

FOREWORD

For the present translation of Kant's *Grounding* I have used Karl Vorländer's German text (Leipzig, 1906) as it appears in Vol. III of the Philosophische Bibliothek edition of Kant's works, and Paul Menzer's text as it appears in Vol. IV of the Königlich Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften edition of Kant's works. Kant's essay entitled "On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns," which appears as a supplement after the *Grounding*, is to be found in Vol. VIII, pp. 425-30 of the Academy edition. Page numbers of the latter edition, the standard reference for Kant's works, appear in the present translation as marginal numbers. All material interpolated by me in text or notes has been bracketed.

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INTRODUCTION

Kant's moral philosophy is contained in three works: *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). Some people might want to include *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), especially Book III of Part I, where the appetitive power is considered, in order to have something of the empirical basis for morality; some might want to include *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone* (1793) in order to have an elaboration of the function of the idea of God in Kant's moral system —an idea that is first introduced in Book II of the *Critique of Practical Reason* ("Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason"). However, in this introduction only the first three works are considered in any detail.

Toward the end of the Preface to the *Grounding* Kant says that the intention of this work is to seek out and establish the supreme principle of morality. This principle is nothing more nor less than the famous categorical imperative: Always act in such a way that you can also will that the maxim of your action should become a universal law. Kant claims that this is the one supreme principle for the whole field of morals, including the philosophy of law (politics) as well as the moral requirements of duties to oneself to maintain one's personal integrity and of duties to others in one's association with them (ethics). For those familiar with Kant's system of theoretic philosophy there is an obvious analogy between the function of the categorical imperative in morals and the function of the transcendental unity of apperception in speculative thought when Kant claims in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B134 note) that the synthetic unity of apperception is the highest point to which the whole employment of the understanding must be ascribed, even the whole of general logic, and conformable with logic, even the whole of transcendental philosophy. Both principles function as highest synoptic focalpoints to which one is led by all lesser principles and from which one descends to all subsidiary principles. The roles played by these two principles in Kant's philosophy are not unlike those played by the Chief Good in Plato's philosophy and the Prime Mover in Aristotle's philosophy.

The *Grounding* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* both deal with the meta-ethical treatment of the foundations and method of the moral doctrine (or normative ethics) contained in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. The *Grounding* presents moral philosophy as falling under the province of a single supreme principle of pure reason (rather than empirical reason); the *Critique of Practical Reason* investigates the grounds for justifying such a supreme a priori principle (the categorical imperative) as being the

fundamental principle of the autonomy of reason in action. As such both works are biased in the direction of high-level abstractions. The *Metaphysics of Morals*, on the other hand, treats of the varied problems of moral judgment and of choice in concrete situations. Moral philosophy is a complex subject, and Kant treats it systematically in these various treatises dealing with one topic at a time.

Kant never claims that he discovered the categorical imperative. In fact he says in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (Ak. 8 note) that it would be outright silly of anyone to claim that he had discovered the moral law as something really new, as if the world up to then had been ignorant of what constitutes moral duty or else had been quite wrong about such duty. This supreme principle is, rather, ordinarily presumed in all moral judgments; it is a working criterion supposedly employed by any rational agent as a guide for making his own choices and judgments but without his being necessarily able to formulate it and make it explicit. If there is a consistent standard according to which everyday actions are judged as being moral or not, then the precise formulation of such a standard would be practically helpful and theoretically enlightening. It is here that Kant claims he has made a worthwhile contribution. He formulates the categorical imperative in some five different ways in the Second Section of the *Grounding*. Each formula is expressed in quite different terms; but when they are properly understood, they can be seen to amount to the same thing. Consequently, Kant has given the world five different formulations of one supreme moral law—not five different moral laws (as some commentators have claimed).

The idea running through all of these formulations is that of autonomy: ie moral law is imposed by reason itself and is not imposed externally (heteronomously) as, for example, would be the case if all actions were directed to the attainment of happiness conceived as a state of the subject in which he had no unsatisfied desires but had complete well-being and contentment, or as would be the case if all actions were commanded by the will of God. These various formulations culminate in that of the so-called kingdom of ends. This is the ideal of a moral community in which each member would act in such a way that if all other members acted in this way, then a community of free and equal members would result in which each member would, as he realizes his own purposes, also further the aims of his fellow members. In such a community each member freely disciplines himself under the very same rules that would be prescribed by him for others; the result would be that each member would act as a law unto himself (and hence autonomously) but yet would cooperate harmoniously with every other member.

Such an ideal kingdom of ends has law as its formal ordering principle. Now a law must apply universally and permit no exceptions within its domain. If something is right for me to do, then it must be so for everybody else. In formal terms, the first formulation in the *Grounding* of the categorical imperative states that one should act only on that maxim that can at the same time be willed to become a universal law. A maxim is

nothing but a rule that is followed in any deliberately intentional act. To get to Paris, take an Air France flight. In this example there is an aim, the means for attaining it, and the relevant circumstances could be elaborated; in any maxim the aim, means, and circumstances can always be identified. The maxim of an immoral act cannot be willed to become a universal law. When you tell a lie, you do not will that everybody else lie also. For if you did so will, then nobody would believe your lie; and your lying would never work to get you what you want. When you lie, you will that everybody else tell the truth and believe that what you are saying is true, for this is the only way your lie will work. In lying you simply take exception to the law that says everyone should tell the truth.

Clearly from what Kant says in the *Grounding at Ak. 436*, the kingdom of ends has not only a form (the legality examined in the preceding paragraph) but also a matter—its free and equal members and the aims, or purposes, they pursue. To say that they are equally free means that any one of them has not the right either by coercion or deception to subject any of the others to his own private interests. Consequently, another (and oft-quoted) formulation of the moral law states that one should always act in such a way that humanity either in oneself or in others is always treated as an end in itself and never merely as a means. If a person is treated as a mere means, then he is treated as nothing more than a thing without purposes of his own rather than as a self-determining rational agent.

Now despite terminological differences, the formula of the end in itself considered in the preceding paragraph is actually equivalent to the previous formula of universal law. According to the formula of universal law, any violation of the formula of the end in itself must be wrong, i.e., when someone is treated as a mere means, his purposes are regarded as not counting; when the maxim of such treatment is universalized, the agent of such treatment must be willing to be so treated in turn. But here is a contradiction, for no one wants his purposes to count for nothing. Conversely, any violation of the formula of universal law always involves making oneself an exception to the rules (as when one lies). By doing so, he makes the aims of others mere means to his own selfish aims—he exploits others thereby, and the formula of the end in itself forbids such exploitation. Consequently, according to the formula of the end in itself, any violation of the formula of universal law must be wrong. The two formulations mutually imply each other and must therefore be equivalent.

