

## [IMPERATIVES IN GENERAL]

Everything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the power to act in accordance with his idea of laws—that is, in accordance with principles—and only so has he a will. Since reason is required in order to derive actions from laws,<sup>4</sup> the will is nothing but practical reason. If reason infallibly determines the will, then in a being of this kind the actions which are recognised to be objectively necessary are also subjectively necessary—that is to say, the will is then a power to choose only that which reason independently of inclination recognises to be practically necessary, that is, to be good. But if reason solely by itself is not sufficient to determine the will; if the will is exposed also to subjective conditions (certain impulsions) which do not always harmonise with the objective ones; if, in a word, the will is not in itself completely in accord with reason (as actually happens in the case of men); then actions which are recognised to be objectively necessary are subjectively contingent and the determining of such a will in accordance with objective laws is necessitation. That is to say, the relation of objective laws to a will not good through and through is conceived as one in which the will of a rational being, although it is determined<sup>1</sup> by principles of reason, does not necessarily follow these principles in virtue of its own nature. 37 413

The conception of an objective principle so far as this principle is necessitating for a will is called a command (of reason), and the formula of this command is called an *Imperative*.

All imperatives are expressed by an 'ought' (Sollen). By this they mark the relation of an objective law of reason to a will which is not necessarily determined by this law in virtue of its subjective constitution (the relation of necessitation). They say that something would be good to do or to leave undone; only they say it to a will which does not always do a thing because it has been informed that this is a good thing to do. The practically good is 38

that which determines the will by concepts of reason, and therefore not by subjective causes, but objectively—that is, on grounds valid for every rational being as such. It is distinguished from the *pleasant* as that which influences the will, not as a principle of reason valid for every one, but solely through the medium of sensation by purely subjective causes valid only for the senses of this person or that.\*

414] 39 A perfectly good will would thus stand quite as much under objective laws (laws of the good), but it could not on this account be conceived as *necessitated* to act in conformity with law, since of itself, in accordance with its subjective constitution, it can be determined only by the concept of the good. Hence for the *divine* will, and in general for a *holy* will, there are no imperatives: ‘I ought’ is here out of place, because ‘I will’ is already of itself necessarily in harmony with the law. Imperatives are in consequence only formulae for expressing the relation of objective laws of willing to the subjective imperfection of

- 38 \* The dependence of the power of appetite on sensation is called an inclination, and thus an inclination always indicates a *need*. The dependence of a contingently determinable will on principles of reason is called an interest. Hence an interest is found only where there is a dependent will which in itself is not always in accord with reason: to a divine will we cannot ascribe any interest. But even the human will can take an interest in something without therefore acting from interest. The first expression signifies practical interest in the action; the second pathological interest in the object of the action. The first indicates only dependence of the will on principles of reason by itself; the second its dependence on principles of reason at the service of inclination—that is to say, where reason merely supplies a practical rule for meeting the need of inclination.<sup>1</sup> In the first case what interests me is the action; in the second case what interests me is the object of the action (so far as this object is pleasant to me). We have seen in Chapter 1 that in an action done for the sake of duty we must have regard, not to interest in the object, but to interest in the action itself and in its rational principle (namely, the law).

the will of this or that rational being—for example, of the human will.

## [CLASSIFICATION OF IMPERATIVES]

All imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. Hypothetical imperatives declare a possible action to be practically necessary as a means to the attainment of something else that one wills (or that one may will). A categorical imperative would be one which represented an action as objectively necessary in itself apart from its relation to a further end.

Every practical law represents a possible action as good and therefore as necessary for a subject whose actions are determined by reason. Hence all imperatives are formulae for determining an action which is necessary in accordance with the principle of a will in some sense good. If the action would be good solely as a means to *something else*, the imperative is hypothetical; if the action is represented as good in itself and therefore as necessary, in virtue of its<sup>1</sup> principle, for a will which of itself accords with reason, then the imperative is categorical. 40

An imperative therefore tells me which of my possible actions would be good; and it formulates a practical rule for a will that does not perform an action straight away because the action is good—whether because the subject does not always know that it is good or because, even if he did know this, he might still act on maxims contrary to the objective principles of practical reason.

A hypothetical imperative thus says only that an action is good for some purpose or other, either *possible* or *actual*. In the first case it is a *problematic* practical principle; in the second case an *assertoric* practical principle. A categorical imperative, which declares an action to be objectively necessary in itself without reference to some purpose—that is, even without any further end—ranks as an *apodeictic* practical principle. 415

- 41 Everything that is possible only through the efforts of some rational being can be conceived as a possible purpose of some will; and consequently there are in fact innumerable principles of action so far as action is thought necessary in order to achieve some possible purpose which can be effected by it. All sciences have a practical part consisting of problems which suppose that some end is possible for us and of imperatives which tell us how it is to be attained. Hence the latter can in general be called imperatives of skill. Here there is absolutely no question about the rationality or goodness of the end, but only about what must be done to attain it. A prescription required by a doctor in order to cure his man completely and one required by a poisoner in order to make sure of killing him are of equal value so far as each serves to effect its purpose perfectly. Since in early youth we do not know what ends may present themselves to us in the course of life, parents seek above all to make their children learn things of many kinds; they provide carefully for skill in the use of means to all sorts of arbitrary ends, of none of which can they be certain that it could not<sup>1</sup> in the future become an actual purpose of their ward, while it is always possible that he might adopt it. Their care in this matter is so great that they commonly neglect on this account to form and correct the judgement of their children
- 42 about the worth of the things which they might possibly adopt as ends.

There is, however, *one* end that can be presupposed as actual in all rational beings (so far as they are dependent beings to whom imperatives apply); and thus there is one purpose which they not only *can* have, but which we can assume with certainty that they all *do* have by a natural necessity—the purpose, namely, of *happiness*. A hypothetical imperative which affirms the practical necessity of an action as a means to the furtherance of happiness is *assertoric*. We may represent it, not simply as necessary to an uncertain, merely possible purpose, but as necessary to a purpose which we can presuppose *a priori* and with certainty to be present

in every man because it belongs to his very being. Now skill in the choice of means to one's own greatest well-being can be called *prudence*\* in the narrowest sense.<sup>1</sup> Thus an imperative concerned with the choice of means to one's own happiness—that is, a precept of prudence—still remains *hypothetical*: an action is commanded, not absolutely, but only as a means to a further purpose.

Finally, there is an imperative which, without being based on, and conditioned by, any further purpose to be attained by a certain line of conduct, enjoins this conduct immediately. This imperative is *categorical*. It is concerned, not with the matter of the action and its presumed results, but with its form and with the principle from which it follows; and what is essentially good in the action consists in the mental disposition, let the consequences be what they may. This imperative may be called the imperative of *morality*.

