



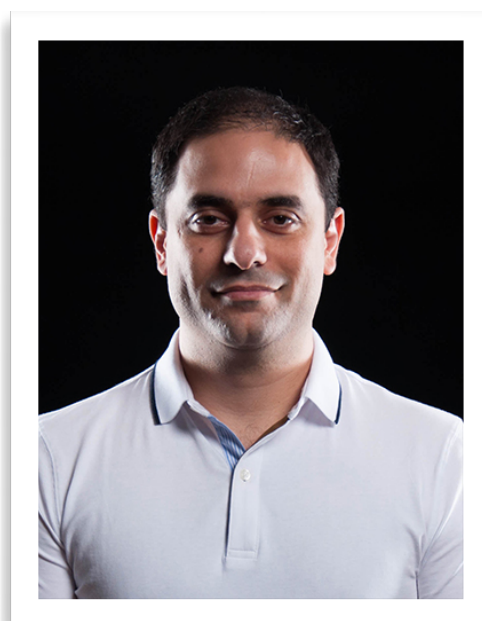
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ECS 88 – Winter 2026

[Week 7]

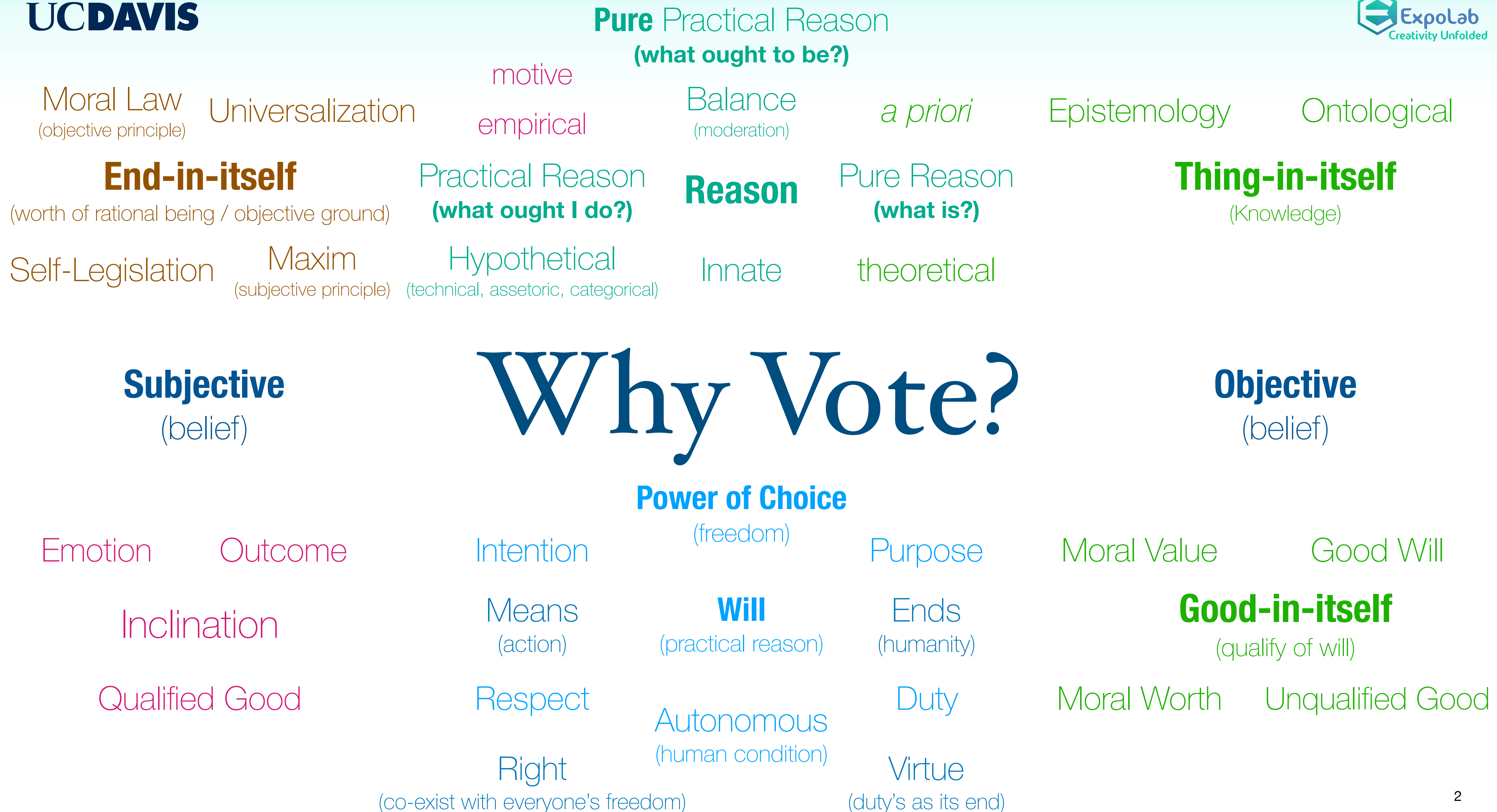
KANTIANISM

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Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond it—can be conceived as **good without qualification** except a **good will**. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and whatever else may be counted among the talents of the mind, and likewise courage, resoluteness, perseverance as qualities of temperament, are certainly good and desirable in many respects; yet they can also **become exceedingly evil and harmful** if the will that is to make use of these gifts of nature and which in its special **constitution** is called **character**, is not good. Power, riches, honor—even health, and the complete well-being and contentment with one's condition that we call happiness—**can foster pride and even presumption** unless a good will is present to correct their influence on the mind and on its principles of action, making them universally conformable to their proper end. It need hardly be mentioned that the spectacle of a being adorned with no trace of a pure and good will yet enjoying unbroken prosperity can never delight a rational, impartial observer. Thus the **good will** appears to be the **indispensable condition** even of **worthiness to be happy**.

Immanuel Kant

[Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, 4:393-394]

Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond it—
can be conceived as **good** without qualification except a **good will**.
A **good will** is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, nor because of its adequacy to
attain some **intended end**; it is good only through its **willing**, that is, **good in itself**.
Its usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add nor take away anything from this worth.
A **will** that **chooses** its **maxims** solely from respect for the **moral law** — that is, from **duty** —
is thereby, in its ground, wholly **independent** of inclinations and of **everything empirical**.
Even if, by the special disfavour of fortune or the niggardly provision of a step-motherly nature,
this will should wholly lack the power to accomplish its purpose, yet, like a **jewel**,
