

Notes for “Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals” by Immanuel Kant

Richard Walters, 2019

No one can understand Kant without a glossary of terms.

Glossary of Terms

- **Categorical** – Apodeictical, something that is necessarily, logically certain, incontestable
- **Imperative** – “Formulae determining an action which is necessary according to the principle of a will good in some respects. If now the action is good only as a means to something else, then the imperative is hypothetical; if it is conceived as good in itself and consequently as being necessarily the principle of a will which of itself conforms to reason, then it is categorical.”
- **Hypothetical Imperative** – “The practical necessity of a possible action as a means to something else that is willed (or at least which one might possibly will).”
- **Categorical Imperative** – “That which represented an action as necessary of itself without reference to another end, i.e., as objectively necessary.”
- **Heteronomy** – refers to action that is influenced by a force outside the individual
- **Autonomy** - the capacity of an agent to act in accordance with objective morality rather than under the influence of desires
- **Synthetical Judgements** – Judgements where the understanding of the predicate lies completely outside of the conception of the subject, although it stands in connection with it. For example: “all bodies are heavy.”
- **Apodeictic** – Clearly established beyond dispute. There is a scientific under-tone to the use of this word. The fact must be established through experience, and not as a matter of custom.
- **Problematical** – asserting that a thing could be, hypothetical possible
- **Assertorial** – asserting that a thing is, hypothetical actual

Three formulations of the Categorical Imperative

1. Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.
2. So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only.
3. Consider the will of every rational being as a universally legislative will.

Preface

1. Kant begins his preface explaining terms.
 - a. All “rational” knowledge, he explains is either “material” or “formal.”
 - i. “All rational knowledge is either material or formal: the former considers some object, the latter is concerned only with the form of the understanding and of the reason itself, and with the universal laws of thought in general without distinction of its objects.”
 - b. Material and Formal
 - i. “Formal philosophy is called logic. Material philosophy, however, has to do with determinate objects and the laws to which they are subject, is again twofold; for these laws are either laws of nature or of freedom. The science of the former is physics, that of the latter, ethics; they are also called natural philosophy and moral philosophy respectively.”
 - ii. Formal Philosophy = Logic
 - iii. Material Philosophy = Laws Governing Reality
 1. Laws of Nature = Natural Philosophy
 - a. Science of Physics
 2. Laws of Freedom = Moral Philosophy
 - a. Science of Ethics
 - c. Logic
 - i. There can be no material aspect to Logic. Logic exists independent of experience. In many ways it is self-defining.
 - d. Ethics
 - i. “Ethics, however, must also consider the conditions under which what ought to happen frequently does not.”
 - e. Empirical = Based on Experience
 - f. A Priori = Independent of Experience, “pure philosophy” is derived from a priori principles alone.
 - g. Metaphysics = The Root of Physics, or “pure philosophy” directed at material world (material and not formal causes).
 - h. Metaphysics can be divided again:
 - i. “In this way there arises the idea of a twofold metaphysic—a metaphysic of nature and a metaphysic of morals. Physics will thus have an empirical and also a rational part. It is the same with Ethics; but here the empirical part might have the special name of practical anthropology, the name morality being appropriated to the rational part.
 - ii. Metaphysics of Nature
 - iii. Metaphysics of Morals
2. Next he describes the purpose of this text. He prefaces his purpose with this interesting statement about “specialization.”

- a. “All trades, arts, and handiworks have gained by division of labour, namely, when, instead of one man doing everything, each confines himself to a certain kind of work distinct from others in the treatment it requires, so as to be able to perform it with greater facility and in the greatest perfection. Where the different kinds of work are not distinguished and divided, where everyone is a jack-of-all-trades, there manufactures remain still in the greatest barbarism. It might deserve to be considered whether pure philosophy in all its parts does not require a man specially devoted to it, and whether it would not be better for the whole business of science if those who, to please the tastes of the public, are wont to blend the rational and empirical elements together, mixed in all sorts of proportions unknown to themselves, and who call themselves independent thinkers, giving the name of minute philosophers to those who apply themselves to the rational part only—if these, I say, were warned not to carry on two employments together which differ widely in the treatment they demand, for each of which perhaps a special talent is required, and the combination of which in one person only produces bunglers. But I only ask here whether the nature of science does not require that we should always carefully separate the empirical from the rational part, and prefix to Physics proper (or empirical physics) a metaphysic of nature, and to practical anthropology a metaphysic of morals, which must be carefully cleared of everything empirical, so that we may know how much can be accomplished by pure reason in both cases, and from what sources it draws this its a priori teaching, and that whether the latter inquiry is conducted by all moralists (whose name is legion), or only by some who feel a calling thereto.”
- b. **“Everyone must admit that if a law is to have moral force, i.e., to be the basis of an obligation, it must carry with it absolute necessity... ”**
- c. And this law must be a priori because: **“any other precept which is founded on principles of mere experience may be in certain respects universal, yet in as far as it rests even in the least degree on an empirical basis, perhaps only as to a motive, such a precept, while it may be a practical rule, can never be called a moral law.”**
- d. Further: **“For in order that an action should be morally good, it is not enough that it conform to the moral law, but it must also be done for the sake of the law, otherwise that conformity is only very contingent and uncertain; since a principle which is not moral, although it may now and then produce actions conformable to the law, will also often produce actions which contradict it.”**
- e. **“For the metaphysic of morals has to examine the idea and the principles of a possible pure will, and not the acts and conditions of human volition generally, which for the most part are drawn from psychology.”**

Section 1:

TRANSITION FROM THE COMMON RATIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF MORALITY TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL

1. The goal of Ethics and morality is to produce a “good will.” To put this simply, the purpose of morality is not to condition an individual to live a life of virtue. Rather it is to forge a will that wants to be virtuous. Note that Kant strongly makes the point that a good will does not have “utility” in the sense that it must lead to anything else. Without success or any other trapping of vanity, a good will is a jewel that continues to shine and have intrinsic value.
 - a. **“Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good, without qualification, except a good will. Intelligence, wit, judgement, and the other talents of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resolution, perseverance, as qualities of temperament, are undoubtedly good and desirable in many respects; but these gifts of nature may also become extremely bad and mischievous if the will which is to make use of them, and which, therefore, constitutes what is called character, is not good. It is the same with the gifts of fortune. Power, riches, honour, even health, and the general well-being and contentment with one’s condition which is called happiness, inspire pride, and often presumption, if there is not a good will to correct the influence of these on the mind, and with this also to rectify the whole principle of acting and adapt it to its end. The sight of a being who is not adorned with a single feature of a pure and good will, enjoying unbroken prosperity, can never give pleasure to an impartial rational spectator. Thus a good will appears to constitute the indispensable condition even of being worthy of happiness.”**
 - b. “Moderation in the affections and passions, self-control, and calm deliberation are not only good in many respects, but even seem to constitute part of the intrinsic worth of the person; but they are far from deserving to be called good without qualification, although they have been so unconditionally praised by the ancients.”
 - c. **“For without the principles of a good will they may become extremely bad, and the coolness of a villain not only makes him far more dangerous, but also directly makes him more abominable in our eyes than he would have been without it.**
 - d. “A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition; that is, it is good in itself, and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought about by it in favour of any inclination, nay even of the sum total of all inclinations.”
 - e. **“Even if it should happen that, owing to special disfavour of fortune, or the niggardly provision of a step-motherly nature, this will should wholly lack power to accomplish its purpose, if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing, and there should remain only the good will (not, to be sure, a mere wish, but the summoning of all means in our power), then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing**

which has its whole value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitfulness can neither add nor take away anything from this value."

- f. "There is, however, something so strange in this idea of the absolute value of the mere will, in which no account is taken of its utility, that notwithstanding the thorough assent of even common reason to the idea, yet a suspicion must arise that it may perhaps really be the product of mere high-flown fancy, and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature in assigning reason as the governor of our will."
2. Philosophy demands we consider ideas that occasionally run counter to our inclinations. For example, Kant proposes we consider the possibility that "happiness" may not be the end goal of our ability to reason. Rather, reason's purpose is the cultivation of a good will.
 - a. **"In the physical constitution of an organized being, that is, a being adapted suitably to the purposes of life, we assume it as a fundamental principle that no organ for any purpose will be found but what is also the fittest and best adapted for that purpose. Now in a being which has reason and a will, if the proper object of nature were its conservation, its welfare, in a word, its happiness, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose. For all the actions which the creature has to perform with a view to this purpose, and the whole rule of its conduct, would be far more surely prescribed to it by instinct, and that end would have been attained thereby much more certainly than it ever can be by reason. Should reason have been communicated to this favoured creature over and above, it must only have served it to contemplate the happy constitution of its nature, to admire it, to congratulate itself thereon, and to feel thankful for it to the beneficent cause, but not that it should subject its desires to that weak and delusive guidance and meddle bunglingly with the purpose of nature. In a word, nature would have taken care that reason should not break forth into practical exercise, nor have the presumption, with its weak insight, to think out for itself the plan of happiness, and of the means of attaining it. Nature would not only have taken on herself the choice of the ends, but also of the means, and with wise foresight would have entrusted both to instinct. And, in fact, we find that the more a cultivated reason applies itself with deliberate purpose to the enjoyment of life and happiness, so much the more does the man fail of true satisfaction. And from this circumstance there arises in many, if they are candid enough to confess it, a certain degree of misology, that is, hatred of reason, especially in the case of those who are most experienced in the use of it, because after calculating all the advantages they derive, I do not say from the invention of all the arts of common luxury, but even from the sciences (which seem to them to be after all only a luxury of the understanding), they find that they have, in fact, only brought more trouble on their shoulders, rather than gained in happiness; and they end by envying, rather than despising, the more common stamp of men who keep closer to the guidance of mere instinct and do not allow their reason much influence on their conduct. And this we must admit, that the judgement of those who would very much lower the lofty eulogies of the advantages which reason gives us in regard to the happiness and satisfaction of life, or who would even reduce them below zero, is by**

no means morose or ungrateful to the goodness with which the world is governed, but that there lies at the root of these judgements the idea that our existence has a different and far nobler end, for which, and not for happiness, reason is properly intended, and which must, therefore, be regarded as the supreme condition to which the private ends of man must, for the most part, be postponed. For as reason is not competent to guide the will with certainty in regard to its objects and the satisfaction of all our wants (which it to some extent even multiplies), this being an end to which an implanted instinct would have led with much greater certainty; and since, nevertheless, reason is imparted to us as a practical faculty, i.e., as one which is to have influence on the will, therefore, admitting that nature generally in the distribution of her capacities has adapted the means to the end, its true destination must be to produce a will, not merely good as a means to something else, but good in itself, for which reason was absolutely necessary. This will then, though not indeed the sole and complete good, must be the supreme good and the condition of every other, even of the desire of happiness. Under these circumstances, there is nothing inconsistent with the wisdom of nature in the fact that the cultivation of the reason, which is requisite for the first and unconditional purpose, does in many ways interfere, at least in this life, with the attainment of the second, which is always conditional, namely, happiness. Nay, it may even reduce it to nothing, without nature thereby failing of her purpose. For reason recognizes the establishment of a good will as its highest practical destination, and in attaining this purpose is capable only of a satisfaction of its own proper kind, namely that from the attainment of an end, which end again is determined by reason only, notwithstanding that this may involve many a disappointment to the ends of inclination. We have then to develop the notion of a will which deserves to be highly esteemed for itself and is good without a view to anything further, a notion which exists already in the sound natural understanding, requiring rather to be cleared up than to be taught, and which in estimating the value of our actions always takes the first place and constitutes the condition of all the rest. In order to do this, we will take the notion of duty, which includes that of a good will, although implying certain subjective restrictions and hindrances. These, however, far from concealing it, or rendering it unrecognizable, rather bring it out by contrast and make it shine forth so much the brighter.”

3. Duty cannot be complicated by motives of vanity or self-interest to retain moral worth. Our inclinations are bent toward happiness, not duty. **Kant supplies three sources for moral worth through duty.** The first is when we do a thing that is right even though we are disinclined to desire it. The second is from the value of the purpose of that action, excluding selfish purposes. And the third is through an intellectual “respect” for conformity to the law.
 - a. **First: To Do a Thing that is Right, Even Though We are Disinclined to Desire It.**
 - i. “... if adversity and hopeless sorrow have completely taken away relish for life; if the unfortunate one, strong in mind, indignant at his fate rather than desponding or dejected, wishes for death, and yet preserves his life without

loving it – not from inclination or fear, but from duty – then his maxim has moral worth.”