Willing in accordance with these three kinds of principle is also sharply distinguished by a *dissimilarity* in the necessitation of the will. To make this dissimilarity obvious we should, I think, name these kinds of principle most appropriately in their order if we said there were either *rules of skill* or *counsels of prudence* or *commands (laws) of morality*. For only *law* carries with it the concept of an *unconditioned*, and yet objective and so universally valid, necessity; and commands are laws which must be obeyed—that is, must be followed even against inclination. *Counsel* does indeed involve necessity, but necessity valid only under a subjective and

\* The word 'prudence' (*Klugheit*) is used in a double sense: in one sense it can have the name of 'worldly wisdom' (*Weltklugheit*); in a second sense that of 'personal wisdom' (*Privatklugheit*). The first is the skill of a man in influencing others in order to use them for his own ends. The second is sagacity in combining all these ends to his own lasting advantage.<sup>1</sup> The latter is properly that to which the value of the former can itself be traced; and of him who is prudent in the first sense, but not in the second, we might better say that he is clever and astute, but on the whole imprudent.

contingent condition—namely, if this or that man counts this or that as belonging to his happiness. As against this, a categorical imperative is limited by no condition and can quite precisely be called a command, as being absolutely, although practically,<sup>1</sup>  
 417 necessary. We could also call imperatives of the first kind *technical* (concerned with art); of the second kind *pragmatic\** (concerned with well-being); of the third kind *moral* (concerned with free conduct as such<sup>2</sup>—that is, with morals).

### [HOW ARE IMPERATIVES POSSIBLE?]

The question now arises ‘How are all these imperatives possible?’ This question does not ask how we can conceive the execution of an action commanded by the imperative, but merely how we can conceive the necessitation of the will expressed by the imperative in setting us a task.<sup>3</sup> How an imperative of skill is  
 45 possible requires no special discussion. Who wills the end, wills (so far as reason has decisive influence on his actions) also the means which are indispensably necessary and in his power. So far as willing is concerned, this proposition is analytic: for in my willing of an object as an effect there is already conceived<sup>1</sup> the causality of myself as an acting cause—that is, the use of means; and from the concept of willing an end the imperative merely extracts the concept of actions necessary to this end. (Synthetic propositions are required in order to determine the means to a proposed end, but these are concerned, not with the reason for performing the act of will, but with the cause which produces

44 \* It seems to me that the proper meaning of the word ‘pragmatic’ can be defined most accurately in this way. For those *Sanctions* are called *Pragmatic* which, properly speaking, do not spring as necessary laws from the Natural Right of States, but from *forethought* in regard to the general welfare.<sup>1</sup> A history is written *pragmatically* when it teaches *prudence*—that is, when it instructs the world of today how to provide for its own advantage better than, or at least as well as, the world of other times.

the object.) That in order to divide a line into two equal parts on a sure principle I must from its ends describe two intersecting arcs—this is admittedly taught by mathematics only in synthetic propositions; but when I know that the aforesaid effect can be produced only by such an action, the proposition ‘If I fully will the effect, I also will the action required for it’ is analytic; for it is one and the same thing to conceive something as an effect possible in a certain way through me and to conceive myself as acting in the same way with respect to it.

If it were only as easy to find a determinate concept of happiness, the imperatives of prudence would agree entirely with those of skill and would be equally analytic. For here as there it could alike be said ‘Who wills the end, wills also (necessarily, if he accords with reason) the sole means which are in his power’. Unfortunately, however, the concept of happiness is so indeterminate a concept that although every man wants to attain happiness, he can never say definitely and in unison with himself what it really is that he wants and wills. The reason for this is that all the elements which belong to the concept of happiness are without exception empirical—that is, they must be borrowed from experience; but that none the less there is required for the Idea of happiness an absolute whole, a maximum of well-being in my present, and in every future, state. Now it is impossible for the most intelligent, and at the same time most powerful, but nevertheless finite, being to form here a determinate concept of what he really wills. Is it riches that he wants? How much anxiety, envy, and pestering might he not bring in this way on his own head! Is it knowledge and insight? This might perhaps merely give him an eye so sharp that it would make evils at present hidden from him and yet unavoidable seem all the more frightful, or would add a load of still further needs to the desires which already give him trouble enough. Is it long life? Who will guarantee that it would not be a long misery? Is it at least health? How often has infirmity of body kept a man from excesses into

which perfect health would have let him fall!—and so on. In short, he has no principle by which he is able to decide with complete certainty what will make him truly happy, since for this he would require omniscience. Thus we cannot act on determinate principles in order to be happy, but only on empirical counsels, for example, of diet, frugality, politeness, reserve, and so on—things which experience shows contribute most to well-being on the average. From this it follows that imperatives of prudence, speaking strictly, do not command at all—that is, cannot exhibit actions objectively as practically *necessary*; that they are rather to be taken as recommendations (*consilia*), than as commands (*praecepta*), of reason; that the problem of determining certainly and universally what action will promote the happiness of a rational being is completely insoluble; and consequently that in regard to this there is no imperative possible which in the strictest sense could command us to do what will make us happy, since happiness is an Ideal, not of reason, but of  
 419 imagination—an Ideal resting merely on empirical grounds, of  
 48 which it is vain to expect that they should determine an action by which we could attain the totality of a series of consequences which is in fact infinite. Nevertheless, if we assume that the means to happiness could be discovered with certainty, this imperative of prudence would be an analytic practical proposition; for it differs from the imperative of skill only in this—that in the latter the end is merely possible, while in the former the end is given. In spite of this difference, since both command solely the means to something assumed to be willed as an end, the imperative which commands him who wills the end to will the means is in both cases analytic. Thus there is likewise no difficulty in regard to the possibility of an imperative of prudence.

