1 An introduction to the ethical, political, and religious thought of Kant

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>
> *Critique of Pure Reason*

For Immanuel Kant the death of speculative metaphysics and the birth of the rights of man were not independent events. Together they constitute the resolution of the Enlightenment debate about the scope and power of reason. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant shows that theoretical reason is unable to answer the questions of speculative metaphysics: whether God exists, the soul is immortal, and the will is free. But this conclusion prepares the way for an extension in the power of practical reason.[1] Practical reason directs that every human being as a free and autonomous being must be regarded as unconditionally valuable. In his ethical writings Kant shows how this directive provides a rational foundation for morality, politics, and a religion of moral faith. Bringing reason to the world becomes the enterprise of morality rather than metaphysics, and the work as well as the hope of humanity.

A CHILD OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Immanuel Kant was born in Königsberg, Prussia, on 22 April 1724, into a devout Pietist family. His father was a harness-maker and the family was not well off. But Kant's mother recognized her son's intellectual gifts, and the patronage of the family pastor Franz Albert Schultz (1692–1763), a Pietist theology professor and preacher, enabled Kant to attend the Collegium Fridericianum and prepare for

the university. He studied at the University of Königsberg from 1740–47, resisting pressure to choose one of the faculties and taking courses eclectically instead.[2] He was influenced by his teacher Martin Knutsen (1713–51), a Wolffian rationalist who taught philosophy and physics, and who took an interest in the developments of British philosophy and science. Knutsen introduced Kant to the works of Newton.

From 1747–55 Kant worked as a private tutor in the homes of various families near Königsberg, and pursued his interests in natural science. In 1755 he was granted the right to lecture as a *Privatdozent* (an unsalaried lecturer who is paid by lecture fees) at Königsberg. In order to earn a living Kant lectured on many subjects including logic, metaphysics, ethics, geography, anthropology, mathematics, the foundations of natural science and physics. We have testimonials to the power of Kant's lectures throughout his life: his audiences were large, and his ethics lectures are reported to have been especially moving.[3] In 1770 Kant was finally appointed to a regular professorship, the chair of logic and metaphysics at Königsberg. He lectured there until 1797. He died on 12 February 1804.

Kant never left the Königsberg area, but there are reports of his extraordinary ability to visualize, on the basis of written accounts, places and things he had never seen.[4] In a footnote to the preface of *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant complacently remarks:

> A city such as *Königsberg* on the River Pregel – a large city, the center of a state, the seat of the government's provincial councils, the site of a university (for cultivation of the sciences), a seaport connected by rivers with the interior of the country, so that its location favors traffic with the rest of the country as well as with neighboring or remote countries having different languages and customs – is a suitable place for broadening one's knowledge of man and the world. In such a city, this knowledge can be acquired even without traveling. (ANTH 120n)

Kant's parents died when he was young, and he had little contact with his family after that. He never married. The regularity of his habits, perhaps due to the poverty of his early life and to his poor health, is well known. He only once got into trouble with the authorities. The events of his life were those of his intellectual life, and the political events in which he took such interest. His reawakening to the problem set by the skepticism of Hume, his conversion to a morality based on the worth of humanity under the influence of Rousseau; and the American and French Revolutions formed the important episodes of his life.

In Enlightenment Germany the intellectual world was dominated by an extreme form of rationalism called the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy. Christian Wolff (1679–1754) is generally considered one of the two founders of the German *Aufklärung*. Wolff constructed his philosophy from the ideas of Leibniz and Thomistic scholasticism. He took mathematics as a model, and believed that philosophy should be a universal deductive system, with every conclusion derived by syllogistic reasoning from necessary premises. Like Leibniz, Wolff based his system on the principles of contradiction and sufficient reason.[5] Wolff also believed that the principle of sufficient reason could be derived from the principle of contradiction, for there would be a contradiction in the insufficiently determined existence of a merely possible thing.[6] While human beings need to use empirical methods in our search for the reasons of things, in principle it should be possible to cast the sciences in a completely deductive form. The existence of God can be proved by ontological, cosmological and teleological arguments; and because we know that God exists we know that this is the Best of All Possible Worlds. The soul is simple and immortal, and, since actions other than those one performs are logically possible, the will is free.[7] Wolff's ethics is based on the idea that the will is necessarily motivated by the good – that is, by the perception of a perfection achievable by action. Wolff thought it contradictory to perceive a perfection and not desire it, so in Kantian terms we may say that he believed that the moral principle is analytic.[8] Seeking perfection will bring us happiness, and the perfection of each person harmonizes with the perfection of every other. Immoral conduct is the result of confusion about what is good. Moral goodness is to be achieved through the clarification and correction of our ideas.

The influence of this system of dogmatic metaphysics on the thought of *Aufklärung* Germany can hardly be overestimated. Because he taught in the university, lectured in German, and wrote in German as well as Latin, Wolff had more direct influence than Leibniz himself. Wolff was the first philosopher to produce a full-fledged

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Of course this extreme rationalism did not go unchallenged. The followers of the other founder of the *Aufklärung*, Christian Thomasius (1655–1728), attacked the conception of philosophy embodied in the Leibniz-Wolffian system. Some were anti-metaphysical, and wanted philosophy to play a more popular, non-academic role. More important to the student of ethics is the fact that Thomasius himself, and others who opposed Wolffian rationalism, were associated with Pietism. Pietism, the religion of Kant's own family, emphasized inner religious experience, self-examination and morally good works; and Pietist theologians believed in a strong connection between morality and religion. When Wolff was appointed rector at the University of Halle, a Pietist center, his inaugural lecture was "On the Practical Philosophy of the Chinese." Wolff claimed that the moral philosophy of Confucius shows that ethics is accessible to natural reason and independent of revelation. As a result, Wolff's Pietist enemies persuaded Frederick Wilhelm I to banish Wolff.

A later challenge to the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy came when Germans began to study the British Empiricists, especially Hume. In Berlin after the middle of the century a movement called "popular philosophy" flourished under the influence of Frederick the Great, overlapping in its membership with the Berlin Academy which Frederick had revitalized. Both groups were interested in the philosophical traditions of France and Britain, and the works of Locke, Berkeley, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Reid, and Rousseau were translated. Moral sense theory was much admired, by Kant among others. Thus, rationalism in ethics was opposed both by the appeal to religion and

the appeal to moral feeling and happiness. After the middle of the century rationalist metaphysics too came increasingly under attack.

And so in 1763 the Berlin Academy offered a prize for the best essay on the topic "Whether metaphysical truths generally, and in particular the fundamental principles of natural theology and morals, are not capable of proofs as distinct as those of geometry; and if they are not, what is the true nature of their certainty, to what degree can this certainty be developed, and is this degree sufficient for conviction [of their truth]?"[11] One of the competitors was Kant, although he did not win the prize, which went to Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86). In his essay Kant denies that metaphysics has the same method as mathematics. The difficulty is that the concepts of metaphysics cannot be established synthetically the way the concepts of mathematics can. In mathematics the concepts create their objects, and we can be certain that they contain what we have put into them. Philosophy, on the other hand, has to analyze concepts which are given to it obscurely (PE 276–78; 283ff.). Yet metaphysics is still seen to be possible and capable of a certainty sufficient for conviction: we must draw our inferences only from those predicates of a concept of which we are certain, and not jump to the conclusion that we have arrived at a complete definition (PE 292–93). Kant's ethical views in this essay display a curious combination of influences from Wolff and Hutcheson. The moral principles are the Wolffian "do the most perfect possible by you" and "do not do that which would hinder the greatest possible perfection realizable through you" (PE 299). Yet these principles are merely formal and so empty until we know what is perfect. For this reason ethics fails to have the requisite certainty. For, Kant says, a principle of obligation tells us that we ought to do something. Either we ought to do something as a means to an end, in which case we can prove the principle, but it is not a case of moral obligation; or we ought to do something as an end, in which case the principle is unprovable. Fortunately, Hutcheson has shown us that the subordinate principles that give ethics content are objects not of knowledge but of unanalyzable feeling (PE 299). It is yet to be determined whether the primary principles of obligation are based on the faculty of knowledge or of feeling (PE 300).[12] Kant's conclusions are in one sense the reverse of those he will ultimately reach: it is speculative metaphysics which will be left unfounded, and practical philosophy which will be set on

a firm basis. Yet in the prize essay we see Kant set for himself the questions that will lead to his mature views: the question of the status of pure concepts, in metaphysics, and the question of rational determinability of ends and imperatives, in ethics.

THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Throughout the 1760s and 1770s Kant was working out the views that would constitute the critical philosophy. Kant published little in this period, but we know that he worked on ethics as well as metaphysics and decided against moral sense theory. In the Inaugural Dissertation[13] of 1770 Kant says:

> So *moral philosophy*, in as much as it supplies the first *principles of critical judgement*, is only cognised by the pure intellect and itself belongs to pure philosophy. And the man who reduced its criteria to the sense of pleasure or pain, Epicurus, is very rightly blamed, together with certain moderns who have followed him to some extent from afar, such men as Shaftesbury and his supporters. (ID 396)

We also have the *Lectures on Ethics*, notes taken by Kant's students in his ethics courses sometime in the years 1775–80, and the views in these are close to Kant's critical views. And we have Kant's own testimony, in a fragment written in the 1760s, of the profound influence exercised on his moral views by Rousseau, whose works he was reading.[14]

Although Kant's moral views were developing, their articulation had to await the working out of his conclusions about the status of metaphysics. The first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared in 1781. Its conclusions overthrew the dogmatic metaphysics of the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy; Mendelssohn referred to its author as "the all-destroying Kant."[15] In fact, Kant's aim was not to destroy, but to circumvent the skepticism of Hume. In the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Kant reports:

> I openly confess my recollection of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction. . . .
>
> 1. . . . first tried whether Hume's objection could not be put into a general form, and soon found that the concept of the connection of cause and effect was by no means the only concept by which the understanding thinks the connection of things *a priori*, but rather that metaphysics consists altogether of such concepts. I sought to ascertain their number; and when I had satisfactorily succeeded in this by starting from a single principle, I proceeded to the deduction of these concepts, which I was now certain were not derived from experience, as Hume had attempted to derive them, but sprang from the pure understanding. (PFM 260)

Hume and Kant agree that metaphysical principles such as "every event has a cause" are not analytic. In an analytic judgment the predicate is contained in the concept of the subject. A judgment that is not analytic is synthetic. If metaphysical principles are synthetic, we cannot lay them down as definitions and derive truths from them by the principle of contradiction. They must be demonstrated. But Hume showed that "every event has a cause" could not be derived from experience. Although not analytic, the judgment must be *a priori* – knowable by pure reason. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant provides the needed demonstration – or "deduction" – of the synthetic *a priori* principles of the understanding. "Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects." Instead, we must suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. For "we can know *a priori* of things only what we ourselves put into them" (C1 Bxvi–Bxviii). But Kant's deduction only licenses our use of the principles of pure understanding for objects *as we experience them*, that is, as "phenomena." It does not provide us with a justification for applying them to things as they are in themselves – to "noumena."

