apparent adequacy of a principle provide no wholly secure proof of its correctness, but rather awaken a certain partiality not to investigate and consider it for itself without any regard for the consequences.

The method I have taken in this work, I believe, is the one best suited if one wants to take the way analytically from common cognition to the determination of its supreme principle and then, in turn, synthetically from the testing of this principle and its sources back to common cognition, in which its use is encountered. Hence the division turns out thus:

*First Section:* Transition from common rational moral cognition to philosophical moral cognition.

*Second Section:* Transition from popular moral philosophy to the metaphysics of morals.

*Third Section:* Final step from the metaphysics of morals to the critique of pure practical reason.

## First Section

[Ak 4:393]

### TRANSITION

#### FROM COMMON RATIONAL MORAL COGNITION TO PHILOSOPHICAL MORAL COGNITION

There is nothing it is possible to think of anywhere in the world, or indeed anything at all outside it, that can be held to be good without limitation, excepting only a **good will**. Understanding, wit, the power of judgment,<sup>1</sup> and like *talents* of the mind,<sup>2</sup> whatever they might be called, or courage, resoluteness, persistence in an intention, as qualities of *temperament*, are without doubt in some respects good and to be wished for; but they can also become extremely evil and harmful, if the will that is to make use of these gifts of nature, and whose peculiar constitution is therefore called *character*,<sup>3</sup> is not good. It is the same with *gifts of fortune*. Power, wealth, honor,<sup>4</sup> even health and that entire well-being and contentment with one's condition, under the name of *happiness*, make for courage and thereby often also for arrogance,<sup>5</sup> where there is not a good will to correct their influence on the mind,<sup>6</sup> and thereby on the entire principle of action, and make them universally purposive; not to mention that a rational impartial spectator can never take satisfaction even in the sight of the uninterrupted welfare of a being, if it is adorned with no trait of a pure and good will; and so the good will appears to constitute the indispensable condition even of the worthiness to be happy.

Some qualities are even conducive to this good will itself and can make its work much easier, but still have despite this no inner unconditioned worth, yet always presuppose a good will, which limits the esteem<sup>7</sup> that one

[Ak 4:394]

1. See *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, Ak 7:196–201.

2. *Geist*

3. For Kant's distinction between "temperament" and "character," see *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, Ak 7:286–95; see also Ak 4:398–99 below.

4. Power, wealth, and honor are for Kant the three objects of the principal social passions. See *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, Ak 7:271–274.

5. *Mut und hierdurch öfters auch Übermut*

6. *Gemüt*

7. 1786: *Hochschätzung*; 1785: *Schätzung* ("estimation")

otherwise rightly has for them, and does not permit them to be held absolutely good. Moderation in affects and passions,<sup>8</sup> self-control, and sober reflection not only are good for many aims, but seem even to constitute a part of the *inner* worth of a person; yet they lack much in order to be declared good without limitation (however unconditionally they were praised by the ancients).<sup>9</sup> For without the principles of a good will they can become extremely evil, and the cold-bloodedness of a villain makes him not only far more dangerous but also immediately more abominable in our eyes than he would have been held without it.

The good will is good not through what it effects or accomplishes, not through its efficacy for attaining any intended end, but only through its willing, i.e., good in itself, and considered for itself, without comparison, it is to be estimated far higher than anything that could be brought about by it in favor of any inclination, or indeed, if you prefer, of the sum of all inclinations. Even if through the peculiar disfavor of fate, or through the meager endowment of a stepmotherly nature, this will were entirely lacking in the resources to carry out its aim, if with its greatest effort nothing of it were accomplished, and only the good will were left over (to be sure, not a mere wish, but as the summoning up of all the means insofar as they are in our control): then it would shine like a jewel for itself, as something that has its full worth in itself. Utility or fruitlessness can neither add to nor subtract anything from this worth. It would be only the setting, as it were, to make it easier to handle in common traffic, or to draw the attention of those who are still not sufficiently connoisseurs, but not to recommend it to connoisseurs and determine its worth.

There is, however, something so strange in this idea of the absolute worth of the mere will, without making any allowance for utility in its estimation, that despite all the agreement with it even of common reason, there must nevertheless arise a suspicion that perhaps it is covertly grounded merely on a high-flown fantasy, and that nature might have been falsely understood in the aim it had in assigning reason to govern our will. Hence we will put this idea to the test from this point of view.

In the natural predispositions of an organized being, i.e., a being arranged purposively for life, we assume as a principle that no instrument is to

8. In Kant's empirical theory of the faculty of desire, affects and passions are the two principal obstacles to rational self-control. See *Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6:407–9; *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, Ak 7:251–67.

9. Courage and self-control were, for the ancients, two of the primary moral virtues, along with wisdom, justice, and sometimes piety. See Plato, *Meno* 78d–e, *Republic* 427e; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.6–12; Cicero, *On Duties* 1.15.

be encountered in it for any end except that which is the most suitable to and appropriate for it.<sup>10</sup> Now if, in a being that has reason and a will, its *preservation*, its *welfare* — in a word, its *happiness* — were the real end of nature, then nature would have hit on a very bad arrangement in appointing reason in this creature to accomplish the aim. For all the actions it has to execute toward this aim, and the entire rule of its conduct, would be prescribed to it much more precisely through instinct, and that end could be obtained far more safely through it than could ever happen through reason; and if, over and above this, reason were imparted to the favored creature, it would have served it only to make it consider the happy predisposition of its nature, to admire it, to rejoice in it, and to make it grateful to the beneficent cause of it, but not to subject its faculty of desire to that weak and deceptive guidance, and meddle in the aim of nature; in a word, nature would have prevented reason from breaking out into *practical use* and from having the presumption, with its weak insight, to think out for itself the project of happiness and the means of attaining it; nature would have taken over the choice not only of the ends but also of the means, and with wise provision would have entrusted both solely to instinct.<sup>11</sup>

In fact we also find that the more a cultivated reason gives itself over to the aim of enjoying life and happiness, the further the human being falls short of true contentment; from this arises in many, and indeed in those most practiced in the cultivated use of reason, if only they are sincere enough to admit it, a certain degree of *misology*, i.e., hatred of reason;<sup>12</sup> for after reckoning all the advantages they draw, I do not say from the invention of all the arts of common luxury,<sup>13</sup> but even from the sciences (which also

10. Kant's reasons for accepting this proposition as an *a priori* maxim of reflective judgment are presented in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), § 66, Ak 5:376–77.

11. Kant rejects the proposition that human happiness is an end of nature in his writings on history and in his review of the chief work of his former student J. G. Herder (1762–1802). See *Idea toward a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (1784), Ak 8:19–20; Reviews of Herder's *Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity* (1785–1786), Ak 8:64–65; *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (1786), Ak 8:114–18. See also *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Ak 5:429–31. Though not an end of nature, human happiness is an end of reason, and of morality; see *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5:61–62, 110–13; *Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6:387–88.

12. See Plato, *Phaedo* 89d–91b.

13. "Luxury (luxus) is excessive convenience in the social life of a community (so that its convenience works against its welfare)"; *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, Ak 7:249.

[Ak 4:396]

seem to them in the end to be<sup>14</sup> a luxury of the understanding), they nevertheless find that they have in fact only brought more<sup>15</sup> hardship down on their shoulders than they have gained in happiness, and on this account in the end they sooner envy than despise human beings of the more common stamp, who are closer to the guidance of mere natural instinct and do not permit their reason much influence over their deeds and omissions. And we must admit this much, that the judgment of those who very much moderate the boastful high praise of the advantages that reason is supposed to supply us in regard to happiness and contentment with life, or who even reduce it below zero, is by no means morose or ungrateful toward the kindness of the world's government; but rather these judgments are covertly grounded on the idea of another aim for their existence, possessing much greater dignity, for which, and not for their happiness, reason has been given its wholly authentic vocation, and to which, therefore, as a supreme condition, the private aims of the human being must for the most part defer.

For since reason is not sufficiently effective in guiding the will safely in regard to its objects and the satisfaction of all our needs (which it in part itself multiplies), and an implanted natural instinct would have guided us much more certainly to this end, yet since reason nevertheless has been imparted to us as a practical faculty, i.e., as one that ought to have influence on the *will*, its true vocation must therefore be not to produce volition *as a means* to some other aim, but rather to produce a *will good in itself*, for which reason was absolutely necessary, since everywhere else nature goes to work purposively in distributing its predispositions. This will may therefore not be the single and entire good, but it must be the highest good, and the condition for all the rest, even for every demand for happiness, in which case it can be united with the wisdom of nature, when one perceives that the culture of reason, which is required for the former, limits in many ways the attainment of the second aim, which is always conditioned, namely of happiness, at least in this life, and can even diminish it to less than nothing without nature's proceeding unpurposively in this; for reason, which recognizes its highest practical vocation in the grounding of a good will, is capable in attaining this aim only of a contentment after its own kind, namely from the fulfillment of an<sup>16</sup> end that again only reason determines,

14. 1785 reads *scheint* instead of *zu sein scheinen*, which would have the effect in translation of eliminating the words "to be" from this sentence.

15. 1785: "more of"

16. 1785: "of the end"

even if this should also be bound up with some infringement of the ends of inclination.

[Ak 4:397]

But now in order to develop the concept of a good will, to be esteemed in itself and without any further aim, just as it dwells already<sup>17</sup> in the naturally healthy understanding, which does not need to be taught but rather only to be enlightened, this concept always standing over the estimation of the entire worth of our actions and constituting the condition for everything else: we will put before ourselves the concept of *duty*, which contains that of a good will, though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances, which, however, far from concealing it and making it unrecognizable, rather elevate it by contrast and let it shine forth all the more brightly.

I pass over all actions that are already recognized as contrary to duty, even though they might be useful for this or that aim; for with them the question cannot arise at all whether they might be done *from duty*, since they even conflict with it. I also set aside the actions which are actually in conformity with duty, for which, however, human beings have immediately *no inclination*, but nevertheless perform them because they are driven to it through another inclination. For there it is easy to distinguish whether the action in conformity with duty is done *from duty* or from a self-seeking aim. It is much harder to notice this difference where the action is in conformity with duty and the subject yet has besides this an *immediate* inclination to it. E.g., it is indeed in conformity with duty that the merchant should not overcharge his inexperienced customers, and where there is much commercial traffic, the prudent merchant also does not do this, but rather holds a firm general price for everyone, so that a child buys just as cheaply from him as anyone else. Thus one is *honestly* served; yet that is by no means sufficient for us to believe that the merchant has proceeded thus from duty and from principles of honesty; his advantage required it; but here it is not to be assumed that besides this, he was also supposed to have an immediate inclination toward the customers, so that out of love, as it were, he gave no one an advantage over another in his prices. Thus the action was done neither from duty nor from immediate inclination, but merely from a self-serving aim.

By contrast, to preserve one's life is a duty, and besides this everyone has an immediate inclination to it. But the often anxious care that the greatest part of humankind takes for its sake still has no inner worth, and its maxim has no moral content. They protect their life, to be sure, *in conformity with duty*, but not *from duty*. If, by contrast, adversities and hopeless grief have

[Ak 4:398]

17. This word added in 1786

entirely taken away the taste for life, if the unhappy one, strong of soul, more indignant than pusillanimous or dejected over his fate, wishes for death and yet preserves his life without loving it, not from inclination or fear, but from duty: then his maxim has a moral content.