- ii. “To be beneficent when we can is a duty; and besides this, there are many minds so sympathetically constituted that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest, they find a pleasure in spreading joy around them and can take delight in the satisfaction of others so far as it is their own work. But I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however proper, however amiable it may be, has nevertheless no true moral worth, but is on a level with other inclinations, e.g., the inclination to honour, which, if it is happily directed to that which is in fact of public utility and accordant with duty and consequently honourable, deserves praise and encouragement, but not esteem. For the maxim lacks the moral import, namely, that such actions be done from duty, not from inclination.”
- iii. “... the moral worth of the character is brought out which is incomparably the highest of all, namely, that he is beneficent, not from inclination, but from duty.”
- iv. “... all men have already the strongest and most intimate inclination to happiness, because it is just in this idea that all inclinations are combined in one total. But the precept of happiness is often of such a sort that it greatly interferes with some inclinations, and yet a man cannot form any definite and certain conception of the sum of satisfaction of all of them which is called happiness.”
- v. **“It is in this manner, undoubtedly, that we are to understand those passages of Scripture also in which we are commanded to love our neighbor, even our enemy. For love, as an affection, cannot be commanded, but beneficence for duty’s sake may; even though we are not impelled to it by any inclination – nay, are even repelled by a natural and unconquerable aversion. This is practical love and not pathological – a love which is seated in the will, and not in the propensions of sense – in principles of action and not of tender sympathy; and it is this love alone which can be commanded.”**

b. Second: Value Derived from the Purpose of your Action.

- i. “The second proposition is: That an action done from duty derives its moral worth, not from the purpose which is to be attained by it, but from the maxim by which it is determined, and therefore does not depend on the realization of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of volition by which the action has taken place, without regard to any object of desire.”
- ii. “In what then, can their worth lie, if it is not to consist in the will and in reference to its expected effect? It cannot lie anywhere but in the principle of the will without regard to the ends which can be attained by the action. For the will stands between its a priori principle, which is formal, and its a posteriori spring, which is material, as between two roads, and as it must be determined by something, it that it must be determined by the formal principle of volition

when an action is done from duty, in which case every material principle has been withdrawn from it.”

c. Third: Value through “Respect” for the Law.

- i. “The third proposition, which is a consequence of the two preceding, I would express thus Duty is the necessity of acting from respect for the law.”
- ii. “Now an action done from duty must wholly exclude the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will, so that nothing remains which can determine the will except objectively the law, and subjectively pure respect for this practical law, and consequently the maxim that I should follow this law even to the thwarting of all my inclinations.”

iii. “Thus the moral worth of an action does not lie in the effect expected from it, nor in any principle of action which requires to borrow its motive from this expected effect. For all these effects – agreeableness of one’s condition and even the promotion of the happiness of others – could have been also brought about by other causes, so that for this there would have been no need of the will of a rational being; where as it is in this alone that the supreme and unconditional good can be found.”

- 1. Note: It is good to remember at all times that Kant believes that a good will is requisite for any action of moral worth. It is the habit of performing actions of moral worth – actions commanded by duty – that reflect a good will.

iv. “The pre - eminent good which we call moral can therefore consist in nothing else than the conception of law in itself, which certainly is only possible in a rational being”

- 4. Because he is talking now about how a rational being achieves moral worth through respect for the law he asks: “But what sort of law can that be, the conception of which must determine the will even without paying any regard to the effect expected from it, in order that this will may be called good absolutely and without qualification?”
 - a. “I am never to act otherwise than so that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law.”
- 5. Example: Promise Keeping
 - a. “May I when in distress make a promise with the intention not to keep it?”
 - i. The Maxim: “Every one may make a deceitful promise when he finds himself in a difficulty from which he cannot extricate himself?”
 - ii. “Then I presently become aware that while I can will the lie, I can by no means will that lying should be a universal law. For with such a law there would be no promises at all, since it would be in vain to allege my intention in regard to my future actions to those who would not believe this allegation, or if they over hastily did so would pay me back in my own coin.”
 - iii. Lesson: “Canst thou also will that thy maxim should be a universal law? If not, then it must be rejected.”

6. Using this one very simple rule, Kant believes that any rational being should be able to lead a moral life. He even goes so far as to say his system is so simple and elegant that it should be preferred above other moral systems which may conform to the rule, but are much more difficult for the common man to keep always in the front of his mind.
 - a. “Here it would be easy to show how, with this compass in hand, men are well able to distinguish, in every case that occurs, what is good, what bad, conformably to duty or inconsistent with it, if, without in the least teaching them anything new, we only, like Socrates, direct their attention to the principle they themselves employ; and that, therefore, we do not need science and philosophy to know what we should do to be honest and good, yea, even wise and virtuous. Indeed we might well have conjectured beforehand that the knowledge of what every man is bound to do, and therefore also to know, would be within the reach of every man, even the commonest.”
7. Man is constantly under assault from his inclinations and his self-love.
 - a. “Now reason issues its commands unyieldingly, without promising anything to the inclinations, and, as it were, with disregard and contempt for these claims, which are so impetuous, and at the same time so plausible, and which will not allow themselves to be suppressed by any command. Hence there arises a natural dialectic, i.e., a disposition, to argue against these strict laws of duty and to question their validity, or at least their purity and strictness; and, if possible, to make them more accordant with our wishes and inclinations, that is to say, to corrupt them at their very source, and entirely to destroy their worth — a thing which even common practical reason cannot ultimately call good.”

Section 2:

TRANSITION FROM POPULAR MORAL PHILOSOPHY TO THE METAPHYSIC OF MORALS

1. So, we have a problem. By examining our experiences, it is impossible to find a single case where the maxim of our actions can be said to be done with respect for duty, and therefore be unconditionally moral.
 - a. "Although many things are done in conformity with what duty prescribes, it is nevertheless always doubtful where they are done strictly from duty, so as to have a moral worth. Hence there have at all times been philosophers who have altogether denied that this disposition actually exists at all in human actions, and have ascribed everything to a more or less refined self-love. Not that they have on that account questioned the soundness of the conception of morality; on the contrary, they spoke with sincere regret of the frailty and corruption of human nature, which, though noble enough to take its rule as an idea so worthy of respect, is yet too weak to follow it and employs reason which ought to give it the law only for the purpose of providing for the interest of the inclinations, whether singly or at the best in the greatest possible harmony with one another."
 - b. "In fact, it is absolutely impossible to make out by experience with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action, however right in itself, rested simply on moral grounds and on the conception of duty."**
 - c. "Sometimes it happens that with the sharpest self-examination we can find nothing beside the moral principle of duty which could have been powerful enough to move us to this or that action to so great a sacrifice; yet we cannot from this infer with certainty that it was not really some secret impulse of self-love, under the false appearance of duty, that was the actual determining cause of the will."
 - d. "...we cannot better serve the wishes of those who ridicule all morality as a mere chimera of human imagination over stepping itself from vanity, than by conceding to them that notions of duty must be drawn only from experience (as from indolence, people are ready to think is also the case with all other notions); for or is to prepare for them a certain triumph."
 - e. "Nor could anything be more fatal to morality than that we should wish to derive it from examples."
2. The correct approach needs to be independent of experience: "a priori."
 - a. "Even the Holy One of the Gospels must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize Him as such; and so He says of Himself, "Why call ye Me (whom you see) good; none is good (the model of good) but God only (whom ye do not see)?" But whence have we the conception of God as the supreme good? Simply from the idea of moral perfection, which reason frames a priori and connects inseparably with the notion of a free will."