Beyond all doubt, the question ‘How is the imperative of morality possible?’ is the only one in need of a solution; for it is in no way hypothetical, and consequently we cannot base the



objective necessity which it affirms on any presupposition, as we can with hypothetical imperatives. Only we must never forget here that it is impossible to settle by an example, and so empirically, whether there is any imperative of this kind at all: we must rather suspect that all imperatives which seem to be categorical may none the less be covertly hypothetical. Take, for example, the saying 'Thou shalt make no false promises'. Let us assume that the necessity for this abstention is no mere device for the avoidance of some further evil—as it might be said 'You ought not to make a lying promise lest, when this comes to light, you destroy your credit'. Let us hold, on the contrary, that an action of this kind must be considered as bad in itself, and that the imperative of prohibition is therefore categorical. Even so, we cannot with any certainty show by an example that the will is determined here solely by the law without any further motive, although it may appear to be so; for it is always possible that fear of disgrace, perhaps also hidden dread of other risks, may unconsciously influence the will. Who can prove by experience that a cause is not present? Experience shows only that it is not perceived. In such a case, however, the so-called moral imperative, which as such appears to be categorical and unconditioned, would in fact be only a pragmatic prescription calling attention to our advantage and merely bidding us take this into account. 49

We shall thus have to investigate the possibility of a categorical imperative entirely *a priori*, since here we do not enjoy the advantage of having its reality given in experience and so of being obliged merely to explain, and not to establish, its possibility.<sup>1</sup> 420 So much, however, can be seen provisionally—that the categorical imperative alone purports to be a practical law, while all the rest may be called principles of the will but not laws; for an action necessary merely in order to achieve an arbitrary purpose can be considered as in itself contingent, and we can always escape from the precept if we abandon the purpose; whereas an 50

unconditioned command does not leave it open to the will to do the opposite at its discretion and therefore alone carries with it that necessity which we demand from a law.

In the second place, with this categorical imperative or law of morality the reason for our difficulty (in comprehending its possibility) is a very serious one. We have here a synthetic *a priori* practical proposition;\* and since in theoretical knowledge there is so much difficulty in comprehending the possibility of propositions of this kind, it may readily be gathered that in practical knowledge the difficulty will be no less.

### [THE FORMULA OF UNIVERSAL LAW]

- 51 In this task we wish first to enquire whether perhaps the mere concept of a categorical imperative may not also provide us with the formula containing the only proposition that can be a categorical imperative; for even when we know the purport of such an absolute command, the question of its possibility will still require a special and troublesome effort, which we postpone to the final chapter.

When I conceive a *hypothetical* imperative in general, I do not know beforehand what it will contain—until its condition is given. But if I conceive a *categorical* imperative, I know at once what it contains. For since besides the law this imperative

- 50 \* Without presupposing a condition taken from some inclination I connect an action with the will *a priori* and therefore necessarily (although only objectively so—that is, only subject to the Idea of a reason having full power over all subjective impulses to action). Here we have a practical proposition in which the willing of any action is not derived analytically from some other willing already presupposed<sup>1</sup> (for we do not possess any such perfect will<sup>2</sup>), but is on the contrary connected immediately<sup>3</sup> with the concept of the will of a rational being as something which is not contained in this concept.

contains only the necessity that our maxim\* should conform<sup>1</sup> to this law, while the law, as we have seen, contains no condition to limit it, there remains nothing over to which the maxim has to conform except the universality of a law as such; and it is this conformity alone that the imperative properly asserts to be necessary.

There is therefore only a single categorical imperative and it is this: 'Act only on that maxim through<sup>1</sup> which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.'

Now if all imperatives of duty can be derived from this one imperative as their principle, then even although we leave it unsettled whether what we call duty may not be an empty concept, we shall still be able to show at least what we understand by it and what the concept means.

## [THE FORMULA OF THE LAW OF NATURE]

Since the universality of the law governing the production of effects constitutes what is properly called *nature* in its most general sense (nature as regards its form)<sup>2</sup>—that is, the existence of things so far as determined by universal laws—the universal imperative of duty may also run as follows: 'Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature.'

\* A maxim is a subjective principle of action and must be distinguished from an objective principle—namely, a practical law. The former contains a practical rule determined by reason in accordance with the conditions of the subject (often his ignorance or again his inclinations): it is thus a principle on which the subject acts. A law, on the other hand, is an objective principle valid for every rational being; and it is a principle on which he ought to act—that is, an imperative.<sup>1</sup>

## [ILLUSTRATIONS]

We will now enumerate a few duties, following their customary division into duties towards self and duties towards others and into perfect and imperfect duties.\*

1. A man feels sick of life as the result of a series of misfortunes that has mounted to the point of despair, but he is still so far in possession of his reason as to ask himself whether taking his own life may not be contrary to his duty to himself. He now applies the test 'Can the maxim of my action really become a universal law of nature?' His maxim is 'From self-love I make it my principle to shorten my life if its continuance threatens more evil than it promises pleasure'. The only further question to ask is whether this principle of self-love can become a universal law of nature. It is then seen at once that a system of nature by whose law the very same feeling whose function (*Bestimmung*) is to stimulate the furtherance of life should actually destroy life would contradict itself and consequently could not subsist as a system of nature.<sup>1</sup> Hence this maxim cannot possibly hold as a universal law of nature and is therefore entirely opposed to the supreme principle of all duty.

2. Another finds himself driven to borrowing money because of need. He well knows that he will not be able to pay it back; but he sees too that he will get no loan unless he gives a firm promise to pay it back within a fixed time. He is inclined to make such a promise; but he has still enough conscience to ask 'Is it not unlawful and contrary to duty to get out of difficulties

\* It should be noted that I reserve my division of duties entirely for a future *Metaphysic of Morals* and that my present division is therefore put forward as arbitrary (merely for the purpose of arranging my examples). Further, I understand here by a perfect duty one which allows no exception in the interest of inclination,<sup>1</sup> and so I recognise among *perfect duties*, not only outer ones, but also inner.<sup>2</sup> This is contrary to the accepted usage of the schools, but I do not intend to justify it here, since for my purpose it is all one whether this point is conceded or not.

in this way?' Supposing, however, he did resolve to do so, the maxim of his action would run thus: 'Whenever I believe myself short of money, I will borrow money and promise to pay it back, though I know that this will never be done.' Now this principle of self-love or personal advantage is perhaps quite compatible with my own entire future welfare; only there remains the question 'Is it right?' I therefore transform the demand of self-love into a universal law and frame my question thus: 'How would things stand if my maxim became a universal law?' I then see straight away that this maxim can never rank as a universal law of nature and be self-consistent, but must necessarily contradict 55 itself. For the universality of a law that every one believing himself to be in need can make any promise he pleases with the intention not to keep it would make promising, and the very purpose of promising, itself impossible, since no one would believe he was being promised anything, but would laugh at utterances of this kind as empty shams.

3. A third finds in himself a talent whose cultivation would make him a useful man for all sorts of purposes. But he sees 423 himself in comfortable circumstances, and he prefers to give himself up to pleasure rather than to bother about increasing and improving his fortunate natural aptitudes. Yet he asks himself further 'Does my maxim of neglecting my natural gifts, besides agreeing in itself with my tendency to indulgence, agree also with what is called duty?' He then sees that a system of nature could indeed always subsist under such a universal law, although (like the South Sea Islanders) every man should let his talents rust and should be bent on devoting his life solely to idleness, indulgence, procreation, and, in a word, to enjoyment. Only he cannot possibly will that this should become a universal 56 law of nature or should be implanted in us as such a law by a natural instinct. For as a rational being he necessarily wills that all his powers should be developed, since they serve him, and are given him, for all sorts of possible ends.

