

Kant-II

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Introduction

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a philosopher of enlightenment, though famous mainly for his epistemology and metaphysics, is outstanding and influential in the field of ethics too till the present era. In every field of human enquiry Kant believes that the human reason has the responsibility of determining the source, extent and bounds of its own principles. Living in an era when the emergence of science and secular society and the bloody religious conflicts of the reformation affected human life alarmingly, he suggested a critical approach to every sphere of human thought and submitted everything to the “test of criticism”. In the field of morality, he was looking for a secure basis that would be independent of the specific religious creeds and traditions that had divided society and culture throughout the modern era, and could limit the control of religious and political powers on our moral lives. Thus, of his two major ethical works, *GM* (1785) would attempt to give a precise and strong foundation to morals, and *CPrR* (1788) would take up the task of investigating the nature of human reason employed in morality and highlighting the moral aspects that touched the human conduct. He believed that human reason has the capacity to determine *a priori* and independently of sensibility the realm of freedom and of what ought to be, and therefore our moral determinations are *a priori*, i.e., their

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justifications do not depend on any particular course of experience.

The Concept of Imperatives

Imperatives are understood as rules that we impose in matters of conduct upon our active powers (*Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter *CPR*), A 547/B 575, 472). They are the conclusions of a practical reasoning which state that one has reason to act in a certain way. They necessitate the will to do or to refrain from something. In *GM* Kant says: “The representation of an objective principle in so far as it necessitates the will is called a command (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an imperative.” (*GM*, Ak 4: 413, 24). “All imperatives are expressed by an ought.” (*GM*, Ak 4: 413, 24). The imperatives express the oughtness of an action either for its own sake or for some other end, for example, one ought to do physical exercises for the sake of health, or one ought to keep one’s agreements. A finite rational being is ought to obey only those commands which are presented to the will as practically good by means of a representation of reason and not by the subjective causes or sensuous inclinations (*GM*, Ak 4: 413, 24). The necessitation of reason does not guarantee that the right actions will necessarily take place in those beings, but only that the reason gives laws which are imperatives in the form of necessitation and which can only tell what ought to take place in a rational being in moral determinations.

Kant identifies two kinds of imperatives that are commonly held to be applied in human conduct (*GM*, Ak 4: 414-419, 25-29). He says that all imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. These two kinds of imperatives, namely **the hypothetical and categorical imperatives**, stand for two aspects of practical reason,

namely empirical and pure respectively. A hypothetical imperative represents an action as good or necessary as a means to some desired end or interest (*GM*, Ak 4: 414, 25). It says that one ought to perform some action, if one wants to fulfill a particular interest. For example, 'if you want to maintain your good reputation, you should be honest'. Here we may note two parts: the 'if' part which expresses the particular desire of an agent and the part which expresses the means that is required of him to acquire the desired goal. The means are the required actions that take a person to the desired goal. They are required to be carried out only by those who have an interest in the said-goal. If a person is not interested in maintaining a good reputation, then he is exempted, or at least is not obliged by this imperative to be honest. Therefore the hypothetical imperatives are held to be imperatives and are relevant only for those who have an interest in the goal. In hypothetical imperatives, a relevant question is: why should a person be obliged, if there is no reason to perform an action or to follow a means? The validity of a hypothetical imperative is conditioned by having certain ends or interests that are rationally optional. In other words, a hypothetical imperative has only a conditional validity.

What makes an imperative hypothetical is not the appearance of the 'if' clause in its formulation. For example, "Eat whenever you are hungry", where there is no 'if' clause, yet which provides an obligation to an agent, who, whenever has a desire for satisfying the hunger, should oblige himself for a particular action, namely eating. Therefore the sole determining feature of a hypothetical imperative is that it obliges the agent to an action only on condition that the agent has a desire for something that the action could bring about. You ought to do a certain act *if* you will a certain end. Kant puts it: "whoever wills the end wills also the means that

are indispensably necessary to his actions and that lie in his power.” (*GM*, Ak 4: 417, 27).