In this way Kant rescues the metaphysical basis of natural science from Humean skepticism. But he does so at great cost to speculative metaphysics, for the traditional proofs of God, immortality and freedom are undermined. Kant has not shown that there is no God, immortality or freedom, but rather that these things are beyond the limits of theoretical understanding. Yet theoretical reason, in its search for the unconditioned – for the completeness of its account of things – compels us to ask whether these things are real. Human reason, the opening lines of the *Critique of Pure Reason* tell us, is compelled by its nature to ask questions it is unable to answer.

These conclusions set the problems for Kant's practical philosophy. First, the moral law itself must be a synthetic *a priori* principle (G 420). For, as Kant had already emphasized in the prize essay, "The

formula in which all obligation is expressed is: One *ought* to do this or that and leave the other" and "every ought expresses a necessity of the action" (PE 298). But an ought statement cannot be derived from experience, which merely tells us how things are, and does not provide the required necessity. It must, therefore, be known *a priori*. But the moral ought cannot be established analytically. The argument for this, in the Second Section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), picks up where the prize essay left off 22 years before. Hypothetical imperatives – principles which instruct us to do certain actions if we want certain ends – are analytic. While their material content comes from a law of nature telling us that a certain action is a means to a certain end, the necessity expressed in the "ought" comes from a principle that is analytic for the will:

> Whoever wills the end, so far as reason has decisive influence on his action, wills also the indispensably necessary means to it that lie in his power. This proposition, in what concerns the will, is analytical; for, in willing an object as my effect, my causality as an acting cause, i.e. the use of the means, is already thought, and the imperative derives the concept of necessary actions to this end from the concept of willing this end. (G 417)

Willing something is determining yourself to be the cause of that thing, which means determining yourself to use the available causal connections – the means – to it. "Willing the end" is already posited as the hypothesis, and we need only analyze it to arrive at willing the means. If you will to be able to play the piano, then you already will to practice, as that is the "indispensably necessary means to it" that "lie in your power." But the moral ought is not expressed by a hypothetical imperative. Our duties hold for us regardless of what we want. A moral rule does not say "do this if you want that" but simply "do this." It is expressed in a categorical imperative. For instance, the moral law says that you must respect the rights of others. Nothing is already posited, which can then be analyzed. In the prize essay Kant had thought that this meant that the moral principle could not be established. Now he concludes instead that the categorical imperative is synthetic *a priori*, and requires a "deduction," like the deduction that established the principles of the pure understanding for the realm of experience.

The second result of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that bears on ethics concerns the issues of speculative metaphysics: God, freedom

and immortality. As already noted, Kant concluded that these could not be objects of theoretical knowledge. In fact, the attempt to determine whether they are realities gives rise to antinomies: apparently equally good arguments on both sides of the question. The most important of these, concerning freedom, will serve as an example. Freedom, as Kant understands it, is a special kind of causality – first or spontaneous causality, unconditioned by any prior cause. One may argue that there can be no first cause, on the grounds that it would violate the rule that every event has a cause. On the other hand, one may argue that there must be a first cause, since the sufficient cause of anything must include all the causes that have led up to it, and there can be no sufficient cause if this is an infinite regress (A444–52/B472–80). Christian August Crusius (1715–75), a Pietist critic of Wolff whom Kant admired, had written about the antinomies, appealing to them as evidence of the limitations of human reason, and the need for reliance on faith and revelation.[16] Kant now resolves the antinomies by appeal to his distinction between noumena and phenomena. The antinomies show how important this distinction is, for without it reason must be seen as giving rise to contradictions and skepticism will be justified. In some cases, the antinomy is generated by a sort of equivocation – phenomena are treated as if they were noumena, and both of the arguments are false (A505–6/B533–34). In other cases, it turns out that one of the arguments is true of phenomena, while the other could be true – although we do not know that it is – of noumena. The antinomy of freedom takes the latter form. In the phenomenal world, because it is temporal and causality is temporal succession according to a rule, every event has a cause, and there can be no freedom. But the noumenal world does not exist in time and a spontaneous causality is possible, though not knowable, in it (A536–41/B564–69).

This leaves room for belief in the freedom of the will, which is the foundation of morality (A542–58/B570–86). As we will see, freedom of the will is important to Kant not merely for the familiar reason that we cannot be held accountable if we are not free, but because it provides both the content of morality and its motive. Kant will ask "how would a free will with nothing constraining or guiding it determine its actions?" and he will argue that the answer is "by the moral law" (C2 29). This solves the problem set by the antinomy, although only from a practical point of view. For reason says that there must

be an uncaused cause in the noumenal world if an unconditional explanation of the phenomena can be given. Unless there is such a cause, the world is not, by the standards of human reason, intelligible. Speculative theoretical reason, however, cannot tell us what this cause would be. Practical reason, in providing us with the moral law, answers this question. This, according to Kant, provides us with a "credential" for believing in the reality of the moral law, and so in the freedom of our own wills (C2 48). Once Kant discovers that there is a moral basis for belief in the freedom of the will, he uses the same method to show that there is a moral basis for belief in God and immortality.

UNIVERSAL LAW AND HUMANITY

The views sketched above are not worked out until Kant writes the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). But first Kant produced a short book destined to become the main text for the study of his ethics, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). The purpose of this work is "the search for and establishment of the supreme principle of morality" (G 392). His plan was then to write a *Metaphysics of Morals*. In Kant's terminology, a "critique" investigates the legitimacy of applying pure rational principles and their concepts to objects; while a "metaphysics" sets forth those principles and their implications. The Third Section of the *Groundwork* contains a deduction of the moral law and so is a critique of practical reason; at the time he wrote this work, he thought that that would be sufficient. Later he saw that the moral law could be validated in a different way, and the *Critique of Practical Reason* was the result.[17] But we must turn to the *Groundwork* and the *Metaphysics of Morals* to get the substance of Kant's ethics, for in the second *Critique* the problem of validating the moral law and showing how it fits into his system supplants Kant's interest in its formulation and application.

Kant's method in the First Section of the *Groundwork* is analytic: he uses examples in order to analyze our ordinary conception of a good will and to arrive at a formulation of the principle on which such a will acts. A good will is easily distinguished from one that acts from an indirect inclination, doing the right thing merely as a means to some ulterior end, a "selfish purpose." The difficult thing is to distinguish a good will from a will that has a "direct inclination" to do something that is (as it happens) right (G 397ff.). For instance, there are people "so sympathetically constituted that without any motive of vanity or selfishness they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy, and rejoice in the contentment of others which they have made possible" (G 398). Having a natural inclination to do what coincides with duty is not the same thing as acting from duty, so for clarity we must contrast this case with one where the duty is done without natural inclination. Take someone whose mind is "clouded by a sorrow of his own which extinguished all sympathy with the lot of others" or one who is "by temperament cold and indifferent to the sufferings of others" (G 398). If such a person is nevertheless beneficent, it must be from a good will. What is the principle on which he or she acts? We see, first, that such a person does his or her duty just because it is his or her duty. Furthermore, we see that what makes him or her do it – and so what makes it his or her duty – is not simply its purpose. For the naturally sympathetic person and the unsympathetic but beneficent person both have the same purpose, helping others, although one has this purpose because of a direct inclination and the other has it from duty. *Both* are contrasted with the selfish man who does the right thing for an ulterior purpose, such as fear of punishment or hope of reward.

Duty, then, is not a matter of having certain purposes. If we remove all purposes – all material – from the will, what is left is the formal principle of the will. The formal principle of duty is just that it is duty – that it is law. The essential character of law is universality. Therefore, the person who acts from duty attends to the universality of his/her principle. He or she only acts on a maxim that he or she could will to be a universal law (G 402). In this way Kant moves from the idea that a good will is one that acts from duty to a principle that can be used to tell us what our duties are.[18]

In the Second Section Kant reaches the same point by another route: the investigation of rational action. "Everything in nature works according to laws. Only a rational being has the capacity of acting according to the conception of laws, that is, according to principles" (G 412). The principle that you give to yourself, that you act on, Kant calls a "maxim." Your maxim must contain your reason for action: it must say what you are going to do, and why. If your maxim is one that it is rational to act on, it meets certain tests. commands of reason expressed in imperatives. Your action must be a

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A later challenge to the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy came when Germans began to study the British Empiricists, especially Hume. In Berlin after the middle of the century a movement called "popular philosophy" flourished under the influence of Frederick the Great, overlapping in its membership with the Berlin Academy which Frederick had revitalized. Both groups were interested in the philosophical traditions of France and Britain, and the works of Locke, Berkeley, Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, Reid, and Rousseau were translated. Moral sense theory was much admired, by Kant among others. Thus, rationalism in ethics was opposed both by the appeal to religion and

the appeal to moral feeling and happiness. After the middle of the century rationalist metaphysics too came increasingly under attack.

And so in 1763 the Berlin Academy offered a prize for the best essay on the topic "Whether metaphysical truths generally, and in particular the fundamental principles of natural theology and morals, are not capable of proofs as distinct as those of geometry; and if they are not, what is the true nature of their certainty, to what degree can this certainty be developed, and is this degree sufficient for conviction [of their truth]?"[11] One of the competitors was Kant, although he did not win the prize, which went to Moses Mendelssohn (1729–86). In his essay Kant denies that metaphysics has the same method as mathematics. The difficulty is that the concepts of metaphysics cannot be established synthetically the way the concepts of mathematics can. In mathematics the concepts create their objects, and we can be certain that they contain what we have put into them. Philosophy, on the other hand, has to analyze concepts which are given to it obscurely (PE 276–78; 283ff.). Yet metaphysics is still seen to be possible and capable of a certainty sufficient for conviction: we must draw our inferences only from those predicates of a concept of which we are certain, and not jump to the conclusion that we have arrived at a complete definition (PE 292–93). Kant's ethical views in this essay display a curious combination of influences from Wolff and Hutcheson. The moral principles are the Wolffian "do the most perfect possible by you" and "do not do that which would hinder the greatest possible perfection realizable through you" (PE 299). Yet these principles are merely formal and so empty until we know what is perfect. For this reason ethics fails to have the requisite certainty. For, Kant says, a principle of obligation tells us that we ought to do something. Either we ought to do something as a means to an end, in which case we can prove the principle, but it is not a case of moral obligation; or we ought to do something as an end, in which case the principle is unprovable. Fortunately, Hutcheson has shown us that the subordinate principles that give ethics content are objects not of knowledge but of unanalyzable feeling (PE 299). It is yet to be determined whether the primary principles of obligation are based on the faculty of knowledge or of feeling (PE 300).[12] Kant's conclusions are in one sense the reverse of those he will ultimately reach: it is speculative metaphysics which will be left unfounded, and practical philosophy which will be set on

a firm basis. Yet in the prize essay we see Kant set for himself the questions that will lead to his mature views: the question of the status of pure concepts, in metaphysics, and the question of rational determinability of ends and imperatives, in ethics.

