



Critique of Practical Reason

IMMANUEL KANT

Musean Translation

MOUSEIA



Critique of Practical Reason



IMMANUEL KANT

Musean Translation

Translated by Michael Berardi

MOUSEIA

THIS EDITION

Complete machine-assisted translation directly from Kant's German, Akademie-Ausgabe V (1913), pages 1–163, including all eighteen author notes. Original page and section references are retained.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

Written 1788 · Moral philosophy

SOURCE

Original text from gutenberg.org.

Mouseia · mouseia.org

Edition dated 26 October 2026

Contents



Title page	1
Preface	2
Introduction: The idea of a critique of practical reason	14
Doctrine of the elements of pure practical reason PART I	16
Book I, Chapter I: The principles of pure practical reason	17
Book I, Chapter II: The concept of an object of pure practical reason	56
Book I, Chapter III: The incentives of pure practical reason	71
Critical examination of the analytic of pure practical reason BOOK I	89
Book II, Chapter I: A dialectic of pure practical reason in general	107
Book II, Chapter II: The dialectic of pure reason in determining the highest good	111
Doctrine of the method of pure practical reason PART II	148
Conclusion	159

Title page



Critique [AA V 1] of Practical Reason
by
Immanuel Kant.

Preface



Preface. [A 3] [AA V 3]

Why this critique is not entitled a critique of *pure* practical reason, but simply of practical reason in general, although its parallel with speculative reason seems to require the former title, is sufficiently explained in this treatise. Its sole aim is to establish *that there is pure practical reason*, and for this purpose it subjects reason's entire *practical faculty* to criticism. If it succeeds, there is no need to criticize the *pure faculty itself* to see whether reason, in claiming such a faculty, is merely presuming to *overstep its bounds*, as speculative reason does. For if reason, as pure reason, is actually practical, it proves its own reality and that of its concepts by the deed itself, and all quibbling against the possibility of its being practical is futile.

With this faculty, transcendental *freedom* is now also [A 4] established, in precisely the absolute sense in which speculative reason needed it when using the concept of causality. Speculative reason required freedom to escape the antinomy into which it inevitably falls when it seeks to think the *unconditioned* in the series of causal connections. Yet it could put forward this concept only problematically, as something not impossible to think, without securing its objective reality. Its sole purpose was to prevent the alleged impossibility of what it must at least admit as thinkable from undermining its own essential character and casting it into an abyss of skepticism.

The concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, now forms the *keystone* of the entire structure of a system of pure reason, even speculative [AA V 4] reason. All the other concepts—those of God and immortality—which remain unsupported in speculative reason as mere ideas, now attach themselves to it, and with it and through it acquire stability and objective reality. That is, their *possibility* is thereby [A 5] *proved* by the actuality of freedom; for this idea reveals itself through the moral law.

Freedom is also the only one of all the ideas of speculative reason whose possibility we *know a priori*, without, however, having insight into it, because it is the condition¹ of the moral law, which we know. The ideas of *God* and *immortality*, by contrast, are not conditions of the moral law, but only conditions of the necessary object of a will determined by that law—that is, of the [A 6] merely practical use of our pure reason. We therefore cannot claim, regarding those ideas, to *know* or *have insight into*, I will not say merely their actuality, but even their possibility. Nevertheless, they are the conditions for applying the morally determined will to its object, given to it *a priori*: the highest good. Their possibility can and must therefore be *assumed* in this practical relation, without our knowing it or having insight into it theoretically. For this latter requirement, it is sufficient for practical purposes that they contain no internal impossibility, no contradiction. Here, then, is a ground for holding something true that, compared with speculative reason, is merely *subjective*, yet is *objectively* valid for a reason that is just as pure, though practical. Through the concept of freedom, this ground gives the ideas of God and immortality objective reality and warrants our assuming them—indeed, makes that assumption subjectively necessary, as a need of pure reason. Reason's theoretical cognition is not thereby [AA V 5] extended. Rather, their possibility, previously only a *problem*, is here established as an *assertion*, and the practical [A 7] use of reason is thus connected with the elements of its theoretical use. This need is not a hypothetical one serving some *optional* speculative purpose, as though we had to assume something if we *wished* to rise to a complete speculative use of rea-

son. It is a need imposed by *law*: we must assume something without which that which we *ought* unfailingly to make the purpose of our conduct, in action and restraint alike, cannot come about.

It would certainly be more satisfying to our speculative reason to solve those problems on its own, without this detour, and to preserve their solution as an insight available for practical use. But our faculty of speculation is simply not so well equipped. Those who boast of such lofty cognitions should not withhold them, but present them publicly for examination and appreciation. They wish to *prove* them: very well, let them prove them, and the critique will lay its entire armor at their feet as victors. *Why do you stand still? They are unwilling. And yet they may be happy.*—Since in fact they are unwilling, presumably because they are unable, we must once again take up the critique [A 8] to seek the concepts of *God*, *freedom*, and *immortality* in the moral use of reason, and ground them upon it, since speculation cannot provide a sufficient guarantee of their *possibility*.

Only here does the puzzle of the critique become clear: how we can *deny objective reality* to the supersensible *use of the categories* in speculation, yet *grant them this reality* in relation to the objects of pure practical reason. For before this it must necessarily appear *inconsistent*, so long as such a practical use is known only by name. But a complete analysis of that use now shows that the reality in question involves no theoretical *determination of the categories* and no extension of cognition to the supersensible. It means only that in this relation *an object* belongs to them in every case, because they are either contained in the necessary determination of the will *a priori* or inseparably connected with its object. That inconsistency then disappears, because [A 9] we are using those concepts differently from the way speculative reason [AA V 6] requires. Instead, a highly satisfying confirmation, scarcely to be expected beforehand, now emerges of the *consistency of thought* in the speculative critique. That critique insisted that the objects of experience as such, including our own subject, must count only as *appearances*, yet that things in themselves must underlie them; it therefore insisted that not everything supersensible be treated as an invention, nor its concept as empty of content. Now practical reason, indepen-

dently and without having reached any agreement with speculative reason, gives reality to a supersensible object of the category of causality, namely *freedom*—although, as a practical concept, only for practical use. It thus confirms by a fact what could only be *thought* there. At the same time, the strange, though indisputable, claim of the speculative critique that even *the thinking subject is, to itself, in inner intuition, merely an appearance*, receives its full confirmation in the critique of practical reason. This confirmation is so complete that we would have to arrive at that claim [A 10] even if the former critique had never proved it.²

This also enables me to understand why the most substantial objections to the critique that I have so far encountered turn precisely on these two hinges: *on the one hand*, the objective reality of the categories applied to noumena, denied in theoretical cognition and affirmed in practical cognition; *on the other*, the paradoxical demand that we make ourselves, as subjects of freedom, noumena, yet at the same time, with regard to nature, phenomena in our own empirical consciousness. For as long as no definite concepts of morality and freedom had been formed, one could not guess [A 11] what was meant to underlie the supposed appearance as a noumenon, or, on the other side, whether it was possible to form any concept of it at all, if all the concepts of the pure understanding in theoretical use had already been assigned exclusively to mere appearances. Only a detailed critique of practical [AA V 7] reason can remove all this misinterpretation and bring into clear light the consistency of thought that constitutes its greatest merit.

So much to justify why the concepts and principles of pure speculative reason, although already subjected to their own special critique, are here and there examined again in this work. Such reexamination would otherwise hardly be appropriate to the systematic progress of a science being established, since matters already decided should properly be cited, not reopened. Yet *here* it was permissible, indeed necessary, because reason is considered with those concepts in transition to a wholly different use from the one it made of them *there*. Such a transition requires a comparison [A 12] of the earlier use with the new one, both to distinguish the new track clearly from the old and to make their con-

nection evident. Reflections of this kind, including those directed once more to the concept of freedom, but now in the practical use of pure reason, should therefore not be regarded as interpolations serving merely to fill gaps in the critical system of speculative reason—for that system is complete for its purpose—or as props and buttresses added afterward, as happens with a hastily erected building. They are genuine members that make the coherence of the system visible, allowing concepts that could there be presented only problematically to be understood now in their actual exhibition. This reminder concerns above all the concept of freedom. It is surprising to observe how many still boast that they understand it perfectly and can explain its possibility, considering it merely in its psychological relation. If they had first examined it carefully in its transcendental relation, they would have recognized both [A 13] its *indispensability*, as a problematic concept, to the complete use of speculative reason, and its utter *incomprehensibility*. On subsequently passing with it to practical use, they would then have arrived of their own accord at precisely the same determination of that use with respect to its principles that they are otherwise so reluctant to accept. The concept of freedom is the stumbling block for all *empiricists*, but also the key to the highest practical principles for *critical* moralists, who thereby [AA V 8] understand that they must necessarily proceed *rational-ly*. I therefore ask the reader not to pass over with a cursory glance what is said about this concept at the close of the Analytic.

Whether a system of pure practical reason such as the one developed here from the critique of the latter has required much or little labor, particularly to avoid missing the correct standpoint from which its whole can be accurately laid out, I must leave to those familiar with such work to judge. It does presuppose [A 14] the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, but only insofar as that work provides a preliminary acquaintance with the principle of duty and states and justifies a definite formula of it.³ Otherwise, it stands on its own. There is also a sound reason, in the character of this practical rational faculty, why a *division* of all the practical sciences has not been added for the sake of *completeness*, as it was in the critique of speculative reason. For duties can be specifically determined as human duties, and thus classified, only if the subject of this determi-

nation [A 15]—the human being—has first been known in its actual constitution, though only to the extent required in relation to duty in general. That knowledge, however, does not belong to a critique of practical reason in general, whose task is only to state completely the principles of its possibility, scope, and limits, without any special reference to human nature. The division therefore belongs here to the system of the science, not to the system of the critique. In the second chapter of the *Analytic* I hope to have answered a certain truth-loving and acute, and so nonetheless always worthy of respect, reviewer of that *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, concerning his objection *that the concept of [AA V 9] the good was not established there before the moral principle*, as in his opinion it should have been.⁴ I have likewise [A 16] taken account of several other objections that have reached me from men [A 17] who show that discovering the truth is close to their hearts. For those who keep only their old system [A 18] in view, and have already decided what is to be approved or disapproved, do not desire a discussion that might stand in the way of their [AA V 10] private purpose. I will continue to proceed in this way.

When the task is to determine a particular faculty of the human soul in its sources, content, and limits, the nature of human cognition requires us to begin with its *parts*, giving an exact and, so far as the present state of the elements we have already acquired permits, complete account of them. But a second concern is more philosophical and *architectonic*: to grasp correctly the *idea of the whole* and, from it, to consider all those parts in their reciprocal relations by deriving them from the concept of that whole within a pure rational faculty. This examination and assurance are possible only [A 19] through the closest familiarity with the system. Those who have found the first inquiry wearisome, and thus have not thought it worth the trouble to acquire this familiarity, do not reach the second stage: the comprehensive view that synthetically returns to what was previously given analytically. It is no wonder that they find inconsistencies everywhere, although the gaps that seem to suggest these are not in the system itself, but merely in their own disconnected train of thought.

With regard to this treatise, I have no fear of being accused of seeking to introduce a *new* language, since the kind of cognition involved here naturally approaches general accessibility. Nor could that accusation have occurred to anyone concerning the first critique who had not merely leafed through it but thought it through. To contrive new words where language already has no shortage of expressions for given concepts [A 20] is a childish attempt to distinguish oneself from the crowd, if not by new and true thoughts, then by a new patch on an old garment. If, therefore, readers of that work know more accessible expressions that are nevertheless as adequate to the thought as those I have used seem to me, or if they believe they can demonstrate the emptiness of those thoughts themselves, and consequently of every expression designating them, they would oblige me greatly in the first case, for I wish only to be understood; in the second, they would render a service to philosophy. But as long as those thoughts still stand, [AA V 11] I very much doubt that expressions both adequate to them and more familiar will be found.⁵

[AA V 12] In this way, the *a priori* principles of two [A 21] faculties of the mind, cognition and desire, would now have been discovered [A 22] and determined in respect of the conditions, scope, and limits of their [A 23] use. A secure foundation would thereby have been laid for a systematic philosophy, theoretical as well as practical, as a science.