3. A Metaphysics of Morals is required. But approaching morality from a purely philosophical, a priori direction is not “popular.” So, the vast majority of philosophers draw upon experience (prudence) to found their positions on moral pronouncements.
 - a. “We need only look at the attempts of moralists in that favourite fashion, and we shall find at one time the special constitution of human nature (including, however, the idea of a rational nature generally), at one time perfection, at another happiness, here moral sense, there fear of God. a little of this, and a little of that, in marvellous mixture, without its occurring to them to ask whether the principles of morality are to be sought in the knowledge of human nature at all (which we can have only from experience); or, if this is not so, if these principles are to be found altogether a priori, free from everything empirical, in pure rational concepts only and nowhere else, not even in the smallest degree; then rather to adopt the method of making this a separate inquiry, as pure practical philosophy, or (if one may use a name so decried) as metaphysic of morals, to bring it by itself to completeness, and to require the public, which wishes for popular treatment, to await the issue of this undertaking.”
 - b. “Such a metaphysic of morals, completely isolated, not mixed with any anthropology, theology, physics, or hyperphysics, and still less with occult qualities (which we might call hypophysical), is not only an indispensable substratum of all sound theoretical knowledge of duties, but is at the same time a desideratum of the highest importance to the actual fulfilment of their precepts. **For the pure conception of duty, unmixed with any foreign addition of empirical attractions, and, in a word, the conception of the moral law, exercises on the human heart, by way of reason alone (which first becomes aware with this that it can of itself be practical), an influence so much more powerful than all other springs which may be derived from the field of experience, that, in the consciousness of its worth, it despises the latter, and can by degrees become their master; whereas a mixed ethics, compounded partly of motives drawn from feelings and inclinations, and partly also of conceptions of reason, must make the mind waver between motives which cannot be brought under any principle, which lead to good only by mere accident and very often also to evil.**”
 - c. “From what has been said, it is clear that all moral conceptions have their seat and origin completely a priori in the reason, and that, moreover, in the commonest reason just as truly as in that which is in the highest degree speculative; that they cannot be obtained by abstraction from any empirical, and therefore merely contingent, knowledge; that it is just this purity of their origin that makes them worthy to serve as our supreme practical principle, and that just in proportion as we add anything empirical, we detract from their genuine influence and from the absolute value of actions.”
4. Just saying that we have a duty to follow only a maxim that we would also will to be a universal law presupposes the idea that this command is an “imperative.” Kant must explain what an imperative is. Also, he must distinguish the important difference between hypothetical and categorical imperatives.

- a. "... if reason of itself does not sufficiently determine the will, if the latter is subject also to subjective conditions (particular impulses) which do not always coincide with the objective conditions; in a word, if the will does not in itself completely accord with reason (which is actually the case with men), then the actions which objectively are recognized as necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will according to the objective laws is obligation, that is to say, the relation of the objective laws to a will that is not thoroughly good is conceived as the determination of the will of a rational being by principles of reason, but which the will from its nature does not of necessity follow."
 - b. "The conception of an objective principle, in so far as it is obligatory for a will, is called a command (of reason), the formula of the command is called an imperative."**
 - c. "Now all imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to something else that is willed (or at least which one might possibly will). The categorical imperative would be that which represented an action as necessary of itself without reference to another end, i.e., as objectively necessary."**
 - d. "... all imperatives are formulae determining an action which is necessary according to the principle of a will good in some respects. If now the action is good only as a means to something else, then the imperative is hypothetical; if it is conceived as good in itself and consequently as being necessarily the principle of a will which of itself conforms to reason, then it is categorical."**
5. Happiness is something desired by all men. But happiness is not categorical. It is assertorial and therefore, hypothetical.
- a. "There is one end, however, which may be assumed to be actually such to all rational beings (so far as imperatives apply to them, viz., as dependent beings), and, therefore, one purpose which they not merely may have, but which we may with certainty assume that they all actually have by a natural necessity, and this is happiness."
 - b. "The hypothetical imperative which expresses the practical necessity of an action as a means to the advancement of happiness is assertorial. We are not to present it as necessary for an uncertain and merely possible purpose, but for a purpose with certainty and a priori in every man, because it belongs to his being."
 - c. "Now, skill in the choice of means to his own greatest well-being may be called prudence, in the narrowest sense. And thus the imperative which refers to the choice of means to one's own happiness, i.e., the precept of prudence, is still always hypothetical; the action is not commanded absolutely, but only as a means to another purpose."
 - d. "Finally, there is an imperative which commands a certain conduct immediately, without having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by it. This imperative is categorical. It concerns not the matter of the action, or its intended result, but its form and the principle of which it is itself a result; and what is essentially good in it consists in the mental disposition, let the consequence be what it may. This imperative may be called that of morality."**