THE CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Throughout the 1760s and 1770s Kant was working out the views that would constitute the critical philosophy. Kant published little in this period, but we know that he worked on ethics as well as metaphysics and decided against moral sense theory. In the Inaugural Dissertation[13] of 1770 Kant says:

> So *moral philosophy*, in as much as it supplies the first *principles of critical judgement*, is only cognised by the pure intellect and itself belongs to pure philosophy. And the man who reduced its criteria to the sense of pleasure or pain, Epicurus, is very rightly blamed, together with certain moderns who have followed him to some extent from afar, such men as Shaftesbury and his supporters. (ID 396)

We also have the *Lectures on Ethics*, notes taken by Kant's students in his ethics courses sometime in the years 1775–80, and the views in these are close to Kant's critical views. And we have Kant's own testimony, in a fragment written in the 1760s, of the profound influence exercised on his moral views by Rousseau, whose works he was reading.[14]

Although Kant's moral views were developing, their articulation had to await the working out of his conclusions about the status of metaphysics. The first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared in 1781. Its conclusions overthrew the dogmatic metaphysics of the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy; Mendelssohn referred to its author as "the all-destroying Kant."[15] In fact, Kant's aim was not to destroy, but to circumvent the skepticism of Hume. In the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, Kant reports:

> I openly confess my recollection of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction. . . .
>
> 1. . . . first tried whether Hume's objection could not be put into a general form, and soon found that the concept of the connection of cause and effect was by no means the only concept by which the understanding thinks the connection of things *a priori*, but rather that metaphysics consists altogether of such concepts. I sought to ascertain their number; and when I had satisfactorily succeeded in this by starting from a single principle, I proceeded to the deduction of these concepts, which I was now certain were not derived from experience, as Hume had attempted to derive them, but sprang from the pure understanding. (PFM 260)

Hume and Kant agree that metaphysical principles such as "every event has a cause" are not analytic. In an analytic judgment the predicate is contained in the concept of the subject. A judgment that is not analytic is synthetic. If metaphysical principles are synthetic, we cannot lay them down as definitions and derive truths from them by the principle of contradiction. They must be demonstrated. But Hume showed that "every event has a cause" could not be derived from experience. Although not analytic, the judgment must be *a priori* – knowable by pure reason. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant provides the needed demonstration – or "deduction" – of the synthetic *a priori* principles of the understanding. "Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge must conform to objects." Instead, we must suppose that objects must conform to our knowledge. For "we can know *a priori* of things only what we ourselves put into them" (C1 Bxvi–Bxviii). But Kant's deduction only licenses our use of the principles of pure understanding for objects *as we experience them*, that is, as "phenomena." It does not provide us with a justification for applying them to things as they are in themselves – to "noumena."

In this way Kant rescues the metaphysical basis of natural science from Humean skepticism. But he does so at great cost to speculative metaphysics, for the traditional proofs of God, immortality and freedom are undermined. Kant has not shown that there is no God, immortality or freedom, but rather that these things are beyond the limits of theoretical understanding. Yet theoretical reason, in its search for the unconditioned – for the completeness of its account of things – compels us to ask whether these things are real. Human reason, the opening lines of the *Critique of Pure Reason* tell us, is compelled by its nature to ask questions it is unable to answer.

These conclusions set the problems for Kant's practical philosophy. First, the moral law itself must be a synthetic *a priori* principle (G 420). For, as Kant had already emphasized in the prize essay, "The

formula in which all obligation is expressed is: One *ought* to do this or that and leave the other" and "every ought expresses a necessity of the action" (PE 298). But an ought statement cannot be derived from experience, which merely tells us how things are, and does not provide the required necessity. It must, therefore, be known *a priori*. But the moral ought cannot be established analytically. The argument for this, in the Second Section of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), picks up where the prize essay left off 22 years before. Hypothetical imperatives – principles which instruct us to do certain actions if we want certain ends – are analytic. While their material content comes from a law of nature telling us that a certain action is a means to a certain end, the necessity expressed in the "ought" comes from a principle that is analytic for the will:

> Whoever wills the end, so far as reason has decisive influence on his action, wills also the indispensably necessary means to it that lie in his power. This proposition, in what concerns the will, is analytical; for, in willing an object as my effect, my causality as an acting cause, i.e. the use of the means, is already thought, and the imperative derives the concept of necessary actions to this end from the concept of willing this end. (G 417)

Willing something is determining yourself to be the cause of that thing, which means determining yourself to use the available causal connections – the means – to it. "Willing the end" is already posited as the hypothesis, and we need only analyze it to arrive at willing the means. If you will to be able to play the piano, then you already will to practice, as that is the "indispensably necessary means to it" that "lie in your power." But the moral ought is not expressed by a hypothetical imperative. Our duties hold for us regardless of what we want. A moral rule does not say "do this if you want that" but simply "do this." It is expressed in a categorical imperative. For instance, the moral law says that you must respect the rights of others. Nothing is already posited, which can then be analyzed. In the prize essay Kant had thought that this meant that the moral principle could not be established. Now he concludes instead that the categorical imperative is synthetic *a priori*, and requires a "deduction," like the deduction that established the principles of the pure understanding for the realm of experience.

The second result of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that bears on ethics concerns the issues of speculative metaphysics: God, freedom

and immortality. As already noted, Kant concluded that these could not be objects of theoretical knowledge. In fact, the attempt to determine whether they are realities gives rise to antinomies: apparently equally good arguments on both sides of the question. The most important of these, concerning freedom, will serve as an example. Freedom, as Kant understands it, is a special kind of causality – first or spontaneous causality, unconditioned by any prior cause. One may argue that there can be no first cause, on the grounds that it would violate the rule that every event has a cause. On the other hand, one may argue that there must be a first cause, since the sufficient cause of anything must include all the causes that have led up to it, and there can be no sufficient cause if this is an infinite regress (A444–52/B472–80). Christian August Crusius (1715–75), a Pietist critic of Wolff whom Kant admired, had written about the antinomies, appealing to them as evidence of the limitations of human reason, and the need for reliance on faith and revelation.[16] Kant now resolves the antinomies by appeal to his distinction between noumena and phenomena. The antinomies show how important this distinction is, for without it reason must be seen as giving rise to contradictions and skepticism will be justified. In some cases, the antinomy is generated by a sort of equivocation – phenomena are treated as if they were noumena, and both of the arguments are false (A505–6/B533–34). In other cases, it turns out that one of the arguments is true of phenomena, while the other could be true – although we do not know that it is – of noumena. The antinomy of freedom takes the latter form. In the phenomenal world, because it is temporal and causality is temporal succession according to a rule, every event has a cause, and there can be no freedom. But the noumenal world does not exist in time and a spontaneous causality is possible, though not knowable, in it (A536–41/B564–69).

This leaves room for belief in the freedom of the will, which is the foundation of morality (A542–58/B570–86). As we will see, freedom of the will is important to Kant not merely for the familiar reason that we cannot be held accountable if we are not free, but because it provides both the content of morality and its motive. Kant will ask "how would a free will with nothing constraining or guiding it determine its actions?" and he will argue that the answer is "by the moral law" (C2 29). This solves the problem set by the antinomy, although only from a practical point of view. For reason says that there must

be an uncaused cause in the noumenal world if an unconditional explanation of the phenomena can be given. Unless there is such a cause, the world is not, by the standards of human reason, intelligible. Speculative theoretical reason, however, cannot tell us what this cause would be. Practical reason, in providing us with the moral law, answers this question. This, according to Kant, provides us with a "credential" for believing in the reality of the moral law, and so in the freedom of our own wills (C2 48). Once Kant discovers that there is a moral basis for belief in the freedom of the will, he uses the same method to show that there is a moral basis for belief in God and immortality.

UNIVERSAL LAW AND HUMANITY

The views sketched above are not worked out until Kant writes the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). But first Kant produced a short book destined to become the main text for the study of his ethics, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). The purpose of this work is "the search for and establishment of the supreme principle of morality" (G 392). His plan was then to write a *Metaphysics of Morals*. In Kant's terminology, a "critique" investigates the legitimacy of applying pure rational principles and their concepts to objects; while a "metaphysics" sets forth those principles and their implications. The Third Section of the *Groundwork* contains a deduction of the moral law and so is a critique of practical reason; at the time he wrote this work, he thought that that would be sufficient. Later he saw that the moral law could be validated in a different way, and the *Critique of Practical Reason* was the result.[17] But we must turn to the *Groundwork* and the *Metaphysics of Morals* to get the substance of Kant's ethics, for in the second *Critique* the problem of validating the moral law and showing how it fits into his system supplants Kant's interest in its formulation and application.

Kant's method in the First Section of the *Groundwork* is analytic: he uses examples in order to analyze our ordinary conception of a good will and to arrive at a formulation of the principle on which such a will acts. A good will is easily distinguished from one that acts from an indirect inclination, doing the right thing merely as a means to some ulterior end, a "selfish purpose." The difficult thing is to distinguish a good will from a will that has a "direct inclination" to do something that is (as it happens) right (G 397ff.). For instance, there are people "so sympathetically constituted that without any motive of vanity or selfishness they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy, and rejoice in the contentment of others which they have made possible" (G 398). Having a natural inclination to do what coincides with duty is not the same thing as acting from duty, so for clarity we must contrast this case with one where the duty is done without natural inclination. Take someone whose mind is "clouded by a sorrow of his own which extinguished all sympathy with the lot of others" or one who is "by temperament cold and indifferent to the sufferings of others" (G 398). If such a person is nevertheless beneficent, it must be from a good will. What is the principle on which he or she acts? We see, first, that such a person does his or her duty just because it is his or her duty. Furthermore, we see that what makes him or her do it – and so what makes it his or her duty – is not simply its purpose. For the naturally sympathetic person and the unsympathetic but beneficent person both have the same purpose, helping others, although one has this purpose because of a direct inclination and the other has it from duty. *Both* are contrasted with the selfish man who does the right thing for an ulterior purpose, such as fear of punishment or hope of reward.

Duty, then, is not a matter of having certain purposes. If we remove all purposes – all material – from the will, what is left is the formal principle of the will. The formal principle of duty is just that it is duty – that it is law. The essential character of law is universality. Therefore, the person who acts from duty attends to the universality of his/her principle. He or she only acts on a maxim that he or she could will to be a universal law (G 402). In this way Kant moves from the idea that a good will is one that acts from duty to a principle that can be used to tell us what our duties are.[18]

In the Second Section Kant reaches the same point by another route: the investigation of rational action. "Everything in nature works according to laws. Only a rational being has the capacity of acting according to the conception of laws, that is, according to principles" (G 412). The principle that you give to yourself, that you act on, Kant calls a "maxim." Your maxim must contain your reason for action: it must say what you are going to do, and why. If your maxim is one that it is rational to act on, it meets certain tests, commands of reason expressed in imperatives. Your action must be a

means to your end, and (unless it is morally required) your end must be consistent with your happiness. These tests are embodied in the two kinds of hypothetical imperatives, those of skill and prudence. But there is also an imperative that tells us what we must do, regardless of our private purposes. This is the moral or categorical imperative, and because it is independent of all material, we know that "there is nothing remaining in it except the universality of law as such to which the maxim of the action should conform" (G 421). So from the very idea of a categorical imperative we can tell that it says: "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (G 421; C2 27).