it would still **shine by its own light**, as something which has its full **worth in itself**.

Immanuel Kant

[Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, 4:397–398]

Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called **good without qualification**, except a **good will**.

Duty is the necessity of an action done out of **respect** for the **law**.

The **will** is the **capacity to act** according to the representation of laws, that is, according to **principles**.

Since **reason** is required for deriving **actions** from **laws**, the **will** is nothing other than **practical reason**.

Act only in accordance with that **maxim** through which you can at the same time will that it become a **universal law**.

A maxim is the **subjective principle** of **volition**; the **objective principle** (i.e., the practical law) would be the rule that would serve all **rational beings** as the **objective ground** of a maxim.

Immanuel Kant

[Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, 4:393, 4:400, 4:412. 4:412, 4:421, 4:421]

An **action** done from **duty** has its **moral worth**, not in the **purpose** to be attained by it, but in the **maxim** in accordance with which it is decided upon and done.

Autonomy of the will is the property of the will by which it is a **law to itself** (independently of all properties of the objects of volition).

So act that you use **humanity**, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an **end**, never merely as a **means**.

A rational being belongs to the **kingdom of ends** as a member, when he **legislates** in it **universal laws** while also being himself subject to these laws.

Immanuel Kant
[Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, 4:400, 4:400, 4:429, 4:421]

Choice (Willkür) is **free** when it can determine itself independently of sensible impulses.

Virtue is the **moral strength** of the will in fulfilling its duty.

Any action is **right** if it can coexist with **everyone's freedom** according to a universal law.

Right is concerned only with the external and indeed practical relation of one person to another, in so far as their actions, as deeds, can exert influence on each other.

...**Virtue**, by contrast, has inner freedom, i.e. the **conformity of actions** to duty from the motive of **duty itself**, as **its end**.

Immanuel Kant
[Metaphysics of Morals, 6:213, 6:397, 6:230, 6:213]