To be beneficent where one can is a duty, and besides this there are some souls so sympathetically attuned<sup>18</sup> that, even without any other motive of vanity or utility to self, take an inner gratification in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the contentment of others insofar as it is their own work. But I assert that in such a case the action, however it may conform to duty and however amiable it is, nevertheless has no true moral worth, but is on the same footing as other inclinations, e.g., the inclination to honor, which, when it fortunately encounters something that in fact serves the common good and is in conformity with duty, and is thus worthy of honor, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem; for the maxim lacks moral content, namely of doing such actions not from inclination but *from duty*. Thus suppose the mind of that same friend of humanity were clouded over with his own grief, extinguishing all his sympathetic participation<sup>19</sup> in the fate of others; he still has the resources to be beneficent to those suffering distress, but the distress of others does not touch him because he is<sup>20</sup> sufficiently busy with his own; and now, where no inclination any longer stimulates him to it, he tears himself out of this deadly insensibility and does the action without any inclination, solely from duty; only then does it for the first time have its authentic moral worth. Even more: if nature had put little sympathy at all in the heart of this or that person, if he (an honest man, to be sure) were by temperament cold and indifferent toward the sufferings of others, perhaps because he himself is provided with particular gifts of patience and strength to endure his own, and also presupposes or even demands the same of others; if nature has not really formed<sup>21</sup> such a man into a friend of humanity (although he would not in truth be its worst product), nevertheless would he not find a source within himself to give himself a far higher worth than that which a good-natured temperament might have? By all means! Just here begins the worth of character, which is moral and the highest without any comparison, namely that he is beneficent not from inclination but from duty.

To secure one's own happiness is a duty (at least indirectly), for the lack

18. *teilnehmend gestimmte Seelen*

19. *Teilnehmung*

20. 1785: *wäre*

21. *gebildet*

of contentment with one's condition, in a crowd of many sorrows and amid unsatisfied needs, can easily become a great *temptation to the violation of duties*. But even without looking at duty, all human beings always have of themselves the most powerful and inward inclination to happiness, because precisely in this idea all inclinations are united in a sum. Yet the precept of happiness is for the most part so constituted that it greatly infringes on some inclinations and yet the human being cannot make any determinate and secure concept of the sum of satisfaction of them all, under the name of 'happiness'; hence it is not to be wondered at that a single inclination, which is determinate in regard to what it promises and the time in which its satisfaction can be obtained, can outweigh a wavering idea; and the human being, e.g., a person with gout, could choose to enjoy what tastes good and to suffer what he must, because in accordance with his reckoning, here at least he has not sacrificed the enjoyment of the present moment through expectations, perhaps groundless, of a happiness that is supposed to lie in health. But also in this case, if the general inclination to happiness does not determine his will, if for him, at least, health does not count as so necessary in his reckoning, then here, as in all other cases, there still remains a law, namely to promote his happiness not from inclination but from duty, and then his conduct has for the first time its authentic moral worth.

It is in this way, without doubt, that those passages in scripture are to be understood in which it is commanded to love our neighbor and even our enemy. For love as inclination cannot be commanded; but beneficence solely from duty, even when no inclination at all drives us to it, or even when natural and invincible disinclination resists, is *practical* and not *pathological* love, which lies in the will and not in the propensity of feeling, in the principles of action and not in melting sympathy;<sup>22</sup> but the former alone can be commanded.

The second proposition<sup>23</sup> is: an action from duty has its moral worth *not in the aim* that is supposed to be attained by it, but rather in the maxim in accordance with which it is resolved upon; thus<sup>24</sup> that worth depends not on the actuality of the object of the action, but merely on the *principle of the volition*, in accordance with which the action is done, without regard to any object of the faculty of desire. It is clear from the preceding that the aims we may have in actions, and their effects, as ends and incentives of the will, can

22. *schmelzender Teilnehmung*

23. Kant does not say explicitly what the "first proposition" was, but presumably it is that an action has moral worth only if it is done from duty.

24. This word added in 1786

impart to the actions no unconditioned and moral worth. In what, then, can this worth lie, if it is not supposed to exist in the will, in the relation of the actions to the effect hoped for? It can lie nowhere else *than in the principle of the will*, without regard to the ends that can be effected through such action; for the will is at a crossroads, as it were, between its principle *a priori*, which is formal, and its incentive *a posteriori*, which is material, and since it must somehow be determined by something, it must be determined through the formal principle in general of the volition if it does an action from duty, since every material principle has been withdrawn from it.

The third proposition, as a consequence of the first two, I would express thus: *Duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law*. For the object, as an effect of my proposed action, I can of course have an *inclination*, but *never respect*, just because it<sup>25</sup> is merely an effect and not the activity of a will.<sup>26</sup> Just as little can I have respect for inclination in general, whether my own or another's; I can at most approve it in the first case, in the second I can sometimes even love it, i.e., regard it as favorable to my own advantage. Only that which is connected with my will merely as a ground, never as an effect, only what does not serve my inclination but outweighs it, or at least wholly excludes it from the reckoning in a choice, hence only the mere law for itself, can be an object of respect and hence a command. Now an action from duty is supposed entirely to abstract from<sup>27</sup> the influence of inclination, and with it every object of the will, so nothing is left over for the will that can determine it except the *law* as what is objective and subjectively *pure respect* for this practical law, hence the maxim\* of complying with such a law, even when it infringes all my inclinations.

[Ak 4:401]

The moral worth of the action thus lies not in the effect to be expected from it; thus also not in any principle of action which needs to get its motive from this expected effect. For all these effects (agreeableness of one's condition, indeed even the furthering of the happiness of others) could be brought about through other causes, and for them the will of a rational being

\*A *maxim* is the subjective principle of the volition; the objective principle (i.e., that which would serve all rational beings also subjectively as a practical principle if reason had full control over the faculty of desire) is the practical *law*.

25. Kant's pronoun here is in the feminine, which could refer to "effect" but not to "object," which seems to be the intended referent. Editors therefore often emend the pronoun to the neuter.

26. 1785: "an effect of my will"

27. *absondern*

is therefore not needed; but in it alone the highest and unconditioned good can nevertheless be encountered. Nothing other than the *representation of the law* in itself, which obviously occurs only in the rational being insofar as it, and not the hoped-for effect, is the determining ground of the will, therefore<sup>28</sup> constitutes that so pre-eminent good which we call 'moral', which is already present in the person himself who acts in accordance with it, but must not first of all be expected from the effect.\*\*

[Ak 4:402]

But what kind of law can it be, whose representation, without even

\*\*One could accuse me of merely taking refuge behind the word *respect* in an obscure feeling instead of giving a distinct reply to the question through a concept of reason. Yet even if respect is a feeling, it is not one *received* through influence but a feeling *self-effected* through a concept of reason and hence specifically distinguished from all feelings of the first kind, which may be reduced to inclination or fear. What I immediately recognize as a law for me, I recognize with respect, which signifies merely the consciousness of the *subjection* of my will to a law without any mediation of other influences on my sense. The immediate determination of the will through the law and the consciousness of it is called *respect*, so that the latter is to be regarded as the *effect* of the law on the subject and not as its *cause*. Authentically, respect is the representation of a worth that infringes on my self-love. Thus it is something that is considered as an object neither of inclination nor of fear, even though it has something analogical to both at the same time. The *object* of respect is thus solely the law, and specifically that law that we *lay upon ourselves* and yet also as in itself necessary. As a law we are subject to it without asking permission of self-love; as laid upon us by ourselves, it is a consequence of our will, and has from the first point of view an analogy with fear, and from the second with inclination. All respect for a person is properly only respect for the law (of uprightness, etc.) of which the person gives us the example. Because we regard the expansion of our talents also as a duty, we represent to ourselves a person with talents also as an *example of a law*, as it were (to become similar to the person in this) and that constitutes our respect. All so-called moral *interest* consists solely in *respect* for the law. [The parenthetical material in the penultimate sentence was added in 1786. Cf. *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5:71–89. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant lists four feelings that are produced directly by reason and can serve as moral motivation. These are "moral feeling," "conscience," "love of human beings," and "respect" (*Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6:399–403).]

[Ak 4:401]

28. 1785: "thus"

taking account of the effect expected from it, must determine the will, so that it can be called good absolutely and without limitation? Since I have robbed the will of every impulse that could have arisen from the obedience to any law, there is nothing left over except the universal lawfulness of the action in general which alone is to serve the will as its principle, i.e., I ought never to conduct myself except so that I could also will that my maxim become a universal law. Here it is mere lawfulness in general (without grounding it on any law determining certain actions) that serves the will as its principle, and also must so serve it, if duty is not to be everywhere an empty delusion and a chimerical concept; common human reason,<sup>29</sup> indeed, agrees perfectly with this in its practical judgment, and has the principle just cited always before its eyes.

Let the question be, e.g.: When I am in a tight spot, may I not make a promise with the intention of not keeping it? Here I easily make a distinction in the signification the question can have, whether it is prudent, or whether it is in conformity with duty, to make a false promise. The first can without doubt often occur. I do see very well that it is not sufficient to get myself out of a present embarrassment by means of this subterfuge, but rather it must be reflected upon whether from this lie there could later arise much greater inconvenience than that from which I am now freeing myself, and, since the consequences of my supposed *cunning* are not so easy to foresee, and a trust once lost to me might become much more disadvantageous than any ill I think I am avoiding, whether it might not be more *prudent* to conduct myself in accordance with a universal maxim and make it into a habit not to promise anything except with the intention of keeping it. Yet it soon occurs to me here that such a maxim has as its ground only the worrisome consequences. Now to be truthful from duty is something entirely different from being truthful out of worry over disadvantageous consequences; in the first case, the concept of the action in itself already contains a law for me, whereas in the second I must look around elsewhere to see which effects might be bound up with it for me. For if I deviate from the principle of duty, then this is quite certainly evil; but if I desert my maxim of prudence, then that can sometimes be very advantageous to me, even though it is safer to remain with it. Meanwhile, to inform myself in the shortest and least deceptive way in regard to my answer to this problem, whether a lying promise is in conformity with duty, I ask myself: Would I be content with it if my maxim (of getting myself out of embarrassment through an untruthful promise) should be valid as a universal law (for

29. 1785: "but common human reason"

myself as well as for others), and would I be able to say to myself that anyone may make an untruthful promise when he finds himself in embarrassment which he cannot get out of in any other way? Then I soon become aware that I can will the lie but not at all a universal law to lie; for in accordance with such a law there would properly be no promises, because it would be pointless to avow my will in regard to my future actions to those who would not believe this avowal, or, if they rashly did so, who would pay me back in the same coin; hence my maxim, as soon as it were made into a universal law, would destroy itself.

Thus I need no well-informed shrewdness to know what I have to do in order to make my volition morally good. Inexperienced in regard to the course of the world, incapable of being prepared for all the occurrences that might eventuate in it, I ask myself only: Can you will also that your maxim should become a universal law? If not, then it is reprehensible, and this not for the sake of any disadvantage impending for you or someone else, but because it cannot fit as a principle into a possible universal legislation; but for this legislation reason extorts immediate respect from me, from which, to be sure, I still do not have *insight* into that on which it is grounded (which the philosopher may investigate), but I at least understand this much, that it is an estimation of a worth which far outweighs everything whose worth is commended by inclination, and that the necessity of my actions from *pure* respect for the practical law is what constitutes duty, before which every other motive must give way because it is the condition of a will that is good *in itself*, whose worth surpasses everything.