But how can you tell whether you are able to will your maxim as a universal law? On Kant's view, it is a matter of what you can will *without contradiction*. This is important, for it helps to secure the categorical character of the results – any agent who applies the contradiction test should get the same result, regardless of his/her private interests. To determine whether you can will your maxim at the same time as its universalization without contradiction, you envision trying to will your maxim in a world in which the maxim is universalized – in which it is a law of nature. You are to "Ask yourself whether, if the action which you propose should take place by a law of nature of which you yourself were a part, you could regard it as possible through your will" (C2 69). Contradiction may arise in two ways: if the maxim cannot even be *conceived* as a law of nature without contradiction, it is contrary to strict or perfect duty; if it can be conceived but could not be *willed* without contradiction, it is contrary to broad or imperfect duty (G 424).

The best example of the first sort of contradiction concerns a man whose maxim is to make a false promise in order to get some money, which he knows he will be unable to repay. To see whether this can be willed as a universal law, we imagine a world in which this is, so to speak, the standard procedure for getting ready money – it is a law of nature that anyone who needs money tries to get it this way. Then we imagine the agent trying to will to act on his maxim in that world. Kant tells us that this gives rise to a contradiction because such universalization would make "the promise itself and the end to be accomplished by it impossible; no one would believe what was promised to him but would only laugh at any such assertion as vain pretense" (G 422). It is important to notice the sense in which this is

a contradiction. Kant's view, as we saw earlier, is that hypothetical imperatives are analytic, because they express a relation of conceptual containment. The negation of an analytic statement is a contradiction. The man in the example derives his maxim from a hypothetical imperative: "If you want some ready money, you ought to make a false promise." This imperative is derived from a causal "law" – that false promising is a means to getting ready money – combined with the analytic principle that whoever wills the end wills the means. The causal "law" in question, however, turns out to be no law at all, because false promising could not be the *universal* method of getting ready money. The efficacy of a lying promise depends on the fact that it is exceptional, for people believe promises only because they are normally made in good faith, and lend money on the basis of them only because they believe them. In willing the universalization of his maxim, the deceitful promiser wills a world in which promises of this kind are not normally in good faith and therefore will not be accepted. This means that they will not be a means to getting ready money, and that the hypothetical imperative from which the deceitful promiser derives his own maxim will be falsified. This is where we get the contradiction: the lying promiser who attempts to will the universalization of his maxim wills the denial of the analytical principle on which he himself proposes to act, and the denial of an analytical principle is a contradiction.[19] Later critics claim that undermining the efficacy of promises is only a contradiction if promises are themselves necessary. But Kant's point in the example is more modest than that; it is not intended to establish that promises are necessary. Promises are necessary for the man in the example, because *he* proposes to use a promise as the means to his own end.[20] This is why Kant says that he cannot will his maxim and its universalization *at the same time*. Whenever you propose to perform an action whose efficacy depends on its exceptional character, you get a contradiction of this kind.

The other kind of contradiction arises when you attempt to will the universalization of some policy which would undermine the will's efficacy more generally. For instance, if you try to will a universal policy of neglecting talents and powers, you contradict your will because these serve you for "all sorts of possible purposes" (G 423). If you try to will a universal policy of not helping others, you contradict your will because you yourself, as a finite rational being, are

often in need of assistance.[21] Kant is not offering an egoistic reason for an actual agreement here. Imagining yourself in a world without assistance is a thought experiment to determine whether you can will your maxim as a universal law. The duty of helping others holds even if you do not in fact get any assistance from anyone else, or have any real hope that you will.

At this point Kant has only told us what the categorical imperative is if there is one (G 425). But just as the laws of the understanding had to be established by a deduction showing that they apply to the world of experience, the categorical imperative must be established by showing that it actually applies to the human will. "The possibility of reason thus determining conduct must now be investigated" (G 427). While this possibility cannot be established until the critical argument of the Third Section, the rest of the Second Section prepares the way.

Kant begins from his thesis that one always acts with some end in view. Ends may provide us with reasons positively, as purposes to be achieved, or negatively, as things we must not act against. If there is a categorical imperative, there must be an objective end, one determined by reason itself and so attributed to every rational will; when we act on the categorical imperative, this will be the end we have in view (G 427–28; MPV 385). What would this end be? This kind of absolute value cannot be found in the objects of our desires, for they get their value from the fact that we desire them. Nor can it be found in our desires themselves, or in the various objects around us available for use as means. Rather, Kant says, "man, and, in general, every rational being exists as an end in himself" (G 428).

This conclusion harks back to the claim with which the *Groundwork* opens: the only thing which has unconditional value is a good will. A thing has conditional value if its value depends on whether certain conditions hold. For instance, the value of the means depends on the value of the end it serves; and the value of an object of desire depends on whether satisfying the desire will really contribute to the person's happiness. Even happiness is not valuable in all cases, and so is conditional. A thing has unconditional value if it has its value in itself and so has it under all conditions. Ultimately all value must spring from a source which is unconditionally valuable, for as long as we can question the value of something, we have not reached the end of its conditions. Kant's view is that only a good will

has unconditional value of this kind. Since it is the objects of our own choices which we take to be good, and those objects do not have value in themselves, the source of value must be something that rests in us. It is not our needs and desires, for those are not always good. It must, therefore, be our humanity, our rational nature and capacity for rational choice. This is not different from saying it is a good will, for rational nature, in its perfect state, is a good will (G 428–29; C2 57–67; 87).

Kant says that the principle "rational nature exists as an end in itself" is a subjective principle of human actions, but that since every rational being holds it, it must be taken to be objective as well (G 429). Because each of us holds his/her own ends to be good, each of us regards his/her own humanity as a *source of value*. In consistency, we must attribute the same kind of value to the humanity of others. These considerations establish humanity as the objective end needed for the determination of the will by a categorical imperative. It is a negative end, one that is not to be acted against, rather than a purpose to be achieved. This leads Kant to a new formulation of the imperative, the Formula of Humanity: "Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" (G 429).[22]

Kant then treats the same set of examples he used earlier, showing how the immoral maxims involve a violation of the unconditional value of humanity. Violations of perfect duty occur when the power of rational choice definitive of humanity is made subordinate to other, merely conditional goods. A suicide, for instance, treats his/her own humanity as something he/she can throw away for the sake of his/her comfort (G 429; MPV 422–23). Anyone who uses deceptive or coercive methods to undermine the freedom of choice and action exercised by others also violates perfect duty. The lying promiser uses the lender as a mere means because he tricks him into giving away his money rather than allowing him to *choose* whether or not to do so. He thus treats his having the money, a conditional good, as if it were more important than the other's humanity. Coercion (except to protect rights) and deception are unjustifiable no matter what end they serve, for a good end is an object of every rational will, and reason is "just the verdict of free citizens" (C2 62; C1 A739–40/B767).[23]

Although humanity is not a purpose to be achieved, we can act in

a way that expresses a positive value for it, and imperfect duty is violated when we do not. We ought to realize our humanity by developing our talents and powers, our rational capacities. We ought to acknowledge that others are sources of value by treating their chosen ends as good, and pursuing their happiness as they see it (MPV 388). All human activities and pursuits are to be regarded as good as long as everyone can in principle agree to them. "This principle of humanity and of every rational creature as an end in itself is the supreme limiting condition on the freedom of the actions of each man" (G 430–31). The same idea is implicit in the Formula of Universal Law: for your reason to be sufficient, it need only be universalizable. Adoption of humanity as the unconditional end leads to the conduct which the Formula of Universal Law prescribes.

CATEGORIES OF DUTY: THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS

In the *Groundwork*, a footnote to the first discussion of the four examples warns the reader that Kant will make his own division of duties when he writes the *Metaphysics of Morals*. He says that he has adopted the division normally in use by the schools, with one difference: he thinks that there are inner as well as outer perfect duties (G 421n). When Kant did publish the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797) he introduced a more rich and complicated classification of duties. Before moving to the question of how Kant establishes the validity of the moral law, I will describe the system of duties that Kant sets out in his later work.[24]

The *Metaphysics of Morals* is divided into two parts: the *Metaphysical Principles of Justice* and the *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*. The *Metaphysical Principles of Justice* deals with *Recht*, right, and is concerned with the question how natural and acquired rights are possible, and how they give rise to political society. The duties it deals with are "outer": the sense in which you "have a duty" not to interfere with the freedom and property of another is that the other is authorized to use coercion against you if you do (MPJ 231). Rights arise from the Universal Principle of Justice: "act externally in such a way that the free use of your will is compatible with the freedom of everyone according to a universal law" (MPJ 231). This principle is analytic, since one may arrive at it by analyzing the notion of external freedom (MPJ 231; MPV 396). Freedom can only be limited by itself – your freedom is as extensive as possible consistent with the same freedom for others. Anything that prevents a hindrance to freedom is consistent with freedom. So, if someone tries to undermine your freedom and you use coercion against him/her, that is consistent with freedom – with universal freedom and so with *his* or *her* freedom. It follows by the law of contradiction that a right is united with the authorization to use coercion against anyone who violates it (MPJ 231–233). We have an innate right to freedom, and we may acquire property rights. This is because of the Juridical Postulate of Practical Reason, according to which external objects may be property. Kant sees ownership as necessary for the use of objects as means. An object that cannot be owned cannot be effectively used, and so is, from a practical point of view, nothing at all. It would be inconsistent with freedom to limit it by nullifying the means it might use, so it follows that it must be possible for objects to be property (MPJ 246). A property right is correlated with an outer duty – a duty of justice. To say "this is my book" means that the imperative "you ought not to take this book" has acquired categorical or moral status. In this way outer duties – things that others may legitimately make us do or refrain from – are established. They are extensions of our innate right to freedom.

The *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* deals with inner duties, duties of virtue. A duty of virtue differs from one of justice in several ways. First, a duty of virtue involves the free adoption of some end which pure practical reason directs. Duties of virtue arise from the Supreme Principle of the Doctrine of Virtue: "Act according to a maxim whose ends are such that it can be a universal law that everyone have these ends" (MPV 395).[25] Unlike the Universal Principle of Justice, this principle is synthetic: since it directs the adoption of ends and so concerns our motives, it must be established that it applies to the human will. It is deduced from the possibility of pure practical reason. It is a feature of human beings and probably all finite rational beings that we always act for an end (R 6n–8n; TP 279n–80n). And, "since sensible inclinations may misdirect us to ends (the matter of choice) which may be contrary to duty, legislative reason cannot guard against their influence other than, in turn, by means of an opposing moral end, which therefore must be given *a priori* independently of inclination" (MPV 381). Practical reason is a

faculty of ends, so if there is pure practical reason there must be necessary ends. This means that there are duties to have these ends, duties of virtue (MPV 395).