As Kant points out at Ak. 436, when the unity of the will's form (universality) is combined with the plurality of its matter (will's ends), then there arises a totality of the will's system of ends—i.e., a kingdom of ends. The preceding exposition started with the formula of the kingdom of ends and from this formulation distinguished the formula of universal law and the formula of the end in itself. There is still another formulation that derives from the kingdom of ends, viz., the formula of autonomy. The members of this kingdom are not only subject to the rule of law but are also co-authors, or legislators, of the law because of the univer-

salizable maxims according to which they act; thereby is the system a community. Anyone who steps outside this community and imposes law upon the other members without subjecting himself to the law is not treating those members as ends in themselves (i.e., the formula of the end in itself is violated), nor is he regarding his maxims as universal laws (i.e., the formula of universal law is violated). He might employ a system of rewards and punishments to make the members always obey his laws, but they would not do so autonomously. Much the same holds in the case of a religious ethics which conceives of God as a legislator issuing arbitrary commands with threats of damnation unless those commands are obeyed. The formula of autonomy states that one should always act in such a way that his will can at the same time regard itself as legislating in its maxims universal laws. This formula of autonomy is the one that most clearly indicates that a moral imperative must be categorical rather than hypothetical. An imperative is first of all a directive to act in a certain way—it is not a statement of fact. Furthermore, if the imperative is categorical, then the action commanded by it should be done because that action is the right thing to do and not because of some pay-off or advantage offered by the action. A will that obeys a law for an ulterior motive is acting on a hypothetical imperative. A rule that is formally legal (does not violate the formula of universal law) and also just (does not violate the formula of the end in itself) may be put into effect through rewards and punishments. Whoever obeys such a legal and just rule to gain the reward or avoid some penalty, does so for an ulterior motive—his action accords with duty but is not done from duty. He has followed a hypothetical imperative but not a categorical one. For a rule that is both legal and just to be a moral law means that the rule must also be autonomous and in no way dependent upon any ulterior motive; only then is the rule a categorical imperative rather than a hypothetical one.

At Ak. 440 Kant sums up his progress in the first two sections of the *Grounding* by saying that the principle of autonomy is the sole principle of morals and that this has been shown by merely analyzing the concepts of morality. In the process of this analysis the principle of morals is found to be necessarily a categorical imperative, which commands nothing but this very autonomy. Hereby he fulfills the suggestion made at the end of the Preface that the best method will be to proceed analytically from ordinary moral knowledge to a determination of the supreme principle of morality. The working criterion that is reflected in ordinary moral judgments (helping others in distress is good, telling lies is bad, etc.) has been made explicit (though not discovered since that criterion is implicit in every morally good act that was ever done), and that criterion has been given various alternative formulations that reflect the different aspects of that criterion.

But even though the supreme principle of morality has thus far in the *Grounding* been investigated and established, what about that principle itself? How is the principle of autonomy to be justified? It must be justified, or else all the subordinate principles which depend on it (such as

the categorical imperative and the principles of jurisprudence and of ethics) will be questionable. The Third Section of the *Grounding* prepares the way, but the *Critique of Practical Reason* has the job of justifying the principle of autonomy. Since this introduction is concerned primarily with the *Grounding*, I shall indicate very briefly what Kant says about the problems of why one should be moral.

Why should one be good unless he thereby attains happiness in this life or else the promise of such in the after-life? As we have already seen, the categorical imperative commands us to be good irrespective of any payoff. Here we have, of course, the age-old conflict between duty and self-interest. The duty part says there must be a categorical imperative, while the self-interest part says that there are only hypothetical imperatives (do such and such if you want to gain this or that). The conflict involved here concerns mainly a question regarding the possibility of doing whatever is done because of a special kind of incentive, even if other kinds of incentives are present. What sorts of incentives qualify as moral? Can purely rational considerations be sufficient to determine the will to action, not only by providing a rule for distinguishing right from wrong if one wanted to act on that rule, but also by supplying an incentive that is sufficient for performing the action? Purely rational considerations are independent of experience, i.e., are a priori rather than empirical. Practical action differs from unintentional or automatic motion in that action is rational inasmuch as it is always guided by a conception of what is being done. This conception can always be formulated as a rule or maxim that can logically be nothing but categorical or hypothetical. If the maxim is hypothetical, the action is empirically determined; if categorical, then the action is purely (a priori) determined. The possibility of acting on categorical imperative means the same thing as the possibility of not being determined to act because of some empirical condition, e.g., some tells the truth even when telling a lie might promote his personal happiness and comfort. Moral concepts require one to act from respect for the idea of conformity to law (incentive) in accordance with the capacity of one's maxim to be a universal law (rule) and for the sake of (end) a self-regulating community of free members (the kingdom of ends). Not one of these ideas (incentive, rule, end) can be adequately exemplified in experience, and they must therefore all be a priori conceptions.

Insofar as the categorical imperative provides criteria for determining what should be done by pointing out an end, a rule and an incentive, it is a practical principle. But there are certain limitations when one uses this principle to decide about moral character. Any overt action that is contrary to lawfulness (lying, cheating, stealing) is unjust; it is also morally wrong because it could not have been done for any morally acceptable reason. Any action that is unjust and morally wrong is thereby blame-worthy. But what about the use of this principle to determine merit? An action may be just (rule) and legal (end) but yet be morally indeterminate (incentive). Does the man who pays his taxes do so because it is the right thing to do or because he wants to avoid the penalties imposed on delin-

respect for
the idea of
conformity
to law as
incentive

moral
character

blame
merit

quents; we cannot tell and neither can he really—moral merit can only be known to God, the searcher of hearts.

So, on the one hand, the validity of the categorical imperative implies that there may be causes for action that are independent of empirical influences—i.e., one can act on a priori grounds alone; but, on the other hand, if an action can have both pure and empirical grounds, which grounds were the determining ones (pure or empirical)? Kant calls this a question of transcendental freedom, and much of the “analytic” of the *Critique of Practical Reason* is devoted to it. His solution is to say that for practical purposes one can be sure that he is free, but one cannot fully grasp cognitively how transcendental freedom is possible. One knows that he can act autonomously, and thereby is the categorical imperative vindicated as a guide for action; but since knowledge (cognition) is a manifestation of the transcendental autonomy of intelligence, he cannot rise to a higher vantage point in order to attain a full cognitive grasp of the ultimate grounds of both knowledge and action.

All of the foregoing topics that are treated in the *Grounding* and the *Critique* are preparation for the systematic presentation of doctrine in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, which has two parts called respectively *The Metaphysical Principles of Right* (jurisprudence) and *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* (ethics).¹ Today many philosophers would call Kant’s treatment of the foundations and method of morals as contained in the *Grounding* and *Critique* “meta-ethical” and the doctrine of the *Metaphysics of Morals* his “normative ethics.” This is a good way to emphasize again that the former two treatises are slanted in the direction of high-level abstractions. People who read mainly the *Grounding* and the *Critique* often criticize Kant for having his head in the clouds and for not being convincingly capable of dealing with concrete cases. A reading of the *Metaphysics of Morals* will show anyone how unfounded such criticisms are.