Thus in the moral cognition of common human reason we have attained to its principle, which it obviously does not think abstractly in such a universal form, but actually has always before its eyes and uses as its standard of judgment. It would be easy here to show how, with this compass in its hand, it knows its way around very well in all the cases that come before it, how to distinguish what is good, what is evil, what conforms to duty or is contrary to duty, if, without teaching it the least new thing, one only makes it aware of its own principle, as Socrates did;<sup>30</sup> and thus that it needs no science and philosophy to know what one has to do in order to be honest and good, or indeed, even wise and virtuous. It might even have been conjectured in advance that the acquaintance with what every human being is obliged to do, hence to know, would also be the affair of everyone,

[Ak 4:404]

30. This would appear to be Kant's interpretation of Socrates' "human wisdom" (Plato, *Apology* 20c–24b). Compare *Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6:411.

even of the most common human being. Here<sup>31</sup> one cannot regard without admiration the way the practical faculty of judgment is so far ahead of the theoretical in the common human understanding. In the latter, if common reason ventures to depart from the laws of experience and perceptions of sense, then it falls into sheer inconceivabilities and self-contradictions, or at least into a chaos of uncertainty, obscurity, and inconstancy. But in the practical, the power of judgment first begins to show itself to advantage when the common understanding excludes from practical laws all sensuous incentives. It then even becomes subtle, caviling with its conscience, or with other claims in reference to what is to be called right, or even in wanting sincerely to determine the worth of actions for its own instruction,<sup>32</sup> and, what is most striking, it can in the latter case do so with just as good a hope of getting things right as any philosopher might promise to do; indeed, it is almost more secure in this even than the latter, because the philosopher has<sup>33</sup> no other principle than the common understanding, but the philosopher's judgment is easily confused by a multiplicity of considerations that are alien and do not belong to the matter and can make it deviate from the straight direction. Would it not accordingly be more advisable in moral things to stay with the judgment of common reason, and bring in philosophy at most only in order to exhibit the system of morals all the more completely and comprehensibly, and its rules in a way that is more convenient for their use (still more for disputation), but not in order to remove the common human understanding in a practical respect out of its happy simplicity, and through philosophy to set it on a new route of investigation and instruction?

[Ak 4:405]. There is something splendid about innocence, but it is in turn very bad that it cannot be protected very well and is easily seduced. On this account even wisdom — which consists more in deeds and omissions than in knowledge — also needs science, not in order to learn from it but in order to provide entry and durability for its precepts. The human being feels in himself a powerful counterweight against all commands of duty, which reason represents to him as so worthy of esteem, in his needs and inclinations, whose satisfaction he summarizes under the name of 'happiness'. Now reason commands its precepts unremittingly, without promising anything to inclinations, thus snubbing and disrespecting, as it were, those impetuous claims, which at the same time seem so reasonable (and will not

31. 1785: "Nevertheless"

32. 1785: *Belohnung* ("reward"); 1786: *Belehrung* ("instruction")

33. 1785: "can have"

be done away with by any command). From this, however, arises a *natural dialectic*, that is, a propensity to ratiocinate against those strict laws of duty and to bring into doubt their validity, or at least their purity and strictness, and,<sup>34</sup> where possible, to make them better suited to our wishes and inclinations, i.e., at ground to corrupt them and deprive them of their entire dignity, which not even common practical reason can in the end call good.

Thus *common human reason* is impelled, not through any need of speculation (which never assaults it as long as it is satisfied with being mere healthy reason), but rather from practical grounds themselves, to go outside its sphere and to take a step into the field of *practical philosophy*, in order to receive information and distinct directions about the source of its principle and its correct determination in opposition to the maxims based on need and inclination, so that it may escape from its embarrassment concerning the claims of both sides and not run the risk of being deprived, through the ambiguity into which it easily falls, of all genuine ethical principles. Thus even in common practical reason, when it is cultivated, there ensues unnoticed a *dialectic*, which necessitates it to seek help in philosophy, just as befalls it in its theoretical use; and therefore the first will find no more tranquillity than the other anywhere except in a complete critique of our reason.

34. 1785: "at least"

## Second Section

### TRANSITION FROM POPULAR MORAL PHILOSOPHY TO THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS

If we have thus far drawn our concept of duty from the common use of our practical reason, it is by no means to be inferred from this that we have treated it as a concept of experience. Rather, if we attend to the experience of the deeds and omissions of human beings, we encounter frequent and, as we ourselves concede, just complaints that one could cite no safe examples of the disposition to act from pure duty; that, even if some of what is done may *accord* with what *duty* commands, nevertheless it always<sup>1</sup> remains doubtful whether<sup>2</sup> it is really done *from duty* and thus has a moral worth. Hence<sup>3</sup> in all ages there have been philosophers who have absolutely denied the actuality of this disposition in human actions, and have ascribed everything to a more or less refined self-love, yet without bringing the correctness of the concept of morality into doubt; rather, they have mentioned<sup>4</sup> with inward regret the fragility and impurity of human nature,<sup>5</sup> which is, to be sure, noble enough to make an idea so worthy of respect into its precept, but at the same time is too weak to follow it, and uses reason, which ought to serve it for legislation, only in order to take care of the interest of inclinations, whether singly or at most in their greatest compatibility with one another.

In fact it is absolutely impossible to settle with complete certainty through experience whether there is even a single case in which the maxim

1. 1785: "thus"

2. 1785: "that"

3. 1785 omits this word and treats the following sentence as a clause subordinate to the previous sentence.

4. 1786 adds this verb construction *Erwähnung taten*

5. In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant lists "fragility" (the inability to hold to good maxims, once they are adopted) and "impurity" (the need for nonmoral incentives to do one's duty) as the two lesser degrees of the radical evil in human nature, along with the highest degree, "depravity" (the propensity to place incentives of inclination ahead of those of duty) (Ak 6:29–30).

of an otherwise dutiful action has rested solely on moral grounds and on the representation of one's duty. For it is sometimes the case that with the most acute self-examination we encounter nothing that could have been powerful enough apart from the moral ground of duty to move us to this or that good action and to so great a sacrifice; but from this it cannot be safely inferred that it was not actually some covert impulse of self-love, under the mere false pretense of that idea, that was the real determining cause of the will; so we would gladly flatter ourselves with a false presumption of a nobler motive, while in fact even through the most strenuous testing, we can never fully get behind the covert incentives, because when we are talking about moral worth, it does not depend on the actions, which one sees, but on the inner principles, which one does not see.<sup>6</sup>

One cannot better serve the wishes of those who ridicule all morality, as a mere figment of the mind overreaching itself though self-conceit, than to concede to them that the concepts of duty must be drawn solely from experience (as one is gladly persuaded, for the sake of convenience, in the case of all other concepts); for in this way one prepares for them a certain triumph. From love of humanity I will concede that most of our actions are in conformity with duty; but if one looks more closely at "the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts,"<sup>7</sup> then everywhere one runs into the dear self, which is always thrusting itself forward;<sup>8</sup> it is upon this that the aim is based, and not on the strict command of duty, which would often demand self-renunciation. One does not need to be an enemy of virtue, but only a cold-blooded observer, who does not take the liveliest wish for the good straightway as its reality, in order (especially with advancing years, and a power of judgment grown shrewder through experience and more acute for observation) to become doubtful at certain moments whether any true virtue is ever really to be encountered in the world. And here nothing can protect us from falling away entirely from our ideas of duty and preserve in our soul a well-grounded respect toward its law, except the clear conviction that even if there have never been actions that have arisen from such pure

6. Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:18: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

7. *ihr Dichten und Trachten*; this is an allusion to the phrase *Tichten und Trachten* in the Lutheran translation of Genesis 6:5, which reads (in the King James version): "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

8. See *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, § 2, Ak 7:128–30.



[Ak 4:408]

sources, yet nevertheless we are not talking here about whether this or that happens, but rather reason commands, for itself and independently of all appearances, what ought to happen; hence actions, of which perhaps the world has up to now given no example and about which one might, grounding everything on experience, very much doubt even their feasibility, are nevertheless commanded unremittingly by reason; and that, e.g., pure honesty in friendship can no less be demanded of every human being, even if up to now there may not have been a single honest friend,<sup>9</sup> because this duty, as duty in general, lies prior to all experience in the idea of a reason determining the will through a *a priori* grounds.

If one adds that unless one wants to dispute whether the concept of morality has any truth and relation to any possible object, one could not deny that its law is of such an extensive significance that it would have to be valid not merely for human beings but for all *rational beings in general*, and not merely under contingent conditions and with exceptions, but with *absolute necessity*, then it is clear that no experience could give occasion for inferring even the possibility of such apodictic laws.<sup>10</sup> For with what right could we bring into unlimited respect, as a universal precept for every rational nature, that which is perhaps valid only under the contingent conditions of humanity, and how should laws for the determination of *our* will be taken as laws for the determination of the will of a rational being in general, and only as such also for our will, if they were merely empirical and did not take their origin fully *a priori* from pure-but practical reason?

Nor could one give worse advice to morality than by trying to get it from examples. For every example of morality that is to be represented to me as such must itself be previously judged in accordance with principles of

9. "Friendship thought of as attainable in its purity or completeness (between Orestes and Pylades, Thesesus and Pirithous) is the hobbyhorse of writers of romances. On the other hand, Aristotle says: 'My dear friends, there are no friends!'" (*Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6:470). The statement attributed to Aristotle is based on Diogenes Laertius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* 5.1.21.

10. The original meaning of 'apodictic' is 'self-evident' (from the Greek 'από + δεικνυμι). But Kant more typically uses it in the sense of 'necessary' (this is its apparent meaning in the Table of Judgments, *Critique of Pure Reason* A70/B95); yet an epistemic element of certainty is often intended as well. For example: "Geometrical propositions are all apodictic, i.e., combined with consciousness of their necessity" (*Critique of Pure Reason* B 41; cf. A160/B199); "[Mathematical cognition] carries with it thoroughly apodictic certainty (i.e., absolute necessity), hence rests on no grounds of experience" (*Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, § 6, Ak 4:280).

morality as to whether it is worthy to serve as an original<sup>11</sup> example, i.e., as a model; but it can by no means by itself<sup>12</sup> supply the concept of morality. Even the holy one of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before one can recognize him as holy; he says this about himself too: Why do you call me (whom you see) good? No one is good (the archetype of the good) except the one God (whom you do not see).<sup>13</sup> But where do we get the concept of God as the highest good? Solely from the *idea* that reason projects *a priori* of moral perfection and connects inseparably with the concept of a free will. In morality there is no imitation, and examples serve only for encouragement, i.e., they place beyond doubt the feasibility of what the law commands, they make intuitive what the practical rule expresses universally; but they can never justify setting aside their true original,<sup>14</sup> which lies in reason, and in directing ourselves in accordance with examples.