4. Yet a fourth is himself flourishing, but he sees others who have to struggle with great hardships (and whom he could easily help); and he thinks ‘What does it matter to me? Let every one be as happy as Heaven wills or as he can make himself; I won’t deprive him of anything; I won’t even envy him; only I have no wish to contribute anything to his well-being or to his support in distress!’ Now admittedly if such an attitude were a universal law of nature, mankind could get on perfectly well—better no doubt than if everybody prates about sympathy and goodwill, and even takes pains, on occasion, to practise them, but on the other hand cheats where he can, traffics in human rights, or violates them in other ways. But although it is possible that a universal law of nature could subsist in harmony with this maxim, yet it is impossible to will that such a principle should hold everywhere as a law of nature. For a will which decided in this way would be in conflict with itself, since many a situation might arise in which the man needed love and sympathy from others,<sup>1</sup> and in which,
- 57 by such a law of nature sprung from his own will, he would rob himself of all hope of the help he wants for himself.

### [THE CANON OF MORAL JUDGEMENT]

- These are some of the many actual duties—or at least of what we take to be such—whose derivation from the single principle
- 424 cited above leaps to the eye. We must *be able to will* that a maxim of our action should become a universal law—this is the general canon for all moral judgement of action. Some actions are so constituted that their maxim cannot even be *conceived* as a universal law of nature without contradiction, let alone be *willed* as what ought to become one. In the case of others we do not find this inner impossibility, but it is still impossible to will that their maxim should be raised to the universality of a law of nature, because such a will would contradict itself. It is easily seen that the first kind of action is opposed to strict or narrow (rigorous)

duty, the second only to wider (meritorious) duty;<sup>1</sup> and thus that by these examples all duties—so far as the type of obligation is concerned (not the object of dutiful action)<sup>2</sup>—are fully set out in their dependence on our single principle.

If we now attend to ourselves whenever we transgress a duty, we find that we in fact do not will that our maxim should become a universal law—since this is impossible for us—but rather that its opposite should remain a law universally: we only take the liberty of making an exception to it for ourselves (or even just for this once) to the advantage of our inclinations. Consequently if we weighed it all up from one and the same point of view—that of reason—we should find a contradiction in our own will, the contradiction that a certain principle should be objectively necessary as a universal law and yet subjectively should not hold universally but should admit of exceptions. Since, however, we first consider our action from the point of view of a will wholly in accord with reason, and then consider precisely the same action from the point of view of a will affected by inclination, there is here actually no contradiction, but rather an opposition of inclination to the precept of reason (*antagonismus*), whereby the universality of the principle (*universalitas*) is turned into a mere generality (*generalitas*) so that the practical principle of reason may meet our maxim half-way. This procedure, though in our own impartial judgement it cannot be justified, proves none the less that we in fact recognise the validity of the categorical imperative and (with all respect for it) merely permit ourselves a few exceptions which are, as we pretend, inconsiderable and apparently forced upon us.

We have thus at least shown this much—that if duty is a concept which is to have meaning and real legislative authority for our actions, this can be expressed only in categorical imperatives and by no means in hypothetical ones. At the same time—and this is already a great deal—we have set forth distinctly, and determinately for every type of application, the

content of the categorical imperative, which must contain the principle of all duty (if there is to be such a thing at all). But we are still not so far advanced as to prove *a priori* that there actually is an imperative of this kind—that there is a practical law which by itself commands absolutely and without any further motives, and that the following of this law is duty.

### [THE NEED FOR PURE ETHICS]

For the purpose of achieving this proof it is of the utmost importance to take warning that we should not dream for a moment of trying to derive the reality of this principle from the *special characteristics of human nature*. For duty has to be a practical, unconditioned necessity of action; it must therefore hold for all rational beings (to whom alone an imperative can apply at all), and *only because of this* can it also be a law for all human wills. Whatever, on the other hand, is derived from the special predisposition of humanity, from certain feelings and propensities, and even, if this were possible, from some special bent peculiar to human reason and not holding necessarily for the will of every rational being—all this can indeed supply a personal maxim, but not a law: it can give us a subjective principle—one on which we have a propensity and inclination to act—but not an objective one on which we should be *directed* to act although our every propensity, inclination, and natural bent were opposed to it; so much so that the sublimity and inner worth of the command is the more manifest<sup>1</sup> in a duty, the fewer are the subjective causes for obeying it and the more those against—without, however, on this account weakening in the slightest the necessitation exercised by the law or detracting anything from its validity.

It is here that philosophy is seen in actual fact to be placed in a precarious position, which is supposed to be firm although neither in heaven nor on earth is there anything from which it depends or on which it is based. It is here that she has to show



her purity as the authoress of her own laws—not as the mouth-  
 piece of laws whispered to her by some implanted sense or by  
 who knows what tutelary nature, all of which laws together,  
 though they may always be better than nothing, can never fur- 426  
 nish us with principles dictated by reason. These principles must  
 have an origin entirely and completely *a priori* and must at the  
 same time derive from this their sovereign authority—that they 61  
 expect nothing from the inclinations of man, but everything  
 from the supremacy of the law and from the reverence due to it,  
 or in default of this condemn man to self-contempt and inward  
 abhorrence.

Hence everything that is empirical is, as a contribution to the  
 principle of morality,<sup>1</sup> not only wholly unsuitable for the pur-  
 pose, but is even highly injurious to the purity of morals; for in  
 morals the proper worth of an absolutely good will, a worth  
 elevated above all price, lies precisely in this—that the principle  
 of action is free from all influence by contingent grounds, the  
 only kind that experience can supply. Against the slack, or  
 indeed ignoble, attitude which seeks for the moral principle  
 among empirical motives and laws we cannot give a warning  
 too strongly or too often; for human reason in its weariness is  
 fain to rest upon this pillow and in a dream of sweet illusions  
 (which lead it to embrace a cloud in mistake for Juno)<sup>2</sup> to foist  
 into the place of morality some misbegotten mongrel patched  
 up from limbs of very varied ancestry and looking like anything  
 you please, only not like virtue, to him who has once beheld her  
 in her true shape.\*

\* To behold virtue in her proper shape is nothing other than to show morality 61  
 stripped of all admixture with the sensuous and of all the spurious adornments  
 of reward or self-love. How much she then casts into the shade all else that 62  
 appears attractive to the inclinations can be readily perceived by every man if  
 he will exert his reason in the slightest—provided he has not entirely ruined it  
 for all abstractions.