To be sure, the principle of autonomy (the moral law) as examined in the *Grounding* and justified in the *Critique* is perfectly general and applies to all rational agents as such (to agents who are able to act from reason and not merely from inclinations of sense). Accordingly, the moral law makes no distinctions between God and man. However, duties cannot be ascribed to a perfectly rational agent (God), inasmuch as such an agent always acts in accordance with the moral law because in this case there are no senses involved to incline such a being by means of self-interest to act contrary to the moral law. But in the case of humans, account must be taken of their desires and interests, which may urge action contrary to the moral law. Indeed the relation of human beings to the law is always one of obligation since man has both reason and senses; humans alone have

1. For an ingratiating but profoundly penetrating study of the whole system of Kant’s moral philosophy (that is as rewarding an introductory study as is to be found anywhere) see Warner Wick’s Introduction to *Kant’s Ethical Philosophy* (my translation of *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* and *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* combined in one volume, published by Hackett, Indianapolis, 1982). I have found many of his thoughts in that essay (especially those in his Section I) quite helpful here in my Introduction to the *Grounding*.

duties. Animals do not act rationally but solely by instinct and sensuous inclinations, and hence have no obligations or duties (man is the only living being that blushes and the only one that needs to).

The concepts of human desire and its many kinds are empirical, to be sure. These empirical concepts in conjunction with the supreme moral principle yield the various classes of specific duties that make up the body of doctrine contained in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In analogous fashion, the empirically given concept of matter when determined by the transcendental predicates conveyed in the pure categories of the understanding yield the body of doctrine regarding corporeal nature that is contained in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. The empirical concepts of desires and interests are what relate the fundamental law of morality to the human condition. But this use of empirical concepts does not make the propositions of the body of moral metaphysical doctrine empirical in the sense that its propositions are dependent on empirical evidence and are thereby true only contingently. If this were so, then the *Metaphysics of Morals* would contain nothing but hypothetical imperatives; however, it comprises a system of particular categorical imperatives (thou shalt honor contracts, thou shalt not commit suicide, thou shalt not overindulge in food and drink, etc.). Indeed moral philosophy is such that its a priori part exhausts what is called doctrine proper. Moral philosophy does have an empirical part contained in what Kant calls practical anthropology; but the contribution of the latter is merely supplemental, inasmuch as morals are concerned with what should be done rather than with what actually is done. Such anthropology considers, for example, the frequent failure in what should be done and how such mistakes can be avoided in the future. In this respect moral doctrine contrasts with natural doctrine. The empirical laws of nature investigated in empirical physics comprise the largest part of natural science, while the transcendental system of nature contained in the "Analytic of Principles" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the metaphysical system of nature contained in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* make up but a small—yet important—part of the science of nature.

Kant's approach to moral philosophy involves going from the fundamental principle of autonomy to specific rules of duty (particular categorical imperatives) and finally down to cases. Moral philosophy is intended for what can be realized in action amid changing circumstances. Kant is often upbraided for having given the world in the instance of the categorical imperative an empty formula with no power for determining rules sufficiently specific for any effective guidance in concrete situations. It is also said that the prescriptions which he does offer are so lacking in flexibility that they do not fit either the changing situations everyone faces or the various values among which one has to choose. Both the *Grounding* and the *Critique* deal primarily with the categorical imperative as a universal principle, but the *Metaphysics of Morals* provides the reader with a better-balanced perspective. Even though this last-mentioned treatise deals mainly with general categories of duties, those duties never-

theless are oriented toward concrete action; and in the *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue* the reader will even find sections devoted to casuistical questions. For example, in the days before anti-rabies serum would a man bitten by a mad dog do wrong to commit suicide lest in his final raving sickness he might himself uncontrollably bite someone? Obviously the maxim upon which he acted would be quite different from that of someone who threw himself out of a high window upon learning that he had been financially wiped out in the 1929 stock market crash.

The field of the moral law's legislation has two main subdivisions. The first one is the domain of justice and legality, and Kant calls this one the domain of right (*Recht*); accordingly, the first part of the *Metaphysics of Morals* is called the *Metaphysical Principles of the Doctrine of Right*. The second one is the domain of virtue (*Tugend*), and the second part is called the *Metaphysical Principles of the Doctrine of Virtue*. To pay or not to pay one's debts, to respect or violate somebody's rights are matters of justice or injustice that can be rewarded or punished. But virtue or vice, merit or depravity are internal and personal things that are out of reach of the law.

Kant distinguishes legality and morality quite succinctly in terms of the concept of legislation, which involves a rule to be followed and an incentive for following it. Ethical legislation makes something a duty and declares that the appropriate reason for fulfilling that duty is the very fact that the something under consideration is a duty, e.g., no one can be compelled by law to be beneficent (though he may be taxed and this money then distributed in welfare payments), but if someone is beneficent, this beneficence is its own reason for being. In the case of juridical legislation, rewards and punishments are attached as incentives to the fulfillment of the duties involved, e.g., if one does not pay his taxes, he will be fined. Ethical legislation is internal, while the juridical is external. Jurisprudence is the science of external legislation, and the supreme principle of right says that one should act externally in such a way that the free use of one's choice may not interfere with anyone's freedom insofar as his freedom agrees with universal law.

Ethical obligations are discharged only when they are done out of respect for the law; such performance involves merit over and above merely being free from blame. All juridical duties when done for duty's sake (and not merely for some reward or the avoidance of punishment) are thereby ethical duties. But there is a second kind of ethical duty called duties of virtue. These are the ones which are considered in the *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, and are those for which no external legislation is possible; they include such duties as not to commit suicide, not overindulge in food and drink, not to lie, not to become anyone's doormat, to be beneficent, grateful, sympathetic, not to be prideful, full of calumny, full of mockery, and yet others.

It is not the intention of this introduction to provide the reader with a bird's-eye view of the *Metaphysics of Morals* (which is longer than the *Grounding* and the *Critique* combined). I have intended merely to give

enough information about the *Metaphysics of Morals* to impress upon the reader that he cannot get a balanced impression of Kant's conception of moral philosophy by considering only the *Grounding* and the *Critique*. Also he cannot fully grasp the *Metaphysics of Morals* without first studying the other two treatises, especially the *Grounding*.

Kant's treatment of moral philosophy is a profound—and lengthy—affair; and most certainly the only place to start is with the *Grounding*, which lies just ahead. And heaven help the one who enters thereon! Why do I say this? There are two main reasons. First, Kant writes for a rather sophisticated audience. He assumes readers who are well on their way toward rational knowledge. He supposes that they have a rudimentary grasp of the basic points and do not need to have the consequences of those points elaborated in detail. For example, he says that there is one categorical imperative, which can be formulated in five different ways. Yet he does not provide the reader much help in seeing how those formulations are equivalent—in fact several generations of students and commentators have been confused on this point, including John Stuart Mill. Second, he has such a firm grip on his material that he does not always judge wisely as to where the reader may stand in need of extra help if he is not to go astray. But, students, be of good cheer! Your teachers, one hopes, will be able to lead you through the maze. If they falter, consult the ensuing Selected Bibliography for further help. And never forget that struggling with Kant (or any other great but difficult philosopher) can be very rewarding.

Ancient Greek philosophy was divided into three sciences: physics, ethics, and logic. This division is perfectly suitable to the nature of the subject, and the only improvement that can be made in it is perhaps only to supply its principle so that there will be a possibility on the one hand of insuring its completeness and on the other of correctly determining its necessary subdivisions.