If, then, there is no genuine supreme principle of morality which does not have to rest on pure reason independent of all experience, then I believe it is not necessary even to ask whether it is good to expound these concepts in general (*in abstracto*), as they, together with the principles belonging to them, are fixed *a priori*, provided that this cognition is distinguished from common cognition and is to be called 'philosophical'. But in our age this might well be necessary. For if one were to collect votes on which is to be preferred, a pure rational cognition abstracted from everything empirical, hence a metaphysics of morals, or popular practical philosophy, then one would soon guess on which side the preponderance<sup>15</sup> will fall.<sup>16</sup>

11. 1785: "genuine"

12. zu oberst

13. "'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good except God alone'" (Luke 18:19; cf. Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18). As in note 6 above, compare also 2 Corinthians 4:18.

14. Original

15. 1785: "the truth"

16. Kant's references to "popular philosophy" are primarily allusions to a movement of German Enlightenment philosophers, centered chiefly in Berlin, whose best-known representatives were Christian Garve (1742–1798), Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), Christoph Meiners (1747–1810), and Christoph Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811). Other critical references to this movement can be found throughout Kant's writings (*Critique of Pure Reason* A x, A855/B883; *Prolegomena*, Ak 4:261–62, 371–83; *What Does It Mean To Orient Oneself in Thinking?* Ak 8:133–46; *On the Common Saying "That May Be Correct in Theory, but Does Not Work in Practice"* Ak 8:278–89; *Metaphysics of Morals*,

[Ak 4:409]

This condescension to popular concepts<sup>17</sup> is to be sure very laudable when the elevation to principles of pure reason has already been achieved to full satisfaction, and that would mean first *grounding* the doctrine of morals on metaphysics, but procuring *entry* for it by means of popularity, once it stands firm. But it is quite absurd to want to humor popularity in the first investigation, upon which depends the correctness of principles. Not only can this procedure never lay claim to the extremely rare merit of a true *philosophical popularity*, since there is no art in being commonly understandable if one relinquishes all well-grounded insight; this produces only a disgusting mish-mash of patched-together observations and half-reasoned principles, in which superficial minds revel, because there is always something serviceable for everyday chitchat, but which insightful people disregard, feeling confused and dissatisfied without being able to help themselves; yet philosophers, who can very well see through the illusion,<sup>18</sup> find little hearing when for certain occasions they decry this supposed popularity, in order, through acquiring determinate insight, finally to gain the right to be popular.

One need only look at the essays on morality adapted to this favored taste; then one will sometimes encounter the particular vocation of human nature (but occasionally also the idea of a rational nature in general), sometimes perfection, sometimes happiness, here moral feeling, there fear of God, some of this and some of that, all in a wondrous mixture, without its occurring to anyone to ask whether the principles of morality are to be sought anywhere in the knowledge of human nature (which we can obtain only through experience); and if not, if these principles are to be encountered in pure concepts of reason, fully *a priori*, free from everything empirical, and nowhere else even in the smallest part, then one may seize the

Ak 6:206; *On Turning Out Books*, Ak 8: 433–37; *Logic*, Ak 9:19–20, 148). Despite this, Kant was on terms of friendship and mutual admiration with at least two members of the movement, namely Mendelssohn and Garve. Some scholars have maintained the thesis that Garve's translation, with notes, of Cicero's *On Duties* greatly influenced the *Groundwork* itself, including its account of the good will and its three formulations of the moral law. See Klaus Reich, "Kant and Greek Ethics," *Mind* 47 (1939), and A. R. C. Duncan, *Practical Reason and Morality* (London: Nelson, 1957), chap. 11. For a convincing refutation of this thesis, see Reiner Wimmer, *Universalisierung in der Ethik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1980), pp. 183–84; and Dieter Schönecker, *Kant: Grundlegung III. Die Deduktion des kategorischen Imperativs* (Freiburg: Alber Verlag, 1999), pp. 61–67.

17. *Volksbegriffen*

18. *Blendwerk*

initiative by entirely separating this investigation as pure practical philosophy, or (if one may use such a disreputable term) as metaphysics\* of morals, bringing it for itself alone to its entire completeness, and deferring the expectations of the public, which demands popularity, until the completion of this undertaking.

But such a fully isolated metaphysics of morals, mixed with no anthropology, with no theology, with no physics or hyperphysics, still less with occult qualities (which one might call 'hypophysical'), is not only an indispensable substrate of all theoretical cognition of duties which is securely determined, but it is at the same time also a desideratum of the highest importance for the actual fulfillment of its precepts. For the pure representation of duty and the moral law in general, mixed with no alien addition from empirical stimuli, has, by way of reason alone (which thereby for the first time becomes aware that it can for itself be practical), an influence on the human heart so much more powerful than all other incentives\*\* that might

\*One can, if one wants, distinguish the 'pure' philosophy of morals (metaphysics) from the 'applied' (namely to human nature) (just as 'pure' mathematics and 'pure' logic are distinguished from 'applied'). By this terminology one is directly reminded that moral principles are not grounded on the peculiarities of human nature, but must be subsistent *a priori* for themselves; but from them human practical rules must be derivable, as for every rational nature.

\*\*I have a letter from the late excellent *Sulzer*, in which he asks me what the cause might be that the doctrines of virtue, however convincing they may be to reason, yet accomplish so little. My answer, through being prepared so as to be complete, came too late. Yet it is nothing except that the teachers have not brought their concepts to purity, and because they were trying to do too much by scaring up motivations to be morally good from everywhere, in trying to strengthen their medicine they ruin it. For the most common observation shows that when one represents an upright action as it is carried out with a steadfast soul even under the greatest temptations of distress or of enticement, separate from every intention for any advantage in this or in another world, it leaves far behind and eclipses every similar action which is affected even in the slightest with an alien incentive; it elevates the soul and inspires the wish to be able also to act that way. Even moderately young children feel this impression, and one should never represent duty to them otherwise than this. [Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–1779), director of the philosophical division of the Prussian Academy of Sciences (1777–1779). The letter in question is usually thought to be the

be summoned from the empirical field, that reason, in the consciousness of its dignity, despises the latter, and can gradually become their master; in place of this, a mixed doctrine of morals, composed from incentives of feelings and inclinations and simultaneously from concepts of reason, must make the mind waver between motivations that cannot be brought under any principle, and can lead us only very contingently to the good, but often also to the evil.

From what we have adduced it is clear that all moral concepts have their seat and origin fully *a priori* in reason, and this as much in the most common human reason as in that reason which is in highest measure speculative; that these concepts cannot be abstracted from any empirical, and therefore mere contingent, cognition; that their dignity lies precisely in this purity of their origin, so that<sup>19</sup> they serve us as supreme practical principles; that whatever one adds to them of the empirical, one withdraws that much from their genuine influence and from the unlimited worth of actions; that it is not only of the greatest necessity for theoretical aims, when it is merely a matter of speculation, but it is also of the greatest practical importance, to demand that their concepts and laws should be taken from pure reason, to expound them pure and unmixed, indeed, to determine the range of this entire practical or pure rational cognition, i.e., the entire faculty of pure practical reason; but not as speculative philosophy permits, or indeed at times finds necessary, making the principles dependent on the particular nature of human reason, but rather, since moral laws are to be valid for every rational being in general, to derive them from the universal concept of a rational being in general; and in such a way all morality, which needs

[Ak 4:412]

one dated December 8, 1770 (see Ak 13:51), which, however, does not directly raise the question Kant says it does. What Sulzer does say is this: "I really wished to hear from you whether we may soon hope to see your work on the metaphysics of morals. This work is of the highest importance, given the present unsteady state of moral philosophy. I have tried to do something of this sort myself in attempting to resolve the question, 'What actually is the physical or psychological difference between a soul that we call virtuous and one which is vicious?' I have sought to discover the true dispositions of virtue and vice in the first manifestations of representations and sensations, and I now regard my undertaking of this investigation as less futile, since it has led me to concepts that are simple and easy to grasp, and which one can effortlessly apply to the teaching and raising of children. But this work, too, is impossible for me to complete at present" (Ak 10:112).]

19. This word added in 1786

anthropology for its *application* to human beings, must first be expounded completely, independently of anthropology, as pure philosophy, i.e., as metaphysics (which it is possible to do in this species of entirely separate cognitions); but we must also be conscious that without being in possession of this, it would be futile, I will not say to determine precisely for speculative judgment what is moral about duty in everything that conforms to duty, but that it would even be impossible in a common and practical use, chiefly in moral instruction, to ground morality on its genuine principles and thereby to effect pure moral dispositions and implant them in people's minds for the highest good of the world.<sup>20</sup>

But now in order to progress by natural steps in this work not merely from the common moral judgment (which is here worthy of great respect) to the philosophical, as has already been done, but also from a popular philosophy, which goes no further than it can get through groping by means of examples, up to metaphysics (which is not any longer held back by anything empirical and, since it must cover the entire sum total of rational cognition of this kind, goes as far as ideas, where even examples desert us), we must follow and distinctly exhibit the practical faculty of reason from its universal rules of determination up to where the concept of duty arises from it.

Every thing in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the faculty to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, i.e., in accordance with principles, or a *will*. Since for the derivation of actions from laws *reason* is required, the will is nothing other than practical reason. If reason determines the will without exception, then the actions of such a being, which are recognized as objectively necessary, are also subjectively necessary, i.e., the will is a faculty of choosing *only that* which reason, independently of inclination, recognizes as practically necessary, i.e., as good. But if reason for itself alone does not sufficiently determine the will, if the will is still subject to subjective conditions (to certain incentives) which do not always agree with the objective conditions, in a word, if the will is not *in itself* fully in accord with reason (as it actually is with human beings), then the actions which are objectively recognized as necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will, in accord with objective laws, is *necessitation*, i.e., the relation of objective laws to a will which is not thoroughly good is represented as the determination of the will of a rational being through grounds of reason to which, however, this will in accordance with its nature is not necessarily obedient.

[Ak 4:413]

20. Vom höchsten Weltbesten

The representation of an objective principle, insofar as it is necessitating for a will, is called a 'command' (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an **imperative**.

All imperatives are expressed through an *ought* and thereby indicate the relation of an objective law of reason to a will which in its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by that law (a necessitation). They say that it would be good to do or refrain from something, but they say it to a will that does not always do something just because it is represented to it as good to do. Practical *good*, however, is that which determines the will by means of representations of reason, hence not from subjective causes, but objectively, i.e., from grounds that are valid for every rational being as such. It is distinguished from the *agreeable*, as that which has influence on the will only by means of sensation from merely subjective causes, those which are valid only for the senses of this or that one, and not as a principle of reason, which is valid for everyone.\*

A perfectly good will would thus stand just as much under objective laws (of the good), but it would not be possible to represent it as *necessitated* by them to lawful actions, because of itself, in accordance with its subjective constitution, it can be determined only through the representation of the good. Hence for the *divine* will, and in general for a *holy* will, no imperatives are valid; the *ought* is out of place<sup>21</sup> here, because the *volition* is of itself already necessarily in harmony with the law. Hence imperatives are

\*The dependence of the faculty of desire on sensations is called 'inclination', and this always therefore proves a *need*. But the dependence of a contingently determinable will on principles of reason is called an *interest*. This occurs, therefore, only with a dependent will, which does not always of itself accord with reason; with the *divine* will one cannot think of any interest. But the human will, too, can *take an interest* without therefore *acting from interest*. The former signifies the *practical* interest in the action, the second the *pathological* interest in the object of the action. The first indicates only the dependence of the will on principles of reason in itself, the second on those principles of reason on behalf of inclination, where, namely, reason furnishes only the practical rule as to how the need of inclination is to be supplied. In the first case the action interests me, in the second the object of the action (insofar as it is agreeable to me). In the First Section we have seen that with an action from duty it is not the interest in an object that has to be looked to, but merely the action itself and its principle in reason (the law).