62 Our question therefore is this: 'Is it a necessary law for all rational beings always to judge their actions by reference to those maxims of which they can themselves will that they should serve as universal laws?' If there is such a law, it must already be connected (entirely *a priori*) with the concept of the will of a rational being as such.<sup>1</sup> But in order to discover this connexion we must, however much we may bristle, take a step beyond it—that is, into metaphysics, although into a region of it different  
 427 from that of speculative philosophy, namely, the metaphysic of morals.<sup>2</sup> In practical philosophy we are not concerned with accepting reasons for what happens, but with accepting laws of what ought to happen even if it never does happen—that is, objective practical laws. And here we have no need to set up an enquiry as to the reasons why anything pleases or displeases; how the pleasure of mere sensation differs from taste, and whether the latter differs from a universal approval by reason;<sup>3</sup> whereon feelings of pleasure and displeasure are based; how from these feelings there arise desires and inclinations; and how from these in turn, with the co-operation of reason, there arise maxims. All  
 63 this belongs to empirical psychology, which would constitute the second part of the doctrine of nature, if we take this doctrine to be the philosophy of nature so far as grounded on empirical laws.<sup>1</sup> Here, however, we are discussing objective practical laws, and consequently the relation of a will to itself as determined solely by reason. Everything related to the empirical then falls away of itself; for if reason entirely by itself determines conduct (and it is the possibility of this which we now wish to investigate), it must necessarily do so *a priori*.

### [THE FORMULA OF THE END IN ITSELF]

The will is conceived as a power of determining oneself to action in accordance with the idea of certain laws. And such a power can be found only in rational beings. Now what serves the will as a

subjective<sup>2</sup> ground of its self-determination is an *end*; and this, if it is given by reason alone, must be equally valid for all rational beings. What, on the other hand, contains merely the ground of the possibility of an action whose effect is an end is called a *means*.<sup>3</sup> The subjective ground of a desire is an *impulsion* (*Triebfeder*); the objective ground of a volition is a *motive* (*Bewegungsgrund*). Hence the difference between subjective ends, which are based on impulsions, and objective ends, which depend on motives 64 valid for every rational being. Practical principles are *formal* if they abstract from all subjective ends; they are *material*, on the other hand, if they are based on such ends and consequently on certain impulsions.<sup>1</sup> Ends that a rational being adopts arbitrarily as effects of his action (material ends) are in every case only relative; for it is solely their relation to special characteristics in the subject's power of appetite which gives them their value. Hence this value can provide no universal principles, no principles valid and necessary for all rational beings and also for every volition<sup>2</sup>—that is, no practical laws. Consequently all these relative 428 ends can be the ground only of hypothetical imperatives.

Suppose, however, there were something whose existence has in itself an absolute value, something which as an *end in itself* could be a ground of determinate laws; then in it, and in it alone, would there be the ground of a possible categorical imperative—that is, of a practical law.

Now I say that man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* for arbitrary use by this or that will: he must in all his actions, whether they are directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be viewed at the same time as an *end*. All the objects of inclination have only a conditioned 65 value; for if there were not these inclinations and the needs grounded on them,<sup>1</sup> their object would be valueless. Inclinations themselves, as sources of needs, are so far from having an absolute value to make them desirable for their own sake that it must rather be the universal wish of every rational being to be wholly

free from them.<sup>2</sup> Thus the value of all objects that can be produced by our actions is always conditioned. Beings whose existence depends, not on our will, but on nature, have none the less, if they are non-rational beings, only a relative value as means and are consequently called *things*. Rational beings, on the other hand, are called *persons* because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves—that is, as something which ought not to be used merely as a means—and consequently imposes to that extent a limit on all arbitrary treatment of them (and is an object of reverence). Persons, therefore, are not merely subjective ends whose existence as an object of our actions has a value for us: they are *objective ends*—that is, things whose existence is in itself an end, and indeed an end such that in its place we can put no other end to which they should serve simply as means; for unless this is so, nothing at all of *absolute* value would be found  
 66 anywhere. But if all value were conditioned—that is, contingent—then no supreme principle could be found for reason at all.

If then there is to be a supreme practical principle and—so far as the human will is concerned—a categorical imperative,<sup>1</sup> it must be such that from the idea of something which is necessarily an end for every one because it is an *end in itself* it forms an  
 429 *objective* principle of the will and consequently can serve as a practical law. The ground of this principle is: *Rational nature exists as an end in itself*. This is the way in which a man necessarily conceives his own existence: it is therefore so far a *subjective* principle of human actions. But it is also the way in which every other rational being conceives his existence on the same rational ground which is valid also for me;\* hence it is at the same time an *objective* principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, it must be possible to derive all laws for the will. The practical imperative will therefore be as follows: Act in such a way that you

66 \* This proposition I put forward here as a postulate. The grounds for it will be found in the final chapter.<sup>1</sup>

always treat humanity,<sup>2</sup> whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply<sup>3</sup> as a means, but always at the same time as an end. We will now 67  
consider whether this can be carried out in practice.

## [ILLUSTRATIONS]

Let us keep to our previous examples.

First, as regards the concept of necessary duty to oneself, the man who contemplates suicide will ask 'Can my action be compatible with the Idea of humanity as an end in itself?' If he does away with himself in order to escape from a painful situation, he is making use of a person merely as a means to maintain a tolerable state of affairs till the end of his life. But man is not a thing—not something to be used merely as a means: he must always in all his actions be regarded as an end in himself. Hence I cannot dispose of man in my person by maiming, spoiling, or killing. (A more precise determination of this principle in order to avoid all misunderstanding—for example, about having limbs amputated to save myself or about exposing my life to danger in order to preserve it, and so on—I must here forgo: this question belongs to morals proper.)

Secondly, so far as necessary or strict duty to others is concerned, the man who has a mind to make a false promise to others will see at once that he is intending to make use of another man merely 68  
as a means to an end he does not share. For the man whom I seek to use for my own purposes by such a promise cannot possibly agree with my way of behaving to him, and so cannot himself share the end of the action. This incompatibility with the prin- 430  
ciple of duty to others leaps to the eye more obviously when we bring in examples of attempts on the freedom and property of others. For then it is manifest that a violator of the rights of man intends to use the person of others merely as a means without taking into consideration that, as rational beings, they ought always at the same time to be rated as ends—that is, only as

beings who must themselves be able to share in the end of the very same action.\*

69 Thirdly, in regard to contingent (meritorious) duty to oneself, it is not enough that an action should refrain from conflicting with humanity in our own person as an end in itself: it must also harmonise with this end. Now there are in humanity capacities for greater perfection which form part of nature's purpose for humanity in our person.<sup>1</sup> To neglect these can admittedly be compatible with the maintenance of humanity as an end in itself, but not with the promotion of this end.