All rational knowledge is either material and concerned with some object, or formal and concerned only with the form of understanding and of reason themselves and with the universal rules of thought in general without regard to differences of its objects. Formal philosophy is called logic. Material philosophy, however, has to do with determinate objects and with the laws to which these objects are subject; and such philosophy is divided into two parts, because these laws are either laws of nature or laws of freedom. The science of the former is called physics, while that of the latter is called ethics; they are also called doctrine of nature and doctrine of morals respectively.

Logic cannot have any empirical part, i.e., a part in which the universal and necessary laws of thought would be based on grounds taken from experience; for in that case it would not be logic, i.e., a canon for understanding and reason, which is valid for all thinking and which has to be demonstrated.¹ Natural and moral philosophy, on the contrary, can each have an empirical part. The former has to because it must determine the laws of nature as an object of experience, and the latter because it must determine the will of man insofar as the will is affected by nature. The laws of the former are those according to which everything does happen, while the laws of the latter are those according to which everything ought to happen, although these moral laws also consider the conditions under which what ought to happen frequently does not.

All philosophy insofar as it is founded on experience may be called empirical, while that which sets forth its doctrines as founded entirely on a priori principles may be called pure. The latter, when merely formal, is called logic; but when limited to determinate objects of the understanding, it is called metaphysics.

In this way there arises the idea of a twofold metaphysics: a metaphysics of nature and a metaphysics of morals.² Physics will thus

1. [Kant's *Logic* was first published in 1800 in a version edited by Gottlob Benjamin Jasche who was one of Kant's students.]

2. [*The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* was published in 1786. *The Metaphysics of Morals* appeared in 1797.]

practical anthropology have its empirical part, but also a rational one. Ethics will too, though here the empirical part might more specifically be called practical anthropology,³ while the rational part might properly be called morals.

division of labor All industries, crafts, and arts have gained by the division of labor, viz., one man does not do everything, but each confines himself to a certain kind of work that is distinguished from all other kinds by the treatment it requires, so that the work may be done with the highest perfection and with greater ease. Where work is not so distinguished and divided, where everyone is a jack of all trades, there industry remains sunk in the greatest barbarism. Whether or not pure philosophy in all its parts requires its own special man might well be in itself a subject worthy of consideration. Would not the whole of this learned industry be better off if those who are accustomed, as the public taste demands, to purvey a mixture of the empirical with the rational in all sorts of proportions unknown even to themselves and who style themselves independent thinkers, while giving the name of hair-splitters to those who apply themselves to the purely rational part, were to be given warning about pursuing simultaneously two jobs which are quite different in their technique, and each of which perhaps requires a special talent that when combined with the other talent produces nothing but bungling? But I only ask here whether the nature of science does not require that the empirical part always be carefully separated from the rational part. Should not physics proper (i.e., empirical physics) be preceded by a metaphysics of nature, and practical anthropology by a metaphysics of morals? Both of these metaphysics must be carefully purified of everything empirical in order to know how much pure reason can accomplish in each case and from what sources it draws its a priori teaching, whether such teaching be conducted by all moralists (whose name is legion) or only by some who feel a calling thereto.

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other rational beings

Since I am here primarily concerned with moral philosophy, the foregoing question will be limited to a consideration of whether or not there is the utmost necessity for working out for once a pure moral philosophy that is wholly cleared of everything which can only be empirical and can only belong to anthropology. That there must be such a philosophy is evident from the common idea of duty and of moral laws. Everyone must admit that if a law is to be morally valid, i.e., is to be valid as a ground of obligation, then it must carry with it absolute necessity. He must admit that the command, "Thou shalt not lie," does not hold only for men, as if other rational beings had no need to abide by it, and so with all the other moral laws properly so called. And he must concede that the ground of obligation here must therefore be sought not in the nature of man nor in the circumstances of the world in which man is placed, but must be sought a priori solely in the concepts of pure reason; he must grant that every other precept which is founded on principles of mere experience—even a precept that may in certain respects be universal—

3. [*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* first appeared in 1798.]

law
necessity
a priori
pure reason

insofar as it rests in the least on empirical grounds—perhaps only in its motive—can indeed be called a practical rule, but never a moral law.

Thus not only are moral laws together with their principles essentially different from every kind of practical cognition in which there is anything empirical, but all moral philosophy rests entirely on its pure part. When applied to man, it does not in the least borrow from acquaintance with him (anthropology) but gives a priori laws to him as a rational being. To be sure, these laws require, furthermore, a power of judgment sharpened by experience, partly in order to distinguish in what cases they are applicable, and partly to gain for them access to the human will as well as influence for putting them into practice. For man is affected by so many inclinations that, even though he is indeed capable of the idea of a pure practical reason, he is not so easily able to make that idea effective in concreto in the conduct of his life.

A metaphysics of morals is thus indispensably necessary, not merely because of motives of speculation regarding the source of practical principles which are present a priori in our reason, but because morals themselves are liable to all kinds of corruption as long as the guide and supreme norm for correctly estimating them are missing. For in the case of what is to be morally good, that it conforms to the moral law is not enough; it must also be done for the sake of the moral law. Otherwise that conformity is only very contingent and uncertain, since the non-moral ground may now and then produce actions that conform with the law but quite often produces actions that are contrary to the law. Now the moral law in its purity and genuineness (which is of the utmost concern in the practical realm) can be sought nowhere but in a pure philosophy. Therefore, pure philosophy (metaphysics) must precede; without it there can be no moral philosophy at all. That philosophy which mixes pure principles with empirical ones does not deserve the name of philosophy (for philosophy is distinguished from ordinary rational knowledge by its treatment in a separate science of what the latter comprehends only confusedly). Still less does it deserve the name of moral philosophy, since by this very confusion it spoils even the purity of morals and counteracts its own end.

There must be no thought that what is required here is already contained in the propaedeutic that precedes the celebrated Wolff's moral philosophy, i.e., in what he calls *Universal Practical Philosophy*,⁴ and that hence there is no need to break entirely new ground. Just because his work was to be a universal practical philosophy, it has not taken into consideration any special kind of will, such as one determined solely by a priori principles without any empirical motives and which could be called a pure will, but has considered volition in general, together with all the

*a pure
will*

4. [This work of Christian Wolff was published in 1738–39; this and other of his works served for many years as the standard philosophy textbooks in German universities. Wolff's philosophy was founded on that of Leibniz.]