21. *am unrechten Orte*

only formulas expressing the relation of objective laws of volition in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, e.g., to the human being.

Now all *imperatives* command either *hypothetically* or *categorically*. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to attain something else which one wills (or which it is possible that one might will). The categorical imperative would be that one which represented an action as objectively necessary for itself, without any reference to another end.

Because every practical law represents a possible action as good, and therefore as necessary for a subject practically determinable by reason, all imperatives are formulas of the determination of action, which is necessary in accordance with the principle of a will which is good in some way.<sup>22</sup> Now if the action were good merely as a means to *something else*, then the imperative is *hypothetical*; if it is represented as good *in itself*, hence necessary, as the principle of the will, in a will that in itself accords with reason, then it is *categorical*.

The imperative thus says which action possible through me would be good, and represents the practical rule in relation to a will<sup>23</sup> that does not directly do an action because it is good, in part because the subject does not always know that it is good, in part because if it did know this, its maxims could still be contrary to the objective principles of a practical reason.

The hypothetical imperative thus says only that the action is good for some *possible* or *actual* aim. In the first case it is a **problematically**,<sup>24</sup> in the second an **assertorically** practical principle. The categorical imperative, which declares the action for itself as objectively necessary without reference to any aim, i.e., also without any other end, is valid as an **apodictically** practical principle.

One can think of that which is possible only through the powers of some rational being also as a possible aim of any will, and hence the principles of the action, insofar as it is represented as necessary in order to achieve any aim to be effected through it, are infinitely many. All sciences have some

22. 1785: "for some aim"

23. 1785: "the will"

24. In his (unpublished) First Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (Ak 20:200 note), Kant retracts the term 'problematical' for this kind of imperative, replacing it with the term 'technical', which he also uses already in the *Groundwork* (Ak 4:416).

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practical part, consisting of the problems whether<sup>25</sup> any end is possible for us and of imperatives about how it can be attained. These can therefore in general be called imperatives of **skill**. Whether the end is rational and good is not the question here, but only what one has to do in order to achieve them. The precepts for the physician, how to make his patient healthy in a well-grounded way, and for the poisoner, how to kill him with certainty,<sup>26</sup> are to this extent of equal worth, since each serves to effect its aim perfectly. Because in early youth one does not know what ends he will run up against in life, parents seek chiefly to have their children learn *many things*, and they concern themselves about *skill* in the use of means toward all kinds of *discretionary* ends, about none of which they can determine whether it will perhaps actually become an aim of his pupil in the future, but about any of which, however, it is *possible* that he might someday have it, and this concern is so great that they commonly neglect to educate and correct their judgment over the worth of the things that they may perhaps make their ends.

There is *one* end, however, that one can presuppose as actual for all rational beings (insofar as imperatives apply to them, namely as dependent beings), and thus one aim that they not merely *can* have, but of which one can safely presuppose that without exception<sup>27</sup> they *do have* it in accordance with a natural necessity, and that is the aim at *happiness*. The hypothetical imperative that represents the practical necessity of the action as a means to furthering happiness is **assertorič**. One may expound it as necessary not merely to an uncertain, merely possible aim, but to an aim that one can presuppose safely and *a priori*<sup>28</sup> with every human being, because it belongs to his essence.<sup>29</sup> Now one can call skill in the choice of means to his own greatest well-being *prudence*\* in the narrowest sense. Thus the imper-

[Ak 4:416]

\*The word 'prudence' is taken in a twofold sense; in the first it can bear the name of 'worldly prudence' and in the second that of 'private prudence.' The first is the skill of a human being to have influence on others, in order to use them for his aims. The second is the insight to unite all these aims to his own enduring advantage. The latter is really that to which the worth of the first is reduced, and about someone who is prudent in the first way but not in the second way one can better say that he is clever and sly, but on the whole imprudent.

25. *Aufgaben, daß*, a construction somewhat opaque in meaning and almost as awkward in German as "problems that" would be in English.

26. *sicher*, which could also be translated "safely"

27. *insgesamt*

28. "and *a priori*" added in 1786

29. 1785: "to his nature"

ative that refers to the choice of means to one's own happiness, i.e., the precept of prudence, is always *hypothetical*; the action is commanded not absolutely but only as a means to another aim.

Finally, there is one imperative that, without being grounded on any other aim to be achieved through a certain course of conduct as its condition, commands this conduct immediately. This imperative is **categorical**. It has to do not with the matter of the action and what is to result from it, but with the form and the principle from which it results; and what is essentially good about it consists in the disposition, whatever the result may be. This imperative may be called that of **morality**.

The volition in accordance with these three kinds of principles is also clearly distinguished by a *difference*<sup>30</sup> in the necessitation of the will. Now in order to make this noticeable too, I believe that the most suitable terminology to use in ordering them is to say that they are either *rules* of skill, or *counsels* of prudence or *commands (laws)* of morality. For only *law* carries with it the concept of an *unconditional* and objective, hence universally valid *necessity*, and commands are laws that must be obeyed, i.e., followed even against inclination. The *giving of counsel* contains necessity, to be sure, but can be valid merely under a subjective, pleasing<sup>31</sup> condition, whether this or that human being counts this or that toward his happiness; the categorical imperative, by contrast, is not limited by any condition, and as absolutely, though practically necessary, can be called quite authentically a command. One could also call the first imperative *technical* (belonging to art), the second *pragmatic*\* (to welfare), the third *moral* (belonging to free conduct in general, i.e., to morals).

[Ak 4:417]

Now the question arises: How are all these imperatives possible? This

\*It seems to me that the authentic signification of the word 'pragmatic' could be determined most precisely in this way. For those *sanctions* are called 'pragmatic' which really flow not from the rights of states, as necessary laws, but from *provision* for the general welfare. A *history* is written 'pragmatically' when it makes us *prudent*, i.e., teaches how the world could take care of its advantage better than, or at any rate at least as well as, the world of antiquity has done.

30. *Ungleichheit*, which might also be translated "inequality." Kant may be suggesting, that is, not only that the three imperatives are different in kind, but also that the three kinds of necessitation have unequal rational weight: moral necessitation is unconditional, hence prior to the other two, overriding them in cases of conflict; pragmatic necessitation by imperatives of prudence, in turn, overrides technical necessitation by imperatives of skill that merely tell us how to achieve some optional end we have contingently chosen.

31. *gefälliger*; editors often correct this to *zufälliger*, "contingent."

question does not demand the knowledge how to think the execution of the action that the imperative commands, but rather merely how to think the necessitation of the will that the imperative expresses in the problem. How an imperative of skill is to be possible probably needs no particular discussion. Whoever wills the end, also wills (insofar as reason has decisive influence on his actions) the means that are indispensably necessary to it that are in his control. As far as volition is concerned, this proposition is analytic; for in the volition of an object, as my effect, is already thought my causality as an acting cause, i.e., the use of means; and the imperative extracts the concept of actions necessary for this end out of the concept of a volition of this end (to be sure, synthetic propositions belong to determining the means themselves to a proposed aim, but they have nothing to do with the ground, with making the act<sup>32</sup> of the will actual, but rather with how to make the object actual). That in order to divide a line into two equal parts in accordance with a secure principle I must draw two arcs from its endpoints — this mathematics obviously teaches only through synthetic propositions; but that if I know that the specified effect can occur only through such an action, then if I completely will the effect, I would also will the action that is required for it — that is an analytic proposition; for to represent something as an effect possible through me in a certain way and to represent myself, in regard to it, acting in this same way — those are entirely the same.

Imperatives of prudence would be equally analytic, and entirely coincide with those of skill, if only it were so easy to provide a determinate concept of happiness. For here, as there, it would be said: whoever wills the end, also wills (necessarily in accord with reason) the sole means to it in his control. Yet it is a misfortune that the concept of happiness is such an indeterminate concept that although every human being wishes to attain it, he can never say, determinately and in a way that is harmonious with himself, what he really wishes and wills. The cause of this is that all the elements that belong to the concept of happiness are altogether empirical, i.e., have to be gotten from experience, while for the idea of happiness an absolute whole, a maximum of welfare, is required, in my present and in every future condition. Now it is impossible for the most insightful, and at the same time most resourceful, yet finite being to make a determinate concept of what he really wills here. If he wills wealth, how much worry, envy, and harassment<sup>33</sup> will he not bring down on his shoulders?<sup>34</sup> If he

32. *Aktus*

33. *Nachstellung*

34. Kant ends this sentence, which seems halfway between an assertion and a rhetorical question, with a period instead of a question mark.

wills much cognition and insight, perhaps that could only give him a more acute eye, to show him all the more terribly those ills that are now hidden from him and yet cannot be avoided, or to burden his desires, which already give him quite enough to do, with still more needs. If he wills a long life, who will guarantee him that it would not be a long misery? If he wills at least health, how often have bodily discomforts not deterred him from excesses into which unlimited health would have allowed him to fall, etc.? In short, he is not capable of determining with complete certainty, in accordance with any principle, what will make him truly happy, because omniscience would be required for that. Thus one cannot act in accordance with determinate principles in order to be happy, but only in accordance with empirical counsels, e.g., of diet, frugality, politeness, restraint, etc., of which experience teaches that they most promote welfare on the average. It follows from this that the imperatives of prudence, to speak precisely, cannot command at all, i.e., cannot exhibit actions objectively as practically *necessary*; that they are sooner to be taken as advisings (*consilia*) than as commands (*praecepta*) of reason; that the problem of determining, certainly<sup>35</sup> and universally, what action will promote the happiness of a rational being, is fully insoluble, hence no imperative in regard to it is possible, which would command us, in the strict sense, to do what would make us happy, because happiness is an ideal not of reason but of imagination, resting merely on empirical grounds, of which it would be futile to expect that they should determine an action through which to attain the totality of a series of consequences which are in fact infinite. This imperative of prudence, meanwhile, would be an analytically practical proposition if one assumes that the means to happiness could be specified with certainty;<sup>36</sup> for it is distinguished from the imperative of skill only in this, that with the latter the end is merely possible, but with the former it is given: since, however, both merely command the means to that which it is presupposed that one wills as an end, then the imperative that commands the volition of the means for him who wills the end is in both cases analytic. Thus there is also no difficulty in regard to the possibility of such an imperative.

By contrast, how the imperative of *morality* is possible is without doubt the sole question in need of a solution, since it is not at all hypothetical, and thus the necessity, represented as objective, cannot be based on any presupposition, as with the hypothetical imperatives. Yet in this connection it must not be left out of account that whether there is any such imperative anywhere cannot be settled by *any example*, hence not empirically; but the

35. *sicher*

36. *sicher*

worry is rather that all those that seem categorical might be, in some hidden wise, hypothetical. E.g., if it is said: "You ought not to make a deceiving promise," and one assumes that the necessity of this omission is not mere advice for the avoidance of some ill or other, so that it might really mean: "You should not make a lying promise, so that if it were revealed then you would lose your credit"; if an action of this kind<sup>37</sup> must be considered as evil for itself, then the imperative forbidding it would be categorical; then one still cannot with certainty give an example in which the will is determined merely by the law, without any other incentive, although it might<sup>38</sup> appear so; for it is always possible that fear of disgrace, or perhaps also an obscure worry about other dangers, might secretly have had an influence on the will. Who<sup>39</sup> can prove through experience the nonexistence of a cause, since experience teaches us nothing beyond the fact that we do not perceive one? But in such a case the so-called moral imperative, which appears as such to be categorical and unconditioned, would in fact be only a pragmatic precept, which alerts us to our own advantage and merely teaches us to pay attention to it.