Fourthly, as regards meritorious duties to others, the natural end which all men seek is their own happiness. Now humanity could no doubt subsist if everybody contributed nothing to the happiness of others but at the same time refrained from deliberately impairing their happiness. This is, however, merely to agree negatively and not positively with humanity as an end in itself unless every one endeavours also, so far as in him lies, to further the ends of others. For the ends of a subject who is an end in himself must, if this conception is to have its full effect in me, be also, as far as possible, my ends.

## [THE FORMULA OF AUTONOMY]

This principle of humanity, and in general of every rational agent, as an end in itself (a principle which is the supreme limiting  
431] 70 condition of every man's freedom of action) is not borrowed

68 \* Let no one think that here the trivial '*quod tibi non vis fieri, etc.*'<sup>1</sup> can serve as a standard or principle. For it is merely derivative from our principle, although subject to various qualifications: it cannot be a universal law<sup>2</sup> since it contains the ground neither of duties to oneself nor of duties of kindness to others (for many a man would readily agree that others should not help him if only he could be dispensed from affording help to them), nor finally of strict duties towards others; for on this basis the criminal would be able to dispute with the judges who punish him, and so on.

from experience; firstly, because it is universal, applying as it does to all rational beings as such, and no experience is adequate to determine universality; secondly, because in it humanity is conceived, not as an end of man (subjectively)—that is, as an object which, as a matter of fact, happens to be made an end—but as an objective end—one which, be our ends what they may, must, as a law, constitute the supreme limiting condition of all subjective ends and so must spring from pure reason. That is to say, the ground for every enactment of practical law lies *objectively* in the rule and in the form of universality which (according to our first principle) makes the rule capable of being a law (and indeed a law of nature); *subjectively*, however, it lies in the end; but (according to our second principle) the subject of all ends is to be found in every rational being as an end in himself. From this there now follows our third practical principle for the will—as the supreme condition of the will’s conformity with universal practical reason—namely, the *Idea of the will of every rational being as a will which makes universal law*.

By this principle all maxims are repudiated which cannot accord with the will’s own enactment of universal law. The will is therefore not merely subject to the law, but is so subject that it must be considered as also *making the law* for itself and precisely on this account as first of all subject to the law (of which it can regard itself as the author). 71

## [THE EXCLUSION OF INTEREST]

Imperatives as formulated above—namely, the imperative enjoining conformity of actions to universal law on the analogy of a *natural order* and that enjoining the universal supremacy of rational beings in themselves as *ends*—did, by the mere fact that they were represented as categorical, exclude from their sovereign authority every admixture of interest as a motive. They were, however, merely *assumed* to be categorical because we were

bound to make this assumption if we wished to explain the concept of duty. That there were practical propositions which commanded categorically could not itself be proved, any more than it can be proved in this chapter generally; but one thing could have been done—namely, to show that in willing for the sake of duty renunciation of all interest,<sup>1</sup> as the specific mark distinguishing a categorical from a hypothetical imperative, was expressed in the very imperative itself by means of some determination inherent in it. This is what is done in the present third formulation of the principle—namely, in the Idea of the will of every rational being as a will which makes universal law.

Once we conceive a will of this kind, it becomes clear that while a will which is subject to law may be bound to this law by some interest, nevertheless a will which is itself a supreme law-giver cannot possibly as such depend on any interest; for a will which is dependent in this way would itself require yet a further law in order to restrict the interest of self-love to the condition that this interest should itself be valid as a universal law.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the principle that every human will is a will which by all its maxims enacts universal law\*—provided only that it were right in other ways—would be well suited to be a categorical imperative in this respect: that precisely because of the Idea of making universal law it is based on no interest and consequently can alone among all possible imperatives be unconditioned. Or better still—to convert the proposition—if there is a categorical imperative (that is, a law for the will of every rational being), it can command us only to act always on the maxim of such a will in us as can at the same time look upon itself as making universal law; for only then is the practical principle and the imperative which we

\* I may be excused from bringing forward examples to illustrate this principle, since those which were first used as illustrations of the categorical imperative and its formula can all serve this purpose here.



obey unconditioned, since it is wholly impossible for it to be based on any interest.

We need not now wonder, when we look back upon all the previous efforts that have been made to discover the principle of morality, why they have one and all been bound to fail. Their authors saw man as tied to laws by his duty, but it never occurred to them that he is subject only to laws which *are made by himself* and yet are universal, and that he is bound only to act in conformity with a will which is his own but has as nature's purpose for it<sup>1</sup> the function of making universal law. For when they thought of man merely as subject to a law (whatever it might be), the law had to carry with it some interest in order to attract or compel, 433 because it did not spring as a law from his own will: in order to conform with the law his will had to be necessitated by *something* else to act in a certain way. This absolutely inevitable conclusion meant that all the labour spent in trying to find a supreme principle of duty was lost beyond recall; for what they discovered was never duty, but only the necessity of acting from a certain interest. This interest might be one's own or another's; but on such a view the imperative was bound to be always a conditioned one and could not possibly serve as a moral law. I will 74 therefore call my principle the principle of the *Autonomy* of the will in contrast with all others, which I consequently class under *Heteronomy*.

## [THE FORMULA OF THE KINGDOM OF ENDS]

The concept of every rational being as one who must regard himself as making universal law by all the maxims of his will, and must seek to judge himself and his actions from this point of view, leads to a closely connected and very fruitful concept—namely, that of a *kingdom of ends*.

I understand by a 'kingdom' a systematic union of different rational beings under common laws. Now since laws determine

ends as regards their universal validity, we shall be able—if we abstract from the personal differences between rational beings, and also from all the content of their private ends—to conceive a whole of all ends in systematic conjunction (a whole both of rational beings as ends in themselves and also of the personal ends<sup>1</sup> which each may set before himself); that is, we shall be able to conceive a kingdom of ends which is possible in accordance with the above principles.

For rational beings all stand under the law that each of them  
 75 should treat himself and all others, *never merely as a means*, but always *at the same time as an end in himself*. But by so doing there arises a systematic union of rational beings under common objective laws—that is, a kingdom. Since these laws are directed precisely to the relation of such beings to one another as ends and means, this kingdom can be called a kingdom of ends (which is admittedly only an Ideal).