One can hold a hypothetical imperative either by performing the prescribed action or by giving up the end. In the example stated above, when a person has the interest of maintaining his good reputation he follows the means prescribed by the imperative and thus satisfies the hypothetical imperative. On the other hand, a person who has no interest in maintaining his good reputation – non-interestedness of a person for the end can be either due to his incapacity of being honest or because of the mere disinterestedness in the end itself – need not follow the demands of the hypothetical imperative, because he is not obliged by this imperative as he has no reason to follow the means. Nevertheless such a person does not necessarily neglect the hypothetical imperative. The giving up of the action that is prescribed by a hypothetical imperative is not in itself a case of the negligence of that imperative. However, the hypothetical imperative so expressed has nothing to do with those hypothetical imperatives where one does the same action with another motive/end in view, or where one uses some other means for the same end. For example, those cases, where a person who practices honesty with the intention of becoming a holy person, or a person who aims a good reputation through unjust means, etc., do not come under the same hypothetical imperative.

A hypothetical imperative does not necessarily imply a sure or absolute means for the desired end. There is no necessary connection between the means proposed and the desire expressed in a hypothetical imperative. In the example given above, being honest need not necessarily secure a person with good reputation, but only suggests that the means given is at least good or necessary, though it cannot absolutely guarantee one with good reputation.

The hypothetical imperative, 'if you want to maintain your good reputation, you should be honest' is not the same as a conditional proposition which states, 'if you are honest, you will be reputed'; in the latter there is a necessary consequence from the antecedent clause which expresses the condition. One of the rules of logic states: in a true conditional proposition, if the antecedent part is affirmed, the consequent part should also be affirmed, even though the affirmation of the consequent part need not necessarily imply the affirmation of the given antecedent part. Now what we are assured by a hypothetical imperative is that the proposed means is in anyway congenial to the realization of the end. In other words, the means suggested in a hypothetical imperative is both not inimical and good and expresses some relation, in which some may express necessary relations while some others may not be so necessary, but express at least some form of validity or usefulness for the end or ends to be achieved.

Kant distinguishes two kinds of hypothetical imperatives: rules of skill and counsels of prudence. (*GM*, Ak 4: 415-417, 25-27). In the rules of skill, there is no question at all of whether the end is reasonable or good. The point of interest is what must be done to attain the end or whether the prescribed means is efficacious to carry out the end. Kant gives the example of a doctor who uses his own prescriptions to cure a patient, and a prisoner who uses his own means to kill a victim. From the point of view of the rules of skill, both these actions are of equal value in so far as each serves to bring about its purpose perfectly. Moreover, a significant factor about the rules of skill is that these rules are not always relevant for all because one may or may not have occasions to use those rules and to accomplish the things that one has learned. Let us take the hypothetical imperative, 'if you want to be a good

music teacher, learn music properly.' In this example, even if one learns music properly, he may not get an opportunity to teach or to conduct music. Later due to some reasons, he may be engaged not in the field of music but in some other field, for example, medicine. Whether a person uses his skills that he has learned depends on what he chooses to do. Sometimes some of our choices are arbitrary also. Therefore the imperatives involved in the rules of skill, Kant calls, 'problematic', because the ends they propose to secure are ends that one may or may not pursue (*GM*, Ak 4: 415, 25). In short the means and the ends that the rules of skill propose concern only some people, some times and the value of the action depends mainly on the effectiveness of the proposed means to bring about the end.

Counsels of prudence are different from the rules of skill. There is no uncertainty of usefulness in the counsels of prudence as is the case with the rules of skill. Kant gives the example of happiness. Though there are many ways in which a person can find his happiness, and that the means chosen and the interests of the people may also vary in the course of time and place and also from person to person, the proposition that 'every one wants to be happy' remains valid; and everyone pursues the end that one is fitted to secure. Prudence, for Kant, is the skill in the choice of means to one's own greatest well being. The word 'prudence' is used in a double sense: worldly wisdom and private wisdom. The former is the skill to influence others so as to use them for one's own purpose[s], and the latter is the sagacity to combine these purposes for one's own lasting advantage. The value of the former is reduced to the value of the latter. If one has the former and lacks the latter, then he is called clever and cunning but on the whole imprudent. The counsels of prudence, as opposed to the 'problematic' nature of the rules of skill, are expressed in principles

that are assertoric, and are pursued by all (GM, Ak 4: 414-416, 25-26).