[Ak 4:420]

Thus we will have to investigate the possibility of a *categorical* imperative entirely *a priori*, since here we cannot have the advantage that its reality is given in experience, so that its possibility would be necessary not for its establishment but only for its explanation.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, we can provisionally<sup>41</sup> have insight into this much: that the categorical imperative alone can be stated as a practical law, while the others collectively are, to be sure, *principles* of the will, but cannot be called 'laws'; for what it is necessary to do for the attainment of a discretionary aim can be considered in itself to be contingent, and we can always be rid of the precept if we give up the aim; whereas the unconditioned command leaves the will no free discretion in regard to the opposite, hence it alone carries with it that necessity which we demand for a law.

Secondly, with this categorical imperative, or law of morality, the ground of difficulty (of having insight into its possibility) is very great

37. 1785: "but rather if one asserts that an action of this kind"

38. 1785: "even if it might appear so"

39. 1785: "For who"

40. *Erklärung*, which could also be translated "definition." Kant holds that for a well-formed (real) definition of a thing, we require a demonstration of its (real) possibility. See *Critique of Pure Reason* A727–30/B755–59.

41. 1785: "But we can provisionally"

indeed. It is a synthetically practical proposition\* *a priori*, and since there is so much difficulty in gaining insight into the possibility of propositions of this kind in theoretical cognition, it is easy to gather that there will be no less in the practical.

Regarding this problem we will first try to see whether perhaps the mere concept of a categorical imperative does not also provide us with its formula, containing the proposition which alone can be a categorical imperative; for how such an absolute command is possible, even if we know how it is stated, will still demand particular and difficult effort, which, however, we will postpone until the last section.

If I think of a *hypothetical* imperative in general, then I do not know beforehand what it will contain until the condition is given to me. But if I think of a *categorical* imperative, then I know directly what it contains. For since besides the law, the imperative contains only the necessity of the maxim,\*\* that it should accord with this law, but the law contains no condition to which it is limited, there remains nothing left over with which the maxim of the action is to be in accord, and this accordance alone is what the imperative really represents necessarily.

[Ak 4:421]

The categorical imperative is thus only a single one, and specifically this: *Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.*

Now if from this one imperative all imperatives of duty can be derived as from their principle, then although we leave unsettled whether in general

\*I connect the deed *a priori* with the will, without a presupposed condition from any inclination, hence necessarily (though only objectively, i.e., under the idea of reason, which would have full control over all subjective motivations). This is therefore a practical proposition that does not derive the volition of an action analytically from any other volition already presupposed (for we have no such perfect will), but is immediately connected with the concept of the will of a rational being, as something not contained in it.

[Ak4:420]

\*\*A *maxim* is the subjective principle for action, and must be distinguished from the *objective principle*, namely the practical law. The former contains the practical rule that reason determines in accord with the conditions of the subject (often its ignorance or also its inclinations), and is thus the principle in accordance with which the subject *acts*; but the law is the objective principle, valid for every rational being, and the principle in accordance with which it *ought to act*, i.e., an imperative.

[Ak4:421]

what one calls 'duty' is an empty concept, we can at least indicate what we are thinking in the concept of duty and what this concept means.<sup>42</sup>

Because the universality of the law in accordance with which effects happen constitutes that which is really called *nature* in the most general sense (in accordance with its form), i.e., the existence of things insofar as it is determined in accordance with universal laws, thus the universal imperative of duty can also be stated as follows: *So act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature.*

Now we will enumerate<sup>43</sup> some duties, in accordance with their usual division into duties toward ourselves and toward other human beings, and into perfect and imperfect duties:\*

(1) One person, through a series of evils that have accumulated to the point of hopelessness, feels weary of life but is still so far in possession of his reason that he can ask himself whether it might be contrary to the duty to himself to take his own life. Now he tries out whether the maxim of his action could become a universal law of nature. But his maxim is: 'From self-love, I make it my principle to shorten my life when by longer term it threatens more ill than it promises agreeableness'. The question is whether this principle of self-love could become a universal law of nature. But then one soon sees that a nature whose law it was to destroy life through the same feeling<sup>44</sup> whose vocation it is to impel the furtherance of life would contra-

\*Here one must note well that I reserve the division of duties entirely for a future *metaphysics of morals*; the division here therefore stands only as a discretionary one (to order my examples). For the rest, I understand by a perfect duty that which permits no exception to the advantage of inclination, and I do have *perfect duties* that are not merely external but also internal, which runs contrary to the use of words common in the schools; but I do not mean to defend that here, because for my aim it is all the same whether or not one concedes it to me. [Cf. *Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6:240, 391–98, 413, and the detailed taxonomy of duties of virtue, Ak 6:417–68. The "use of words common in the schools," according to which perfect duties are externally enforceable actions, is based on Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694), *De Jure Naturale* (1672), I.1.19–20. But Pufendorf's distinction was anticipated by Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and had been taken up also by, among others, Christian Thomasius (1655–1728) and J. G. Sulzer.]

42. *sagen wolle*

43. *herzählen*, which could also be translated "reckon" or "calculate"

44. *Empfindung*

dict itself, and thus could not subsist as nature; hence that maxim could not possibly obtain as a universal law of nature, and consequently it entirely contradicts the supreme principle of all duty.

(2) Another sees himself pressured by distress into borrowing money. He knows very well that he will not be able to pay, but he also sees that nothing will be lent him if he does not firmly promise to pay at a determinate time. He wants to make such a promise; yet he has conscience enough to ask himself: "Is it not impermissible and contrary to duty to get out of distress in such a way?" Supposing he nevertheless resolved on it, his maxim would be stated as follows: 'If I believe myself to be in pecuniary distress, then I will borrow money and promise to pay it back, although I know this will never happen'. Now this principle of self-love, or of what is expedient for oneself, might perhaps be united with my entire future welfare, yet the question now is: "Is it right?" I thus transform this claim<sup>45</sup> of self-love into a universal law and set up the question thus: "How would it stand if my maxim became a universal law?" Yet I see right away that it could never be valid as a universal law of nature and still agree with itself, but rather it would necessarily contradict itself. For the universality of a law that everyone who believes himself to be in distress could promise whatever occurred to him with the intention of not keeping it would make impossible the promise and the end one might have in making it, since no one would believe that anything has been promised him, but rather would laugh about every such utterance as vain pretense.

(3) A third finds in himself a talent, which could, by means of some cultivation, make him into a human being who is useful for all sorts of aims. But he sees himself as in comfortable circumstances and sooner prefers to indulge<sup>46</sup> in gratification than to trouble himself with the expansion and improvement of his fortunate natural predispositions. Yet he still asks whether, apart from the agreement of his maxim of neglecting his gifts of nature with his propensity to amusement, it also agrees with what one calls 'duty'. Then he sees that, although a nature could still subsist in accordance with such a universal law, though then the human being (like the South Sea Islanders) would think only of letting his talents rust and applying his life merely to idleness, amusement, procreation, in a word, to enjoyment; yet it is impossible for him to will that this should become a universal law of nature, or that it should be implanted in us as such by natural instinct. For as a rational being he necessarily wills that all the faculties in him should be

45. *Zumutung*

46. 1785: "and he prefers it that he indulge"



developed, because they are serviceable and given<sup>47</sup> to him for all kinds of possible aims.

(4)<sup>48</sup> Yet a *fourth*— for whom it is going well, while he sees that others have to struggle with great hardships (with which he could well help them)—thinks: “What has it to do with me? Let each be as happy as heaven wills, or as he can make himself, I will not take anything from him or even envy him; only I do not want to contribute to his welfare or to his assistance in distress!” Now to be sure, if such a way of thinking were to become a universal law of nature, then the human race could well subsist, and without doubt still better than when everyone chatters about sympathetic participation<sup>49</sup> and benevolence, and even on occasion exerts himself to practice them, but, on the contrary also deceives wherever he can,<sup>50</sup> sells out, or otherwise infringes on the right of human beings. But although it is possible that a universal law of nature could well subsist in accordance with that maxim, yet it is impossible to will that such a principle should be valid without exception<sup>51</sup> as a natural law. For a will that resolved on this would conflict with itself, since the case could sometimes arise in which he needs the love and sympathetic participation of others, and where, through such a natural law arising from his own will, he would rob himself of all the hope of assistance that he wishes for himself.

Now these are some of the many actual duties, or at least of what we take to be duties, whose partitioning<sup>52</sup> from the single principle just adduced

[Ak 4:424]

47. “and given” added in 1786

48. Kant’s text, although it emphasizes the word “fourth,” omits the (4) required by the parallel with his three other examples.

49. *Teilnehmung*

50. 1785: “wherever one can”

51. *allenthalben*

52. *Abteilung*; some editors correct this to *Ableitung*, “derivation.” In favor of the emendation is that if Kant meant ‘classification,’ one would expect him to use *Einteilung* (“division,” as he did above, Ak 4:421); *Abteilung* refers more properly to one of the parts or subcategories marked out by a division or classification than it does to the act of dividing or classifying or to the entire system of classification; where it does refer to an act of dividing, *abteilen* means the partitioning off of one space from another, and not the creation of a system of classification. The construction *Abteilung aus dem einigen Prinzip* is also awkward, in the same way that this English translation of it is; and no such construction is found anywhere else in Kant’s writings. Further, Kant did speak earlier of being able to “derive” (*ableiten*) all imperatives of duty from a single categorical imperative (Ak 4:421). But despite all these reasons, the emendation to *Ableitung* (“derivation”)

clearly meets the eye. One must *be able to will* that a maxim of our action should become a universal law: this is the canon of the moral judgment of this action in general. Some actions are so constituted that their maxim cannot even be *thought* without contradiction as a universal law of nature, much less could one *will* that it *ought* to become one. With others, that internal impossibility is not to be encountered, but it is impossible to *will*

remains doubtful. Against it is the following: Kant goes on in the present paragraph to discuss the relation of his principle only to the *classification* of duties, not to their *derivation*. Further, it is not at all clear that when Kant spoke of deriving duties from a single categorical imperative, he meant to restrict the formula of that imperative to the two formulations that have been presented so far. He may well have meant that a derivation of duties would require the entire system of formulas, first introduced later at Ak 4:436. His practice in the *Metaphysics of Morals* strongly suggests the latter position. There Kant does propose to derive an entire system of ethical duties; but only the duty of beneficence (which pertains only to the fourth example here) is related to anything in the present formula of the moral law (Ak 6:453). This is possible only because the maxim of pursuing one’s own happiness (and the consequent volition of others’ voluntary assistance, as required to achieve this end) can be ascribed to all rational beings, so that the principle of morality can require them to adopt it in a universalizable form. Apart from this unique case, universalizability enables us only to disqualify certain specific maxims, and cannot yield anything like a positive duty (e.g., to refrain from suicide, keep promises, or develop talents). All fifteen of the other ethical duties explicitly enumerated there (including three of the four that are exemplified here) are derived by appeal to the second formula, that of humanity as end in itself (first stated in the *Groundwork* at Ak 4:429). Kant says that suicide is a “debasing of humanity in one’s person” (Ak 6:422–423); the duty to develop one’s natural perfection is “bound up with the end of humanity in our own person” (Ak 6:391–92; cf. 6:444–46). In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant treats promising under the heading of externally enforceable right rather than of ethics (as his use here of the term ‘right’ might also imply). There Kant even denies that it is either possible or necessary to demonstrate that promises ought to be kept (Ak 6:273). The principle of right is distinct from the supreme principle of morality (Ak 6:230); but the fundamental right (the innate human right to freedom) is said “to belong to every human being by virtue of his humanity” (Ak 6:237). But he does discuss the ethical duty not to lie under the heading of strict duties to oneself, where it is said to be a violation of “the humanity in his own person” because it uses his capacity to communicate as a mere means (Ak 6:429). Kant’s definitive presentation of the duties enumerated here thus has far less affinity with the present discussion of them (based on the formula of the law of nature) than it does with his discussion of them below in connection with the second formula, that of humanity as end in itself (Ak 4:429–30).

that their maxims should be elevated to the universality of a natural law, because such a will would contradict itself. One easily sees that the first conflict with strict or narrow (unremitting) duty, the second only with wide (meritorious) duty, and thus all duties regarding the kind of obligation (not the object of their action) have been completely set forth<sup>53</sup> through these examples in their dependence on the one principle.