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actions and conditions belonging to it under this general signification. And thereby does his propaedeutic differ from a metaphysics of morals in the same way that general logic, which expounds the acts and rules of thinking in general, differs from transcendental philosophy, which treats merely of the particular acts and rules of pure thinking, i.e., of that thinking whereby objects are cognized completely *a priori*. For the metaphysics of morals has to investigate the idea and principles of a possible pure will and not the actions and conditions of human volition as such, which are for the most part drawn from psychology. Moral laws and duty are discussed in this universal practical philosophy (though quite improperly), but this is no objection to what has been said about such philosophy. For the authors of this science remain true to their idea of it on the following point also: they do not distinguish the motives which, as such, are presented completely *a priori* by reason alone and are properly moral from the empirical motives which the understanding raises to general concepts merely by the comparison of experiences. Rather, they consider motives irrespective of any difference in their source; and inasmuch as they regard all motives as being homogeneous, they consider nothing but their relative strength or weakness. In this way they frame their concept of obligation, which is certainly not moral, but is all that can be expected from a philosophy which never decides regarding the origin of all possible practical concepts whether they are *a priori* or merely *a posteriori*.

dialectical

I intend some day to publish a metaphysics of morals,⁵ but as a preliminary to that I now issue this *Grounding* [1785]. Indeed there is properly no other foundation for such a metaphysics than a critical examination of pure practical reason, just as there is properly no other foundation for a metaphysics [of nature] than the critical examination of pure speculative reason, which has already been published.⁶ But, in the first place, the former critique is not so absolutely necessary as the latter one, because human reason can, even in the most ordinary mind, be easily brought in moral matters to a high degree of correctness and precision, while on the other hand in its theoretical but pure use it is wholly dialectical. In the second place, if a critical examination of pure practical reason is to be complete, then there must, in my view, be the possibility at the same time of showing the unity of practical and speculative reason in a common principle; for in the final analysis there can be only one and the same reason, which is to be differentiated solely in its application. But there is no possibility here of bringing my work to such completeness, without introducing considerations of an entirely different kind and without thereby confusing the reader. Instead of calling the present work a *Critique of Pure Practical Reason*, I have, therefore, adopted the title

5. [This appeared in 1797.]

6. [The first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared in 1781, while the second edition appeared in 1787. The *Critique of Practical Reason* was published in 1788.]

Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals [*Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten.*]⁷

But, in the third place, since a metaphysics of morals, despite the forbidding title, is nevertheless capable of a high degree of popularity and adaptation to the ordinary understanding, I find it useful to separate from the aforementioned metaphysics this preliminary work on its foundation [*Grundlage*] in order later to have no need to introduce unavoidable subtleties into doctrines that are easier to grasp.

The present *Grounding* [*Grundlegung*] is, however, intended for nothing more than seeking out and establishing the supreme principle of morality. This constitutes by itself a task which is complete in its purpose and should be kept separate from every other moral inquiry. The application of this supreme principle to the whole ethical system would, to be sure, shed much light on my conclusions regarding this central question, which is important but has not heretofore been at all satisfactorily discussed; and the adequacy manifested by the principle throughout such application would provide strong confirmation for the principle. Nevertheless, I must forego this advantage, which after all would be more gratifying for myself than helpful for others, since ease of use and apparent adequacy of a principle do not provide any certain proof of its soundness, but do awaken, rather, a certain bias which prevents any rigorous examination and estimation of it for itself without any regard to its consequences.

The method adopted in this work is, I believe, one that is most suitable if we proceed analytically from ordinary knowledge to a determination of the supreme principle and then back again synthetically from an examination of this principle and its sources to ordinary knowledge where its application is found. Therefore, the division turns out to be the following:

1. First Section. Transition from the Ordinary Rational Knowledge of Morality to the Philosophical
2. Second Section. Transition from Popular Moral Philosophy to a Metaphysics of Morals
3. Third Section. Final Step from a Metaphysics of Morals to a Critique of Pure Practical Reason.

7. [This might be translated as *Laying the Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals*. But for the sake of brevity *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* has been chosen.]

TRANSITION FROM THE ORDINARY RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE
OF MORALITY TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL

There is no possibility of thinking of anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be regarded as good without qualification, except a good will. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and whatever talents of the ^{good} ~~will~~ mind one might want to name are doubtless in many respects good and desirable, as are such qualities of temperament as courage, resolution, perseverance. But they can also become extremely bad and harmful if the will, which is to make use of these gifts of nature and which in its special constitution is called character, is not good. The same holds with gifts of fortune; power, riches, honor, even health, and that complete well-being and contentment with one's condition which is called happiness make for pride and often hereby even arrogance, unless there is a good will to correct their influence on the mind and herewith also to rectify the whole principle of action and make it universally conformable to its end. The sight of a being who is not graced by any touch of a pure and good will but who yet enjoys an uninterrupted prosperity can never delight a rational and impartial spectator. Thus a good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition of being even worthy of happiness.

Some qualities are even conducive to this good will itself and can facilitate its work. Nevertheless, they have no intrinsic unconditional worth; but they always presuppose, rather, a good will, which restricts the high esteem in which they are otherwise rightly held, and does not permit them to be regarded as absolutely good. Moderation in emotions and passions, self-control, and calm deliberation are not only good in many respects but even seem to constitute part of the intrinsic worth of a person. But they are far from being rightly called good without qualification (however unconditionally they were commended by the ancients). For without the principles of a good will, they can become extremely bad; ^{co} ~~the coolness of a villain makes him not only much more dangerous but~~ ^{avilain} also immediately more abominable in our eyes than he would have been regarded by us without it.

A good will is good not because of what it effects or accomplishes, nor because of its fitness to attain some proposed end; it is good only through its willing, i.e., it is good in itself. When it is considered in itself, then it is to be esteemed very much higher than anything which it might ever bring about merely in order to favor some inclination, or even the sum total of all inclinations. Even if, by some especially unfortunate fate or by the nigh-

*primarily
ture* gardedly provision of stepmotherly nature, this will should be wholly lacking in the power to accomplish its purpose; if with the greatest effort it should yet achieve nothing, and only the good will should remain (not, to be sure, as a mere wish but as the summoning of all the means in our power), yet would it, like a jewel, still shine by its own light as something which has its full value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitlessness can neither augment nor diminish this value. Its usefulness would be, as it were, only the setting to enable us to handle it in ordinary dealings or to attract to it the attention of those who are not yet experts, but not to recommend it to real experts or to determine its value.

But there is something so strange in this idea of the absolute value of a mere will, in which no account is taken of any useful results, that in spite of all the agreement received even from ordinary reason, yet there must arise the suspicion that such an idea may perhaps have as its hidden basis merely some high-flown fancy, and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature in assigning to reason the governing of our will. Therefore, this idea will be examined from this point of view.

instinct In the natural constitution of an organized being, i.e., one suitably adapted to the purpose of life, let us take as a principle that in such a being no organ is to be found for any end unless it be the most fit and the best adapted for that end. Now if that being's preservation, welfare, or in a word its happiness, were the real end of nature in the case of a being having reason and will, then nature would have hit upon a very poor arrangement in having the reason of the creature carry out this purpose. For all the actions which such a creature has to perform with this purpose in view, and the whole rule of his conduct would have been prescribed much more exactly by instinct; and the purpose in question could have been attained much more certainly by instinct than it ever can be by reason. And if in addition reason had been imparted to this favored creature, then it would have had to serve him only to contemplate the happy constitution of his nature, to admire that nature, to rejoice in it, and to feel grateful to the cause that bestowed it; but reason would not have served him to subject his faculty of desire to its weak and delusive guidance nor would it have served him to meddle incompetently with the purpose of nature. In a word, nature would have taken care that reason did not strike out into a practical use nor presume, with its weak insight, to think out for itself a plan for happiness and the means for attaining it. Nature would have taken upon herself not only the choice of ends but also that of the means, and would with wise foresight have entrusted both to instinct alone.