A rational being belongs to the kingdom of ends as a *member*, when, although he makes its universal laws, he is also himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as its *head*, when as the maker of laws he is himself subject to the will of no other.<sup>1</sup>

434 A rational being must always regard himself as making laws in a kingdom of ends which is possible through freedom of the will—whether it be as member or as head. The position of the latter he can maintain, not in virtue of the maxim of his will alone, but only if he is a completely independent being, without needs and with an unlimited power adequate to his will.

Thus morality consists in the relation of all action to the mak-  
 76 ing of laws whereby alone a kingdom of ends is possible. This making of laws must be found in every rational being himself and must be able to spring from his will. The principle of his will is therefore never to perform an action except on a maxim such as can also be a universal law, and consequently such that the will can regard itself as at the same time making universal law by means of its maxim. Where maxims are not already by their very nature in

harmony with this objective principle of rational beings as makers of universal law, the necessity of acting on this principle is practical necessitation—that is, duty. Duty does not apply to the head in a kingdom of ends, but it does apply to every member and to all members in equal measure.

The practical necessity of acting on this principle—that is, duty—is in no way based on feelings, impulses, and inclinations, but only on the relation of rational beings to one another, a relation in which the will of a rational being must always be regarded as *making universal law*, because otherwise he could not be conceived as *an end in himself*. Reason thus related every maxim of the will, considered as making universal law, to every other will and also to every action towards oneself: it does so, not because of any further motive or future advantage, but from the Idea of the dignity of a rational being who obeys no law other than that which he at the same time enacts himself. 77

## [THE DIGNITY OF VIRTUE]

In the kingdom of ends everything has either a *price* or a *dignity*. If it has a price, something else can be put in its place as an *equivalent*; if it is exalted above all price and so admits of no equivalent, then it has a *dignity*.

What is relative to universal human inclinations and needs has a *market price*; what, even without presupposing a need, accords with a certain taste—that is, with satisfaction in the mere purposeless play of our mental powers<sup>1</sup>—has a *fancy price* (*Affektionspreis*); but that which constitutes the sole condition under which anything can be an end in itself has not merely a relative value—that is, a price—but has an intrinsic value—that is, *dignity*. 435

Now morality is the only condition under which a rational being can be an end in himself; for only through this is it possible to be a law-making member in a kingdom of ends.

Therefore morality, and humanity so far as it is capable of  
 78 morality, is the only thing which has dignity. Skill and diligence  
 in work have a market price; wit, lively imagination, and  
 humour have a fancy price; but fidelity to promises and kindness  
 based on principle (not on instinct) have an intrinsic worth. In  
 default of these, nature and art alike contain nothing to put in  
 their place;<sup>1</sup> for their worth consists, not in the effects which  
 result from them, not in the advantage or profit they produce,  
 but in the attitudes of mind—that is, in the maxims of the will—  
 which are ready in this way to manifest themselves in action  
 even if they are not favoured by success. Such actions too need  
 no recommendation from any subjective disposition or taste in  
 order to meet with immediate favour and approval; they need no  
 immediate propensity or feeling for themselves; they exhibit the  
 will which performs them as an object of immediate reverence;  
 nor is anything other than reason required to impose them upon  
 the will, not to coax them from the will—which last would any-  
 how be a contradiction in the case of duties. This assessment  
 reveals as dignity the value of such a mental attitude and puts it  
 infinitely above all price, with which it cannot be brought into  
 reckoning or comparison without, as it were, a profanation of its  
 sanctity.

What is it then that entitles a morally good attitude of mind—  
 79 or virtue—to make claims so high? It is nothing less than the *share*  
 which it affords to a rational being in the *making of universal law*, and  
 which therefore fits him to be a member in a possible kingdom  
 of ends. For this he was already marked out in virtue of his own  
 proper nature as an end in himself and consequently as a maker  
 of laws in the kingdom of ends—as free in respect of all laws of  
 nature, obeying only those laws which he makes himself and in  
 virtue of which his maxims can have their part in the making of  
 436 universal law (to which he at the same time subjects himself).  
 For nothing can have a value other than that determined for it by  
 the law. But the law-making which determines all value must

for this reason have a dignity—that is, an unconditioned and incomparable worth—for the appreciation of which, as necessarily given by a rational being, the word ‘reverence’ is the only becoming expression. *Autonomy* is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature.

## [REVIEW OF THE FORMULAE]

The aforesaid three ways of representing the principle of morality are at bottom merely so many formulations of precisely the same law, one of them by itself containing a combination of the other two. There is nevertheless a difference between them, which, however, is subjectively rather than objectively practical: that is to say, its purpose is to bring an Idea of reason nearer to intuition (in accordance with a certain analogy) and so nearer to feeling. All maxims have, in short, 80

1. a *form*, which consists in their universality; and in this respect the formula of the moral imperative is expressed thus: ‘Maxims must be chosen as if they had to hold as universal laws of nature’;

2. a *matter*—that is, an end; and in this respect the formula says: ‘A rational being, as by his very nature an end and consequently an end in himself, must serve for every maxim as a condition limiting all merely relative and arbitrary ends’;

3. a *complete determination*<sup>1</sup> of all maxims by the following formula, namely: ‘All maxims as proceeding from our own making of law ought to harmonise with a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature.’\* This progression may be said to take place

\* Teleology views nature as a kingdom of ends; ethics views a possible kingdom of ends as a kingdom of nature. In the first case the kingdom of ends is a theoretical Idea used to explain what exists. In the second case it is a practical Idea used to bring into existence what does not exist but can be made actual by our conduct—and indeed to bring it into existence in conformity with this Idea. 80

through the categories of the unity of the form of will (its universality); of the multiplicity of its matter (its objects—that is, its ends); and of the totality or completeness of its system of ends.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, better if in moral judgement we proceed always in accordance with the strict method and take as our basis the universal formula of the categorical imperative: ‘Act on the maxim which can at the same time be made a universal law’. If, however, we wish also to secure acceptance for the moral law, it is very useful to bring one and the same action under the above-mentioned three concepts and so, as far as we can, to bring the universal formula<sup>1</sup> nearer to intuition.

### [REVIEW OF THE WHOLE ARGUMENT]

We can now end at the point from which we started out at the beginning—namely, the concept of an unconditionally good will. The will is *absolutely good* if it cannot be evil—that is, if its maxim, when made into a universal law, can never be in conflict with itself. This principle is therefore also its supreme law: ‘Act always on that maxim whose universality as a law you can at the same time will’. This is the one principle on which a will can never be in conflict with itself, and such an imperative is categorical. Because the validity of the will as a universal law for possible actions is analogous to the universal interconnexion of existent things in accordance with universal laws—which constitutes the formal aspect of nature as such<sup>2</sup>—we can also express the categorical imperative as follows: ‘Act on that maxim which can at the same time have for its object<sup>3</sup> itself as a universal law of nature’. In this way we provide the formula for an absolutely good will.