What worse could befall these efforts than someone's unexpected discovery that there is no *a priori* cognition at all, nor can there be? Yet there is no danger of this. It would amount to someone's wishing to prove by reason that there is no reason. For we say that we know something through reason only when we are conscious that we could have known it even if it had not occurred to us in experience in that way. Rational cognition and *a priori* cognition [A 24] are therefore one and the same. To try to squeeze necessity out of an experiential proposition—*water from pumice*—and thereby give a judgment true universality as well, is a direct contradiction. Without such universality there is no rational inference, not even inference by analogy, which amounts to at least a presumed universality and objective necessity, and therefore always presupposes them. To substitute subjective necessity, that is, habit, for the objective necessity found

only in *a priori* judgments is to deny reason the capacity to judge an object—that is, to know it and what belongs to it. For example, concerning something that has frequently and invariably followed a certain preceding state, we could not say that we can *infer* the following event from the preceding state, since that would signify objective necessity and the concept of an *a priori* connection. We could only expect similar cases, much as animals do. This is at bottom to reject the concept of a cause as false and as a mere deception of thought. An attempt to remedy this lack of objective [A 25] and consequently universal validity by saying that we see no reason to ascribe a different way of representing things to other rational beings would, if it were a valid inference, mean that our ignorance did more to extend our cognition than all our reflection. Merely because we know no rational beings other than human beings, we would have the right to assume that they are constituted as we know ourselves to be; that is, we would actually know them. I do not even mention here that universality in holding something true does not prove a judgment's objective [AA V 13] validity, its validity as cognition. Even if such universality happened to occur, it still could not prove agreement with the object. Rather, objective validity alone provides the ground for a necessary universal agreement.

Hume, too, would find this system of *universal empiricism* [A 26] in principles very congenial. As is well known, he required nothing more than the substitution of a merely subjective significance—habit—for all objective significance of necessity in the concept of a cause, in order to deny reason any judgment concerning God, freedom, and immortality. He certainly understood very well how to draw conclusions with complete logical rigor once his principles were granted. Yet even Hume did not make empiricism so universal as to include mathematics. He held its propositions to be analytic. If that were correct, they would indeed be apodictic, but no inference could be drawn from them to reason's capacity to make apodictic judgments in philosophy as well—namely, synthetic ones, such as the principle of causality. But if empiricism in principles were accepted *universally*, mathematics too would be caught up in it.

If mathematics now conflicts with a reason that admits only empirical principles [A 27]—as inevitably happens in the antinomy, where mathematics irrefutably proves the infinite divisibility of space, but empiricism cannot allow it—then the greatest possible evidence of demonstration stands in open contradiction to the supposed inferences from principles of experience. We must then ask, like Cheselden’s blind man, what deceives me, sight or touch? For empiricism rests on a *felt* necessity, rationalism on one *grasped through insight*. Universal empiricism thus reveals itself as the genuine *skepticism* that was falsely attributed to Hume in so unrestricted a sense,⁶ since Hume at least left mathematics as a reliable touchstone for experience, [A 28] [AA V 14] whereas universal empiricism permits absolutely no such touchstone, which can always be found only in *a priori* principles, even though experience consists not merely of feelings but also of judgments.

Yet since, in this philosophical and critical age, that empiricism can hardly be seriously intended, and is presumably advanced only to exercise the power of judgment and, through contrast, bring the necessity of rational *a priori* principles into clearer light, we may still be grateful to those willing to undertake this otherwise not especially instructive labor.

- ¹ To prevent anyone from supposing that there is an *inconsistency* here, when I now call freedom the condition of the moral law and later in the treatise maintain that the moral law is the condition under which we can first *become conscious* of freedom, I wish only to point out that freedom is indeed the *ratio essendi* of the moral law, while the moral law is the *ratio cognoscendi* of freedom. For if the moral law were not *first* distinctly thought in our reason, we would never consider ourselves entitled to *assume* anything such as freedom, even though it contains no contradiction. But if there were no freedom, the moral law would *not be found* in us at all.
- ² Causality as freedom and causality as natural mechanism—the former established by the moral law, the latter by the law of nature, in one and the same subject, the human being—cannot be united unless that subject is represented, in

relation to the former, as a being in itself, and in relation to the latter, as an appearance: in the first case in *pure*, in the second in *empirical* consciousness. Without this, reason's contradiction with itself is unavoidable.

- ³ A reviewer who wished to find something to criticize in that work struck nearer the truth than he himself may have intended when he said that it established no new principle of morality, but only a *new formula*. Who would wish to introduce a new principle of all morality and, as it were, invent it for the first time? As though before him the world had been ignorant or entirely mistaken about what duty is. But anyone who knows what a *formula* means to a mathematician—a precise determination of what must be done to carry out a given task, which leaves no room for error—will not regard a formula that does this for all duty in general as something insignificant and dispensable.
- ⁴ Someone might further object that I have not first explained the concept of the *faculty of desire* or of the *feeling of pleasure*. This objection would be unfair, since one should reasonably be able to presuppose such an explanation as already given in psychology. Yet the definition there might indeed be framed so as to make the feeling of pleasure the basis for determining the faculty of desire, as in fact commonly happens. This would necessarily make the supreme principle of practical philosophy *empirical*, which is precisely what must first be decided and is thoroughly refuted in this critique. I will therefore give the explanation here in the form required to leave this disputed point properly undecided at the outset.—*Life* is a being's capacity to act according to laws of the faculty of desire. The *faculty of desire* is its *capacity to be, through its representations, the cause of the actuality of the objects of those representations*. *Pleasure* is the *representation of the agreement of an object or an action with the subjective conditions of life*, that is, with the capacity for *the causality of a representation with respect to the actuality of its object*, or for determining the subject's powers to the action that produces it. For the purposes of the critique, I need nothing further among the concepts borrowed from psychology; the critique itself supplies the rest. It is easy to see that this explanation leaves undecided whether pleasure must always underlie the faculty of desire, or whether, under certain

conditions, it merely follows that faculty's determination. For the explanation consists entirely of marks of the pure understanding, that is, categories, which contain nothing empirical. Such caution is highly advisable throughout philosophy, yet is often neglected: we should not anticipate our judgments with a venturesome definition before the concept has been fully analyzed, an achievement often reached only very late. Throughout the critique, of both theoretical and practical reason, one will also notice many opportunities to remedy defects in philosophy's old dogmatic procedure and correct errors that become apparent only when concepts are put to a use of reason *directed toward reason as a whole*.

- 5 More than that unintelligibility, I fear here and there a misinterpretation of certain expressions that I chose with the greatest care to prevent their intended concept from being missed. Thus, under the heading of modality in the table of categories of *practical* reason, the *permitted* and the *forbidden*—what is practically and objectively possible and impossible—mean almost the same thing in ordinary usage as the immediately following category of *duty* and *what is contrary to duty*. Here, however, the *former* is to signify what agrees or conflicts with a merely *possible* practical prescription, as with the solution of all problems in geometry and mechanics; the *latter*, what stands in that relation to a law *actually* present in reason in general. This distinction in meaning is not wholly foreign to ordinary usage, though somewhat unusual. For example, a speaker as such is *forbidden* to coin new words or combinations of words, while a poet is to some extent *permitted* to do so. Duty is not in question in either case. For no one can prevent someone who wishes to ruin his reputation as a speaker from doing so. What is at issue here is only the distinction between *imperatives* according to a *problematic*, *assertoric*, or *apodictic* determining ground. Likewise, in the note where I contrasted the moral ideas of practical perfection in different philosophical schools, I distinguished the idea of *wisdom* from that of *holiness*, although I myself declared them fundamentally and objectively one and the same. But in that passage I understand only the wisdom a human being, the Stoic, claims for himself: something therefore *subjectively*

ascribed to the human being as a quality. Perhaps *virtue*, an expression of which the Stoic also made a great display, would better designate his school's distinctive character. The expression *postulate* of pure practical reason, however, might give rise to misinterpretation most of all if its meaning were confused with that of the postulates of pure mathematics, which carry apodictic certainty. These postulate the *possibility of an action* whose object has already been theoretically known *a priori*, with complete certainty, as *possible*. The former, by contrast, postulates the possibility of an *object* itself—God and the immortality of the soul—on the basis of apodictic *practical* laws, and thus solely for the purposes of a practical reason. The certainty of this postulated possibility is therefore not theoretical at all, and consequently not apodictic: it is not a necessity known with regard to the object, but an assumption necessary for the subject's observance of reason's objective, though practical, laws, and thus a merely necessary hypothesis. I could find no better expression for this subjective, yet true and unconditional, necessity of reason.

- ⁶ Names denoting allegiance to a school have always involved much distortion of what is rightfully someone's position, much as when someone says, *N.* is an *idealist*. For although he not only concedes but insists that actual objects of external things correspond to our representations of external things, he nevertheless maintains that the form of our intuition of them belongs not to those things but only to the human mind.

Introduction: The idea of a critique of practical reason



Introduction. [AA V 15] [A 29] The idea of a critique of practical reason.

The theoretical use of reason concerned itself with objects of the mere faculty of cognition. A critique of reason with respect to this use properly concerned only the *pure* faculty of cognition, since this aroused the suspicion, later confirmed, that it could easily lose itself beyond its limits among unattainable objects or even mutually conflicting concepts. The practical use of reason is different. Here reason concerns itself with the determining grounds of the will, which is a faculty either of producing objects corresponding to representations or at least of determining itself to bring them about—whether its physical capacity is sufficient or not—that is, of determining its own causality. [A 30] For here reason can at least attain a determination of the will, and to that extent always has objective reality, insofar as willing alone is at issue. The first question here is therefore whether pure reason alone suffices to determine the will, or whether reason can be a determining ground of the will only as empirically conditioned. Now a concept of causality enters here that has been justified by the critique of pure reason, although it cannot be exhibited empirically: the concept of *freedom*. If we can now find grounds to prove that this property actually belongs to the human will, and thus also to the will of every rational being, this will establish not only that pure reason can be practical, but that it

alone, and not empirically restricted reason, is practical unconditionally. We shall consequently have to undertake not a critique of *pure practical* reason, but only of *practical* reason in general. [AA V 16] For pure reason, once it has been established that there is such a reason, needs no critique. It is itself what contains the standard for criticizing every use of it. A critique of [A 31] practical reason in general therefore has the task of keeping empirically conditioned reason from the presumption of wanting to furnish, exclusively and alone, the determining ground of the will. The use of pure reason, once its existence is established, is alone immanent. Empirically conditioned use, by contrast, when it claims sole authority, is transcendent: it expresses itself in demands and commands that go entirely beyond its domain. This is precisely the reverse of what could be said of pure reason in its speculative use.

Nevertheless, since it is still pure reason whose cognition underlies practical use here, the division of a critique of practical reason must in its general outline be arranged to correspond to that of speculative reason. We shall therefore need a *doctrine of elements* and a *doctrine of method*, and within the former, as the first part, an *Analytic* as the rule of truth and a *Dialectic* as the presentation and resolution of illusion in the judgments of practical reason. But the order in the subdivision of the Analytic will again be the reverse of that in the [A 32] critique of pure speculative reason. For in the present critique we shall begin with *principles*, proceed to *concepts*, and only from these, if possible, pass to the senses; with speculative reason, by contrast, we began with the senses and had to end with principles. The reason for this is again that we are now dealing with a will and must consider reason not in relation to objects, but to this will and its causality. The principles of empirically unconditioned causality must therefore come first. Only afterward can we attempt to establish our concepts of the determining ground of such a will, their application to objects, and finally to the subject and its sensibility. The law of causality through freedom—that is, some pure practical principle—must inevitably form the beginning here and determine the objects to which alone it can be referred.

PART I

Doctrine of the elements of pure practical reason



Of the

[A 33] [AA V 17] Critique of Practical Reason

Part I. Doctrine of the Elements of Pure Practical Reason.

Book I, Chapter I: The principles of pure practical reason



Book I. [AA V 19] [A 35] The Analytic of Pure Practical Reason.

Chapter I. On the Principles of Pure Practical Reason.

[§ 1] Definition.

Practical *principles* are propositions that contain a general determination of the will under which several practical rules fall. They are subjective, or *maxims*, when the subject regards the condition as valid only for the subject's own will; they are objective, or practical *laws*, when the condition is cognized as objective, that is, as valid for the will of every rational being.

Remark.