Having seen the nature and kinds of hypothetical imperatives, let us now look at another type of imperative, namely categorical imperative. Categorical imperatives are clearly distinguished from hypothetical imperatives. A categorical imperative “declares an action to be of itself objectively necessary without any reference to any purpose (*Absicht*), i.e., without any end (*Zweck*).” (GM, Ak 4: 415, 25). Unlike the hypothetical imperatives, the basic features of a categorical imperative are its absolute, unconditional and universal nature. The categorical imperative affirms an action to be rationally necessary and inescapable regardless of the specific interest of the agent. It commands absolutely even without presupposing empirical ends, which in turn is the case with the hypothetical imperatives. A few examples of categorical imperative are: one ought to help a certain person in need; one ought not to press one’s advantage; one should not withhold the information; one ought to make amends for what one has done. Let us analyze the first categorical imperative. The reason for helping a person in need does not presuppose a prior interest in helping or in some further end outside one’s action. It comes from the fact that as a rational agent one necessarily wills the relevant principle of benevolence. If a person acts because of his prior interest in helping a person, then in the absence of that interest he will not be finding a reason for helping the other and so can refrain from the benevolent act of helping the other, and hence becomes a hypothetical imperative, and not a moral imperative. Thus the moral imperatives are pure morals, which command actions from a sense of duty alone, and are different from the hypothetical imperatives that recommend actions from inclinations or for particular ends.

Kant identifies his concept of moral law with categorical imperative. The basic factor of moral law is not the matter or the object of action but only the form of the law, namely universality. The moral worth of the action is to be found “in the *principle* of the will, with no regard to the ends that can be brought about through such an action.” (GM, Ak 4: 400, 13). The moral law holds an action as good or necessary in itself, without reference to any end *outside* the action. The interest of the agent is in the performance *of* the action itself. One ought to perform an action for its own sake, regardless of one’s desires and interests which stay outside the action. The value of the moral action is unconditional. That is to say, the moral law as categorical imperative places an unconditional inviolable requirement of action on an empirical rational agent.

According to Kant, means-ends relation in a hypothetical imperative is not only inadequate but inimical to the demands of the principles of morality. A hypothetical imperative can only show some reason for some action which in some way may be related to morality but not to the moral principles as such. It shows only that the means suggested and the ends intended are two different aspects of a system of law and that the ends can be achieved or at least aimed at through the means proposed. Kant does not allow these kinds of means-end differences to be present in the determination of the moral imperatives. He believes that the supreme principle of morality should be universal, necessary, unconditional and absolute and is expressed as ‘categorical imperative.’

The Concept of Moral Law

From infancy Kant was always been struck by ‘the starry heavens above and the moral law within’, the two orders, the physical and the moral. In the moral order, his

interest was to find out “What should be the nature of morality?” for all empirical rational beings including human beings. In his search, he finds the nature of morality or the moral law as categorical imperative. In the history of philosophy we ascribe the term ‘categorical imperative’ in moral philosophy to Kant. One cannot understand Kant’s practical philosophy apart from this well articulated central term of his moral theory called categorical imperative. Kant argues in *GM* that any moral argument for finite rational beings must be understood as an argument based on the categorical imperative (*GM*, Ak 4: 420, 29). Behind every sound moral judgment should there be the principle of categorical imperative. For, reason demands that the moral law for every empirical rational agent be categorical and imperative.

Moral law for Kant is a synthetic *a priori* proposition. A proposition is synthetic if its predicate is not already contained in the concept of the subject; otherwise it is analytic. A proposition is *a priori* if it can be known independently of experience and is *a posteriori* if it can be known only through experience. Now the problem that Kant places before us is that the moral principles are synthetic *a priori* propositions. Kant formulates the question in this way: “How are synthetic *a priori* judgments possible?” (Kant *CPR*, B 73, 91).

Kant believes that a moral law for all empirical rational beings can be derived only when it is rooted in the autonomous freedom of the agent. The source of morality should be traced in the rational agent’s capacity of freedom to legislate himself without any determination of the empirical factors in which he may be found. Such a moral law alone could be objective, holding absolute and necessary obligations on all rational beings. Any conjunction with the empirical nature of the agent for the determination of the moral law affects its purity.