Rational nature separates itself out from all other things by the fact that it sets itself an end. An end would thus be the matter of every good will. But in the Idea of a will which is absolutely good—good without any qualifying condition (namely, that it should attain this or that end)—there must be complete

abstraction from every end that has to be *produced* (as something which would make every will only relatively good). Hence the end must here be conceived, not as an end to be produced, but as a self-existent end. It must therefore be conceived only negatively<sup>1</sup>—that is, as an end against which we should never act, and consequently as one which in all our willing we must never rate merely as a means, but always at the same time as an end. Now this end can be nothing other than the subject of all possible ends himself, because this subject is also the subject of a will that may be absolutely good; for such a will cannot without contradiction be subordinated to any other object. The principle ‘So act in relation to every rational being (both to yourself and to others) that he may at the same time count in your maxim as an end in himself’ is thus at bottom the same as the principle ‘Act on a maxim which at the same time contains in itself its own universal validity for every rational being’. For to say that in using means to every end I ought to restrict my maxim by the condition that it should also be universally valid as a law for every subject is just the same as to say this—that a subject of ends, namely, a rational being himself, must be made the ground for all maxims of action, never merely as a means, but as a supreme condition restricting the use of every means—that is, always also as an end. 438 83

Now from this it unquestionably follows that every rational being, as an end in himself, must be able to regard himself as also the maker of universal law in respect of any law whatever to which he may be subjected; for it is precisely the fitness of his maxims to make universal law that marks him out as an end in himself. It follows equally that this dignity (or prerogative) of his above all the mere things of nature carries with it the necessity of always choosing his maxims from the point of view of himself—and also of every other rational being—as a maker of law (and this is why they are called persons). It is in this way that a world of rational beings (*mundus intelligibilis*) is possible as a kingdom of ends—possible, that is, through the making of their

own laws by all persons as its members. Accordingly every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxims always a law-making member in the universal kingdom of ends.

- 84 The formal principle of such maxims is 'So act as if your maxims had to serve at the same time as a universal law (for all rational beings)'. Thus a kingdom of ends is possible only on the analogy of a kingdom of nature; yet the kingdom of ends is possible only through maxims—that is, self-imposed rules—while nature is possible only through laws concerned with causes whose action is necessitated from without. In spite of this difference, we give to nature as a whole, even although it is regarded as a machine, the name of a 'kingdom of nature' so far as—and for the reason that—it stands in a relation to rational beings as its ends.<sup>1</sup> Now a kingdom of ends would actually come into existence through maxims which the categorical imperative prescribes as a rule for all rational beings, if these maxims were universally followed. Yet even if a rational being were himself to follow such a maxim strictly, he cannot count on everybody else being faithful to it on this ground, nor can he be confident that the kingdom of nature and its purposive order will work in harmony with him, as a fitting member, towards a kingdom of ends made possible by him-
- 439 self—or, in other words, that it will favour his expectation of happiness.<sup>2</sup> But in spite of this the law 'Act on the maxims of a member who makes universal laws for a merely possible kingdom of ends' remains in full force, since its command is categorical. And precisely here we encounter the paradox that without
- 85 any further end or advantage to be attained the mere dignity of humanity, that is, of rational nature in man—and consequently that reverence for a mere Idea—should function as an inflexible precept for the will; and that it is just this freedom from dependence on interested motives which constitutes the sublimity of a maxim and the worthiness of every rational subject to be a law-making member in the kingdom of ends; for otherwise he would have to be regarded as subject only to the law of



nature—the law of his own needs. Even if it were thought that both the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of ends were united under one head and that thus the latter kingdom ceased to be a mere Idea and achieved genuine reality, the Idea would indeed gain by this the addition of a strong motive, but never any increase in its intrinsic worth; for, even if this were so, it would still be necessary to conceive the unique and absolute law-giver himself as judging the worth of rational beings solely by the disinterested behaviour they prescribed to themselves in virtue of this Idea alone. The essence of things does not vary with their external relations; and where there is something which, without regard to such relations, constitutes by itself the absolute worth of man, it is by this that man must also be judged by everyone whatsoever—even by the Supreme Being. Thus morality lies in the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will—that is, to a possible making of universal laws by means of its maxims. An action which is compatible with the autonomy of the will is permitted; one which does not harmonise with it is forbidden. A will whose maxims necessarily accord with the laws of autonomy is a *holy*, or absolutely good, will. The dependence of a will not absolutely good on the principle of autonomy (that is, moral necessitation) is *obligation*. Obligation can thus have no reference to a holy being. The objective necessity to act from obligation is called *duty*. 86

From what was said a little time ago we can now easily explain how it comes about that, although in the concept of duty we think of subjection to the law, yet we also at the same time attribute to the person who fulfils all his duties a certain sublimity and dignity. For it is not in so far as he is *subject* to the law that he has sublimity, but rather in so far as, in regard to this very same law, he is at the same time its *author* and is subordinated to it only on this ground. We have also shown above<sup>1</sup> how neither fear nor inclination, but solely reverence for the law, is the motive which can give an action moral worth. Our own will, 440

- 87 provided it were to act only under the condition of being able to make universal law by means of its maxims—this ideal will which can be ours is the proper object of reverence; and the dignity of man consists precisely in his capacity to make universal law, although only on condition of being himself also subject to the law he makes.

## AUTONOMY OF THE WILL AS THE SUPREME PRINCIPLE OF MORALITY

- Autonomy of the will is the property the will has of being a law to itself (independently of every property belonging to the object of volition). Hence the principle of autonomy is ‘Never to choose except in such a way that in the same volition the maxims of your choice are also present as universal law’. That this practical rule is an imperative—that is, that the will of every rational being is necessarily bound to the rule as a condition—cannot be proved by mere analysis of the concepts contained in it, since it is a synthetic proposition. For proof we should have to go beyond knowledge of objects and pass to a critique of the subject—that is, of pure practical reason—since this synthetic proposition, as commanding apodeictically, must be capable of being known
- 88 entirely *a priori*. This task does not belong to the present chapter. None the less by mere analysis of the concepts of morality we can quite well show that the above principle of autonomy is the sole principle of ethics. For analysis finds that the principle of morality must be a categorical imperative, and that this in turn commands nothing more nor less than precisely this autonomy.

## 441 HETERONOMY OF THE WILL AS THE SOURCE OF ALL SPURIOUS PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY

If the will seeks the law that is to determine it *anywhere else* than in the fitness of its maxims for its own making of universal law—if