If we assume that *pure* reason can contain within itself a ground sufficient for practice, that is, for determining the will, then there are practical [A 36] laws; otherwise, all practical principles will be mere maxims. In the will of a rational being affected by feeling, maxims may conflict with practical laws that the being itself recognizes. Someone may, for example, make it a maxim never to suffer an insult without taking revenge, and yet see that this is no practical law but only his own maxim, whereas as a rule for the will of every rational being it could not agree with itself within one and the same maxim. In cognition of nature,

the principles of what happens—for example, the principle of the equality of action and reaction in the communication of motion—are also laws of nature; for the use [AA V 20] of reason there is theoretical and determined by the character of the object. In practical cognition, that is, cognition concerned solely with determining grounds of the will, principles we adopt are not on that account laws to which we are inevitably subject, because in practical matters reason is concerned with the subject, namely the faculty of desire, whose particular character allows the rule to vary in many ways.—The practical rule is always a product of reason, because it prescribes an action as a means to an effect intended as an end. But for a being in whom reason is not the sole determining ground of the will, this rule is an *imperative*: a rule expressed through an ought, which conveys the objective necessitation of the action and signifies that, if reason determined the will completely, the action would unfailingly take place according to this rule. Imperatives therefore hold objectively and differ entirely from maxims, [A 37] which are subjective principles. Imperatives, however, determine either the conditions of the causality of a rational being as an efficient cause, solely with regard to the effect and its adequacy to produce that effect, or else the will alone, whether or not it is adequate to the effect. The former would be hypothetical imperatives, containing mere precepts of skill; the latter, by contrast, would be categorical and alone would be practical laws. Maxims, then, are indeed *principles*, but not *imperatives*. Imperatives themselves, however, when they are conditional—that is, when they determine the will not simply as will, but only with regard to a desired effect, and are thus hypothetical imperatives—are practical *precepts*, but not *laws*. Laws must sufficiently determine the will as will even before I ask whether I possess the capacity required for a desired effect, or what I must do to bring it about. They must therefore be categorical; otherwise they are not laws, because they lack the necessity that, if it is to be practical, must be independent of conditions arising from feeling and thus attaching to the will only contingently. Tell someone, for example, that in youth he must work and save so as not to suffer want in old age: this is a correct and also important practical precept for the will. But it is easy to see that the will is here referred to something *else* that it is assumed to

desire. This desire must be left to the agent himself: he may foresee other resources besides the wealth he has acquired, may have no hope of growing old at all, or may think that in case of need he will one day be able to make do with little. Reason, from which alone every rule [A 38] that is to contain necessity can spring, does indeed invest this precept of its own with necessity—for otherwise it would not be an imperative. But that necessity is only subjectively conditioned, and we cannot presuppose it to the same degree in every subject. For reason to legislate, however, it must need to presuppose only *itself*, [AA V 21] since a rule is objectively and universally valid only when it holds without contingent, subjective conditions that distinguish one rational being from another. Now tell someone that he ought never to make a lying promise: this is a rule that concerns his will alone, whether or not the purposes he may have can be achieved through it. Mere willing is what this rule is to determine entirely *a priori*. If it now turns out that this rule is practically correct, then it is a law, because it is a categorical imperative. Practical laws therefore refer solely to the will, regardless of what its causality accomplishes; we can abstract from this causality, as belonging to the world of sense, in order to have the laws in their purity.

[§ 2] Theorem I.

All practical principles that presuppose an *object* (matter) of the faculty of desire as the determining ground of the will are without exception empirical and cannot yield practical laws.

By the matter of the faculty of desire I mean an object whose actuality is desired. Now if the desire for this object precedes the practical rule and is the condition [A 39] for adopting it as a principle, I say (*first*) that this principle is then always empirical. For the determining ground of choice is then the representation of an object and that relation of the representation to the subject by which the faculty of desire is determined to make the object actual. But such a relation to the subject is called *pleasure* in the actuality of an object. This pleasure would therefore have to be presupposed as a condition of the possibility of determining choice. Yet of no representation of any object whatsoever can it be cognized *a priori* whether it will be connected with *pleasure* or *displeasure*, or

will be *indifferent*. In such a case, therefore, the determining ground of choice must always be empirical, and so too must the material practical principle that presupposed it as a condition.

Now (*second*), a principle founded only on the subjective condition of receptivity to pleasure or displeasure—which can always be cognized only empirically and cannot hold in the same way for all rational beings—may indeed serve the subject who possesses it as a *maxim*, but cannot serve even that subject as a *law*, because it lacks objective [AA V 22] necessity, which must be cognized *a priori*. Such a principle can therefore never yield a practical [A 40] law.

[§ 3] Theorem II.

All material practical principles, as such, are without exception of one and the same kind and fall under the general principle of self-love or one's own happiness.

Pleasure arising from the representation of the existence of a thing, insofar as it is to be a determining ground for desiring that thing, rests on the subject's *receptivity*, because it *depends* on the existence of an object. It therefore belongs to sense (feeling), not to the understanding, which expresses a relation of the representation *to an object* according to concepts, but not to the subject according to feelings. Pleasure is thus practical only insofar as the sensation of the agreeableness that the subject expects from the actuality of the object determines the faculty of desire. Now a rational being's consciousness of the agreeableness of life uninterruptedly accompanying its entire existence is *happiness*; and the principle of making this the supreme determining ground of choice is the principle of self-love. All material principles that place the determining ground of choice in the pleasure or displeasure to be felt from the actuality [A 41] of some object are therefore entirely *of the same kind* in this respect: they all belong to the principle of self-love or one's own happiness.

Corollary.

All *material* practical rules place the determining ground of the will in the *lower faculty of desire*. If there were no *merely formal* laws of the will that sufficiently determined it, then *no higher faculty of desire* could be admitted either.

Remark I.

It is astonishing that otherwise acute thinkers can believe they find a distinction between the *lower* and *higher faculty of desire* in [AA V 23] whether the *representations* connected with the feeling of pleasure originate in *the senses* or in *the understanding*. For when we ask about the determining grounds of desire and locate them in the agreeableness expected from something, it does not matter at all where the *representation* of this pleasing object comes from, but only how much it *pleases*. If a representation—even one whose seat and origin lie in the understanding—can determine choice only by presupposing a feeling of pleasure in the subject, then its being a determining ground of choice depends entirely on the character of inner sense: namely, on its capacity to be agreeably affected by that representation. However different in kind the representations of objects may be, even if they are representations of the understanding [A 42] or of reason itself, as opposed to representations of the senses, the feeling of pleasure through which alone they actually constitute the determining ground of the will—the agreeableness, the enjoyment expected from them, which impels activity toward producing the object—is nonetheless of one and the same kind. This is so not only because it can always be cognized only empirically, but also because it affects one and the same vital force manifesting itself in the faculty of desire and, in this respect, can differ from any other determining ground only in degree. How else could we compare two determining grounds wholly different in their manner of representation in respect of *magnitude*, so as to prefer whichever affects the faculty of desire most? The very same person can return unread an instructive book that comes into his hands only once, so as not to miss a hunt; leave midway through a fine speech, so as not to be late for a meal; abandon the entertainment of rational conversation, which he otherwise greatly values, to sit at the gaming table; and even turn away a poor man whom he otherwise takes pleasure in helping, because he now has no more money in his pocket than he needs to pay for admission to the theater. If the determination of his will rests on the feeling of agreeableness or disagreeableness that he expects from any cause, it is entirely indifferent to him what kind of representation affects him. To decide his choice, he cares only how intense this agreeableness is, how long it lasts, how easily it is acquired, and how often

it is repeated. Someone who needs gold to spend is entirely indifferent whether its material, [A 43] the gold, was mined from the mountains or washed from sand, provided it is accepted everywhere at the same value. In just the same way, no one concerned solely with the agreeableness of life asks whether representations of the understanding or of the senses provide it, but only *how much enjoyment, and how great an enjoyment*, they will provide for the longest time. Only those who would gladly deny pure reason the capacity to determine the will without presupposing any feeling [AA V 24] can stray so far from their own definition as afterward to declare wholly different in kind what they themselves previously brought under one and the same principle. We find, for example, that we can take enjoyment even in the mere *exercise of our powers*, in consciousness of our strength of soul in overcoming obstacles to our resolve, in cultivating our mental talents, and so on. We rightly call these *finer* joys and delights, because they are more within our control than others, do not wear out, but instead strengthen our capacity to feel still greater enjoyment of them, and cultivate us even as they delight us. But to present them on that account as a way of determining the will other than through sense alone—when, as the first condition of this satisfaction, they already presuppose a feeling implanted in us that makes these enjoyments possible—is just like the ignorant would-be dabblers in metaphysics who imagine matter so fine, so exceedingly fine that the thought might make them dizzy, and then believe they have conceived in this way a *spiritual* yet extended being. If, with *Epicurus*, we make virtue determine the [A 44] will solely through the enjoyment it promises, we cannot afterward reproach him for regarding this enjoyment as entirely of the same kind as the pleasures of the coarsest senses. For we have no grounds for charging him with having attributed the representations that arouse this feeling in us solely to the bodily senses. As far as one can guess, he sought the source of many of them just as much in the use of the higher cognitive faculty. But that did not prevent him, and could not prevent him, from regarding, in accordance with the principle just mentioned, the enjoyment itself that these possibly intellectual representations afford us—and through which alone they can become determining grounds of the will—as entirely of the same kind. To be *consistent* is the greatest

obligation of a philosopher, yet the one most rarely fulfilled. The ancient Greek schools give us more examples of it than we find in our *syncretistic* age, when a certain *coalition system* of contradictory principles is contrived with great dishonesty and shallowness, because it appeals more readily to a public content to know a little of everything and nothing as a whole, while remaining adept in its old ways. However much understanding and reason the principle of one's own happiness may employ, it would still contain no determining grounds for the will other than those suited to the *lower* faculty of desire. Either, then, there is no higher faculty of desire at all, or *pure reason* must be practical by itself alone: it must be able to determine [A 45] the will through the mere form of the practical rule, without presupposing any feeling, and thus without representations of the agreeable or disagreeable as the matter of the faculty of desire, which is always an empirical condition of principles. Only then, insofar as reason by itself determines the will [AA V 25] and is not in the service of inclinations, is it a true *higher* faculty of desire, to which the faculty determinable through feeling is subordinate. It is really, indeed *specifically*, distinct from that faculty, so that even the slightest admixture of the latter's impulses diminishes its strength and superiority, just as the least empirical element introduced as a condition into a mathematical demonstration lowers and destroys its dignity and force. In a practical law, reason determines the will immediately, not through an intervening feeling of pleasure or displeasure, not even pleasure in this law itself; and only its capacity to be practical as pure reason makes it possible for reason to be *legislative*.

Remark II.

To be happy is necessarily the desire of every rational but finite being, and thus an unavoidable determining ground of its faculty of desire. For satisfaction with its entire existence is not an original possession, a blessedness that would presuppose consciousness of its independent self-sufficiency. Rather, it is a problem imposed on it by its finite nature itself, because it has needs. These needs concern the matter of its faculty of desire, that is, something related to a subjectively underlying feeling of pleasure or displeasure, by which what it needs for satisfaction with its condition is determined. But precisely because

this material determining ground can be cognized by the subject only empirically, it is impossible to regard this task as a law, since a law, as objective, would have to contain in every case and for every rational being *the very same* [A 46] *determining ground* of the will. For although the concept of happiness *everywhere* underlies the practical relation of *objects* to the faculty of desire, it is only the general title for subjective determining grounds and determines nothing specifically. Yet this practical task is concerned solely with such specific determination and cannot be solved without it. What each person is to place his happiness in depends on his particular feeling of pleasure and displeasure, and even in one and the same subject it depends on differences of need as this feeling changes. A *subjectively necessary* law, as a law of nature, is therefore *objectively* a highly *contingent* practical principle, which can and must differ greatly in different subjects and hence can never yield a law. For in the desire for happiness, what matters is not the form of conformity to law, but solely the matter: whether and how much enjoyment I can expect from following the law. Principles of self-love can indeed contain general rules of skill for finding means to ends, [AA V 26] but in that case they are merely theoretical principles⁷—for example, how someone who would like to eat bread should devise a mill. [A 47] But practical precepts founded on them can never be universal, since the determining ground of the faculty of desire rests on the feeling of pleasure and displeasure, which can never be assumed to be universally directed toward the same objects.

But suppose that finite rational beings all thought alike both about what they should accept as objects of their feelings of enjoyment or pain, and even about the means they must use to attain the former and avert the latter. They could still by no means present the *principle of self-love* as a *practical law*, for this unanimity would itself be merely contingent. The determining ground would still be only subjectively valid and merely empirical, and would lack the necessity thought in every law: objective necessity from grounds *a priori*. Unless, that is, one were to present this necessity not as practical at all, but as merely physical, meaning that our inclination compelled the action from us just as inevitably as we are compelled to yawn when we see others yawning. One could sooner

maintain that there are no practical laws at all, but only *recommendations* for the benefit of our desires, than elevate merely subjective principles to the rank of practical laws. Such laws must possess objective, not merely subjective, necessity throughout, and must be cognized through reason *a priori*, not through experience, however empirically universal experience may be. Even the rules of concordant appearances are called laws of nature—for example, mechanical laws—only if we either actually cognize them *a priori* or at least assume, as with [A 48] chemical laws, that they would be cognized *a priori* from objective grounds if our insight went deeper. But with merely subjective practical principles, it is expressly made a condition that they must be grounded not in objective but in subjective conditions of choice; hence they may always be represented only as mere maxims, never as practical laws. This last remark seems at first glance mere quibbling over words; yet it gives verbal definition to the most important distinction, one that can come into consideration only in practical investigations.