The moral law must be foundationally rational, i.e., *a priori* and should have the form of universality. The general formula of the moral law is called the formula of universal law, which reads as, "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." (GM, Ak 4: 421, 30). Kant's *a priori* moral law has universal application. He calls a rational moral being universal law-giver as well. The obliging universal validity of a maxim is a sufficient ground to determine the morality of an action. Whatever maxims are permissible or impermissible or obligatory for one person must likewise be for any another rational agent in similar circumstances. The deliberations of a moral agent have to be based on pure practical reason. They do not admit partiality. In practical principles, our canon is, "we must be able to will that a maxim of our action become a universal law." (Kant, GM, Ak 4: 424, 32) The precise work of pure practical reason is to assume the basic universal nature of the freedom of rational beings for self-legislation and to present it in the form of a categorical imperative. The moral law asserts the universal nature of rational beings and the consequent rational obligation of a will that expresses itself as free yet morally obliged. All empirical rational beings who are affected by sensual impulses have to be obliged by the moral law and should act from duty, allowing no sensual impulse to take control over them. To Kant, a rational being is the author of his moral principles and so if he acts according to them, he obeys the laws of his own autonomous reason.

Kant does not admit any empirical factor to be the determining basis of moral duty. Only pure practical reason has the capacity to provide universal, objective and absolute morals for rational beings. The empirical factors of human nature are contingent, and any dependence would affect the reason's power of being

practical by itself. Therefore, they should not be the basis of the moral law of rational beings. The empirical and sensible features of human being are unable to state what should be for a rational being. From what is of human being does not come out what *should be* of rational being. The moral principles should have the pure practical reason as their determining basis. The moral law as categorical imperative must be the duty-bound *a priori* general principle of action and therefore the law of action for all situations. In human situations, when the will stands in conflict between the choice of moral duty and the appealing sensible good, the pure reason presents the *a priori* rational possibility of an objective and absolute moral law, that is valid for everyone, everywhere and at all times.

A good will, for Kant, is nothing but a will determined by the pure practical power of reason. It is good in itself. It demands action from duty alone and all other factors are irrelevant in matters of moral determination. The concept of duty does not come under the concept of good of human sensibility. If one forsakes duty for the sake of an empirical good, then it is, for Kant, a deviation from one's autonomy of reason. Any inalienable dependence on empirical factors brings forth only heteronomous and conditional laws of action (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 33, 48). Kant says, "If we assume, prior to the moral law, any object-under the name of a good-as the determining basis of the will and then to derive the supreme practical principle from it, this would always bring about heteronomy and displace the moral principle." (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 109, p. 140). Kant is not for a stupid good will. A good considered without a reference to reason is not acceptable to him. It does not at the same time mean that a good will is the only good thing in Kant's practical philosophy. Kant says in *GM* that intelligence, wit, judgement, gifts of fortune, power, riches, honour,

even health, etc., are good, but only if the will, that corrects their influence on the mind, is good (Kant, *GM*, Ak 4: 393, 7). Kant suggests that we judge our pleasure and sorrow by a higher satisfaction or dissatisfaction within ourselves namely, the moral. The moral law has to decide whether we ought to indulge or refrain from actions in the conflicting situations of the will. As an ethicist, Kant is interested mainly in cases where one's inclinations and duty are at conflict. In the conflicts between duty and inclinations, reason has to determine the will so that the will may seek not the sensual pleasure but act according to duty.

Kant believes that, whereas the moral law as such, as an idea of reason, is valid for God, angels, human beings and all other rational beings, if there are any elsewhere, the imperative nature of the moral law is valid only for those rational beings which are finites, with reason and sensibility. To such empirical rational beings, moral law is an imperative, for they experience constraints in the observation of the moral law. The categorical imperative specifies the nature of moral law for them. To a perfect rational being, the moral law is not an imperative but 'the law of holiness', because they possess unlimited reason. Kant writes, "... for the will of a maximally perfect being, the moral law is a law of *holiness*, but for the will of every finite rational being it is a law of duty, of moral necessitation, and of the determination of his actions through *respect* for that law and from reverence for his duty." (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 82, 106). As different from a pure will, the human will does not necessarily identify with the moral law. We finite beings do not have a *holy will* so fully determined by its inner lawful constitution that it acts spontaneously and without struggle. The human will is not independent of sensuous affections. As empirical beings we are pathologically affected by our sensible features. We are affected 'through the moving-

causes of sensibility'. We have a tendency to pursue what we have found in our sense experience as pleasure giving. An independence from such sensuous affections or tendency would be impossible for all empirical beings including human beings. We, however, have the freedom of will to determine ourselves independently of the influence of those sensuous affections. Moral law is the expression of this autonomy of the human will, the freedom to determine oneself independently of sensuous influences. The moral law, thus, is categorical imperative for those rational beings that are affected by sensual impulses.