society And, in fact, we find that the more a cultivated reason devotes itself to the aim of enjoying life and happiness, the further does man get away from true contentment. Because of this there arises in many persons, if only they are candid enough to admit it, a certain degree of misology, i.e., hatred of reason. This is especially so in the case of those who are the most experienced in the use of reason, because after calculating all the advantages they derive, I say not from the invention of all the arts of com-

mon luxury, but even from the sciences (which in the end seem to them to be also a luxury of the understanding), they yet find that they have in fact only brought more trouble on their heads than they have gained in happiness. Therefore, they come to envy, rather than despise, the more common run of men who are closer to the guidance of mere natural instinct and who do not allow their reason much influence on their conduct. And we must admit that the judgment of those who would temper, or even reduce below zero, the boastful eulogies on behalf of the advantages which reason is supposed to provide as regards the happiness and contentment of life is by no means morose or ungrateful to the goodness with which the world is governed. There lies at the root of such judgments, rather, the idea that existence has another and much more worthy purpose, for which, and not for happiness, reason is quite properly intended, and which must, therefore, be regarded as the supreme condition to which the private purpose of men must, for the most part, defer.

Reason, however, is not competent enough to guide the will safely as regards its objects and the satisfaction of all our needs (which it in part even multiplies); to this end would an implanted natural instinct have led much more certainly. But inasmuch as reason has been imparted to us as a practical faculty, i.e., as one which is to have influence on the will, its true function must be to produce a will which is not merely good as a means to some further end, but is good in itself. To produce a will good in itself reason was absolutely necessary, inasmuch as nature in distributing her capacities has everywhere gone to work in a purposive manner. While such a will may not indeed be the sole and complete good, it must, nevertheless, be the highest good and the condition of all the rest, even of the desire for happiness. In this case there is nothing inconsistent with the wisdom of nature that the cultivation of reason, which is requisite for the first and unconditioned purpose, may in many ways restrict, at least in this life, the attainment of the second purpose, viz., happiness, which is always conditioned. Indeed happiness can even be reduced to less than nothing, without nature's failing thereby in her purpose; for reason recognizes as its highest practical function the establishment of a good will, whereby in the attainment of this end reason is capable only of its own kind of satisfaction, viz., that of fulfilling a purpose which is in turn determined only by reason, even though such fulfilment were often to interfere with the purposes of inclination.

The concept of a will estimable in itself and good without regard to any further end must now be developed. This concept already dwells in the natural sound understanding and needs not so much to be taught as merely to be elucidated. It always holds first place in estimating the total worth of our actions and constitutes the condition of all the rest. Therefore, we shall take up the concept of duty, which includes that of a good will, though with certain subjective restrictions and hindrances, which far from hiding a good will or rendering it unrecognizable, rather bring it out by contrast and make it shine forth more brightly.

I here omit all actions already recognized as contrary to duty, even

a good will is good in itself
 without preening or pride (respect)
FIRST SECTION
 (esteem)
 (worth)

though they may be useful for this or that end; for in the case of these the question does not arise at all as to whether they might be done from duty, since they even conflict with duty. I also set aside those actions which are really in accordance with duty, yet to which men have no immediate inclination, but perform them because they are impelled thereto by some other inclination. For in this [second] case to decide whether the action which is in accord with duty has been done from duty or from some selfish purpose is easy. This difference is far more difficult to note in the [third] case where the action accords with duty and the subject has in addition an immediate inclination to do the action. For example,¹ that a dealer should not overcharge an inexperienced purchaser certainly accords with duty; and where there is much commerce, the prudent merchant does not overcharge but keeps to a fixed price for everyone in general, so that a child may buy from him just as well as everyone else may. Thus customers are honestly served, but this is not nearly enough for making us believe that the merchant has acted this way from duty and from principles of honesty; his own advantage required him to do it. He cannot, however, be assumed to have in addition [as in the third case] an immediate inclination toward his buyers, causing him, as it were, out of love to give no one as far as price is concerned any advantage over another. Hence the action was done neither from duty nor from immediate inclination, but merely for a selfish purpose.

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On the other hand,² to preserve one's life is a duty; and, furthermore, everyone has also an immediate inclination to do so. But on this account the often anxious care taken by most men for it has no intrinsic worth, and the maxim of their action has no moral content. They preserve their lives, to be sure, in accordance with duty, but not from duty. On the other hand,³ if adversity and hopeless sorrow have completely taken away the taste for life, if an unfortunate man, strong in soul and more indignant at his fate than despondent or dejected, wishes for death and yet preserves his life without loving it—not from inclination or fear, but from duty—then his maxim indeed has a moral content.⁴

1. [The ensuing example provides an illustration of the second case.]

2. [This next example illustrates the third case.]

3. [The ensuing example illustrates the fourth case.]

4. [Four different cases have been distinguished in the two foregoing paragraphs. Case 1 involves those actions which are contrary to duty (lying, cheating, stealing, etc.). Case 2 involves those which accord with duty but for which a person perhaps has no immediate inclination, though he does have a mediate inclination thereto (one pays his taxes not because he likes to but in order to avoid the penalties set for delinquents, one treats his fellows well not because he really likes them but because he wants their votes when at some future time he runs for public office, etc.). A vast number of so-called "morally good" actions actually belong to this case 2—they accord with duty because of self-seeking inclinations. Case 3 involves those which accord with duty and for which a person does have an immediate inclination (one does not commit suicide because all is going well with him, one does not commit adultery because he considers his wife to be the most desirable creature in the whole world,

To be beneficent where one can is a duty; and besides this, there are many persons who are so sympathetically constituted that, without any further motive of vanity or self-interest, they find an inner pleasure in spreading joy around them and can rejoice in the satisfaction of others as their own work. But I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however dutiful and amiable it may be, has nevertheless no true moral worth.⁵ It is on a level with such actions as arise from other inclinations, e.g., the inclination for honor, which if fortunately directed to what is in fact beneficial and accords with duty and is thus honorable, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem; for its maxim lacks the moral content of an action done not from inclination but from duty. Suppose then the mind of this friend of mankind to be clouded over with his own sorrow so that all sympathy with the lot of others is extinguished, and suppose him still to have the power to benefit others in distress, even though he is not touched by their trouble because he is sufficiently absorbed with his own; and now suppose that, even though no inclination moves him any longer, he nevertheless tears himself from this deadly insensibility and performs the action without any inclination at all, but solely from duty—then for the first time his action has genuine moral worth.⁶ Further still, if nature has put little sympathy in this or that man's heart, if (while being an honest man in other respects) he is by temperament cold and indifferent to the sufferings of others, perhaps because as regards his own sufferings he is endowed with the special gift of patience and fortitude and expects or even requires that others should have the same; if such a man (who would truly not be nature's worst product) had not been exactly fashioned by her to be a philanthropist, would he not yet find in himself a source from which he might give himself a worth far higher than any that a good-natured temperament might have? By all means, because just here

moral
worth

etc.). Case 4 involves those actions which accord with duty but are contrary to some immediate inclination (one does not commit suicide even when he is in dire distress, one does not commit adultery even though his wife has turned out to be an impossible shrew, etc.). Now case 4 is the crucial test case of the will's possible goodness—but Kant does not claim that one should lead his life in such a way as to encounter as many such cases as possible in order constantly to test his virtue (deliberately marry a shrew so as to be able to resist the temptation to commit adultery). Life itself forces enough such cases upon a person without his seeking them out. But when there is a conflict between duty and inclination, duty should always be followed. Case 3 makes for the easiest living and the greatest contentment, and anyone would wish that life might present him with far more of these cases than with cases 2 or 4. But you should not arrange his life in such a way as to avoid case 4 at all costs and to seek out case as much as possible (become a recluse so as to avoid the possible rough and tumble involved with frequent association with one's fellows, avoid places where one might encounter the sick and the poor so as to spare oneself the pangs of sympathy and the need to exercise the virtue of benefiting those in distress, etc.). For the purpose of philosophical analysis Kant emphasizes case 4 as being the test case of the will's possible goodness, but he is not thereby advocating puritanism.]