6. Kant takes a moment to show that there are essentially three volitions that obligate us. All of these are “imperatives,” but only one is “categorical.” These are “either rules of skill, or counsels of prudence, or commands (laws) of morality.” He suggests that “prudence,” which is a form of wisdom built upon experience, cannot “command” the will. Only laws of morality can set moral imperatives categorically.
- a. **“Counsels, indeed, involve necessity, but one which can only hold under a contingent subjective condition, vis., they depend on whether this or that man reckons this or that as part of his happiness; the categorical imperative, on the contrary, is not limited by any condition, and as being absolutely, although practically, necessary, may be quite properly called a command. We might also call the first kind of imperatives technical (belonging to art), the second pragmatic (to welfare) and the third moral (belonging to free conduct generally, that is, to morals).”**
7. Imperatives of Skill (art) and Prudence (welfare) don’t hold universally or necessarily.
- a. “No special explanation is needed to show how an imperative of skill is possible. Whoever wills the end, will also (so far as reason decides his conduct) the means in his power which are indispensably necessary thereto. This proposition is, as regards the volition, analytical; for, in willing an object as my effect, there is already thought the causality of myself as an acting cause, that is to say, the use of the means; and in the imperative educes from the conception of volition of an end the conception of actions necessary to this end.”
 - b. “If it were only equally easy to give a definite conception of happiness, the imperatives of prudence would correspond exactly with those of skill, and would likewise be analytical.... But, unfortunately, the notion of happiness is so indefinite that although every man wishes to attain it, yet he never can say definitely and consistently what it is that he really wishes and wills. “
 - i. “Does he will riches, how much anxiety, envy, and snares might he not thereby draw upon his shoulders?”
 - ii. “Does he will knowledge and discernment, perhaps it might prove to be only an eye so much the sharper to show him so much the more fearfully the evils that are now concealed from him, and that cannot be avoided, or to impose more wants on his desires, which already give him concern enough.”
 - iii. “Would he have long life? Who guarantees to him that it would not be a long misery?”
 - iv. “Would he at least have health? How often has uneasiness of the body restrained from excess into which perfect health would have allowed one to fall?”
 - c. “We cannot therefore act on any definite principles to secure happiness, but only on empirical counsels, e.g. of regimen, frugality, courtesy, reserve, etc., which experience teaches do, on the average, most promote well-being.”
 - d. **“Hence it follows that the imperatives of prudence do not, strictly speaking, command at all, that is, they cannot present actions objectively as practically necessary; that they are rather to be regarded as counsels (consilia) than precepts**

(praecepta) of reason, that the problem to determine certainly and universally what action would promote the happiness of a rational being is completely insoluble, and consequently no imperative respecting it is possible which should, in the strict sense, command to do what makes happy; because happiness is not an ideal of reason but of imagination, resting solely on empirical grounds, and it is vain to expect that these should define an action by which one could attain the totality of a series of consequences which is really endless.”

8. Even moral imperatives are limited if they are based on experience and not a priori principles. So, there are no “examples” we can point at to universally cement a rule. Examples limit the rule to a specific case. Also, specific examples might hide hidden motives which would make the example hypothetical and not categorical. Only a categorical imperative can command us such that there is no liberty to choose the opposite.
 - a. “... we cannot show with certainty in any example that the will was determined merely by the law, without any other spring of action, although it may appear to be so. For it is always possible that fear of disgrace, perhaps also obscure dread of other dangers, may have a secret influence on the will. Who can prove by experience the non - existence of a cause when all that experience tells us is that we do not perceive it? But in such a case the so - called moral imperative, which as such appears to be categorical and unconditional, would in reality be only a pragmatic precept, drawing our attention to our own interests and merely teaching us to take these into consideration.”
 - b. **“...the categorical imperative alone has the purport of a practical law; all the rest may indeed be called principles of the will but not laws, since whatever is only necessary for the attainment of some arbitrary purpose may be considered as in itself contingent, and we can at any time be free from the precept if we give up the purpose; on the contrary, the unconditional command leaves the will no liberty to choose the opposite; consequently it alone carries with it that necessity which we require in a law”**
 - c. “When I conceive a hypothetical imperative, in general I do not know beforehand what it will contain until I am given the condition. But when I conceive a categorical imperative, I know at once what it contains.”
9. So, armed with a better understanding of the words “categorical” and “imperative” Kant reasserts his universal law. This is the first, and primary, formulation of Kant’s Categorical Imperative. There are three formulations, each satisfying a different question. This first formulation is the rule by which we should create our maxims.
 - a. **“There is therefore but one categorical imperative, namely, this : Act only on that maxim whereby thou canst at the same time will that it should become a universal law.”**
 - b. “Now, if all imperatives of duty can be deduced from this one imperative as from their principle, then, although it should remain undecided what is called duty is not merely a vain notion, yet at least we shall be able to show what we understand by it and what this notion means.

- c. Phrasing it as a Duty, he says: "...the imperative of duty may be expressed thus: Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature."

10. Examples

- a. **"A man reduced to despair by a series of misfortunes feels wearied of life, but is still so far in possession of his reason that he can ask himself whether it would not be contrary to his duty to take his own life."**
 - i. "From self-love I adopt it as a principle to shorten my life when its longer duration is likely to bring more evil than satisfaction."
 - ii. "Now we see at once that a system of nature of which it should be a law to destroy life by means of the very feeling whose special nature it is to impel to the improvement of life would contradict itself and, therefore, could not exist as a system of nature."
 - 1. Note: to understand this explanation above, you need to focus on the contradiction itself. Ending life to improve one's condition is absurd.
- b. **"Another finds himself forced by necessity to borrow money. He knows that he will not be able to repay it, but sees also that nothing will be lent to him unless he promises stoutly to repay it in a definite time."**
 - i. "When I think myself in want of money, I will borrow money and promise to repay it, although I know that I never can do so."
 - ii. Again there is a contradiction. "For supposing it to be a universal law that everyone when he thinks himself in a difficulty should be able to promise whatever he pleases, with the purpose of not keeping his promise, the promise itself would become impossible."
- c. **"A third finds himself a talent which with the help of some culture might make him a useful man in many respects. But he finds himself in comfortable circumstances and prefers to indulge in pleasure rather than to take pains in enlarging and improving his happy natural capacities. He asks, however, whether his maxim of neglect of his natural gifts, besides agreeing with his inclination to indulgence, agrees also with what is called duty."**
 - i. "But he cannot possibly will that this should be a universal law of nature, or be implanted in us as such by a natural instinct. For, as a rational being, he necessarily wills that his faculties be developed, since they serve him and have been given him, for all sorts of possible purposes."
- d. **"A fourth, who is in prosperity, while he sees that others have to contend with great wretchedness and that he could help them, thinks: 'What concern is it of mine? Let everyone be as happy as Heaven pleases, or as he can make himself; I will take nothing from him nor even envy him, only I do not wish to contribute anything to his welfare or to his assistance in distress!'"**
 - i. "... a will which resolved this would contradict itself, in as much as many cases might occur in which one would have need of the love and sympathy of others, and in which, by such a law of nature sprung from his own will, he would deprive himself of all hope of the aid he desires."