The Postulates of Morality

By reflecting on the implications of moral duty, for example on issues like: 'What is the real outcome of moral action?', 'What is the destiny of moral life?' 'How can the conditions of being good be fulfilled?', 'What is the possibility of a finite being like human being to the complete fulfilment of moral demands?', etc., Kant arrives at certain postulates of pure practical reason. These postulates are, besides freedom which is the only necessary basis as far as the pure reason's determination of moral law is concerned, immortality of the soul and existence of God. Kant discusses these postulates in *CPrR*'s 'dialectic of pure practical reason'. He says, "These postulates are not theoretical dogmas but *presuppositions* from a necessary practical point of view." (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 132, 167). In the postulates of pure practical reason, human beings find certain answers to the issues of moral duty to which the speculative reason has no access. The postulates are justified through the moral law and for its sake, and do not make any expansion of theoretical cognition (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 138, 175). Let us proceed to expose these postulates to see their significance in Kant's practical philosophy.

According to Kant a theoretical proof that a rational being is free is impossible for the human reason. We cannot collect any empirical data about freedom for cognitive knowledge, since freedom transcends anything that the senses can reveal. The impossibility of an experience of freedom as an object present in the external empirical world does not negate, for Kant, the very possibility of freedom. He asserts that the freedom of the will and our membership of the intelligible world are legitimate assumptions from the practical point of view (Kant, *GM*, Ak 4: 447, 452, 49, 53). Freedom can be proved only *a priori* by methods of pure practical reason. It is established on an insight of reason into its own necessary activity. Kant claims, "We must necessarily attribute to every rational being who has a will also the idea of freedom, under which only can such a being act.... We cannot possibly think of a reason that consciously lets itself be directed from outside as regards its judgments.... Reason must regard itself as the author of its principles independent of foreign influences." (Kant, *GM*, Ak 4: 448, 50). The significance of the concept of freedom for the moral law and moral action necessitates him to postulate freedom from the pure practical use of reason. The pure practical postulate of freedom is acceptable to theoretical reason as well, since the latter is unable to disprove the possibility of freedom and the pure reason's assuming of freedom from a practical point of view is neither self-contradictory nor negation of our world of sensible experience.

The knowledge about the possibility of freedom is to be derived from moral law. It is the moral law which offers us the notion of freedom. Kant says that our knowledge of morality precedes the knowledge of freedom (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 29, 43). Our moral consciousness may be regarded as 'the ground of our knowledge of freedom'. The freedom is to be understood as 'the reason for the

being' (*ratio essendi*) of moral law, while the moral law is seen as 'the reason for the cognition' (*ratio cognoscendi*) of this freedom (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 4, 5). Freedom may be also considered further as the third term that Kant introduces to synthesize the rational agent and the moral action, the will and the object of the will. That is, besides the presupposition of the freedom as the *ratio essendi* of moral law, freedom is presupposed also in moral action where the free will, obliged by the moral law, chooses to act morally (Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, notes prepared by Johann Friedrich Vigilantius, 1793, Ak 27: 506-508, 272-273) One could trace the source of moral law and the moral action in the subject's freedom which expresses itself in moral law as autonomy and obligation, which, in turn, demands moral action from the subject. Thus the freedom of the will is justified on morality.

The ideas of God and immortality are the other two pure practical postulates besides the postulate of freedom that Kant gives in *CPrR*. Having postulated freedom as the only foundation or the reason for the being of moral law, Kant assumes or justifies one's beliefs in immortality and God on the foundation of morality. Like the concept of freedom, the ideas of God and immortality cannot be proved or disproved by the speculative reason. They lack theoretical grounds to substantiate their objective realities. According to Kant, the only possible way to deal with them is to take them as postulates of pure practical reason. It is morality that leads one to have beliefs in God and immortality. The moral law as such does not need the postulates of immortality and God. These ideas are postulated by the pure practical reason because of their relevance in moral life. They ensure the possibility of one's reverence for the moral law. The moral endeavors receive vitality and efficacy through these necessary presuppositions. The beliefs in God and immortality provide an empirical agent with a supreme