The ends that reason sets are humanity in one's own person and that of every other, and, following from that, one's own perfection – moral and natural – and the happiness of others (MPV 385–88). Virtue also encompasses the duties of justice: rights are sacred to a person who values humanity, and acts of justice are transformed into acts of virtue when done for this reason. To achieve virtue we must adopt these ends freely. We cannot be coerced to adopt them, in two senses: it is impossible in fact to force someone to adopt an end, and it would in any case be illegitimate to do so. My lacking a good moral disposition cannot hinder your freedom, but only my performing wrong actions (MPV 381–82).

Duties of virtue are of broad obligation, while duties of justice are of strict obligation. Duties of justice require particular actions or omissions, and the obligation is strict because it can be discharged. If you perform a just action, it is not creditable, but just what you owe. If you do not, you have done something bad (MPV 389–94; but see R 22n–23n). Duties of virtue, by contrast, tell you to adopt and pursue certain ends. Such a duty cannot simply be discharged, for the ends in question cannot be completely achieved. So the obligation here is broad. To the extent that you pursue the end, as an end dictated by the law, you achieve moral worth. So, for example, the person who transgresses the rights of others is bad, the person who simply conforms to the law merely does what is owed, but the person who conforms to the law *because* he or she has made the rights of humanity his or her end is morally good (MPV 390–91).

The distinction between strict and broad obligations is sometimes confused with the distinction between perfect and imperfect duties. Kant himself does not use the four terms in a perspicuous way.[26] Perfect duties require definite actions or omissions, while in the case of imperfect duties inclination is allowed to play a role in determining exactly what and how much we will do to carry them out. Duties of justice are all perfect, but there are both imperfect and perfect duties of virtue. We have an imperfect duty of virtue when there is a positive end to promote, but the law does not say exactly how. For instance, you ought to develop your talents and powers, but you may choose those that are suitable to your occupation and tastes

(MPV 392). You ought to promote the happiness of others, but you may concentrate your efforts on the happiness of your friends (MPV 390). Perfect duties of virtue arise because we must refrain from particular actions *against* humanity in our own person or that of another. Suicide, physically destructive habits, and the failures of self-respect exhibited in self-deception and servility violate perfect duties to ourselves (MPV 421–44). Failures of respect, such as calumny, mockery and pride, violate perfect duties to others (MPV 462–68). And the general duty to *adopt* morally good ends – the duty of moral perfection – is perfect. Adopting an end is a definite, though internal, action. But making something your end and making that end the motive of your conduct is not something a human being can simply *decide* all at once to do. Our motives for the outward acts we do for these ends may be mixed with non-moral motives, and we cannot be certain that they are pure (MPV 392–93; 441–42; see also R 29–30). For instance, you may resolve, when tempted, not to commit suicide not only because you value humanity in your own person but because you are afraid; or your beneficence may require the support of your natural sympathies. So Kant says of the duty of moral perfection that it is "in quality strict and perfect, though in degree it is broad and imperfect" (MPV 446). The internal actions that are required are definite, but they are not dischargeable. Valuing humanity in the proper way must be worked at: it is an internal labor with which we are never simply done. So the obligations of virtue are always broad.

So there are four categories of duties of virtue: (1) perfect duties to oneself, to preserve and respect the humanity in one's own person; (2) imperfect duties to oneself, to develop one's humanity, intellectually and physically; (3) duties of love for others, to promote their happiness; and (4) duties of respect for others, including respect for their rights. The degree of one's virtue is measured by the extent to which one succeeds in doing all of these duties from the pure moral motive of regard for humanity. Complete virtue is unattainable (in this life), so our duty to achieve it is itself of broad obligation: it is a duty to progress towards it (MPV 409; C2 82–86; TP 284–85).

Kant explains all of our duties in terms of freedom. Duties of justice spring from the very idea of external freedom: a world in which everyone's rights are respected is a world in which complete external freedom is achieved. Virtue is the achievement of inner

freedom, for the virtuous person acts from freely chosen ends rather than being governed by inclinations and desires. If both of these kinds of duties were universally practiced, human beings would be in every sense free.

AUTONOMY AND THE KINGDOM OF ENDS

The next step in the *Groundwork* argument is to relate the two formulas already given to one another and produce a third.

> Objectively the ground of all practical legislation lies (according to the first principle) in the rule and in the form of universality, which makes it capable of being a law . . . subjectively, it lies in the end. But the subject of all ends is every rational being as an end in itself (by the second principle); from this there follows the third practical principle of the will as the supreme condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, viz., the idea of the will of every rational being as making universal law. (G 431)

Rational beings are the determiners of ends – the ones who set value on things. So a rational being must value rational nature as an end in itself; and it is with this end in view that we act only on maxims which could be universal laws. Since we are the ones who make rational nature our end, we are the ones who give ourselves this law. We are autonomous.

There are two ways of being motivated, autonomously and heteronomously. When you are motivated autonomously, you act on a law that you give to yourself; when you act heteronomously, the law is imposed on you by means of a sanction – you are provided with an interest in acting on it. Take a simple example: you might obey some positive law – for instance, you might pay your taxes – because you are afraid of being punished if you do not. This is heteronomy: your interest in avoiding punishment binds you to the law. On the other hand, you might pay your taxes even if you believe that you could avoid it, either because you think everyone should pay their share, or because you think that people should obey laws made by popular legislation. These would be, in an ordinary sense, examples of autonomy – of giving the law to yourself because of some commitment to it or belief in it as a law.

From what I have said so far, it looks as if you could adopt any principle autonomously, and the idea of autonomy does not determine the content of the principle that is autonomously adopted. But Kant claims that it does, and that the categorical imperative is in a special way *the* principle of autonomy. Heteronomous motivation can only be associated with hypothetical imperatives, for the hypothesis expresses the interest that binds you to the law. The main problem with most ethical theorists before Kant is that they have failed to see that moral motivation cannot be heteronomous. Duty is supposed to obligate us unconditionally. Any theory that tries to explain obligation by offering us an interest of some kind in doing our duty provides us with a principle that commands hypothetically, not categorically. When the imperative is hypothetical, we always have an option: either perform the action, or give up the interest. To explain obligation, we need an imperative that binds us unconditionally. But this means that moral motivation, if it exists, must be autonomous. There can only be one reason why human beings must obey the moral law, and that is that we give that law to ourselves (G 432–33).

The human will must be seen as universally legislative. Each of us has a will that makes laws for itself as if for everyone. Since human beings together legislate the moral law, we form a moral community: a Kingdom of Ends. The Kingdom of Ends is an ideal. It is "a systematic union of different rational beings through common laws," a republic of all rational beings. It is a community in which freedom is perfectly realized, for its citizens are free both in the sense that they have made their own laws and in the sense that the laws they have made are the laws of freedom – the juridical laws of external freedom and the ethical laws of internal freedom. The Kingdom of Ends is also "a whole of rational beings as ends in themselves as well as of the particular ends which each may set for himself," a system of all good ends (G 433). Each citizen takes his own perfection and the happiness of others as an end and treats every other as an end in itself. It is a community engaged in the harmonious and cooperative pursuit of the good.

The Kingdom of Ends provides us with a way of representing the sense in which moral laws are laws of autonomy. Suppose all rational beings were really to form a Kingdom of Ends, and held a constitutional convention to make its laws. What laws would we choose? Each of us would be eager to preserve his or her own freedom, so we would have to choose laws that preserved the freedom of

each according to a universal law. Since we would will a world in which the assistance of others and the resources of human talents were available for use as the means of action, we would will that each person contribute something to the obligatory ends. The laws we would choose to be under, if it were ours to choose, would be moral laws. When we do obey moral laws, then, we are autonomous and free.[27] It is only because we are imperfectly rational, and subject to the importunities of desire, that morality appears to us as constraint – as *duty* (G 397).

This gives Kant another way of formulating the categorical imperative. We are always to act as if we were legislating for the Kingdom of Ends (G 434). Of course, this ideal is not actually brought about by the individual's living up to it. The accidents of nature, and the actions of other people, may distort the results of morally good conduct, and lead to the unhappiness of the moral agent or others. But since the moral law commands categorically, we must nevertheless act as legislators in the Kingdom of Ends. Although this seems like a constraint when the results will be bad, there is a sense in which the agent's freedom is highlighted in such a case. The agent is not constrained by external forces to act against the rational ideal that is the object of his/her will.

THE FOUNDATION OF MORALITY

If there is a categorical imperative, a law of pure reason applying to the will, then these three formulas tell us what it is. But to demonstrate that the categorical imperative is real, Kant needs to show something else – that the human will can be motivated by it. Otherwise morality is a "mere phantom of the mind" (G 445), a dogma of rationalist metaphysics which does not apply to the world. To establish the moral law, we need a critique of practical reason.

The categorical imperative is synthetic. Morality is not contained in the concept of a rational will. When a proposition is synthetic, its two terms must be linked "through their union with a third in which both of them are to be found": it must be deduced (G 447). Kant's view is that this third term is provided by the positive conception of the freedom of the will. His argument is that (1) a rational will must be regarded as a free will, and (2) a free will is a will under moral law. Therefore, a rational will is a will under moral law.

The second premise is proved first. The will is the causality of a rational being. If the will's actions – its choices and decisions – are determined by the laws of nature, it is not a free will. Suppose that all your choices could be traced to a psychological law of nature: say, "a person's will is always determined by the strength of his/her desires." Although you would always do what you "want most," your will would not be free. A free will is one that is not determined by any external force, even your own desires. This is the negative conception of freedom. But we also require a positive conception of freedom. The will is a causality, and the concept of a causality entails laws: a causality which functions randomly is a contradiction. To put it another way, the will is practical reason, and we cannot conceive a practical reason that chooses and acts for no reason. Since reasons are derived from principles, the will must have a principle. A free will must therefore have its own law or principle, which it gives to itself. It must be an autonomous will. But the moral law is the law of an autonomous will. Kant concludes that "a free will and a will under moral laws are identical" (G 447).[28]

Readers are often puzzled by this argument. If the will is free to choose its own principle, why should it be under the moral law? To see why, consider the problem from the perspective of a free rational will. Because it is a rational will, it must have a principle. Because it is free, it must choose this principle for itself. Nothing determines this choice: it is completely spontaneous. Since its principle determines what it counts as a reason, nothing yet counts as a reason for it. But if nothing yet counts as a reason for it, it appears to have no basis for choosing its principle. There is no constraint on its choice, except that it choose a law. But notice that this is just what the Formula of Universal Law says. The only constraint that it imposes on our choices is that they have the form of law. Nothing provides any content for that law; all that it has to be is a law. The moral law simply describes the position of a free will. When the will's choices are directed by the moral law, it expresses its spontaneity. The moral law is the law of spontaneity. The will that is governed by morality is free.