[§ 4] [AA V 27] Theorem III.

If a rational being is to think of its maxims as universal practical laws, it can think of them only as principles that contain the determining ground of the will not in their matter but solely in their form.

The matter of a practical principle is the object of the will. This object either is or is not the determining ground of the will. If it is, then the rule of the will would be subject to an empirical condition—the relation of the determining representation to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure—and consequently would not be a practical law. Now if we separate all matter from a law, that is, every object of the will as a determining ground, nothing remains but the mere *form* of a universal legislation. [A 49] A rational being, therefore, either cannot think of *its* subjectively practical principles, that is, maxims, as universal laws at the same time, or must assume that their mere form, by which they *are suited to universal legislation*, makes them practical laws by itself alone.

Remark.

The most ordinary understanding can distinguish without instruction which form in a maxim is suited to universal legislation and which is not. Suppose, for example, I have made it my maxim to increase my wealth by every safe means. Now I hold a *deposit* whose owner has died without leaving any written acknowledgment of it. This is naturally a case for my maxim. I now want to know only whether that maxim can also hold as a universal practical law. I therefore apply it to the present case and ask whether it could indeed assume the form of a law, and hence whether through my maxim I could at the same time give a law such as this: everyone may deny having received a deposit whose entrustment to him no one can prove. I immediately see that such a principle, as a law, would destroy itself, since it would bring it about that there were no deposits at all. A practical law that I recognize as such must qualify for universal legislation; this is an identical proposition and thus clear in itself. If I now say that my will is subject to a practical *law*, I cannot cite my inclination—for example, in the present case, my greed—as a determining ground of it suited to a universal practical law. [AA V 28] For this inclination, far from [A 50] being fit for universal legislation, must instead consume itself in the form of a universal law.

It is therefore strange that sensible thinkers could have conceived of presenting the desire for happiness as a universal *practical law* simply because this desire, and thus also the maxim by which each person makes happiness the determining ground of his will, is universal. For whereas a universal law of nature otherwise brings everything into accord, here, if we wished to give the maxim the universality of a law, precisely the extreme opposite of accord would follow: the worst conflict and the complete destruction of the maxim itself and its purpose. For everyone's will does not then have one and the same object; instead, each has his own—his own well-being—which may indeed happen to agree with the purposes of others, likewise directed toward themselves, but falls far short of sufficing for a law, because the exceptions one is entitled to make on occasion are endless and cannot be comprehended determinately in a universal rule. This produces a harmony like the one depicted in a certain satirical poem about the spiritual accord of a married couple ruining each other: *O marvelous*

harmony: what he wants, so does she, etc.; or like the declaration attributed to King *Francis I* in regard to Emperor *Charles V*: what my brother Charles wants to have—Milan—I want to have too. Empirical determining grounds are unfit for any universal external legislation, but equally unfit for internal legislation. For each person takes his own subject as the basis of inclination, while another takes a different subject, [A 51] and even within each subject, now one inclination and now another has the predominant influence. To discover a law that would govern them all under this condition, namely with agreement on every side, is utterly impossible.

[§ 5] Problem I.

Assuming that the mere legislative form of maxims alone is the sufficient determining ground of a will, to find the character of the will that is determinable by this alone.

Since the mere form of a law can be represented only by reason, and is therefore no object of the senses and hence does not belong among appearances, the representation of this form as a determining ground of the will differs from all determining grounds of events in nature according to the law of causality, [AA V 29] because in their case the determining grounds must themselves be appearances. But if no determining ground of the will other than that universal legislative form alone can serve it as a law, then such a will must be thought entirely independent of the natural law of appearances in their relation to one another, namely the law of causality. Such independence, however, is called *freedom* in the strictest, that is, transcendental sense. Thus a will [A 52] for which the mere legislative form of a maxim alone can serve as a law is a free will.

[§ 6] Problem II.

Assuming that a will is free, to find the law that alone is fit to determine it necessarily.

Since the matter of a practical law, that is, an object of the maxim, can never be given otherwise than empirically, while a free will, as independent of empirical conditions—that is, conditions belonging to the world of sense—must nevertheless be determinable, a free will must find a determining ground in the law independently of its *matter*. But apart from the matter, nothing more is con-

tained in the law than its legislative form. The legislative form, insofar as it is contained in the maxim, is therefore the only thing that can constitute a determining ground of the will.

Remark.

Freedom and unconditional practical law thus refer reciprocally to one another. I am not asking here whether they are in fact distinct, or whether, instead, an unconditional law is merely the self-consciousness of a pure practical reason, and this in turn entirely identical with the positive concept of freedom. I ask rather where our *cognition* of the unconditionally practical *begins*: with freedom or with the practical law. It cannot begin with freedom, [A 53] for we can neither become immediately conscious of it, since its first concept is negative, nor infer it from experience, since experience lets us cognize only the law of appearances, and thus the mechanism of nature, the exact opposite of freedom. It is therefore the *moral law*, of which we become immediately conscious as soon as we frame maxims of the will, that presents itself to us *first*. And since reason [AA V 30] presents it as a determining ground that no sensible conditions can outweigh, indeed as entirely independent of them, it leads directly to the concept of freedom. But how is consciousness of that moral law itself possible? We can become conscious of pure practical laws just as we are conscious of pure theoretical principles: by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us, and to the separation of all empirical conditions to which it directs us. The concept of a pure will arises from the former, just as consciousness of a pure understanding arises from the latter. That this is the true order of subordination among our concepts, and that morality first discloses to us the concept of freedom, so that *practical reason* first confronts speculative reason with its most insoluble problem in this concept, placing it in the greatest perplexity, is already evident from the following. Nothing in appearances can be explained from the concept of freedom; here the mechanism of nature must always provide the guiding thread. Moreover, the antinomy of pure reason, when it seeks to ascend to the unconditioned in the series of causes, becomes entangled in incomprehensibilities with either concept alike; yet the latter, mechanism, at least has [A 54] usefulness in explaining appearances. Thus no

one would ever have ventured to introduce freedom into science had not the moral law, and with it practical reason, intervened and forced this concept upon us. Experience, too, confirms this order of concepts within us. Suppose someone claims that his lustful inclination is entirely irresistible whenever the desired object and the opportunity present themselves. Ask whether he would not master his inclination if a gallows were erected in front of the house where he finds this opportunity, in order to hang him immediately after he had enjoyed his lust. We need not guess long what he would answer. But ask him whether, if his prince demanded on pain of the same immediate death that he give false testimony against an honest man whom the prince would like to destroy under plausible pretexts, he would consider it possible to overcome his love of life, however great it might be. He may perhaps not venture to assure us whether he would do it or not; but he must admit without hesitation that it would be possible for him. He judges, therefore, that he can do something because he is conscious that he ought to do it, and cognizes within himself the freedom that, without the moral law, would otherwise have remained unknown to him.

[§ 7] Fundamental Law of Pure Practical Reason.

Act so that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as the principle of a universal legislation.

[AA V 31]

Remark. [A 55]

Pure geometry has postulates as practical propositions, but these contain nothing more than the presupposition that one *can* do something if one were required to do it; and these are its only propositions that concern existence. They are thus practical rules under a problematic condition of the will. Here, however, the rule says that one ought to proceed in a certain way unconditionally. The practical rule is therefore unconditional, and hence represented a priori as a categorical practical proposition, by which the will is objectively determined absolutely and immediately—through the practical rule itself, which is therefore a law here. For *pure reason*, *practical in itself*, is here immediately legislative. The will is thought as independent of empirical conditions, and thus,

as pure will, as determined *through the mere form of the law*; and this determining ground is regarded as the supreme condition of all maxims. The matter is strange enough and has no parallel in the whole remainder of practical cognition. For the thought *a priori* of a possible universal legislation, which is thus merely problematic, is unconditionally commanded as a law, without borrowing anything from experience or from any external will. Nor is it a precept according to which an action ought to take place through which a desired effect becomes possible—for then the rule would always be physically conditioned. It is instead a rule that determines only the will *a priori* with regard to the form of its maxims. Here, then, it is at least not impossible to think of a law serving solely the *subjective* form of principles as a determining ground through the *objective* form of a law in general. Consciousness of this fundamental law may be called a fact of reason, [A 56] because we cannot reason it out from antecedent data of reason, such as consciousness of freedom (for this is not given to us beforehand), but because it forces itself upon us of itself as a synthetic proposition *a priori*, founded on no intuition, either pure or empirical. It would indeed be analytic if freedom of the will were presupposed; but for freedom as a positive concept an intellectual intuition would be required, which we may by no means assume here. Yet to regard this law as *given* without misinterpretation, we must carefully note that it is no empirical fact, but the sole fact of pure reason, which thereby announces itself as originally legislative: *thus I will, thus I command*.

Corollary.

Pure reason is practical by itself alone and gives (to the human being) a universal law, which we call the *moral law*.

[AA V 32]

Remark.

The fact just mentioned is undeniable. We need only analyze the judgment people make about the conformity of their actions to law. We will always find that, whatever inclination may interject, their reason, incorruptible and constrained by itself, nevertheless always measures the maxim of the will in an action against the pure will, that is, against itself, insofar as it regards itself as practical

a priori. Now this principle of morality, precisely because of the universality of the legislation that it makes the supreme formal determining ground of the will regardless of all the will's subjective differences, is declared by reason to be a law for all rational [A 57] beings, insofar as they have a will at all, that is, a capacity to determine their causality through the representation of rules. It holds, therefore, insofar as they are capable of actions according to principles, and hence also according to practical principles *a priori*, for these alone possess the necessity that reason requires of a principle. It is thus not restricted to human beings, but extends to all finite beings that have reason and will, and indeed includes even the infinite being as supreme intelligence. In the former case, however, the law takes the form of an imperative. For although we can presuppose in a finite being, as rational, a *pure* will, we cannot presuppose in it, as a being affected by needs and sensible motives, a *holy* will: one incapable of any maxim conflicting with the moral law. For such beings the moral law is therefore an *imperative* that commands categorically, because the law is unconditional. The relation of such a will to this law is *dependence*, under the name of obligation, which signifies a *necessitation*, though through reason alone and its objective law, to an action that is called *duty* for this reason: choice affected by feeling—although not determined by it, and thus still always free—carries with it a wish arising from *subjective* causes, which can therefore often oppose the pure objective determining ground. It consequently requires, as moral necessitation, a resistance from practical reason that may be called an internal but intellectual constraint. In the supremely self-sufficient intelligence, choice is rightly represented as incapable of any maxim that could not at the same time be objectively a law; and the concept of *holiness*, which belongs to it for that reason, places it [A 58] not above all practical laws, but above all practically restrictive laws, and thus above obligation and duty. This holiness of the will is nonetheless a practical idea that must necessarily serve as the *archetype*, an infinite approach to which is all that is possible for finite rational beings. The pure moral law, itself therefore called holy, constantly and accurately holds this idea before their eyes. To be assured of this infinite progress [AA V 33] of one's maxims and of their immutability in continued advance—that is, virtue—is the highest achieve-

ment of finite practical reason. Yet virtue itself, at least as a naturally acquired capacity, can never be complete, since assurance in such a case never becomes apodictic certainty and, as persuasion, is very dangerous.

[§ 8] Theorem IV.

The *autonomy* of the will is the sole principle of all moral laws and of the duties that accord with them. All *heteronomy* of choice, by contrast, not only grounds no obligation at all, but is instead opposed to the principle of obligation and to the morality of the will. The sole principle of morality consists in independence from all matter of the law, namely a desired object, and yet at the same time in the determination of choice through the mere universal legislative form of which a maxim must be capable. That *independence* is freedom in the *negative* sense, while this *legislation of its own* [A 59] by pure reason, practical as such, is freedom in the *positive* sense. Thus the moral law expresses nothing other than the *autonomy* of pure practical reason, that is, of freedom; and this is itself the formal condition of all maxims under which alone they can agree with the supreme practical law. If, therefore, the matter of willing—which can be nothing other than the object of a desire connected with the law—enters the practical law *as a condition of its possibility*, heteronomy of choice results: dependence on the natural law of following some impulse or inclination. The will then does not give itself the law, but only the precept for rationally following laws of feeling. The maxim, however, which can never in this way contain the universally legislative form, not only establishes no obligation in this manner, but is itself opposed to the principle of a *pure* practical reason, and thus also to a moral disposition, even if the action arising from it should conform to law.