11. Kant concludes his point about not trying to base morality on experience.
- a. **“Thus every empirical element is not only quite incapable of being an aid to the principle of morality, but is even highly prejudicial to the purity of morals, for the proper and inestimable worth of an absolutely good will consist just in this, that the principle of action is free from all influence of contingent grounds which alone experience can furnish. We cannot too much or too often repeat our warning against this lax and even mean habit of thought which seeks for its principle amongst empirical motives and laws; for human reason in its weariness is glad to rest on this pillow, and in a dream of sweet illusions (in which, instead of Juno, it embraces a cloud) it substitutes for morality a bastard patched up from limbs of various derivation, which looks like anything one chooses to see in it, only not like virtue to one who has once beheld her in her true form.”**
12. But, how is it that we can assert any universal and necessary imperative at all? How can we raise an instruction to the level of a command for all rational creatures? To achieve this, Kant starts by asserting that a “rational being” is an end in itself. This will lead us to his second formulation of the Categorical Imperative, which is the foundation of proof needed to raise the imperative to the level of a Duty.
- a. **“Supposing, however, that there were something whose existence has in itself absolute worth, something which, being an end in itself, could be a source of definite laws; then in this and this alone would lie the source of a possible categorical imperative, i.e., a practical law.”**
 - b. “Now I say: man and generally any rational being exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will, but in all his actions, whether they concern himself or other rational beings, must be always regarded at the same time as an end.”
 - c. **“... the worth of any object which is to be acquired by our action is always conditional. Beings whose existence depends not on our will but on nature’s, have nevertheless, if they are irrational beings, only a relative value as means, and therefore called things; rational beings, on the contrary, are called persons, because their very nature points them out as ends in themselves, that is as something which must not be used merely as means, and so far therefore restricts freedom of action (and is an object of respect).”**
 - d. **“If then there is a supreme practical principle or, in respect of the human will, a categorical imperative, it must be one which, being drawn from the conception of that which is necessarily an end for everyone because it is an end in itself, constitutes an objective principle of will, and can therefore serve as a universal practical law.”**
 - e. **“Accordingly the practical imperative will be as follows: So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only.”**
13. Can this principle be practically carried out? Examples.
- a. He who contemplates suicide.

- i. “If he destroys himself in order to escape from painful circumstances, he uses a person merely as a means to maintain a tolerable condition up to the end of life. But a man is not a thing, that is to say, something which can be used merely as means, but must in all his actions be always considered as an end in himself. I cannot, therefore, dispose in any way of a man in my own person so as to mutilate him, to damage or kill him.”
 - 1. Note: Kant excludes amputation to save one’s life.
 - b. He who is thinking of making a lying promise.
 - i. “... he would be using another man merely as a means”
 - ii. “This violation of the principle of humanity in other men is more obvious if we take in examples of attacks on the freedom and property of others. For then it is clear that he who transgresses the rights of men intends to use the person of others merely as a means, without considering that as rational beings they ought always to be esteemed also as ends.”
 - c. As regards contingent (meritorious) duties to oneself.
 - i. “... there are in humanity capacities of greater perfection, which belong to the end that nature has in view in regard to humanity in ourselves as the subject: to neglect these might perhaps be consistent with the maintenance of humanity as an end in itself, but not with the advancement of this end.”
 - d. As regards meritorious duties toward others.
 - i. “The natural end which all men have is their own happiness. Now humanity might indeed subsist, although no one should contribute anything to the happiness of others, provided he did not intentionally withdraw anything from it; but after all this would only harmonize negatively not positively with humanity as an end in itself, if everyone does not also endeavor, as far as in him lies, to forward the ends of others. For the ends of any subject which is an end in himself ought as far as possible to be my ends also, if that conception is to have its full effect with me.”
14. The notion that people are ends in themselves is universal and necessary.
- a. “This principle , that humanity and generally every rational nature is an end in itself (which is the supreme limiting condition of every man’s freedom of action) , is not borrowed from experience , firstly , because it is universal , applying as it does to all rational beings whatever , and experience is not capable of determining anything about them ; secondly , because it does not present humanity as an end to men (subjectively) , that is as an object which men do of themselves actually adopt as an end ; but as an objective end , which must as a law constitute the supreme limiting condition of all our subjective ends , let them be what we will ; it must therefore spring from pure reason .”
15. And so, Kant feels satisfied that he has established his Categorical Imperative as a Law of Nature (the first formulation) and then as a Practical Law of Reason (the second formulation) he now addresses the danger that the law might be used to interfere with the harmony of society. Individual autonomy must be preserved and yet people should not infringe on the freedom of others. So, he proposes a third formulation of his categorical imperative.

- a. **“Hence follows the third practical principle of the will, which is the ultimate condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, viz.: the idea of the will of every rational being as a universally legislative will.”**
 - b. “... we could not prove independently that there are practical proposition which command categorically, nor can it be proved in this section; one thing, however, could be done, namely, to indicate in the imperative itself, by some determinate expression, that in the case of volition from duty all interest is renounced, which is the specific criterion of categorical as distinguished from hypothetical imperatives. This is done in the present (third) formula of the principle, namely, in the idea of the will of every rational being as a universally legislating will.”
 - c. **“Looking back now on all previous attempts to discover the principle of morality, we need not wonder why they all failed. It was seen that man was bound to laws by duty, but it was not observed that the laws to which he is subject are only those of his own giving, through at the same time they are universal, and that he is only bound to act in conformity with his own will; a will, however, which is designed by nature to give universal laws. For when one has conceived man only as a subject to a law (no matter what), then this law required some interest, either by way of attraction or constraint, since it did not originate as a law from his own will, but this will was according to a law obliged by something else to act in a certain manner. Now by this necessary consequence all the labor spent in finding a supreme principle of duty was irrevocably lost. For men never elicited duty, but only a necessity of acting from a certain interest. Whether this interest was private or otherwise, in any case the imperative must be conditional and could not by any means be capable of being a moral command. I will therefore call this the principle of autonomy of the will, in contrast with every other which I accordingly reckon as heteronomy.”**
16. And so Kant now launches into a sketchy description of his own utopia, which he calls a “Kingdom of Ends.”
- a. “By a kingdom I understand the union of different rational beings in a system by common laws . Now since it is by laws that ends are determined as regards their universal validity , hence , if we abstract from the personal differences of rational beings and likewise from all the content of their private ends , we shall be able to conceive all ends combined in a systematic whole (including both rational beings as ends in themselves , and also the special ends which each may propose to himself) , that is to say , we can conceive a kingdom of ends , which on the preceding principles is possible.”
 - b. “For all rational beings come uner the law that each of them must treat itself and all others never merely as means, but in every case at the same time as ends in themselves. Hence results a systematic union of rational being by common, objective laws, i.e, a kingdom which may be called a kingdom of ends, since what these laws have in view is just the relation of these beings to one another as ends and means. It is certainly only an ideal.”
 - c. “Morality consists then in the reference of all action to the legislation which alone can render a kingdom of ends possible.”