5. [This is an example of case 3.]

6. [This is an example of case 4.]

eudaimonia)

- 399 does the worth of the character come out; this worth is moral and incomparably the highest of all, viz., that he is beneficent, not from inclination, but from duty.⁷

To secure one's own happiness is a duty (at least indirectly); for discontent with one's condition under many pressing cares and amid unsatisfied wants might easily become a great temptation to transgress one's duties. But here also do men of themselves already have, irrespective of duty, the strongest and deepest inclination toward happiness, because just in this idea are all inclinations combined into a sum total.⁸ But the precept of happiness is often so constituted as greatly to interfere with some inclinations, and yet men cannot form any definite and certain concept of the sum of satisfaction of all inclinations that is called happiness. Hence there is no wonder that a single inclination which is determinate both as to what it promises and as to the time within which it can be satisfied may outweigh a fluctuating idea; and there is no wonder that a man, e.g., a gouty patient, can choose to enjoy what he likes and to suffer what he may, since by his calculation he has here at least not sacrificed the enjoyment of the present moment to some possibly groundless expectations of the good fortune that is supposed to be found in health. But even in this case, if the universal inclination to happiness did not determine his will and if health, at least for him, did not figure as so necessary an element in his calculations; there still remains here, as in all other cases, a law, viz., that he should promote his happiness not from inclination but from duty, and thereby for the first time does his conduct have real moral worth.⁹

Undoubtedly in this way also are to be understood those passages of scripture which command us to love our neighbor and even our enemy. 'or love as an inclination cannot be commanded; but beneficence from duty, when no inclination impels us¹⁰ and even when a natural and unconquerable aversion opposes such beneficence,¹¹ is practical, and not pathological, love. Such love resides in the will and not in the propensities of feeling, in principles of action and not in tender sympathy; and only this practical love can be commanded.

The second proposition¹² is this: An action done from duty has its moral worth, not in the purpose that is to be attained by it, but in the maxim ac-

7. [This is an even more extreme example of case 4.]

- 8. [This is an example of case 3.]**

9. [This example is a weak form of case 4; the action accords with duty but is not contrary to some immediate inclination.]

10. [This is case 4 in its weak form.]

11. [This is case 4 in its strong form.]

12. [The first proposition of morality says that an action must be done from duty in order to have any moral worth. It is implicit in the preceding examples but was never explicitly stated.]

cording to which the action is determined. The moral worth depends, therefore, not on the realization of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of volition according to which, without regard to any objects of the faculty of desire, the action has been done. From what has gone before it is clear that the purposes which we may have in our actions, as well as their effects regarded as ends and incentives of the will, cannot give to actions any unconditioned and moral worth. Where, then, can this worth lie if it is not to be found in the will's relation to the expected effect? Nowhere but in the principle of the will, with no regard to the ends that can be brought about through such action. For the will stands, as it were, at a crossroads between its a priori principle, which is formal, and its a posteriori incentive, which is material; and since it must be determined by something, it must be determined by the formal principle of volition, if the action is done from duty—and in that case every material principle is taken away from it.

third proposition

The third proposition, which follows from the other two, can be expressed thus: Duty is the necessity of an action done out of respect for the law. I can indeed have an inclination for an object as the effect of my proposed action; but I can never have respect for such an object, just because it is merely an effect and is not an activity of the will. Similarly, I can have no respect for inclination as such, whether my own or that of another. I can at most, if my own inclination, approve it; and, if that of another, even love it, i.e., consider it to be favorable to my own advantage. An object of respect can only be what is connected with my will solely as ground and never as effect—something that does not serve my inclination but, rather, outweighs it, or at least excludes it from consideration when some choice is made—in other words, only the law itself can be an object of respect and hence can be a command. Now an action done from duty must altogether exclude the influence of inclination and therewith every object of the will. Hence there is nothing left which can determine the will except objectively the law and subjectively pure respect for this practical law, i.e., the will can be subjectively determined by the maxim¹³ that I should follow such a law even if all my inclinations are thereby thwarted.

Thus the moral worth of an action does not lie in the effect expected from it nor in any principle of action that needs to borrow its motive from this expected effect. For all these effects (agreeableness of one's condition and even the furtherance of other people's happiness) could have been brought about also through other causes and would not have required the will of a rational being, in which the highest and unconditioned good can alone be found. Therefore, the pre-eminent good which is called moral can consist in nothing but the representation of the law in itself, and such a representation can admittedly be found only in a rational being insofar as this representation, and not some expected effect, is the determining

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13. A maxim is the subjective principle of volition. The objective principle (i.e., one which would serve all rational beings also subjectively as a practical principle if reason had full control over the faculty of desire) is the practical law. [See below Kant's footnote at Ak. 420-21.]

ground of the will. This good is already present in the person who acts according to this representation, and such good need not be awaited merely from the effect.¹⁴

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But what sort of law can that be the thought of which must determine the will without reference to any expected effect, so that the will can be called absolutely good without qualification? Since I have deprived the will of every impulse that might arise for it from obeying any particular law, there is nothing left to serve the will as principle except the universal conformity of its actions to law as such, i.e., I should never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law.¹⁵ Here mere conformity to law as such (without having as its basis any law determining particular actions) serves the will as principle and must so serve it if duty is not to be a vain delusion and a chimerical concept. The ordinary reason of mankind in its practical judgments agrees completely with this, and always has in view the aforementioned principle.