Now if we attend to ourselves in every transgression of a duty, then we find that we do not actually will that our maxim should become a universal law, for that is impossible for us, but rather will that its opposite should remain a law generally; yet we take the liberty of making an *exception* for ourselves, or (even only for this once) for the advantage of our inclination. Consequently, if we weighed everything from one and the same point of view, namely that of reason, then we would encounter a contradiction in our own will, namely that objectively a certain principle should be necessary as a universal law and yet subjectively that it should not be universally valid, but rather that it should admit of exceptions. But since we consider our action at one time from a point of view that accords entirely with reason, and then, however, also the same action from the point of view of a will affected by inclination, there is actually no contradiction here, but only a resistance of inclination against the precept of reason (*antagonismus*), through which the universality of the principle (*universalitas*) is transformed into a mere general validity (*generalitas*), so that the practical principle of reason is supposed to meet the maxim halfway. Now although this cannot be justified in our own impartially rendered judgment, it proves that we actually recognize the validity of the categorical imperative and (with every respect for it) allow ourselves only a few exceptions, which are, as it seems to us, insignificant and forced upon us.

Thus we have established at least this much: that if duty is a concept that is to contain significance and actual legislation for our actions, then this duty could be expressed only in categorical imperatives, but by no means in hypothetical ones; likewise, which is already quite a bit, we have exhibited distinctly and for every use the content of the categorical imperative which would have to contain the principle of all duty (if there is such a thing at all). But we are still not ready to prove *a priori* that there actually is such an imperative, that there is a practical law which commands for itself absolutely and without any incentives, and that it is a duty to follow this law.

With the aim of attaining that, it is of the utmost importance to let this serve as a warning that one must not let it enter his mind to try to derive the

reality of this principle from the *particular quality of human nature*. For duty ought to be the practically unconditioned necessity of action; thus it must be valid for all rational beings (for only to them can an imperative apply at all), and must *only for this reason* be a law for every human will. That which, by contrast, is derived only from what is proper to the particular natural predisposition of humanity, or from certain feelings and propensities, or indeed, if possible, from a particular direction of human reason, and would not have to be valid necessarily for the will of every rational being — that can, to be sure, be a maxim for us, but cannot yield any law; it can yield a subjective principle, in accordance with which we may have a propensity and inclination, but not an objective one, in accordance with which we would be *assigned* to act, even if it were to go directly contrary to all our propensities, inclinations, and natural adaptations; it even proves all the more the sublimity and inner dignity of the command in a duty, the less subjective causes are for it and the more they are against it, without on this account the least weakening the necessitation through the law or taking anything away from its validity.

Now here we see philosophy placed in fact at a perilous standpoint, which is to be made firm, regardless of anything either in heaven or on earth from which it may depend or by which it may be supported. Here it should prove its purity<sup>54</sup> as self-sustainer of its own laws, not as a herald of those that an implanted sense or who knows what tutelary nature whispers to it, which, taken collectively, although they may be better than nothing at all, yet they can never yield the principles that reason dictates and that must have their source fully *a priori* and therewith at the same time their commanding authority: expecting nothing of the inclination of the human being, but everything from the supremacy of the law and the respect owed to it; or else, if that fails, condemning the human being to self-contempt and inner abhorrence.

[Ak 4:426]

Thus everything that is empirical is, as a contribution toward the principle of morality, not only entirely unfit for it, but even highly disadvantageous to the purity<sup>55</sup> of morals themselves, in which precisely consists the sublime<sup>56</sup> worth of a will absolutely good in itself and elevated above all price,<sup>57</sup> that the principle of the actions is free of all influences of contingent grounds that only experience can provide. One cannot be given too many or

54. *Lauterkeit*55. *Lauterkeit*

56. Cf. below, Ak 4:439–40.

57. Cf. below, Ak 4:434.

53. 1785: "are completely set forth"

too frequent warnings against this negligent or even base way of thinking, which seeks out the principle among empirical motivations and laws, since human reason in its weariness gladly reposes on this pillow and, in the dream of sweet illusions<sup>58</sup> (which lets it embrace a cloud instead of Juno),<sup>59</sup> supplants the place of morality with a bastard patched together from limbs of quite diverse ancestry, which looks similar to whatever anyone wants to see, but not to virtue, for him who has once beheld it in its true shape.\*

The question is therefore this: Is it a necessary law for all rational beings to judge their actions always in accordance with those maxims of which they themselves can will that they should serve as universal laws? If it is, then it must be bound up (fully *a priori*) with the concept of the will of a rational being in general. But in order to discover this connection, one must, however much one may resist it, take one step beyond, namely to metaphysics, though into a domain of metaphysics that is distinguished from that of speculative philosophy, namely into the metaphysics of morals. In a practical philosophy, where what are to be established are not grounds for what happens, but laws for what ought to happen, even if it never does happen, i.e., objectively practical laws, there we do not find it necessary to institute an investigation into the grounds why something pleases or displeases, how the gratification of mere sensation is to be distinguished from taste, and whether the latter is distinct from a universal satisfaction of

[Ak 4:427]

[Ak4:426]

\*To behold virtue in its authentic shape is nothing other than to exhibit morality denuded of all admixture of the sensible and all unguine adornment of reward or self-love. How completely it eclipses everything else that appears charming to inclinations, everyone can easily be aware of by means of the least attempt of his reason, if it is not entirely corrupted for abstraction.

58. *Vorspiegelungen*

59. In Greek mythology, Ixion (a legendary king of Thessaly) schemed to win the love of Hera, queen of the gods (Latin name: Juno). Her husband, Zeus, discovered his intention and formed a cloud, Nephelē, that resembled Hera. By the cloud Ixion conceived Centaurus (for which the scholiast gives the false etymology "what penetrates the air"). Centaurus was the ancestor of the centaurs, a race of beings half human and half equine (perhaps Kant's "bastard patched together from limbs of quite diverse ancestry" is a reference to them). Zeus punished Ixion for his presumptuousness by having him bound on a wheel in Hades that turns forever. The myth is told by Pindar, *Pythian Ode* 2.21–50. Since Kant's knowledge of Latin poetry was better, he is more likely to have known the Ixion story from Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 4.461, 9.124, 10.42, 12.503–5) or Virgil (*Georgics* 3.38, 4.484; *Aeneid* 6.601), although these later versions emphasize Ixion's underworld punishment rather than the story of Juno and the cloud.

reason; on what the feelings of pleasure and displeasure rest, and how from them arise desires and inclinations, and from these, again, through the cooperation of reason, maxims arise; for all that belongs to an empirical doctrine of the soul, which constitutes the second part of the doctrine of nature, if one considers it as *philosophy of nature* insofar as it is grounded on *empirical laws*. Here, however, we are talking about objectively practical laws, hence about the relation of a will to itself insofar as it determines itself merely through reason, such that everything that has reference to the empirical falls away of itself; because if *reason for itself alone* determines conduct (the possibility of which we will investigate right now), it must necessarily do this *a priori*.

The will is thought as a faculty of determining itself to action *in accord with the representation of certain laws*. And such a faculty can be there to be encountered only in rational beings. Now that which serves the will as the objective ground of its self-determination is the *end*, and this, if it is given through mere reason, must be equally valid for all rational beings. By contrast, what contains merely the ground of the possibility of the action whose effect is the end is called the *means*. The subjective ground of desire is the *incentive*, the objective ground of volition is the *motive*; hence the distinction between subjective ends, which rest on incentives, and objective ones, which depend on motives that are valid for every rational being. Practical principles are *formal* when they abstract from all subjective ends; but they are *material* when they are grounded on these, hence on certain incentives. The ends that a rational being proposes as *effects* of its action at its discretion (material ends) are all only relative; for only their relation to a particular kind of faculty of desire of the subject gives them their worth, which therefore can provide no necessary principles valid universally for all rational beings and hence valid for every volition, i.e., practical laws. Hence all these relative ends are only the ground of hypothetical imperatives.

[Ak 4:428]

But suppose there were something *whose existence in itself* had an absolute worth, something that, as *end in itself*, could be a ground of determinate laws; then in it and only in it alone would lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative, i.e., of a practical law.

Now I say that the human being, and in general every rational being, *exists* as end in itself, *not merely as means* to the discretionary use of this or that will, but in all its actions, those directed toward itself as well as those directed toward other rational beings, it must always *at the same time* be considered as an *end*. All objects of inclinations have only a conditioned worth; for if the inclinations and the needs grounded on them did not exist, then their object would be without worth. The inclinations themselves,

however, as sources of needs, are so little of absolute worth, to be wished for in themselves, that rather to be entirely free of them must be the universal wish of every rational being.<sup>60</sup> Thus the worth of all objects *to be acquired* through our action is always conditioned. The beings whose existence rests not on our will but on nature nevertheless have, if they are beings without reason, only a relative worth as means, and are called *things*; rational beings, by contrast, are called *persons*, because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves, i.e., as something that may not be used merely as means, hence to that extent limits all arbitrary choice<sup>61</sup> (and is an object of respect). These are not merely subjective ends whose existence as effect of our action has a worth *for us*; but rather *objective ends*, i.e., things whose existence in itself is an end, and specifically an end such that no other end can be set in place of it, to which it should do service *merely* as means, because without this nothing at all of *absolute worth* would be encountered anywhere; but if all worth were conditioned, hence contingent, then for reason no supreme practical principle could anywhere be encountered.