- d. "But although a rational being, even if he punctually follows this maxim himself, cannot reckon upon all others being therefore true to the same, nor expect that the kingdom of nature and its orderly arrangements shall be in harmony with him as a fitting member, so as to form a kingdom of ends to which he himself contributes, that is to say, that it shall favour his expectation of happiness, still that law: "Act according to the maxims of a member of a merely possible kingdom of ends legislating in it universally," remains in full force inasmuch as it commands categorically."
 - e. "From what has just been said, it is easy to see how it happens that, although the conception of duty implies subjection to the law, we yet ascribe a certain dignity and sublimity to the person who fulfils all his duties."
17. Lastly, Kant attempts to prove that morality is no creation of the mind, but rather it must be both universal and necessary if we also believe in autonomy of the will.
- a. "Now to prove that morality is no creation of the brain, which it cannot be if the categorical imperative and with it the autonomy of the will is true, and as an a priori principle absolutely necessary."

Section 3

TRANSITION FROM THE METAPHYSIC OF MORALS TO THE CRITIQUE OF PURE PRACTICAL REASON

1. "Freedom is the key that explains the autonomy of the will."
 - a. "What else then can freedom of the will be but autonomy, that is, the property of the will to be a law to itself? But the proposition: 'The will is in every action a law to itself,' only expresses the principle: 'To act on no other maxim than that which can also have as an object itself as a universal law.'"
 - b. "... a free will and a will subject to moral laws are one and the same."
2. "Freedom must be presupposed as a property of the will of all rational beings."
 - a. "Now we cannot possibly conceive a reason consciously receiving a bias from any other quarter with respect to its judgements, for then the subject would ascribe the determination of its judgement not to its own reason, but to an impulse. It must regard itself as the author of its principles independent of foreign influences. Consequently as practical reason or as the will of a rational being it must regard itself free, that is to say, the will of such a being cannot be a will of its own except under the idea of freedom. This idea must therefore in practical point of view be ascribed to every rational being."
3. Kant attempts to explain how or logic is circular with regard to freedom and adherence to the law. Here Kant talks of rational beings understanding that they belong to two worlds at once, a world of sensation and another that is only intelligible.
 - a. "It must be freely admitted that there is a sort of circle here from which it seems impossible to escape. In the order of efficient causes we assume ourselves free, in order that in the order of ends we may conceive ourselves as subject to moral laws: and we afterwards conceive ourselves as subject to these laws, because we have attributed to ourselves freedom of will: for freedom and self-legislation of the will are both autonomy and, therefore, are reciprocal conceptions, and for this very reason one must not be used to explain the other or give the reason of it, but at most only logical purposes to reduce apparently different notions of the same object to one single concept (as we reduce different fractions of the same value to the lowest terms)."
 - b. "... all the 'ideas' that come to us involuntarily (as those of the senses) do not enable us to know objects otherwise than as they affect us; so that what they may be in themselves remains unknown to us, and consequently that as regards 'ideas' of this kind even with the closest attention and clearness that the understanding can apply to them, we can by them only attain to the knowledge of appearances, never to the things in themselves."
 - c. "... a rational being must regard himself qua intelligence (not from the side of his lower faculties) as belonging not to the world of sense, but to that of understanding; hence he has two points of view from which he can regard himself, and recognize laws of the exercise of his faculties, and consequently of all his actions: first, so far as he belongs to

the world of sense, he finds himself subject to laws of nature (heteronomy); secondly, as belonging to the intelligible world, under laws which being independent of nature have found foundation not in experience but in reason alone.

- d. "Now the idea of freedom is inseparably connected with the conception of autonomy, and this again with the universal principle of morality which is ideally the foundation of all actions of rational beings, just as the law of nature is of all phenomena."
 - e. "For now we see that, when we conceive ourselves as free, we transfer ourselves into the world of understanding as members of it and recognize the autonomy of the will with its consequence, morality; whereas, if we conceive ourselves as under obligation, we consider ourselves as belonging to the world of sense and at the same time to the world of understanding."
4. What makes the categorical imperative possible?
- a. "If therefore I were only a member of the world of understanding, then all my actions would perfectly conform to the principle of autonomy of the pure will; if I were only a part of the world of sense, they would necessarily be assumed to conform wholly to the natural law of desires and inclinations, in other words, to the heteronomy of nature."
 - b. "And thus what makes categorical imperatives possible is this, that the idea of freedom makes me a member of an intelligible world, in consequence of which, if I were nothing else, all my actions would always conform to the autonomy of the will; but as I at the same time intuit myself as a member of the world of sense, they ought so to conform, and this categorical "ought" implies a synthetic a priori proposition, inasmuch as besides my will as affected by sensible desires there is added further the idea of the same will but as belonging to the world of the understanding, pure and practical of itself, which contains the supreme condition according to reason of the former will; precisely as to the intuitions of sense there are added concepts of the understanding which of themselves signify nothing but regular form in general and in this way synthetic a priori propositions become possible, on which all knowledge of physical nature rests."**
 - c. "The practical use of common human reason confirms this reasoning. There is no one, not even the most consummate villain, provided only that he is otherwise accustomed to the use of reason, who, when we set before him examples of honesty of purpose, of steadfastness in the following good maxims, of sympathy and general benevolence (even combined with great sacrifices of advantages and comfort), does not wish that he might also possess these qualities. Only on account of his inclinations and impulses he cannot attain this in himself, but at the same time he wishes to be free from such inclinations which are burdensome to himself. He proves this that he transfers himself in thought with a will free from the impulses of the sensibility into an order of things wholly different from that of his desires in the field of the sensibility; since he cannot expect to obtain by that wish any gratification of his desires, not any position which would satisfy any of his actual or supposable inclinations (for this would destroy the pre-eminence of the very idea with which he wrests that wish from him): he can only expect a greater intrinsic worth of his own person. This better person, however, he imagines himself to e

when he transfers himself to the point of view of a member of the world of the understanding, to which he is involuntarily forced by the idea of freedom, i.e., of independence on determining causes of the world of sense; and from this point of view he is conscious of a good will, which by his own confession constitutes the law for the bad will that he possesses as a member of the world of sense – a law whose authority he recognizes while transgressing it. What he morally ‘ought’ is then what he necessarily ‘would,’ as a member of the world of the understanding, and is conceived by him as an ‘ought’ only inasmuch as he likewise considers himself a member of the world of sense.”