For example, take this question. When I am in distress, may I make a promise with the intention of not keeping it? I readily distinguish here the two meanings which the question may have; whether making a false promise conforms with prudence or with duty. Doubtless the former can often be the case. Indeed I clearly see that escape from some present difficulty by means of such a promise is not enough. In addition I must carefully consider whether from this lie there may later arise far greater inconvenience for me than from what I now try to escape. Furthermore, the consequences of my false promise are not easy to foresee, even with all my supposed cunning; loss of confidence in me might prove to be far more disadvantageous than the misfortune which I now try to avoid. The more

desire inversion

14. There might be brought against me here an objection that I take refuge behind the word "respect" in an obscure feeling, instead of giving a clear answer to the question by means of a concept of reason. But even though respect is a feeling, it is not one received through any outside influence but is, rather, one that is self-produced by means of a rational concept; hence it is specifically different from all feelings of the first kind, which can all be reduced to inclination or fear. What I recognize immediately as a law for me, I recognize with respect; this means merely the consciousness of the subordination of my will to a law without the mediation of other influences upon my sense. The immediate determination of the will by the law, and the consciousness thereof, is called respect, which is hence regarded as the effect of the law upon the subject and not as the cause of the law. Respect is properly the representation of a worth that thwarts my self-love. Hence respect is something that is regarded as an object of neither inclination nor fear, although it has at the same time something analogous to both. The object of respect is, therefore, nothing but the law—indeed that very law which we impose on ourselves and yet recognize as necessary in itself. As law, we are subject to it without consulting self-love; as imposed on us by ourselves, it is a consequence of our will. In the former aspect, it is analogous to fear; in the latter, to inclination. All respect for a person is properly only respect for the law (of honesty, etc.) of which the person provides an example. Since we regard the development of our talents as a duty, we think of a man of talent as being also a kind of example of the law (the law of becoming like him by practice), and that is what constitutes our respect for him. All so-called moral interest consists solely in respect for the law.

15! [This is the first time in the *Grounding* that the categorical imperative is stated.]

prudent way might be to act according to a universal maxim and to make it a habit not to promise anything without intending to keep it. But that such a maxim is, nevertheless, always based on nothing but a fear of consequences becomes clear to me at once. To be truthful from duty is, however, quite different from being truthful from fear of disadvantageous consequences; in the first case the concept of the action itself contains a law for me, while in the second I must first look around elsewhere to see what are the results for me that might be connected with the action. For to deviate from the principle of duty is quite certainly bad; but to abandon my maxim of prudence can often be very advantageous for me, though to abide by it is certainly safer. The most direct and infallible way, however, to answer the question as to whether a lying promise accords with duty is to ask myself whether I would really be content if my maxim (of extricating myself from difficulty by means of a false promise) were to hold as a universal law for myself as well as for others, and could I really say to myself that everyone may promise falsely when he finds himself in a difficulty from which he can find no other way to extricate himself. Then I immediately become aware that I can indeed will the lie but can not at all will a universal law to lie. For by such a law there would really be no promises at all, since in vain would my willing future actions be professed to other people who would not believe what I professed, or if they over-hastily did believe, then they would pay me back in like coin. Therefore, my maxim would necessarily destroy itself just as soon as it was made a universal law.¹⁶

lying
manifest contradiction

Therefore, I need no far-reaching acuteness to discern what I have to do in order that my will may be morally good. Inexperienced in the course of the world and incapable of being prepared for all its contingencies, I only ask myself whether I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law. If not, then the maxim must be rejected, not because of any disadvantage accruing to me or even to others, but because it cannot be fitting as a principle in a possible legislation of universal law, and reason exacts from me immediate respect for such legislation. Indeed I have as yet no insight into the grounds of such respect (which the philosopher may investigate). But I at least understand that respect is an estimation of a worth that far outweighs any worth of what is recommended by inclination, and that the necessity of acting from pure respect for the practical law is what constitutes duty, to which every other motive must give way because duty is the condition of a will good in itself, whose worth is above all else.

Thus within the moral cognition of ordinary human reason we have arrived at its principle. To be sure, such reason does not think of this principle abstractly in its universal form, but does always have it actually in view and does use it as the standard of judgment. It would here be easy to

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16. [This means that when you tell a lie, you merely take exception to the general rule that says everyone should always tell the truth and believe that what you are saying is true. When you lie, you do not thereby will that everyone else lie and not believe that what you are saying is true, because in such a case your lie would never work to get you what you want.]

show how ordinary reason, with this compass in hand, is well able to distinguish, in every case that occurs, what is good or evil, in accord with duty or contrary to duty, if we do not in the least try to teach reason anything new but only make it attend, as Socrates did, to its own principle—and thereby do we show that neither science nor philosophy is needed in order to know what one must do to be honest and good, and even wise and virtuous. Indeed we might even have conjectured beforehand that cognizance of what every man is obligated to do, and hence also to know, would be available to every man, even the most ordinary. Yet we cannot but observe with admiration how great an advantage the power of practical judgment has over the theoretical in ordinary human understanding. In the theoretical, when ordinary reason ventures to depart from the laws of experience and the perceptions of sense, it falls into sheer inconceivabilities and self-contradictions, or at least into a chaos of uncertainty, obscurity, and instability. In the practical, however, the power of judgment first begins to show itself to advantage when ordinary understanding excludes all sensuous incentives from practical laws. Such understanding then becomes even subtle, whether in quibbling with its own conscience or with other claims regarding what is to be called right, or whether in wanting to determine correctly for its own instruction the worth of various actions. And the most extraordinary thing is that ordinary understanding in this practical case may have just as good a hope of hitting the mark as that which any philosopher may promise himself. Indeed it is almost more certain in this than even a philosopher is, because he can have no principle other than what ordinary understanding has, but he may easily confuse his judgment by a multitude of foreign and irrelevant considerations and thereby cause it to swerve from the right way. Would it not, therefore, be wiser in moral matters to abide by the ordinary rational judgment or at most to bring in philosophy merely for the purpose of rendering the system of morals more complete and intelligible and of presenting its rules in a way that is more convenient for use (especially in disputation), but not for the purpose of leading ordinary human understanding away from its happy simplicity in practical matters and of bringing it by means of philosophy into a new path of inquiry and instruction?

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Innocence is indeed a glorious thing; but, unfortunately, it does not keep very well and is easily led astray. Consequently, even wisdom—which consists more in doing and not doing than in knowing—needs science, not in order to learn from it, but in order that wisdom's precepts may gain acceptance and permanence. Man feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all the commands of duty, which are presented to him by reason as being so pre-eminently worthy of respect; this counterweight consists of his needs and inclinations, whose total satisfaction is summed up under the name of happiness. Now reason irremissibly commands its precepts, without thereby promising the inclinations anything; hence it disregards and neglects these impetuous and at the same time so seemingly plausible claims (which do not allow themselves to

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be suppressed by any command). Hereby arises a natural dialectic, i.e., a propensity to quibble with these strict laws of duty, to cast doubt upon their validity, or at least upon their purity and strictness, and to make them, where possible, more compatible with our wishes and inclinations. Thereby are such laws corrupted in their very foundations and their whole dignity is destroyed—something which even ordinary practical reason cannot in the end call good.

Thus is ordinary human reason forced to go outside its sphere and take a step into the field of practical philosophy, not by any need for speculation (which never befalls such reason so long as it is content to be mere sound reason) but on practical grounds themselves. There it tries to obtain information and clear instruction regarding the source of its own principle and the correct determination of this principle in its opposition to maxims based on need and inclination, so that reason may escape from the perplexity of opposite claims and may avoid the risk of losing all genuine moral principles through the ambiguity into which it easily falls. Thus when ordinary practical reason cultivates itself, there imperceptibly arises in it a dialectic which compels it to seek help in philosophy. The same thing happens in reason's theoretical use; in this case, just as in the other, peace will be found only in a thorough critical examination of our reason.