On the other hand, if the will allows its choices to be directed by an external force, it surrenders its freedom. In *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Kant emphasizes that this is a *Fall*, perverse and inexplicable (R 34–35, 41–44, 78–79). Since the free will is not

moved by desire unless it chooses to be, the will's surrender of its freedom cannot be explained by the pressures of temptation. Susceptibility to temptation is itself the product of the will's perverse choice to allow incentives of inclination to outweigh moral incentives (R 23–24, 30, 36–37).

But why should we believe that the human will is free? In the *Groundwork*, Kant begins this part of the argument by observing that as rational beings we must act under the idea of freedom. When we make rational choices and decisions, we must think of ourselves as free. A being which must regard itself as free really is "practically free" and so bound by the laws of freedom (G 448). But Kant then complains that this argument by itself is circular if offered as an account of how we can be morally motivated. A *purely* rational will is just a will under moral laws, but we are not purely rational. Morality demands we subordinate our happiness to our freedom. What is needed is an explanation of how we can be motivated to do this. This explanation is provided by the idea of the intelligible world.

Everyone, Kant claims, distinguishes between things as they appear and things as they are in themselves. And everyone can apply this distinction to himself as well as to other things. But in addition, human beings have reason, which is distinguished from everything else in that it is a pure spontaneous activity. Therefore, a human being must count himself as belonging to the intelligible world, as well as to the world of sense (G 450–53; C1 A538–41/B566–69). The intelligible world is the noumenal world, regarded as consisting of pure agencies which generate the world that appears to us. We know nothing of these agencies, except that we must think of them as the source of the appearances from which our knowledge is constructed. But our own capacity for pure activity places us among them. If we are among the intelligences, we are free and spontaneous, and so bound by morality.

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* the argument goes the other way.[29] The reality of moral obligation is known through what Kant calls a "Fact of Reason" (C2 31).This fact is our consciousness of the moral law and its capacity to motivate us whenever we construct maxims. We are conscious of the law not only in the sense that it tells us what to do, but in the sense that we know we *can* do what it tells us, no matter how strong the opposing motives (C2 30). The

fact that we are able to act against our strongest desires reveals to us that we are free, and so are members of the intelligible world.

The intelligible world plays two roles in Kant's argument. First, the distinction between the intelligible and sensible worlds removes the fatal difficulty for morality that would otherwise come from the universal determinism that holds in the phenomenal world (G 455–56). Just as importantly, the intelligible world explains "the interest attaching to the ideas of morality" (G 449). For we realize that ". . . the intelligible world contains the ground of the world of sense and hence of its laws" (G 453). The causal laws that determine everything that happens are part of the world of appearances, and are therefore part of what the intelligences produce. It is the intelligible world that generates the world as we know it. So if you are a member of the intelligible world, you are among the forces that make the world the way it is. If you will morally, you really are a co-legislator of the Kingdom of Ends. This is the motivating idea of morality.

> . . . the idea of a pure intelligible world as a whole of all intelligences to which we ourselves belong as rational beings . . . is always a useful and permissible idea for the purpose of a rational faith. This is so even though all knowledge terminates at its boundary, for through the glorious ideal of a universal realm of ends in themselves (rational beings) a lively interest in the moral law can be awakened in us. (G 462)

THE RELIGION OF REASON

The positive conception of freedom shows us how a metaphysical concept can be defined and supported by practical reason. The moral law defines spontaneous causality. "In the entire faculty of reason only the practical can lift us above the world of sense and furnish cognitions of a supersensuous order . . . " (C2 106). In the Dialectic of the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant extends this kind of account to the concepts of God and immortality. The moral law commits us to its complete object, the Highest Good: virtue and happiness proportional to it. Virtue is unconditionally good. But this does "not imply that virtue is the entire and perfect good as the object of the faculty of desire of finite rational beings. For this, happiness is also required" (C2 110). The Highest Good is the systematic totality of good ends to which the moral law directs us. Morality demands

that we make this our end, but it seems to be impossible to achieve. Complete virtue cannot be realized in this life, and virtue would have to be necessarily connected to happiness for the Highest Good to be realized.[30] But no such connection obtains, for virtue does not inevitably lead to happiness, nor morally good intentions to good results. In fact, an empirical causal connection would be insufficient to solve the problem, for it would have to be between good actions and happiness, yet good actions may be done without a good will (C2 125–29). This apparent impossibility gives rise to an antinomy. We know through the Fact of Reason that the moral law commands categorically. But we cannot be categorically commanded to seek an end that is impossible for us to achieve. "If, therefore, the highest good is impossible according to practical rules, then the moral law which commands that it be furthered must be fantastic, directed to empty imaginary ends, and consequently inherently false" (C2 114).

It has seemed to critics that Kant here forsakes the purity of his position. The moral law is categorical and not conditioned by consistency with happiness. This criticism is a misunderstanding both of what Kant asserted earlier and what he claims here. As Kant himself points out in reply to criticisms by Christian Garve (1742–98), he never asserted, and nothing he says implies, that happiness is not of the utmost importance (TP 278–89). The unconditional character of morality means that the desire for your own happiness must not stop you from doing what is right; it does not mean that morality is the only good and important thing. Happiness is conditionally valuable, but when its condition is met, it is a genuine good. The moral law commits us to the realization of the good things that rational beings place value on. A world in which good people are miserable is morally defective.

The threat posed by the impossibility of achieving the Highest Good is best understood by considering the way the moral motive functions. You view yourself as a member of the intelligible world and so as a possible co-legislator in a Kingdom of Ends. You are among the world's first causes. But there are other first causes: other persons, and whatever else is responsible for the way things appear to us and so of the material content of the laws of nature. In the phenomenal world the results of our actions are determined not just by our own intentions, but by the forces of nature and the actions of other persons. Our attempts to realize the good are often diverted by

these other forces. It is this that gives rise to the antinomy. Kant's description of the problem in the *Critique of Judgment* is better:

> He [a righteous man] desires no advantage to himself from following [the moral law], either in this or in another world; he wishes, rather, disinterestedly to establish the good to which that holy law directs all his powers. But his effort is bounded; and from nature, although he may expect here and there a contingent accordance, he can never expect a regular harmony . . . with the purpose which he yet feels himself obliged and impelled to accomplish. Deceit, violence, and envy will always surround him, although he himself be honest, peaceable, and kindly; and the righteous men with whom he meets will, notwithstanding their worthiness of happiness, be yet subjected by nature, which regards not this, to all the evils of want, disease, and untimely death, just like the beasts of the earth. . . . The purpose, then, which this well-intentioned person had and ought to have before him in his pursuit of moral laws, he must certainly give up as impossible. (C3 452)

The motivating thought of morality is the thought that you can contribute to making the world a Kingdom of Ends. But if your attempts are always diverted by other forces, that thought is, as Kant says, false and fantastic.

The solution to this as to every antinomy is to appeal to the noumenal/phenomenal distinction. In the world of sense, there is no causal connection between a virtuous disposition and happiness, but there could be a connection between one's noumenal disposition and one's happiness in the world of sense. But this connection would be indirect: it would be mediated by an Author of Nature who had designed the laws of nature so that the connection holds (C2 114–15). In order to play the role envisaged, this Author would have to be omnipotent (to design the laws of nature), omniscient (to look into the hearts of rational beings and know their moral dispositions), and perfectly good. The Author of Nature would have the attributes traditionally ascribed to God (C2 140). If there were a God, then, the Highest Good would be possible, and morality would not direct us to impossible ends. Since we must obey the moral law, and therefore must adopt the Highest Good as our end, we need to believe that end is possible. So we need to believe in what will make it possible. This is not a contingent need, based on an arbitrary desire, but "a need of pure reason." This provides a pure practical reason for belief in God (C2 142–43).

A similar argument establishes the practical rationality of belief

in immortality. The moral law commands you to seek your own moral perfection: the holiness of your will. This cannot be achieved in the course of your life, for no one with a sensuous as well as a rational nature has a morally perfect disposition. What a creature who exists in time, subject to causality and so to sensibility, can achieve is *progress* towards holiness of will. An endless progress is the same, in the eyes of God, as the achievement of holiness. "The Infinite Being, to whom the temporal condition is nothing, sees in this series, which is for us without end, a whole conformable to the moral law" (C2 123).[31]

A faith in God and in immortality of the soul thus based on practical reason – pure practical faith – is not just wishful thinking, because it springs from a rational demand. As Kant strikingly puts it:

> Granted that the pure moral law inexorably binds every man as a command (not as a rule of prudence), the righteous man may say: I will that there be a God, that my existence in this world be also an existence in a pure world of the understanding, and finally that my duration be endless. (C2 143)

This does not mean that faith is commanded. The moral law demands that we think the highest good possible but "the manner in which we are to think of it as possible is subject to our own choice" since "reason cannot objectively decide whether it is by universal laws of nature without a wise Author presiding over nature or whether only on the assumption of such an Author" (C2 145). Faith springs from a need of the moral disposition and as such is voluntary. Salvation depends on moral character, not on what one believes.[32]

Our beliefs in God, immortality and freedom – that is, existence in an intelligible world – are "postulates of practical reason." A postulate of practical reason is theoretical in form, asserting something about what is the case, yet it cannot be shown theoretically to be either true or false. But we have an interest springing from the needs of morality in believing it.[33] Since practical reason supports belief in the postulates, its power is more extensive than that of theoretical reason. In establishing the postulates, practical reason takes up the metaphysical tasks that theoretical reason had to abandon. For if there is a God, who made the world in order to achieve the Highest Good, then the world does have an unconditionally good purpose. A teleological account of the sort that the metaphysician seeks – one

according to which everything is made for the best in the Best of All Possible Worlds – would be true (C2 132–41).

But Kant insists that practical faith, although rational, does not in any way extend our *knowledge*. We cannot use the tenets of practical faith to explain the way things are, or for any theoretical purposes. This shows that our faculties are wisely adapted to our vocation. For the final purpose of the Best of All Possible Worlds is the achievement of moral goodness by human beings (C3 442–43). And if we had metaphysical knowledge:

> . . . God and eternity in their awful majesty would stand unceasingly before our eyes. . . . Transgression of the law would indeed be shunned, and the commanded would be performed. But because the disposition from which actions should be done cannot be instilled by any command, and because the spur to action would in this case be always present and external, reason would have no need to endeavor to gather its strength to resist the inclination by a vivid idea of the dignity of the law. Thus most actions conforming to the law would be done from fear, few would be done from hope, none from duty. The moral worth of actions, on which alone the worth of the person and even of the world depends in the eyes of supreme wisdom, would not exist at all. (C2 147)

"I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith" (C1 Bxxx).