If, then, there is supposed to be a supreme practical principle, and in regard to the human will a categorical imperative, then it must be such from the representation of that which, being necessarily an end for everyone, because it is an *end in itself*, constitutes an *objective* principle of the will, hence can serve as a universal practical law. The ground of this principle is: *Rational nature exists as end in itself*. The human being necessarily represents his own existence in this way;<sup>62</sup> thus to that extent it is a *subjective* principle of human actions. But every other rational being also represents his existence in this way as consequent on the same rational ground as is valid for me;\* thus it is at the same time an *objective* principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, all laws of the will must be able to be derived. The practical imperative will thus be the following: *Act so that you*

\*This proposition I here set forth as a postulate. In the last section one will find the grounds for it.

60. "Considered in themselves, natural inclinations are *good*, i.e., not reprehensible, and to want to extirpate them would be not only futile, but harmful and blameworthy as well; we must rather only curb them, so that they will not wear each other out but will instead be harmonized into a whole called 'happiness'" (*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Ak 6:58).

61. *Willkür*

62. See *Conjectural Beginning of Human History*, Ak 8:114; *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, Ak 7:127, 130.

*use humanity*,<sup>63</sup> *as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means*. We will see whether this can be accomplished.

In order to remain with the previous examples,

*First*, in accordance with the concept of the necessary duty toward oneself, the one who has suicide in mind will ask himself whether his action could subsist together with the idea of humanity *as an end in itself*. If he destroys himself in order to flee from a burdensome condition, then he makes use of a person merely as *a means*, for the preservation of a bearable condition up to the end of life. The human being, however, is not a thing, hence not something that can be used *merely* as a means, but must in all his actions always be considered as an end in itself. Thus I cannot dispose of the human being in my own person, so as to maim, corrupt, or kill him.<sup>64</sup> (The nearer determination of this principle, so as to avoid all misunderstanding, e.g., the amputation of limbs in order to preserve myself, or the risk at which I put my life in order to preserve my life, etc., I must here pass over; they belong to morals proper.)<sup>65</sup>

*Second*, as to the necessary or owed duty toward others, the one who has it in mind to make a lying promise to another will see<sup>66</sup> right away that he wills to make use of another human being *merely as means*, without the end also being contained in this other. For the one I want to use for my aims through such a promise cannot possibly be in harmony with my way of

63. *Menschlichkeit*; this term refers to one of our three fundamental predispositions: (1) animality (through which we have instincts for survival, procreation, and sociability); (2) humanity, through which we have the rational capacities to set ends, use means to them, and organize them into a whole (happiness); and (3) personality, through which we have the capacity to give ourselves moral laws and are accountable for following them (see *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Ak 6:26–28; *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, Ak 7:322–25). 'Humanity' thus means the same as 'rational nature', and Kant's use of it involves no retraction of the claim that moral commands must be valid for all rational beings, not only for members of the human species.

64. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant discusses the duty not to maim oneself in connection with the duty forbidding suicide (Ak 6:422–23). *Verderben* ("corrupt") therefore probably carries with it the broad sense of ruining or destroying (sc. one's body or parts of it) rather than the narrower sense of *moral* corruption. Duties to oneself as a moral being, which Kant classifies as duties against lying, avarice, false humility (or servility), and duties as moral judge of oneself, are dealt with separately, 6:428–42.

65. *zur eigentlichen Moral*

66. *einsehen*

[Ak 4:430]

conducting myself toward him and thus contain in himself the end of this action.<sup>67</sup> Even more distinctly does this conflict with the principle of other human beings meet the eye if one approaches it through examples of attacks on the freedom and property of others. For then it is clearly evident that the one who transgresses the rights of human beings is disposed to make use of the person of others merely as a means, without taking into consideration that as rational beings, these persons ought always to be esteemed at the same time as ends, i.e., only as beings who have to be able to contain in themselves the end of precisely the same action.\*

*Third*, in regard to the contingent (meritorious) duty toward oneself, it is not enough that the action does not conflict with humanity in our person as end in itself; it must also *harmonize with it*. Now in humanity there are predispositions to greater perfection, which belong to ends of nature in regard to the humanity in our subject; to neglect these would at most be able to subsist with the *preservation* of humanity as end in itself, but not with the *furthering* of this end.

*Fourth*, as to the meritorious duty toward others, the natural end that all human beings have is their own happiness. Now humanity would be able to subsist if no one contributed to the happiness of others yet did not intentionally remove anything from it; only this is only a negative and not a positive agreement with *humanity as end in itself*, if everyone does not aspire, as much as he can, to further the ends of others. For regarding the subject which is an end in itself: if that representation is to have its *total* effect on me, then its ends must as far as possible also be *my* ends.

This principle of humanity and of every rational nature in general *as end*

\*Let one not think that the trivial *quod tibi non vis fieri, etc.* [What you do not want to be done to yourself do not do to another] could serve here as a standard or principle. For it is only derived from that principle, though with various limitations; it cannot be a universal law, for it does not contain the ground of duties toward oneself, nor that of the duties of love toward others (for many would gladly acquiesce that others should not be beneficent to him, if only he might be relieved from showing beneficence to them), or finally of owed duties to one another, for the criminal would argue on this ground against the judge who punishes him, etc. [Here Kant is distinguishing his principle from the so-called Golden Rule of the Gospels: "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12; cf. Luke 6:31).]

67. It is essential to Kant's conception of a promise that it involves a "united will" of the promisor and the promisee (*Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6: 272).

[Ak 4:431]

*in itself* (which is the supreme limiting condition of the freedom of the actions of every human being) is not gotten from experience, first, on account of its universality, since it applies to all rational beings in general, and no experience is sufficient to determine anything about that; second, because in it humanity is represented not as an end of human beings<sup>68</sup> (subjectively), i.e., as an object that one actually from oneself makes into an end, but as an objective end which, whatever ends we may have, is to constitute as a law the supreme limiting condition of all subjective ends, hence must arise from pure reason. The ground of all practical legislation, namely, lies *objectively in the rule* and the form of universality, which makes it capable of being a law (at least a law of nature) (in accordance with the first principle), but *subjectively* it lies in the *end*; but the subject of all ends is every rational being as end in itself (in accordance with the second principle): from this now follows the third practical principle of the will, as the supreme condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, the *idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law*.

All maxims are repudiated in accordance with this principle which cannot subsist together with the will's own universal legislation. The will is thus not solely subject to the law, but is subject in such a way that<sup>69</sup> it must be regarded also *as legislating to itself*,<sup>70</sup> and precisely for this reason as subject to the law (of which it can consider itself as the author).<sup>71</sup>

Imperatives represented in the above way, namely of the lawfulness of actions generally similar to an *order of nature*, or of the universal *preference of the end* of rational beings themselves, just by being represented as categorical, excluded from their commanding authority all admixture of any interest as an incentive; but they were only *assumed* as categorical, because one had to assume such a thing if one wanted to explain the concept

68. 1785: "of the human being"

69. 1785: "not subject to the law except in such a way that"

70. 1785: "as a self-legislating [being]"

71. On the distinction between the "legislator" of a law (who promulgates and attaches sanctions to it) and the "author" of a law (whose will actually imposes the obligation), see *Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6:227. Although Kant frequently speaks here of the rational being as "legislator" of the moral law, his position (more precisely expressed, in this terminology) is that only the rational being who is obligated can be the *author* of the law; Kant allows that we can speak of God (or the "supreme head of the realm of ends") as the *legislator* of the moral law (see below, 4:433-34; *Moral Philosophy Collins*, Ak 27:282-83; and *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Ak 6:99-100).

of duty. But that there are practical propositions which command categorically cannot be proven for itself here, just as little as this can still happen<sup>72</sup> anywhere in this section; yet one thing could have happened, namely that the withdrawal of all interest in the case of volition from duty, in the imperative itself, through any determination that it could contain, is indicated as the specific sign distinguishing the categorical from the hypothetical imperative, and this happens in the third formula of the principle, namely the idea of the will of every rational being as a *universally legislative will*.

For if we think of such a will, then although a will *that stands under laws* may be bound by means of an interest in this law, nevertheless it is impossible for a will that is itself supremely legislative to depend on any interest; for such a dependent will would need yet another law, which limited the interest of its self-love to the condition of a validity for the universal law.

Thus the *principle* of every human will as a *will legislating universally through all its maxims*,\* if otherwise everything were correct about it, would be quite *well suited* for the categorical imperative by the fact that precisely for the sake of the idea of universal legislation, it *grounds itself on no interest* and hence it alone among all<sup>73</sup> possible imperatives can be *unconditioned*; or still better, by converting the proposition, if there is a categorical imperative (i.e., a law for every will of a rational being), then it can command only that everything be done from the maxim of its will as a will that could at the same time have as its object itself as universally legislative; for only then is the practical principle and the imperative it obeys unconditioned, because it cannot have any interest at all as its ground.

Now it is no wonder, when we look back on all the previous efforts that have ever been undertaken to bring to light the principle of morality, why they all had to fail. One saw the human being bound through his duty to laws, but it did not occur to one that he was subject *only to his own* and yet *universal legislation*, and that he was obligated only to act in accord with his own will, which, however, in accordance with its natural end, is a universally legislative will. For if one thought of him only as subject to a law (whatever it might be), then this would have to bring with it some interest as a stimulus or coercion, because as a law it did not arise from *his*

\*I can be exempted here from providing examples to elucidate this principle, since those that first elucidated the categorical imperative and its formula can all serve here for precisely that end.

72. 1785: "just as little as this still cannot happen"

73. This word added in 1786

will, but rather this will was necessitated by *something else* to act in a certain way in conformity with the law. Through this entirely necessary consequence, however, all the labor of finding a supreme ground of duty was irretrievably lost. For from it one never got duty, but only necessity of action from a certain interest. Now this might be one's own interest or someone else's. But then the imperative always had to come out as conditioned, and could never work at all as a moral command. Thus I will call this principle the principle of<sup>74</sup> the *autonomy* of the will, in contrast to every<sup>75</sup> other, which on this account I count as *heteronomy*.

The concept of every rational being that must consider itself as giving universal law through all the maxims of its will in order to judge itself and its actions from this point of view, leads to a very fruitful concept depending on it, namely that of a *realm of ends*.<sup>76</sup>

By a *realm*, however, I understand the systematic combination of various rational beings through communal laws. Now because laws determine ends in accordance with their universal validity, there comes to be, if one abstracts from the personal differences between rational beings, as likewise from every content of their private ends, a whole of all ends — (of rational beings as ends in themselves, as well as of their own ends, which each may set for himself) in systematic connection, i.e., a realm of ends — can be thought, which is possible in accordance with the above principles.

For rational beings all stand under the *law* that every one of them ought to<sup>77</sup> treat itself and all others *never merely as means*, but always *at the same time as end in itself*. From this, however, arises a systematic combination of rational beings through communal objective laws, i.e., a realm that, because these laws have as their aim the reference of these beings to one another<sup>78</sup> as ends and means, can be called a 'realm of ends' (obviously only an ideal).

But a rational being belongs as a *member* to the realm of ends if in this

74. 1785: "Thus I will call this the principle of"

75. The editors suggest *jenem*, which would translate: "in contrast to that other, which."

76. The obvious source for Kant's conception of a "realm of ends" is Leibniz's conception of the "city of God" as the "realm of minds," and the relationship of the "realm of nature" to this "realm of grace." Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), *Discourse on Metaphysics* (1686), § 36; *Principles of Nature and Grace Based on Reason* (1714), § 15; *Monadology* (1714), §§ 85–90.

77. 1785: "may"

78. 1785: "as their aim their relation to one another"