[AA V 34]

Remark I.

A practical precept carrying a material, and thus empirical, condition must therefore never be counted as a practical law. For the [A 60] law of the pure will, which is free, places it in a sphere entirely different from the empirical; and the necessity it expresses, since it is not to be natural necessity, can consist solely in formal conditions of the possibility of a law in general. All matter of practical rules always rests on subjective conditions, which confer on it no universal-

ity for rational beings other than a conditional one: if I *desire* this or that, what must I then do to make it actual? These rules all revolve around the principle of *one's own happiness*. Now it is certainly undeniable that all willing must also have an object, and thus a matter; but this does not make that matter the determining ground and condition of the maxim. For if it is, the maxim cannot be presented in a universally legislative form, since expectation of the object's existence would then be the determining cause of choice, and willing would have to be grounded in the faculty of desire's dependence on the existence of some thing. Such dependence can always be sought only in empirical conditions and can therefore never provide the ground for a necessary and universal rule. Thus the happiness of other beings can be the object of a rational being's will. But if it were the determining ground of the maxim, we would have to presuppose that we find in the well-being of others not only a natural enjoyment but also a need, as is indeed the case with the sympathetic temperament in human beings. But I cannot presuppose this need in every rational being, and not at all in God. The matter of the maxim may therefore remain, but it must not be the maxim's condition; otherwise [A 61] the maxim would be unfit to be a law. Thus the mere form of a law, which limits the matter, must at the same time be a ground for adding this matter to the will, but not for presupposing it. Let the matter, for example, be my own happiness. If I attribute this to everyone—as I may indeed do in the case of finite beings—it can become an *objective* practical law only if I include the happiness of others within it. The law of promoting others' happiness therefore arises not from the presupposition that this is an object of everyone's choice, but solely from the fact that the form of universality—which reason requires as a condition for giving a maxim of self-love the objective validity of a law—becomes the determining ground of the will. Thus the object, the happiness of others, was not the determining ground of the pure will. It was the mere lawful form alone, by which I limited my maxim grounded on inclination in order to give it the universality [AA V 35] of a law and so make it accord with pure practical reason. Only from this limitation, and not from the addition of an external incentive, could the concept of the *obligation* to extend the maxim of my self-love to the happiness of others arise.

Remark II.

The exact opposite of the principle of morality is to make *one's own* happiness the determining ground of the will. As I have shown above, this includes everything that locates the determining ground which is to serve as a law anywhere other than in the legislative form of the maxim. This opposition is not merely logical, like the [A 62] opposition involved in empirically conditioned rules that one nevertheless wished to elevate into necessary principles of cognition. It is practical, and would utterly destroy morality if the voice of reason in relation to the will were not so clear, so impossible to drown out, so audible even to the most ordinary person. As things stand, it can maintain itself only in the mind-confusing speculations of the schools, which are bold enough to turn a deaf ear to that heavenly voice in order to uphold a theory that costs them no mental exertion.

Suppose a companion whose company you otherwise enjoy thought to justify to you his having given false testimony by first invoking what he claimed was the sacred duty of securing his own happiness. He then listed all the advantages he had gained by it and pointed out the prudence he had exercised to secure himself against any discovery, even on your part: he had revealed the secret to you solely so that he could deny it at any time. But suppose he then claimed in all seriousness to have fulfilled a genuine human duty. You would either laugh in his face or recoil from it in disgust, although, if someone had directed his principles solely toward his own advantages, you would have not the slightest objection to these measures. Or suppose someone recommended a man as a steward to whom you could blindly entrust all your affairs, and, to inspire your confidence, praised him as a shrewd person who understood his own advantage masterfully and as tirelessly active, letting no opportunity for it pass unused. Finally, so that [A 63] no misgivings about vulgar selfishness should stand in the way, suppose he praised the man's refined way of life: he sought his enjoyment not in hoarding money or in coarse extravagance, but in extending his knowledge, in well-chosen, instructive company, even in helping those in need. Yet as for the means—which borrow their worth or worthlessness only from the end—he had no scruples, and other people's money and property were,

[AA V 36] for these purposes, as good to him as his own whenever he knew he could use them without detection or hindrance. You would believe either that the person recommending him was making a fool of you or that he had lost his mind.—So clearly and sharply are the boundaries between morality and self-love drawn that even the most ordinary eye cannot fail to distinguish whether something belongs to the one or the other. The following few remarks may indeed seem superfluous in the case of so evident a truth, but they at least serve to lend somewhat greater clarity to the judgment of ordinary human reason.

The principle of happiness can indeed yield maxims, but never ones fit to be laws of the will, even if one made *universal* happiness one's object. For cognition of happiness rests entirely on data of experience, and every judgment about it depends greatly on each person's opinion, which is itself also highly changeable. There can therefore be *general*, but never *universal*, rules: rules that hold most often on average, but not rules that must hold always and necessarily. Hence no practical *laws* can be founded on them. Precisely because an object of choice is here laid at the foundation of its rule and must therefore precede it, the rule can be referred [A 64] to and founded on nothing other than what is recommended, and thus on experience; and there differences of judgment must be endless. This principle therefore does not prescribe the very same practical rules to all rational beings, although they stand under a common title, namely happiness. The moral law, however, is thought as objectively necessary only because it is to hold for everyone who has reason and will.

The maxim of self-love, or prudence, merely *advises*; the law of morality *commands*. Yet there is a great difference between what we are *advised* to do and what we are *obligated* to do.

What is to be done according to the principle of the autonomy of choice is quite easy for the most ordinary understanding to discern without hesitation. What is to be done on the presupposition of its heteronomy is difficult and requires knowledge of the world. That is, what *duty* is presents itself to everyone of its own accord; but what brings true and lasting advantage, if this advantage is to extend over one's whole existence, is always shrouded in impenetrable darkness. Much prudence is required to adapt the practical rule directed

toward it to the purposes of life, even tolerably, through skillful exceptions. Nevertheless, the moral law commands everyone to follow it, and indeed with the greatest exactness. Judging what is to be done according to it must therefore not be so difficult that even the most ordinary and unpracticed understanding could not manage it without worldly prudence.

To satisfy the categorical command of morality is within everyone's power [AA V 37] at all times; to satisfy the empirically conditioned precept of happiness is only rarely [A 65] possible, and far from possible for everyone even with regard to a single purpose. The reason is that in the former case only the maxim matters, which must be genuine and pure; in the latter, one's powers and physical capacity to make a desired object actual matter as well. A command that everyone should seek to make himself happy would be foolish, for one never commands someone to do what he already inevitably wills of himself. One would have only to command the measures, or rather provide them, since he cannot do everything he wills. But to command morality under the name of duty is entirely reasonable; for, first, not everyone is willing to obey its precept when it conflicts with inclinations; and as for the measures by which he can follow this law, these need not be taught here, for what he wills in this respect he can also do.

Someone who has *lost* at gambling may be *annoyed* with himself and his imprudence. But if he is conscious of having *cheated* at gambling, even though he won by doing so, he must *despise* himself as soon as he compares himself with the moral law. This law must therefore be something other than the principle of one's own happiness. For having to say to oneself, "I am a *worthless person*, although I have filled my purse," must involve a different standard of judgment from applauding oneself and saying, "I am a *prudent* man, for I have enriched my coffers."

Finally, there is something else in the idea of our practical reason that accompanies the transgression of a moral law: its *deserving punishment*. Now the concept of punishment as such cannot be connected with the [A 66] attainment of happiness. For although the one who punishes may at the same time have the benevolent intention of directing this punishment toward that end as well, it

must first be justified in itself as punishment, that is, as a mere ill. Thus the person punished, if matters rested there and he could see no favor hidden behind this severity, would himself have to admit that justice had been done to him and that his lot was perfectly suited to his conduct. In every punishment as such there must first be justice, and this constitutes the essence of the concept. Benevolence may indeed be joined to it, but after his conduct the one deserving punishment has not the slightest ground to count on it. Punishment is therefore a physical ill that, even if it were not connected with moral evil as a *natural* consequence, would nevertheless have to be connected with it as a consequence according to principles of moral legislation. Now if every crime is punishable in itself, even without regard to its physical consequences for the agent—that is, if it forfeits happiness, at least in part—then it would plainly be absurd to say that the crime consisted precisely in his having brought punishment upon himself by impairing his own [AA V 38] happiness, which according to the principle of self-love would have to be the proper concept of every crime. In this way punishment would be the ground for calling something a crime, and justice would instead have to consist in refraining from all punishment and even preventing natural punishment. For then there would no longer be anything evil in the action, since the ills that otherwise followed it, and on account of which alone the action was called evil, would now have been averted. To regard all punishment and reward, moreover, merely as [A 67] machinery in the hands of a higher power, serving solely to set rational beings in motion toward their final end, happiness, is all too visibly a mechanism of their will abolishing all freedom for us to need to dwell on it.

More subtle still, though equally untrue, is the claim of those who assume a certain special moral sense that, rather than reason, determines the moral law. According to them, consciousness of virtue is immediately connected with satisfaction and enjoyment, consciousness of vice with inner unrest and pain; and so they still stake everything on the desire for one's own happiness. Without bringing in what has been said above, I will only point out the deception involved here. To represent the vicious person as tormented by inner unrest through consciousness of his transgressions, they must already represent him in

advance, in the chief basis of his character, as morally good at least to some degree. Likewise, they must already represent the person delighted by consciousness of dutiful actions as virtuous. The concept of morality and duty must therefore have preceded all consideration of this satisfaction and cannot be derived from it at all. We must first esteem the importance of what we call duty, the authority of the moral law, and the immediate worth that following it gives a person in his own eyes, in order to feel that satisfaction in consciousness of our conformity to duty and that bitter reproach when we can accuse ourselves of transgressing it. We cannot, therefore, feel this satisfaction [A 68] or inner unrest before cognition of obligation and make it the ground of obligation. One must already be at least halfway an honest man even to form a representation of those sentiments. I by no means deny, moreover, that just as the human will, by virtue of freedom, can be immediately determined by the moral law, so frequent practice in accordance with this determining ground can finally produce, subjectively, a feeling of satisfaction with oneself. Rather, it is itself a duty to establish and cultivate this feeling, which alone properly deserves to be called moral feeling. But the concept of duty cannot be derived from it; otherwise we would have to think of a feeling of a law as such, and make an object of sensation [AA V 39] what can be thought only through reason. Unless this is to become a flat contradiction, it would entirely abolish every concept of duty and replace it with a merely mechanical play of finer inclinations that sometimes conflict with the coarser ones.

If we now compare our *formal* supreme principle of pure practical reason, as an autonomy of the will, with all previous *material* principles of morality, we can present all the others as such in a table that actually exhausts every possible alternative apart from a single formal principle. We can thus demonstrate at a glance that it is futile to look for any principle other than the one now presented.—All possible determining grounds of the will are either merely *subjective* and thus empirical, or else *objective* and rational; but both are either *external* or *internal*.

Practical material determining grounds

[AA V 40] in the principle of morality are [A 69]

Subjective

external

- *Education* (according to *Montaigne*)
- *Civil constitution* (according to *Mandeville*)

internal

- *Physical feeling* (according to *Epicurus*)
- *Moral feeling* (according to *Hutcheson*)

Objective

internal

- *Perfection* (according to *Wolff* and the *Stoics*)

external

- *The will of God* (according to *Crusius* and other *theological* moralists)

[AA V 41] Those on the left are all empirical and are plainly [A 70] entirely unfit to serve as the universal principle of morality. Those on the right, however, are founded on reason, for perfection as a *quality* of things and supreme perfection represented in *substance*, that is, God, can both be thought only through concepts of reason. But the first concept, namely *perfection*, can be taken in a *theoretical* sense, where it means nothing but the completeness of each thing in its kind (transcendental perfection), or of a thing merely as a thing in general (metaphysical perfection); and neither can be at issue here. The concept of perfection in a *practical* sense, however, is a thing's fitness or adequacy for all sorts of ends. This perfection as a *quality* of the human being, and thus internal, is nothing other than *talent* and what strengthens or supplements it, *skill*. Supreme perfection in *substance*, that is, God, and thus external perfection, considered in a practical respect, is the adequacy of this being for all ends in general. Now ends must be given to us beforehand, in relation to which alone the concept of *perfection*—whether internal in ourselves or external in God—can become a determining ground of the will. But an end, as an *object* that must precede the determination of the will through a practical rule and contain the ground of the possibility of such a determination, and thus as the *matter* of the will taken as its determining ground, is always empirical. It can therefore serve the *Epicurean* principle of the doctrine of happiness, but never

the pure rational principle of the doctrine of morals and duty. For talents and their cultivation can become motives of the will only because they contribute to the advantages of life; and the [A 71] will of God, if conformity with it is made the object of the will without an antecedent practical principle independent of its idea, can become a motive only through the *happiness* we expect from it. It follows, *first*, that all the principles set out here are *material*; *second*, that they comprise all possible material principles; and finally, from this, the conclusion follows that, since material principles are entirely unfit to serve as the supreme moral law, as has been proved, the *formal practical principle* of pure reason is the *only possible* one suited to categorical imperatives, that is, practical laws that make actions duties, and to the principle of morality in general, both in judgment and in its application to determining the human will. According to this principle, the mere form of a universal legislation possible through our maxims must constitute the supreme and immediate determining ground of the will.