REVOLUTION AND WORLD PEACE

Kant was an ardent champion of the American and French Revolutions. His support for the latter won him a reputation as a Jacobin, and at one point there was a widespread rumor that he was going to Paris as an advisor to the new government.[34] Jachmann writes of Kant's impatience for news from France, and his obsession with the subject in conversation.[35] His enthusiasm for the Revolution was not as idealizing as that of many of its admirers, and he did not turn against it when so many others did. According to one report "he said all the horrors in France were unimportant compared with the chronic evil of despotism from which France had suffered and the Jacobins were probably right in all they were doing."[36] Given the high value he places on freedom and human rights, it is not surprising that he regards a republic as the ideal form of government. But it

is surprising to find this enthusiasm for its ruthless establishment in a man who believed that we must always act as citizens in the Kingdom of Ends regardless of consequences, and have faith in God to set things right. What makes it even more surprising is that Kant himself wrote that revolution is always wrong, and that "It is the people's duty to endure even the most intolerable abuse of supreme authority" (MPJ 320).[37]

Kant's political theory, like his ethics generally, owes a great deal to Rousseau. It is a social contract theory, in which people unite according to a General Will. I have explained above how property rights arise from the Juridical Postulate of Practical Reason. These rights exist in a state of nature, but they are "provisional." Since a right is an authorization to use coercion, anyone may defend his right against another. Disputes will inevitably arise, and there is no way to settle them, except by violence. In this way we present a threat to one another in the state of nature. This licenses us to use coercion against one another to establish a juridical state of affairs – a state in which rights are guaranteed rather than provisional. So we have a right and, indeed, a duty to coerce others to enter into political society with us (MPJ 255–313).

The point of political society is to protect rights and freedom. The ideal state – indeed, the "one and only legitimate constitution" (MPJ 340–42; PP 349–53) – is a republic (MPJ 340). But as things stand we must take the existing government to represent the general will of the people, and, consequently, must obey it. Oddly, we must do this even if the existing government is the result of a recent revolution. The government itself has a duty to promote its own gradual evolution to a republican form. And there should be complete freedom of speech, so that the citizens can discuss these matters. But no citizen is in a legitimate position to force the transition (MPJ 318–23; 370–72; TP 297–306).

The argument that shows that individuals should enter into juridical relations with one another also shows what nations should do. Freedom will only be realized when there is a world community guaranteeing perpetual peace. Only a cosmopolitan union of all the states of the world under common law, on the model of the union of the American states, will guarantee peace. This being an unattainable ideal, there should at least be a Congress or League of Nations, and an observation of the Laws of Nations (MPJ 350–51; IUH 24ff.;

PP; TP 307–13). Important among these will be laws for the conduct of war, for wars should be conducted according to laws that will make possible the eventual achievement of peace. In the *Metaphysical Principles of Justice* (MPJ 343–51) and in *Perpetual Peace* (PP 343–60) Kant attempts to spell out in detail what these laws should be, and expresses a hope that rulers will attend to what he says (PP 368–69).[38]

Peace is important not only because it is the end of violence and injustice. Peace will bring with it the entire achievement of the Kingdom of Ends on earth. It goes hand in hand with the state of affairs in which every nation is a republic. When the people, not the rulers, decide whether to go to war, war will come to an end, for the people will not go to war for trivial reasons (PP 351). When there is less war, social institutions will improve, for as things now stand, they are mostly designed for the sake of war. Public funds will be channelled into education rather than war debts, and culture will be improved (IUH 26, 28; CBHH 121). Enlightenment – the condition in which people think for themselves (WE 35) – will be fostered by freedom of speech and discussion. And, finally, morality itself will be achieved, as the ultimate product of culture and enlightenment. For a "good constitution is not to be expected from morality, but, conversely, a good moral condition of a people is to be expected only under a good constitution" (PP 366, OQ 92–93).

At the end of the *Metaphysical Principles of Justice* there is a suggestion that we may have an historical faith in the possibility of peace, on the same model as practical religious faith. No theoretical knowledge can be attained as to whether peace is possible or not. In such a case we may consider whether we have an interest in accepting the conjecture that it is. If the interest is based on morality – if the conjecture is one that must be true if moral ends are to be achieved – then we may accept it. "Even if the realization of this goal of abolishing war were always to remain just a pious wish, we still would not be deceiving ourselves by adopting the maxim of working for it with unrelenting perseverance" (MPJ 354). Indeed we have a duty to do this, and this gives rise to a need to believe it possible. The structure of the argument is exactly that of the argument for belief in God and immortality. Kant calls perpetual peace the "highest political good."

This faith in the possibility of peace is buttressed, in the historical

writings, by a teleological interpretation of history in which nature is envisioned as working towards the moral condition of the human race, even using war and the selfishness of human nature as her tools. Every region of the globe supplies materials that humans can use to adapt to life there, and war has the function of ensuring that human beings eventually do spread everywhere. This brings about the cultivation and development of human powers and talents. As the populations of the various regions increase, these groups are again, inevitably, brought back into contact with one another. Differences of religion and language keep them at war for a time, but pressures to establish peace come from the need for commerce. Eventually this forces them to establish juridical relations with one another, and will lead to peace and justice all over the world.[39] This interpretation of history is offered, not as something knowable, and not as a reason for moral quiescence, but as a way those morally committed to peace can envision nature's cooperation with their efforts (PP 368).

This picture of history as leading to peace is strikingly deterministic. In it the moral disposition is seen as resulting from the republican constitutions and conditions of enlightenment that nature produces. Nature is seen as working through "the mechanism of human passions" (PP 368), through competition, the love of luxury, and war; as using methods that would work on "a race of devils" (PP 366). It is from a practical standpoint that we see ourselves as free; to the theorizing mind, everything is explicable in terms of causes. While theoretical reason explains, practical reason is wholly normative: actual examples of moral conduct cannot be identified with certainty, nor are they necessary to support the moral law's claims on us (G 407).

And yet Kant believes that history *has* provided us with one piece of evidence that the moral disposition is real in the human race, and may yet prevail. This piece of evidence is the enthusiasm of the spectators of the French Revolution. The French Revolution aims at a republican constitution. It therefore aims at justice, and "the condition whereby war (the source of all evil and corruption of morals) is deterred" (OQ 86). The enthusiasm of the spectators must be explained by the existence of a moral disposition, for "genuine enthusiasm always moves only towards what is ideal and, indeed, to what is purely moral, such as the concept of right, and it cannot be grafted onto self-interest" (OQ 86). So Kant concludes:

> The revolution of a gifted people which we have seen unfolding in our day may succeed or miscarry; it may be filled with misery and atrocities to the point that a sensible man, were he boldly to hope to execute it successfully the second time, would never resolve to make the experiment at such cost – this revolution, I say, nonetheless finds in the hearts of all the spectators (who are not engaged in this game themselves) a wishful participation that borders closely on enthusiasm, the very expression of which is fraught with danger; this sympathy, therefore, can have no other cause than a moral predisposition in the human race. (OQ 85)

Kant began his critical work as the "All-destroyer," toppling the edifice of the Leibniz-Wolffian philosophy, along with its optimism that God has chosen everything for the best in the Best of All Possible Worlds. In its place he put a faith in human freedom, as the source of purely rational morality and the cornerstone of a metaphysics of practical reason. This freedom is not an object of knowledge, but of a rational aspiration: something for human beings to achieve, and thereby to realize the ideals of reason in the world. The remarks on the French Revolution quoted above are from the essay "On the Old Question: Is the Human Race Constantly Progressing?" In the French Revolution Kant found evidence that freedom is real in human nature, and may yet become real in the world.

> I claim to be able to predict to the human race . . . I predict its progress towards the better . . . because it [the Revolution and its reception] has revealed a tendency and faculty in human nature for improvement . . . which nature and freedom alone, united in the human race in conformity with inner principles of right, could have promised. (OQ 88)

Optimism is restored, but it is an optimism based on a moral faith in humanity.

NOTES

I would like to thank Ted Cohen, Manley Thompson, and the editors of *Ethics in the History of Western Philosophy* for comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

1 Just as reason provides principles that determine what, given our circumstances, we ought to believe, it can provide principles that determine what in our circumstances we ought to do. The latter is "practical reason." Some of the British Empiricists appear to have believed that practical reason is merely applied theoretical reason: for instance, instrumental

practical reasoning is just "applied" causal reasoning. See, for example, David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, pp. 413–18. What this account leaves out is that if I am to act on the knowledge that something is a means to my end, I must still have a distinctively *practical* rational capacity: that of being *motivated* to take the means to my ends. This distinctly practically rational capacity may also move us to govern our actions by principles of *pure* practical reason which are not applications but analogues of theoretical principles. For discussions of this point see Thomas Nagel, *The Possibility of Altruism*, chapters V and VI; and my "Skepticism about Practical Reason," Chapter 11 in this volume.

2 Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, pp. 20–21.

3 Paul Schilpp, *Kant's Pre-Critical Ethics*, p. 6. See also the foreword to *Lectures on Ethics*, where Lewis White Beck quotes one of Kant's friends as saying:

> How often he moved us to tears, how often he agitated our hearts, how often he lifted our minds and feelings from the fetters of selfish eudaemonism to the high consciousness of freedom, to unconditional obedience to the law of reason, to the exhaltation of unselfish duty! The immortal philosopher seemed to us to be inspired with a heavenly power, and he inspired us, who listened to him in wonder. His hearers certainly never left a single lecture in his ethics without having become better men. (LE ix)

4 Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, p. 46.

5 That is, the principle that anything that exists or occurs must be explained by a reason which shows why the thing must exist or occur and cannot be otherwise than as it is.

6 Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors*, p. 274.

7 Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors*, p. 274.

8 See below, pp. 9–10.

9 Eric A. Blackall, *The Emergence of German as a Literary Language, 1700–1755*, pp. 26–48.

10 Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors*, p. 260.

11 Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors*, pp. 441–42.

12 It is sometimes asserted that in his pre-critical period Kant was a moral sense theorist, or sentimentalist, but as the above discussion shows, he was at best an ambivalent one. (See also Schilpp, *Kant's Pre-Critical Ethics*, Chapter III.) Kant was a rationalist by training and perhaps by temperament, but there is no doubt he admired Francis Hutcheson (1694–1746) and Adam Smith (1723–90). Kant's admiration of Hutcheson is

clear from the frequent (though critical) discussions of Hutcheson in his work. For Kant's admiration of Smith see D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie's Introduction to Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiment*, p. 31. In this period among the British Moralists, the sentimentalists were incomparably better moral philosophers than rationalists such as Samuel Clarke (1675–1729) and his followers. One may see Kant as trying to respond to two of the main objections which the sentimentalists levelled at ethical rationalism. First, the sentimentalists had a functional account of what reason is, which enabled them to deny that reason can give rise to *a priori* concepts such as the rationalists believed "right" and "good" to be. The early rationalists by contrast had no competing account of what reason is that they could use to support their position. Only with Richard Price (1723–91) do we find a British rationalist attacking this problem head-on. Second, the early rationalists insisted that reason can directly determine the will, but they did not have an account of *how* it does so. With his rich account of what reason is in hand, Kant attempts to construct a rationalist ethical theory which will solve these problems.

13 So called because it was publicly defended on the occasion of Kant's appointment to the Chair of Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Königsberg.