5. Limits of Practical Philosophy

- a. “... it is an indispensable problem of speculative philosophy to show that its illusion respecting the contradiction rests on this, that we think of man in a different sense and relation when we call him free and when we regard him as subject to the laws of nature as being part and parcel of nature. It must therefore show that not only can both of these very well co-exist, but that both must be thought as necessarily united in the same subject, since otherwise no reason could be given why we should burden reason with an idea which, though it may possibly without contradiction be reconciled with another that is sufficiently established, yet entangles us in a perplexity which sorely embarrasses reason in its theoretic employment.”
- b. “The claims to freedom of will made even by common reason are founded on the consciousness and the admitted supposition that reason is independent of merely subjectively determined causes which together constitute what belongs to sensation only and which consequently come under the general designation of sensibility. Man considering himself in this way as an intelligence places himself thereby in a different order of things and in a relation to determining grounds of a wholly different kind when on the one hand he thinks of himself as an intelligence endowed with a will, and consequently with causality, and when on the other he perceives himself as a phenomenon in the world of sense (as he really is also), and affirms that his causality is subject to external determination according to laws of nature. Now he soon becomes aware that both can hold good, nay, must hold good at the same time. For there is not the smallest contradiction in saying that a thing in appearance (belonging to the world of sense) is subject to certain laws, of which the very same as a thing or being in itself is independent, and that he must conceive and think of himself in this two-fold way, rests as to the first on the consciousness of himself as an object affected through the senses, and as to the second on the consciousness of himself as an intelligence, i.e., as independent on the sensible impressions in the employment of his reason (in other words as belonging to the world of understanding). Hence it comes to pass that man claims possession of a will which takes no account of anything that comes under the head of desires and inclinations and, on the contrary, conceives actions as possible to him, nay, even as necessary which can only be done by disregarding all desires and sensible inclinations.”

- c. "But reason would overstep all its bounds if it undertook to explain how pure reason can be practical, which would be exactly the same problem to explain how freedom is possible. For we can explain nothing but that which we can reduce to laws, the object of which can be given in some possible experience. But freedom is a mere idea, the objective reality of which can in no wise be shown according to laws of nature, and consequently not in any possible experience; and for this reason it can never be comprehended or understood, because we cannot support it by any sort of example or analogy. It holds good only as a necessary hypothesis of reason in a being that believes itself conscious of a will, that is, of a faculty distinct from mere desire (namely, a faculty of determining itself to action as an intelligence, in other words, by laws of reason independently on natural instincts)."
 - d. "... if they would only bethink themselves and admit, as is reasonable, that being the appearances there must also lie at their root (although hidden) the things in themselves, and that we cannot expect the laws of these to be the same as those that govern their appearances."
 - e. "... it is not doubt requisite that reason should have a power to infuse a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction in the fulfilment of duty"
 - f. "But it is quite impossible to discern, i.e., to make it intelligible a priori, how a mere thought, which itself contains nothing sensible, can itself produce a sensation of pleasure or pain; for this is a particular kind of causality of which as of every other causality we can determine nothing whatever a priori; we must only consult experience about it."
 - g. "... it follows that for us men it is quite impossible to explain how and why the universality of the maxim as a law, that is, morality, interests. This only is certain, that it is not because it interests us that it has validity for us (for that would be heteronomy and dependence of practical reason on sensibility, namely, on the feeling as its principle, in which case it could never give moral laws), but that it interests us because it is valid for us as men, inasmuch as it had its source in our will as intelligences, in other words, in our proper self, and what belongs to mere appearance is necessarily subordinated by reason to the nature of the thing in itself."
6. So, how is a categorical imperative possible amid such uncertainty?
- a. "... we can assign the only hypothesis on which it is possible, namely, the idea of freedom; and we can also discern the necessity of this hypothesis, and this is sufficient for the practical exercise of reason, that is, for the conviction of the validity of this imperative, and hence of the moral law; but how this hypothesis itself is possible can never be discerned by any human reason. On the hypothesis, however, that the will of an intelligence is free, its autonomy, as the essential formal condition of its determination, is a necessary consequence."
 - b. "But to explain how pure reason can be of itself practical without the aid of any spring of action that could be derived from any other source, i.e., how the mere principle of the universal validity of all its maxims as laws (which would certainly be the form of a pure practical reason) can of itself supply a spring, without any matter (object) of the

will in which one could antecedently take any interest; and how it can produce an interest which would be called purely moral; or in other words, how pure reason can be practical – to explain this is beyond the power of human reason, and all labour and pains of seeking an explanation of it are lost.”

- c. “Freedom” is “something that remains over when I have eliminated everything belonging to the world of sense from the actuating principles of my will.”

Concluding Remark

1. I am copying the concluding remark in its entirety here.
 - a. “The speculative employment of reason with respect to nature leads to the absolute necessity of some supreme cause of the world; the practical employment of reason with a view to freedom leads also to the absolute necessity, but only of the laws of actions of a rational being as such. Now it is an essential principle of reason, however employed, to push its knowledge to a consciousness of its necessity (without which it would not be rational knowledge). It is, however, an equally essential restriction of the same reason that it can neither discern the necessity of what is or what happens, nor of what ought to happen, unless a condition is supposed on which it is or happens or ought to happen. In this way, however, by the constant inquiry for the condition, the satisfaction of reason is only further and further postponed. Hence it unceasingly seeks the unconditionally necessary and finds itself forced to assume it, although without any means of making it comprehensible of itself, happy enough if only it can discover a conception which agrees with this assumption. It is therefore no fault in our deduction of the supreme principle of morality, but an objection that could be made to human reason in general, that it cannot enable us to conceive the absolute necessity of an unconditional practical law (such as the categorical imperative must be). It cannot be blamed for refusing to explain this necessity by a condition, that is to say, by means of some interest assumed as a basis, since the law would then cease to be a supreme law of reason. And thus while we do not comprehend the practical unconditional necessity of the moral imperative, we yet comprehend its incomprehensibility, and this is all that can be fairly demanded of a philosophy which strives to carry its principle up to the very limit of human reason.”