I. [A 72] [AA V 42] *On the Deduction of the Principles of Pure Practical Reason.* This Analytic demonstrates that pure reason can be practical, that is, can determine the will by itself, independently of everything empirical. It does so through a fact in which pure reason proves itself actually practical in us: autonomy in the principle of morality, by which reason determines the will to action. —It shows at the same time that this fact is inseparably connected with consciousness of freedom of the will, indeed is identical with it. Through this consciousness, the will of a rational being—which, as belonging to the world of sense, cognizes itself as necessarily subject, like other efficient causes, to the laws of causality—is nevertheless at the same time conscious in practical matters of its existence as determinable on another side, namely as a being in itself, within an intelligible order of things. This is not in accordance with a special intuition of itself, but with certain dynamic laws that can determine its causality in the world of sense. For it has been sufficiently proved elsewhere that freedom, if attributed to us, places us in an intelligible order of things.

If we now compare this with the analytic part of the Critique of Pure [A 73] Speculative Reason, a remarkable contrast between the two emerges. There, not principles but pure sensible *intuition*—space and time—was the first datum that made cognition *a priori* possible, and only for objects of the senses.—Synthetic principles from mere concepts without intuition were impossible. Rather, they could arise only in relation to that intuition, which was sensible, and hence only in relation to objects of possible experience, since concepts of the understanding, combined with this intuition, alone make possible the cognition we call experience.—Beyond objects of experience, and thus concerning things as noumena, speculative reason was quite rightly denied every positive element of *cognition*.—Nevertheless, it accomplished this much: it secured the concept of noumena, that is, the possibility, indeed the necessity, of thinking such things. It defended, for example, against all [AA V 43] objections the assumption of freedom, considered negatively, as entirely compatible with those principles and limitations of pure theoretical reason, yet without providing cognition of anything determinate and expansive concerning such objects; rather, it completely cut off every prospect of that.

The moral law, by contrast, though it gives no *prospect*, [A 74] nevertheless places in our hands a fact absolutely inexplicable from all the data of the world of sense and the entire compass of our theoretical use of reason. This fact points to a pure world of understanding, indeed even *determines it positively* and lets us cognize something of it, namely a law.

This law is to give the world of sense, as a *sensible nature*, the form, as regards rational beings, of a world of understanding, that is, of a *supersensible nature*, without impairing the mechanism of the former. Now nature in the most general sense is the existence of things under laws. The sensible nature of rational beings in general is their existence under empirically conditioned laws, and thus, for reason, *heteronomy*. The supersensible nature of these same beings, by contrast, is their existence according to laws independent of every empirical condition and thus belonging to the *autonomy* of pure reason. And since the laws according to which the existence of things depends on cognition are practical, supersensible nature, insofar as we can form a concept of it, is nothing

other than *a nature under the autonomy of pure practical reason*. The law of this autonomy, however, is the moral law, which is therefore the fundamental law of a supersensible nature and a pure world of understanding, whose counterpart is to exist in the world of sense, yet [A 75] without impairing its laws. We could call the former the *original model* (*natura archetypa*), which we cognize only in reason, and the latter the reproduction (*natura ectypa*), because it contains the possible effect of the idea of the former as a determining ground of the will. For the moral law does indeed transport us, in idea, into a nature in which pure reason, if accompanied by a physical capacity adequate to it, would produce the highest good; and it determines our will to impart this form to the world of sense as a whole of rational beings.

The most ordinary attention to ourselves confirms that this idea actually underlies our determinations of the will as a model, a kind of preliminary design.

[AA V 44] When the maxim according to which I intend to give testimony is examined by practical reason, I always consider what it would be like if it held as a universal law of nature. Clearly, in this form it would necessitate everyone to truthfulness. For it cannot be consistent with the universality of a law of nature to allow statements to count as evidence and yet as intentionally untrue. Likewise, the maxim I adopt concerning the free disposal of my [A 76] life is immediately determined when I ask myself what it would have to be like for a nature to maintain itself according to a law of that maxim. Clearly, in such a nature no one could end his life *at will*, for such a constitution would not be an enduring order of nature; and so in all other cases. In actual nature, however, as an object of experience, the free will is not of itself determined to maxims that could by themselves establish a nature according to universal laws, or that would of themselves fit into a nature ordered according to such laws. Rather, it is private inclinations that constitute a natural whole according to laws of feeling—physical laws—but not a nature that would be possible solely through our will according to pure practical laws. Nevertheless, through reason we are conscious of a law to which all our maxims are subject, as though an order of nature must at the same time arise through our will. This must therefore be the

idea of a nature not empirically given and yet possible through freedom, and thus supersensible. To this nature we give objective reality, at least in a practical respect, because we regard it as the object of our will as pure rational beings.

The difference, then, between the laws of a nature to which *the [A 77] will is subject* and those of a *nature subject to a will*, with regard to what bears on the will's free actions, rests on this: in the former, objects must be causes of the representations that determine the will; in the latter, the will is to be the cause of the objects, so that its causality has its determining ground solely in the pure faculty of reason, which may therefore also be called a pure practical reason.

Thus the two problems—how pure reason can, *on the one hand*, cognize objects *a priori*, and how, *on the other*, it can immediately be a determining ground [AA V 45] of the will, that is, of the causality of a rational being with regard to the actuality of objects, solely through the thought of the universal validity of its own maxims as law—are very different.

The first, belonging to the Critique of Pure Speculative Reason, requires a prior explanation of how intuitions are possible *a priori*, since without them no object at all can be given to us and hence none can be synthetically cognized. Its solution is that these intuitions are all merely sensible, and therefore allow no speculative cognition extending beyond the reach of possible experience. Hence all the principles of that pure speculative reason accomplish nothing [A 78] more than making experience possible, whether of given objects or of those that may be given to infinity but are never given completely.

The second, belonging to the *Critique* of Practical Reason, requires no explanation of how the objects of the faculty of desire are possible. For that, as a problem of theoretical cognition of nature, is left to the Critique of Speculative Reason. It asks only how reason can determine the maxim of the will: whether this occurs only through empirical representations as determining grounds, or whether pure reason too would be practical and a law of a possible order of nature that is not empirically cognizable at all. The possibility of such a supersensible nature, whose concept could at the same time be the ground of its actuality through our free will, requires no intuition *a priori* of an intelligible world—an intuition that in this case, as supersensible, would also have to be

impossible for us. For what matters is only the determining ground of willing in its maxims: whether it is empirical or a concept of pure reason, concerning the conformity of those maxims to law in general, and how it can be the latter. Whether or not the causality of the will suffices to make the objects actual is left to the theoretical principles of reason to judge, as an investigation [A 79] of the possibility of the objects of willing. Their intuition therefore constitutes no element at all in the practical problem. Here only the determination of the will and the determining ground of its maxim as a free will matter, not the outcome. For provided the *will* conforms to law for pure reason, whatever the state of its *capacity* for execution, [AA V 46] whether or not such a nature actually arises from these maxims of the legislation of a possible nature, this is of no concern to the Critique, which investigates whether and how pure reason can be practical, that is, can determine the will immediately.

In this undertaking it can therefore, without reproach, and indeed must, begin with pure practical laws and their actuality. But in place of intuition it grounds them in the concept of their existence in the intelligible world, namely freedom. For this concept means nothing else; and those laws are possible only in relation to freedom of the will, but necessary on the presupposition of it—or conversely, freedom is necessary because those laws are necessary as practical postulates. How this consciousness of moral laws, or, what is the same, of freedom, is possible cannot be further explained; only their admissibility can quite readily be [A 80] defended in the theoretical Critique.

The *exposition* of the supreme principle of practical reason has now been accomplished. That is, we have shown, first, what it contains: that it subsists on its own entirely *a priori* and independently of empirical principles; and then, how it differs from all other practical principles. With the *deduction*—the justification of its objective and universal validity and the insight into the possibility of such a synthetic proposition *a priori*—we cannot hope to fare as well as we did with the principles of the pure theoretical understanding. For these referred to objects of possible experience, namely appearances, and it could be proved that only by bringing these appearances under the categories in accordance with those laws can the appearances be *cognized* as objects of experience; conse-

quently all possible experience must conform to these laws. But I cannot follow such a course with the deduction of the moral law. For it concerns not cognition of the character of objects that may be given to reason in some way from elsewhere, but cognition insofar as it can become the ground of the existence of the objects themselves, and through which reason has causality in a rational being [A 81]: that is, pure reason, which can be regarded as a faculty immediately determining the will.

Now all human insight reaches its limit as soon as we arrive at fundamental forces [AA V 47] or fundamental faculties. For their possibility cannot be comprehended through anything, yet neither may they be arbitrarily invented and assumed. Hence, in the theoretical use of reason, only experience can entitle us to assume them. But here, with regard to the pure practical faculty of reason, even this substitute—offering empirical proofs instead of a deduction from sources of cognition *a priori*—is denied us. For anything that needs to draw the ground of proof of its actuality from experience must, as to the grounds of its possibility, depend on principles of experience. Yet pure and nevertheless practical reason cannot, by its very concept, be regarded as such a thing. Moreover, the moral law is given, as it were, as a fact of pure reason of which we are conscious *a priori* and which is apodictically certain, even supposing that no example of its exact observance could be found in experience. Thus the objective reality of the moral law cannot be proved through any deduction, through any exertion of theoretical reason, whether speculative or supported by experience; nor, even if we were [A 82] willing to forgo apodictic certainty, can it be confirmed through experience and so proved *a posteriori*. Nevertheless, it stands firm by itself.

But something different and wholly paradoxical takes the place of this vainly sought deduction of the moral principle: conversely, the principle itself serves as the principle for deducing an inscrutable faculty that no experience can prove, but that speculative reason had to assume as at least possible in order to find, among its cosmological ideas, the unconditioned in respect of its causality and thus avoid contradicting itself. This is the faculty of freedom, whose possibility and indeed actuality in beings that recognize this law as binding on them

is proved by the moral law, which itself needs no justifying grounds. The moral law is in fact a law of causality through freedom, and thus of the possibility of a supersensible nature, just as the metaphysical law of events in the world of sense was a law of the causality of sensible nature. The former therefore determines what speculative philosophy had to leave undetermined: the law for a causality whose concept in speculative philosophy was merely negative. It thereby first confers objective reality on this concept.

[AA V 48] This sort of credential of the moral law, in which the law itself is established as a [A 83] principle for deducing freedom as a causality of pure reason, is entirely sufficient in place of any justification *a priori* to meet a need of theoretical reason, since theoretical reason was compelled at least to *assume* the possibility of freedom. For the moral law proves its reality to the satisfaction even of the Critique of Speculative Reason by adding a positive determination to a causality thought merely negatively, whose possibility speculative reason could not comprehend and yet had to assume. This positive determination is the concept of a reason immediately determining the will through the condition of a universal lawful form of its maxims. In this way the moral law is able for the first time to give objective, though only practical, reality to reason, which with its ideas always went beyond bounds whenever it wished to proceed speculatively. It transforms reason's *transcendent* use into an *immanent* one: being, in the field of experience, causes that are themselves effective through ideas.