head and a required time respectively to live his virtuous dispositions fully and to work for the establishment of a moral world. An empirical rational being necessarily assumes that there exists a supreme being to guarantee the totality of all objects of his permissible desires (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 132-133, 168), as well as an everlasting state of reward for the moral dispositions. It does not at the same time mean that one pursues the moral law because of one's desire for complete good, i.e., the highest possible combination of morality and happiness, which otherwise would destroy the purity of the moral law. The idea of complete good is a practical necessity for human beings. As the possibility for such a totality or the highest unity of virtues and happiness is not empirically evident, or at least remains as a contingent factor in this world, it is practically necessary that we convince ourselves that our moral endeavours somehow are not in vain but lead to the complete good. Such reflections on practical grounds help us to make progress in our moral duties. At the same time, God cannot be thought of in moral theory as a law-giver or as a power that forces moral law on anyone with the threat of punishment because any external compulsion would destroy the moral autonomy of the agent. For Kant, the moral law is the law of autonomy and so it should be a self-legislative law. Kant's position would be that a rational being like human being should obey the commands of moral law, and a moral life would be the best way to please God. Kant does not believe that we can please God in any other way than a good moral disposition. "Apart from a good life-conduct, anything which the human being supposes that he can do to become pleasing to God is a mere religious delusion and counterfeit service of God." (Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Ak 6: 170, 166). Kant, however, agrees with the concept of a supreme being whose will is a law for all, without his being thought of

as the author of the law (Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, Ak 6: 227, 19). In other words, the moral law may be considered as the will of God, but the rational agent should be obliged by the moral law not because it is the will of God, but because it is founded on the autonomy of pure reason. What Kant advocates in morality is a practical theism. His idea of God agrees also with the idea of a creator who has so ordered the universe that there be unity, interconnectedness and purpose for this world. The idea of such a supreme being is also an impetus for the advancement of knowledge. The ideas of unity, interconnectedness and purpose of this world, together with the above stated conceptions about God would provide impetus and fervour for leading a moral life.

Kant believes that our beliefs are bound up with our acceptance of the moral law. He has not opposed one's belief in God or immortality but only denied the theoretical possibility for proving the existence of God and the attempts to found morality on religious beliefs. Actually, Kant's argument for belief in God and immortality is so powerfully made that one cannot overlook them in the daily life. Kant might claim that he could strengthen the beliefs in God and immortality by separating them from metaphysical illusions and by re-introducing them on their practical necessity. He would regard religious beliefs as possible components of morality. For him, morality does not rest on religion, but religious faith is founded on morality. The requirements of morality necessitate the postulation of the religious beliefs such as the immortality of the soul and the existence of God for human beings. These postulates are necessary ideas that make the reception of moral law possible, and are reasonable beliefs arising from moral dispositions. The freedom poses nothing contradictory but favours them so that the moral law may continue to

exist as the law of all empirical rational beings. Kant thus shows that morality, which is fundamentally independent of religious belief, leads to religion. In short, the ideas of God and immortality are postulated by pure reason for our practical purposes. Kant says that 'it is morally necessary' to assume their existence. (Kant, *CPrR*, Ak 5: 124-125, 157-159.). They are the necessary practical presuppositions for establishing the reverence for the moral law or for assuring morality in the empirical rational beings. In the absence of such postulates one might land up in absurdities causing one's forsaking of moral duty. Even though Kant speaks of the different practical usefulness of the beliefs in God and immortality, his primary interest with the postulates seems to be to find the truth of morality. At the same time the ideas of God and immortality as necessary practical postulates could support the possibility of an autonomous moral law.

Conclusion

Kant's practical philosophy tries to present the nature of morality for all empirical rational beings. Here Kant highlights the capacity of rational agents for self-legislation. The autonomous freedom of the rational agent is the reason for the being of moral law. Moral law is shown to be a synthetic *a priori* proposition. The moral law, so conceived, is nothing but a categorical imperative. It gives unconditional, universal and absolute principles, applicable to every one, everywhere and always. Unlike the hypothetical imperative, which commands an action for the sake of an end in view, the moral imperatives demand action for its own sake without any interest in its end. The reflections on morality include not only its *a priori* foundation but also the implications for empirical rational beings. Thus morality takes us to the postulates of pure practical reason, namely freedom, on which alone

the moral law is founded, God and immortality. These are necessary practical presuppositions for the sake of moral agents who are not only rational but empirical as well.

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