14 In the mid-1760s Kant wrote:

> By inclination I am an inquirer. I feel a consuming thirst for knowledge, the unrest which goes with the desire to progress in it, and satisfaction at every advance in it. There was a time when I believed this constituted the honor of humanity, and I despised the people, who know nothing. Rousseau corrected me in this. . . . I learned to honor men, and I would find myself more useless than the common laborer if I did not believe that this view of mine can give a worth to all others in establishing the rights of humanity.

In rendering this passage I have drawn on the translations by Lewis White Beck in the introduction to *Immanuel Kant: Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, p. 7; and by Paul Schilpp in *Kant's Pre-Critical Ethics*, p. 48.

15 Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors*, p. 337.

16 Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors*, p. 400.

17 Lewis White Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* pp. 3–18. For further treatment see pp. 26–27 and note 31 of this chapter.

18 Hume, in the *Treatise of Human Nature*, had argued that "regard for the virtue of [an] action" cannot be "the first virtuous motive, which bestows a merit on any action." For, he says:

Before we can have such a regard, the action must be really virtuous; and this virtue must be deriv'd from some virtuous motive: And consequently the virtuous motive must be different from regard to the virtue of the action. (p. 478)

This was, at the time, a potentially powerful point against his rationalist opponents. Because they argued that the sense of duty was the "first" motive of moral conduct, Hume's argument forbids them to say that its motive is what makes an action a duty. It forces them to take an intuitionist view about the content of morality. But Kant overcomes Hume's objection by distinguishing the formal and the material elements of motivation. If the "first virtuous motive" does not have to be given materially, the objection does not hold. Nevertheless, an argument similar to Hume's is used by W. D. Ross "against *any* theory which holds that motive of any kind is included in the content of duty." Interestingly, Ross uses the argument in support of intuitionism, since he thinks that "it would be paradoxical to hold that we ought to act from some other motive but never ought to act from a sense of duty, which is the highest motive." See *The Right and the Good*, pp. 5–6. For further discussion see Chapter 2 in this volume.

19 The reading of the contradiction test which I give here is not uncontroversial. There is disagreement both about Kant's intentions and about what form the contradiction test must take in order to work. For a defense of this interpretation against the major alternatives see my "Kant's Formula of Universal Law," Chapter 3 in this volume. As I point out there, my reading does not work for Kant's other example of this sort of contradiction, that of a man who considers suicide as an escape from future misery. I do not think that Kant was right in supposing that the duty not to commit suicide could be derived from the first contradiction test, for the universalization of suicide as a method of escaping misery is not self-defeating, nor can I see that it is in any way self-contradictory. No reading that I know of successfully deals with all of Kant's examples, but this need not mean that the test cannot be constructed. It may mean that Kant chose his examples badly.

20 Kant's claim that his contradiction test can serve as a criterion for determining what our specific duties are has generated a vast literature of criticism and defense. The criticism I mention here, one of the most influential, was made by Hegel and the Idealists (see, for instance, Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, p. 262 and *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox, p. 90). Idealists also claimed that the test forbids too much: Bradley, for instance, in "Duty for Duty's Sake" in *Ethical Studies*, p. 155, claims that the test makes charity immoral,

since universal charity would eliminate its objects. Both objections overlook the role of the agent's intentions and purposes in generating the contradiction. The first overlooks the fact that the agent intends to avail himself of the institution which the universalization of his maxim would eliminate; for him, given his intentions, the institution is necessary. The second overlooks the fact that the agent's purpose in say, acts of charity, would be satisfied in a world where such were no longer called for. For a careful defense of Kant's view from these objections see Marcus Singer, *Generalization in Ethics*, pp. 279–95. See also Chapter 3 in this volume.

21 For a helpful discussion of Kant's account of this duty see Barbara Herman, "Mutual Aid and Respect for Persons," in *The Practice of Moral Judgment*, chapter 3.

22 For a more detailed explication of this argument, see my "Kant's Formula of Humanity," Chapter 4 in this volume.

23 On Kant's strictures against coercion and deception, see my "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil," Chapter 5 in this volume, and Onora O'Neill, "Between Consenting Adults," in *Constructions of Reason: Explorations of Kant's Practical Philosophy*, chapter 6.

24 The *Metaphysics of Morals* has only recently received much attention in Anglo-American criticism. For treatments of this work and accounts of the division of duties, see Mary Gregor, *Laws of Freedom: A study of Kant's Method of Applying the Categorical Imperative in the Metaphysik der Sitten*; Onora Nell (O'Neill), *Acting on Principle: An Essay on Kantian Ethics*; and Bruce Aune, *Kant's Theory of Morals*.

25 In the *Groundwork* Kant claims that in making moral decisions, the best formula to use is that of Universal Law (G 436–37). Interestingly, in the *Metaphysics of Morals* no direct use is made of the Formula of Universal Law: the Universal Principle of Justice and the Supreme Principle of Virtue are used instead. There are two possible reasons for this. One of course is that Kant changed his mind. A better reason is that the moral principles of the *Metaphysics of Morals* are at a general level, and Kant may still intend that one should use the universal law formulation at the level of particular decisions. The latter view has a certain plausibility, for the Formula of Universal Law is intended as a decision procedure. It is not a rule or a way of generating general rules, but a way of making decisions in concrete situations. This is why Kant holds the view, startling to many of his readers, that there can be no genuine conflicts of duty (MM 224). There is no room for conflict when decisions are made under the Formula of Universal Law, for the morally relevant features of the case are included in your maxim, and the maxim simply passes or fails the contradiction tests. Yet there are of course things to say about

what in general our duties are, and this is the territory that the *Metaphysics of Morals* covers.

26 For a good account of this distinction see Onora Nell (O'Neill), *Acting on Principle*, pp. 43–58.

27 The idea of legislation in a Kingdom of Ends provides the most accessible link between Kant's own writings and those of his contemporary "contractualist" successors, for here we find the thought that we may be autonomously bound by the laws we would choose under ideal circumstances. For the most notable example see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

28 This idea that freedom, autonomy and morality are the same is suggested by Rousseau in *The Social Contract*. Rousseau wrote: "To the preceding acquisitions could be added the acquisition in the civil state of moral liberty, which alone makes man truly the master of himself. For to be driven by appetite alone is slavery, and obedience to the law one has prescribed for oneself is liberty" (p. 151). Possibly it was this suggestion that provided Kant with the solution to a problem he had worked on nearly all of his life – the problem of what freedom is.

29 There is critical controversy over whether this resulted from a change in Kant's views. Kant did not say explicitly that it did; but in the *Groundwork* he refers at the end of his argument to "this deduction" (G 454), whereas in the *Critique of Practical Reason* he says that "the reality of the moral law can be proved through no deduction" (C2 47). Additional external evidence is provided by the fact that writing the *Critique of Practical Reason* was a change of plan on Kant's part. (See Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, pp. 13 – 18.) For some recent discussions of this question, see Karl Ameriks, "Kant's Deduction of Freedom and Morality," pp. 53 – 79, and Dieter Henrich, "Die Deduktion des Sittengesetzes: Über die Gründe der Dunkelheit des letzten Abschnitte von Kants *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*."

30 It is not easy to understand why Kant holds that a perfect or holy will cannot be achieved in this life, either from what Kant says here or from the *Religion*, where he claims that there is "radical evil in human nature." In the *Religion* Kant squares the existence of evil with autonomy by showing how an evil will can be thought of as the result of our own choice. The incentives arising from our sensible nature do not compel us in any way: we act on them insofar as we make it our maxim to do so. But this makes it hard to understand why an imperfect will should be *inevitable* for a finite creature in the world of sense. Kant denies that the fact that we *have* non-moral incentives is an imperfection and, in any case, as he points out, the fact would not be imputable (R 28). For a discussion of this problem and of Kant's theory of moral faith generally, see Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*.

31 It is not clear what exactly we are supposed to believe when we believe in immortality. Great difficulties lie here. If we are still to exist in time, the other life seems just to be a continuation of this one, perhaps with the same troubling conditions; if we are not, the notion of progress seems out of place. It also seems that it is in this other life that the virtuous are to be made happy. In fact in the earliest version of the theory, in the "Canon" of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, this is the reason for belief in immortality (C1 A810–11 B838–39). Kant is aware of the difficulties, and takes them up in "The End of All Things." In fact, the case illustrates Kant's thesis, explained below, that the postulates of practical faith cannot be taken to extend our theoretical knowledge in any way (END 333–34). If we try to think of the other life, we necessarily think of something temporal; when we try to think of eternity, we find ourselves thinking of nature as petrified, or monotonous (END 334–35). This is a condition of the way we think.

32 In *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Kant spells out in some detail what a religion based on moral faith would be, and offers reinterpretations of scripture and traditional Christian doctrines in terms of it. This work got Kant into trouble with the authorities for the only time in his life. The liberal Frederick the Great died in 1786, and his more orthodox successor Friedrick Wilhelm II appointed Johann Christoff Wöllner as head of the state department of church and schools. Wöllner, a known opponent of the Enlightenment, began a campaign to stamp out religious enlightenment, and to enforce the authority of orthodox Protestant doctrine. Kant's prestige protected him from these repressive efforts for a time, but the *Religion* provoked Wöllner. Kant was forbidden to write on religious subjects by a direct order from the King, actually written by Wöllner. Notoriously, Kant complied "as Your Majesty's most faithful subject," and took this phrase as license to publish his views about religion once again after Frederick Wilhelm's death. See Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors*, p. 435.

33 The concept of property is also established by a postulate, the Juridical Postulate of Practical Reason, which says that external objects can be property (MPJ 246). One can see the similarity: it is theoretical in form, metaphysical in content (Kant carefully distinguishes "property" properly speaking from mere empirical possession), and held valid because it is needed for the tasks of practical reason. Since the argument for the possibility of achieving world peace has the same structure as his argu-

ments for God and immortality, "Peace can be achieved" is also a postulate of practical reason. See below, pp. 33–34.

35 G. P. Gooch, *Germany and the French Revolution*, pp. 276–77.

36 Gooch, *Germany and the French Revolution*, p. 264.

37 Gooch, *Germany and the French Revolution*, p. 269.

38 See also the conclusion of Part II of "On the Common Saying: 'This may be true in Theory but it does not apply in Practice,' " where Kant comes out strongly against revolution – to the relief, according to Gooch (*Germany and the French Revolution*, p. 269), of many of Kant's admirers who by then opposed the French Revolution. For discussions of the paradoxical character of Kant's attitude to the French Revolution see Lewis White Beck, "Kant and the Right to Revolution," in his *Essays on Kant and Hume*, chapter 10; and Hans Reiss, "Kant and the Right of Rebellion."

39 The League or Congress of Nations is only a "negative surrogate" of a real World Republic, and the laws of war are in a sense only a negative surrogate of the laws of a world republic (PP 357). Instead of compelling us to act peacefully, they compel us to conduct ourselves in a way that will not make peace and international justice impossible (MPJ 347).

40 These remarks summarize things Kant says throughout his historical writings. See especially: *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View; Conjectural Beginning of Human History*; and *Perpetual Peace*, First Supplement, "Of the Guarantee for Perpetual Peace."