The determination of the causality of beings in the world of sense, as such a world, could never be unconditional; yet for every series of conditions there must necessarily be something unconditioned, and thus also a causality determining itself entirely by itself. Hence the [A 84] idea of freedom as a faculty of absolute spontaneity was not a need but, *as regards its possibility*, an analytic principle of pure speculative reason. Yet it is absolutely impossible to give an example conforming to it in any experience, because among the causes of things as appearances no determination of causality can be found that is absolutely unconditioned. We could therefore only *defend* the *thought* of a freely acting cause, when applying it to a being in the world of sense insofar as that being is

also considered, from another side, as a noumenon. We did so by showing that it is not contradictory to regard all its actions as physically conditioned insofar as they are appearances, yet at the same time to regard their causality as physically unconditioned insofar as the acting being is a being of understanding. In this way we made the concept of freedom a regulative principle of reason. Through it I do not at all cognize what the object to which such causality is attributed is, but I nevertheless remove the obstacle: on the one hand, in explaining events in the world, and hence also the actions of rational [AA V 49] beings, I do justice to the mechanism of natural necessity by proceeding backward from the conditioned to its condition to infinity; on the other hand, I keep open for speculative reason the place empty [A 85] for it, namely the intelligible, in which to locate the unconditioned. But I could not *give reality* to this *thought*, that is, transform it into *cognition* of a being acting in this way, even merely as to its possibility. Pure practical reason now fills this empty place with a determinate law of causality in an intelligible world through freedom, namely the moral law. Speculative reason thereby gains nothing in insight, but it does gain in the *securing* of its problematic concept of freedom, to which *objective* and, though only practical, nonetheless indubitable *reality* is here imparted. Practical reason does not even enlarge the concept of causality—whose application, and hence also its meaning, properly takes place only in relation to appearances, in order to connect them into experiences, as the Critique of Pure Reason proves—so as to extend its use beyond those limits. For if it aimed at this, it would have to seek to show how the logical relation of ground and consequence could be used synthetically with a kind of intuition other than sensible intuition, that is, how a *causa noumenon* is possible. This it cannot accomplish at all; but as practical reason it also takes no account of this question. It merely places the *determining ground* of the causality of the human being as a sensible being [A 86]—a causality that is given—in *pure reason*, which is therefore called practical. Thus it uses the concept of cause itself, from whose application to objects for the sake of theoretical cognition it can here abstract entirely—since this concept is always found in the understanding *a priori*, independently of all intuition—not to cognize objects, but to determine causality

with regard to them in general, and thus for no purpose other than a practical one. It can therefore locate the determining ground of the will in the intelligible order of things, while readily admitting that it does not at all understand what determination the concept of cause might have for the cognition of these things. It must indeed cognize in a determinate way causality with regard to actions of the will in the world of sense, for otherwise practical reason could actually produce no deed. But the concept it forms of its own [AA V 50] causality as a noumenon need not be determined theoretically for the sake of cognizing its supersensible existence, nor need practical reason be able to give it meaning in that respect. For it acquires meaning in any case, though only for practical use, namely through the moral law. Considered even theoretically, it always remains a pure concept of the understanding given *a priori*, which can be applied [A 87] to objects whether they are given sensibly or nonsensibly. In the latter case, however, it has no determinate theoretical meaning or application, but is merely a formal, though still essential, thought of the understanding concerning an object in general. The meaning reason confers on it through the moral law is solely practical: the idea of the law of a causality, that of the will, itself has causality, or is its determining ground.

II. On the Entitlement of Pure Reason, in Its Practical Use, to an Extension Not Possible for It by Itself in Its Speculative Use.

In the moral principle we have established a law of causality that places the determining ground of causality beyond all conditions of the world of sense. We have not merely *thought* the will as determinable insofar as it belongs to an intelligible world, and thus the subject of this will, the human being, as belonging to a pure world of understanding, though in this respect unknown to us—as could be done according to the Critique of Pure [A 88] Speculative Reason. We have also *determined* it with regard to its causality through a law that cannot be counted among any laws of nature in the world of sense, and have thus *extended* our cognition beyond the limits of that world, a presumption the Critique of Pure Reason declared null in all speculation. How, then, is the practical use of pure reason here to be reconciled with the theoretical use of that same reason as regards defining the limits of its faculty?

David Hume, of whom it may be said that he truly began all the challenges to the rights of pure reason that made a complete investigation of it necessary, reasoned as follows. The concept of [AA V 51] *cause* is a concept containing the *necessity* of the connection of the existence of different things, precisely insofar as they are different, so that if *A* is posited, I cognize that something entirely different from it, *B*, must necessarily exist as well. But necessity can be attributed to a connection only insofar as it is cognized *a priori*; for experience would allow us to cognize only that a connection exists, not that it necessarily exists in this way. Now it is impossible, he says, to cognize *a priori* and as necessary the connection between one thing and *another*, or between one determination and another entirely different from it, [A 89] when they are not given in perception. Thus the very concept of a cause is false and deceptive; or, to speak of it most leniently, it is a deception excusable to this extent: *habit*, a *subjective* necessity arising from frequently perceiving certain things or their determinations as associated in their existence alongside or after one another, is imperceptibly taken for an *objective* necessity of positing such a connection in the objects themselves. The concept of a cause is thus surreptitiously obtained, not legitimately acquired; indeed, it can never be acquired or authenticated, because it demands a connection that is in itself null, chimerical, and indefensible before any reason, to which no object can ever correspond.—In this way *empiricism* was first introduced as the sole source of principles with regard to all cognition concerning the existence of things—mathematics thus still remained excepted—but with it also the most severe *skepticism*, even with regard to the whole of natural science as philosophy. For according to such principles we can never *infer* a consequence from given determinations of things as to their existence, since this would require the concept of a cause, which contains the necessity of such a connection. We can only, according to the [A 90] rule of imagination, expect cases similar to those that have occurred before; but this expectation is never certain, however often it may have been fulfilled. Indeed, of no event could we say that something *must* have preceded it upon which it *necessarily* followed, that is, that it must have a *cause*. Thus even if we knew ever so many cases in which something of this sort preceded it, so that a rule could be drawn

from them, we could not on that account assume that it always and necessarily happens in this way. We would therefore also have to allow blind chance its due—a chance with which all use of reason [AA V 52] ceases. This firmly establishes and renders irrefutable skepticism concerning inferences ascending from effects to causes.

Mathematics had so far escaped unscathed because Hume held that its propositions were all analytic, that is, that they proceeded from one determination to another on account of identity, and hence according to the principle of contradiction. But this is false, since they are instead all synthetic. Even though geometry, for example, deals not with the existence of things but only with their determination *a priori* in a possible intuition, it nevertheless passes, just as through causal concepts, from one determination *A* to an entirely different one *B* as nonetheless necessarily connected [A 91] with it. But in the end that science, so highly praised for its apodictic certainty, must also succumb to *empiricism in principles*, for the very same reason that Hume substituted habit for objective necessity in the concept of cause. Despite all its pride, it must submit to lowering its bold claims that command assent *a priori*, and must await approval of the universal validity of its propositions from the favor of observers. As witnesses, they would surely not refuse to admit that they had always perceived what the geometer presents as principles to be so, and consequently would permit the expectation that it would continue to be so, although it was not strictly necessary. In this way Hume's empiricism in principles also leads inevitably to skepticism even with regard to mathematics, and consequently in all *scientific* theoretical use of reason, since this belongs either to philosophy or to mathematics. Whether the ordinary use of reason would fare any better amid so dreadful an overthrow as we see befalling the leading branches of cognition, or would instead become still more irretrievably entangled in this same destruction of all knowledge, and hence whether a *universal* skepticism must follow from the same principles—though this would of course [A 92] affect only the learned—I leave everyone to judge for himself.

As for my treatment in the Critique of Pure Reason, which was occasioned by Hume's skeptical doctrine but went much further, embracing the entire field of pure theoretical reason in its synthetic use, and thus also what is called metaphysics [AA V 53] in general, I proceeded as follows with regard to the Scottish philosopher's doubts concerning the concept of causality. Hume was entirely right to declare the concept of cause deceptive and a false illusion if he took the objects of experience—as indeed is almost universally done—for *things in themselves*. For with things in themselves and their determinations as such, we cannot discern how, because something *A* is posited, something else *B* must necessarily also be posited; and thus he could not admit any such cognition *a priori* of things in themselves. Still less could that acute thinker allow this concept an empirical origin, because such an origin directly contradicts the necessity of connection that constitutes the essence of the concept of causality. The concept was therefore outlawed, and habit in observing the course of perceptions took its place.

From my investigations, however, it emerged that the objects [A 93] with which we deal in experience are by no means things in themselves but mere appearances. Although with things in themselves we cannot at all discern—indeed it is impossible to discern—how, if *A* is posited, it should be *contradictory* not to posit *B*, which is entirely different from *A*, this being the necessity of the connection between *A* as cause and *B* as effect, we can nevertheless quite well think that, as appearances in *one experience*, they must necessarily be connected in a certain way, for example in regard to temporal relations, and cannot be separated without *contradicting* that connection by means of which this experience is possible, in which they are objects and alone cognizable to us. And so it was indeed found to be. I could therefore not only prove the concept of cause in its objective reality with regard to objects of experience, but also *deduce* it as a concept *a priori* on account of the necessity of connection it carries with it: that is, demonstrate its possibility from pure understanding without empirical sources. Having thus removed the empiricism of its origin, I could eradicate its inevitable consequence, skepticism, first with regard to natural science and then also, because what followed did so entirely from the same

grounds, with regard to mathematics—both sciences being referred [A 94] to objects of possible experience—and thereby eradicate total [AA V 54] doubt about everything theoretical reason claims to discern.

But what becomes of the application of this category of causality—and likewise of all the others, for without them no cognition of what exists can be achieved—to things that are not objects of possible experience but lie beyond its limits? For I was able to deduce the objective reality of these concepts only with regard to *objects of possible experience*. But precisely this, that I have rescued them even if only in this case, that I have shown that through them objects can at least be *thought*, though not determined *a priori*, is what gives them a place in the pure understanding, from which they are referred to objects in general, sensible or nonsensible. If anything is still lacking, it is the condition for the *application* of these categories, and specifically that of causality, to objects: namely intuition. Where intuition is not given, it makes application *for the sake of theoretical cognition* of the object as a noumenon impossible; such application, if anyone ventures it, is therefore completely forbidden, as it was in the Critique of Pure Reason. Meanwhile, the objective reality of the concept always remains, and it can also [A 95] be used of noumena, but without our being able to determine this concept theoretically in the least and thereby produce cognition. For that this concept contains nothing impossible even in relation to an object was proved by securing its seat in the pure understanding throughout its application to objects of the senses. Even if, when subsequently referred to things in themselves, which cannot be objects of experience, it is incapable of determination for the representation of *a determinate object* for the sake of theoretical cognition, it could nevertheless still be capable of a determination for its application for some other purpose, perhaps a practical one. This would not be so if, as Hume held, this concept of causality contained something utterly impossible to think.

To discover this condition for applying the concept in question to noumena, we need only look back at *why we are not satisfied with applying it to objects of experience*, but would also like to use it of things in themselves. For it soon becomes apparent that it is not a theoretical but a practical purpose that makes

this necessary for us. [AA V 55] For speculation, even if we succeeded, we would still [A 96] make no genuine gain in cognition of nature, or generally with regard to any objects that might be given to us. At most we would take a great step from the sensibly conditioned—where remaining and diligently traversing the chain of causes already gives us enough to do—to the supersensible, in order to complete and delimit our cognition on the side of its grounds. Yet an infinite gulf between that boundary and what we know would always remain unfilled, and we would have listened more to a vain passion for questions than to a thoroughgoing desire for knowledge.

But besides the relation in which the *understanding* stands to objects in theoretical cognition, it also has a relation to the faculty of desire, which is therefore called the will, and the pure will insofar as the pure understanding—which in such a case is called reason—is practical through the mere representation of a law. The objective reality of a pure will, or, what is the same, of a pure practical reason, is given *a priori* in the moral law as though through a fact; for this is what we may call a determination of the will that is unavoidable although it does not rest on empirical principles. But the concept of a will already contains the concept of causality; consequently the concept of a pure will contains the concept of a causality with freedom, that is, one not [A 97] determinable according to laws of nature and hence incapable of any empirical intuition as proof of its reality. Yet in the pure practical law *a priori* this concept fully justifies its objective reality, though, as is easy to see, not for the theoretical but solely for the practical use of reason. Now the concept of a being that has free will is the concept of a *causa noumenon*. We are already assured that this concept does not contradict itself, because the concept of a cause, as originating wholly from the pure understanding and at the same time secured through the deduction in its objective reality with regard to objects in general, is in its origin independent of all sensible conditions. Hence it is not in itself restricted to phenomena, except where a theoretically determinate use is intended, and can indeed be applied to things as pure beings of understanding. But since no intuition, which can always be only sensible, can be laid at the foundation of this application, a *causa noumenon* is, with regard to the theoretical use of reason,

[AA V 56] a possible and thinkable but nevertheless empty concept. Now I do not seek through it to *know theoretically* the character of a being *insofar as* it has a *pure* will. It is enough for me [A 98] merely to designate it through this concept as such a being, and thus merely to connect the concept of causality with that of freedom and, inseparably from it, with the moral law as its determining ground. I am certainly entitled to do this by virtue of the pure, nonempirical origin of the concept of cause, insofar as I regard myself as authorized to make no use of it other than in relation to the moral law that determines its reality, that is, only a practical use.

Had I, with Hume, deprived the concept of causality of objective reality in theoretical use, not only with regard to things in themselves, the supersensible, but also with regard to objects of the senses, it would have lost all meaning and been declared entirely unusable as a theoretically impossible concept. And since no use can be made of nothing, the practical use of a *theoretically null* concept would have been utterly absurd. But as things stand, the concept of an empirically unconditioned causality is indeed theoretically empty, without an intuition suited to it, yet still possible and related to an indeterminate object; and in place of that object, meaning is nevertheless given to it in the moral law, and hence in a practical respect. Thus although I have no intuition that would determine its objective theoretical reality, it nonetheless has actual [A 99] application, which can be exhibited *in the concrete* in dispositions or maxims: that is, practical reality that can be indicated. This suffices to justify it even with regard to noumena.

But once this objective reality of a pure concept of the understanding has been introduced into the field of the supersensible, it now also gives all the remaining categories objective reality, though only a practically applicable reality, and always only insofar as they stand in a *necessary* connection with the determining ground of the pure will, the moral law. Yet this has not the slightest influence in extending theoretical cognition of these objects, as insight into their nature through pure reason. As we will also find in what follows, the categories always refer only to beings as *intelligences*, and in these only to the relation of *reason* to the [AA V 57] *will*, hence always only to the *practical*; beyond this

they claim no cognition of these beings. Whatever further properties belonging to the theoretical manner of representing such supersensible things might be brought in along with them, all these must then be counted not as knowledge, but only as an entitlement—and in a practical respect even a necessity—to assume and presuppose them. This holds even where supersensible [A 100] beings, such as God, are assumed according to an analogy, that is, according to the pure relation of reason that we employ practically with regard to sensible beings. Thus, by applying pure theoretical reason to the supersensible, but only for a practical purpose, we give it not the slightest encouragement to lose itself in extravagance beyond all bounds.

Of the Analytic of Practical Reason

- ⁷ Propositions called *practical* in mathematics or natural science should properly be called *technical*. For these disciplines are not at all concerned with determining the will; they indicate only the manifold of possible action sufficient to produce a certain effect, and are therefore just as theoretical as all propositions stating the connection of a cause with an effect. Whoever desires the latter must also consent to be the former.

Book I, Chapter II: The concept of an object of pure practical reason



Chapter II. On the Concept of an Object of Pure Practical Reason.

By the concept of an object of practical reason I understand the representation of an object as a possible effect through freedom. To be an object of practical cognition as such therefore means only the relation of the will to the action by which the object or its opposite would be made actual; and judging whether something is an object of *pure* practical reason is simply distinguishing whether it is possible or impossible to *will* the action by which a certain object would become actual, if we had the power to bring it about—a matter on which experience must judge. [A 101] If the object is assumed to be the determining ground of our faculty of desire, its *physical possibility* through the free use of our powers must precede the judgment of whether or not it is an object of practical reason. If, by contrast, the law can be regarded *a priori* as the determining ground of the action, and the action therefore as determined by pure practical reason, the judgment of whether something is an object of pure practical reason is wholly independent of any comparison with our physical [AA V 58] powers. The question is only whether we may *will* an action directed

toward the existence of an object, if this were within our power; hence the *moral possibility* of the action must come first, since here its determining ground is not the object but the law of the will.

The only objects of practical reason, then, are those of the *good* and the *evil*. For the former means a necessary object of the faculty of desire, the latter of the faculty of aversion, but both according to a principle of reason.

If the concept of the good is not to be derived from a preceding practical law, but is instead to serve as its foundation, it can only be the concept of something whose existence promises pleasure [A 102] and thus determines the subject's causality in producing it—that is, the faculty of desire. Now, since it is impossible to discern *a priori* which representation will be accompanied by *pleasure* and which by *displeasure*, determining what is immediately good or evil would depend entirely on experience. The property of the subject in relation to which alone this experience can be made is the *feeling* of pleasure and displeasure, as a receptivity belonging to inner sense. Thus the concept of what is immediately good would have to refer only to that with which the sensation of *enjoyment* is immediately connected, and the concept of unqualified evil only to what immediately arouses *pain*. But this already conflicts with ordinary usage, which distinguishes the *agreeable* from the *good*, the *disagreeable* from the *evil*, and requires that good and evil always be judged through reason, hence through concepts that can be universally communicated, rather than through mere sensation, which is confined to individual subjects and their receptivity. Yet no pleasure or displeasure can in itself be immediately connected *a priori* with any representation of an object. A philosopher who believed himself compelled to make a feeling of pleasure the foundation of his practical judgment would therefore [A 103] call *good* what is a *means* to the agreeable, and *evil* what causes disagreeableness and pain; for judging the relation of means to ends certainly belongs to reason. Although reason alone can discern the connection of means with their intended ends—so that one could also define the will as the [AA V 59] faculty of ends, since ends are always determining grounds of the faculty of desire according to principles—the practical maxims that followed from the above concept of the good merely as a means would never contain, as

an object of the will, anything good in itself, but always only something good *for some purpose*. The good would always be merely the useful, and that for which it is useful would always have to lie outside the will, in sensation. If this sensation, as agreeable sensation, had to be distinguished from the concept of the good, there would be nothing immediately good at all: the good would have to be sought only in the means to something else, namely, to some agreeableness.

There is an old formula of the schools: *we desire nothing except under the aspect of good; we shun nothing except under the aspect of evil*. Its use is often correct, but also often highly detrimental to philosophy, because the expressions *good* and *evil* contain an ambiguity for which [A 104] the limitations of language are to blame: they admit a double meaning. They therefore inevitably distort practical laws and force philosophy into subtle distinctions. In using these expressions, philosophy can readily recognize that the concept differs while the word remains the same, yet can find no separate expressions for it; afterward no agreement can be reached about these distinctions, because no fitting expression could directly mark the difference.⁸

German is fortunate in possessing expressions that keep this difference from being overlooked. Where Latin uses the single word *bonum*, German has two very different concepts and equally different expressions: for *bonum*, *the good* and *well-being*; for *malum*, *evil* and *ill* (or *woe*). Thus [AA V 60] it is one thing to consider an action's [A 105] *goodness* and *evil*, and quite another to consider our *well-being* and *woe* (ill). It already follows that the psychological proposition above remains at least very uncertain if it is translated as: we desire nothing except with regard to our *well-being* or *woe*. By contrast, if it is rendered as: under reason's guidance, we will nothing except insofar as we hold it to be good or evil, it becomes unquestionably certain and at the same time perfectly clear. *Well-being* or *ill* always signifies only a relation to our state of *agreeableness* or *disagreeableness*, of enjoyment and pain. If we desire or shun an object on that account, we do so only insofar as it is related to our sensibility and to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure that it produces. *Good* or *evil*, however, always signifies a relation to the *will*, insofar as the will is determined by the *law of reason* to

make something its object. For the will is never immediately determined by the object and its representation; rather, it is a faculty for making a rule of reason the motive of an action through which an object can become actual. Good or evil thus refers properly to actions, not to a person's state of sensation; and if anything were to be good or evil without qualification—in every respect and without [A 106] any further condition—or to be regarded as such, it could only be the manner of acting, the maxim of the will, and hence the acting person himself as a good or evil human being, but never a thing, that could be so named.

People might laugh all they liked at the Stoic who cried out in the fiercest pangs of gout: "Pain, however much you may torment me, I will still never admit that you are an evil (*κακον*, *malum*)!" Yet he was right. It was an ill: he felt that, and his cries betrayed it. But he had no reason at all to concede that an evil thereby attached to him; for pain does not diminish the worth of his person in the least, but only the worth of his condition. A single lie of which he was conscious would have had to cast down his spirit; but the pain served only as an occasion to raise it, if he was conscious that he had not brought it upon himself through any wrongful action and thereby made himself deserving of punishment.

Whatever we are to call good must, in every rational person's judgment, [AA V 61] be an object of the faculty of desire, and evil must in everyone's eyes be an object of aversion. Hence this judgment requires reason in addition to sense. So it is with [A 107] truthfulness as opposed to lying, with justice as opposed to violence, and so forth. But we can call something an ill that everyone must nevertheless declare to be good—sometimes indirectly, sometimes even directly. Someone undergoing a surgical operation undoubtedly feels it as an ill; but through reason both he and everyone else declare it good. If, however, someone who enjoys provoking and disturbing peaceable people finally meets his match and is sent off with a sound thrashing, this is certainly an ill, yet everyone approves and considers it good in itself, even if nothing further should come of it. Indeed, even the person receiving it must recognize in his reason that he is

being justly treated, because he sees here the exact realization of that proportion between well-being and good conduct which reason inevitably holds before him.

In the judgment of our practical reason, a *very great deal* does indeed depend on our well-being and woe; and as far as our nature as sensible beings is concerned, *everything* depends on our *happiness*, provided that, as reason above all demands, happiness is judged not by a passing sensation but by the influence this contingent circumstance has on our whole existence and our satisfaction with it. [A 108] Yet *not everything without exception* depends on it. A human being is a needy being insofar as he belongs to the sensible world; and to that extent his reason certainly has an undeniable commission from sensibility to concern itself with sensibility's interests and to frame practical maxims, including maxims concerning happiness in this life and, if possible, in a future one. Yet he is not so entirely an animal as to be indifferent to everything reason says on its own account and to use it merely as an instrument for satisfying his needs as a sensible being. For possessing reason does not raise him in worth above mere animality at all, if reason is to serve him only for what instinct accomplishes in animals. It would then be merely a particular method nature had employed to equip the human being for the same end to which it has destined animals, without [AA V 62] destining him for a higher end. Given this arrangement nature has made for him, he does indeed need reason to take his well-being and woe into account at all times. But he also possesses it for a higher purpose: not merely to include in his deliberations what is good or evil in itself, on which pure reason, wholly unconcerned with sensible interests, alone can judge, but to distinguish this judgment entirely [A 109] from the former and make it the supreme condition of that former judgment.

In judging what is good and evil in itself, as distinct from what can be so called only in relation to well-being or ill, the following points matter. Either a principle of reason is already thought in itself as the determining ground of the will, without regard to possible objects of the faculty of desire, and thus merely through the lawful form of the maxim; in that case the principle is a practical law *a priori*, and pure reason is assumed to be practical of itself. The law then

determines the will *immediately*; the action conforming to it is *good in itself*; a will whose maxim always conforms to this law is *absolutely good in every respect*, and is the *supreme condition of everything good*. Or else a determining ground of the faculty of desire precedes the maxim of the will, presupposing an object of pleasure and displeasure, hence something that *delights* or *pains*. Reason's maxim of promoting the former and avoiding the latter determines actions as good in relation to our inclination, and therefore only indirectly—in regard to some other end, as means to it. Such maxims can then never be called laws, although they can be called rational practical precepts. In the latter case the end itself, the enjoyment [A 110] we seek, is not a *good* but a *well-being*, not a concept of reason but an empirical concept of an object of sensation. Yet the use of the means to it, that is, the action, is still called good, because it requires rational deliberation—but not good without qualification, only in relation to our sensibility with regard to its feeling of pleasure and displeasure. The will whose maxim is affected by this, however, is not a pure will, which is directed only toward that in which pure reason can be practical of itself.

Here, then, is the place to explain the paradox of method in a critique of practical reason: *the concept of [AA V 63] good and evil must not be determined before the moral law, although it would seemingly even have to serve as the law's foundation, but only after it and through it, as is done here*. Even if we did not know that the principle of morality is a pure law determining the will *a priori*, we would still, in order not to assume principles wholly gratuitously (*gratis*), have to leave it initially at least *undecided* whether the will has only empirical determining grounds or also pure determining grounds *a priori*. For it conflicts with every fundamental rule of philosophical procedure to assume in advance [A 111] that the very matter to be decided has already been decided. Suppose we wished to begin with the concept of the good in order to derive the laws of the will from it. This concept of an object as good would at the same time identify that object as the will's sole determining ground. Since this concept had no practical law *a priori* as its guide, the touchstone of good or evil could be placed nowhere but in the object's agreement with our feeling of pleasure or displeasure. The use of reason could consist only in determining, on the one hand,

this pleasure or displeasure within the entire connection of all the sensations of my existence and, on the other, the means of procuring its object for me. Now, since only experience can determine what accords with the feeling of pleasure, while the practical law is nevertheless supposed to be founded on this as its condition, the possibility of practical laws *a priori* would be excluded outright. This would happen because one thought it necessary first to discover an object for the will, the concept of which as good would constitute the universal, though empirical, determining ground of the will. Yet what was first necessary was to investigate whether there might also be a determining ground of the will *a priori*. This could never have been found anywhere except in a pure practical [A 112] law, insofar as that law prescribes to maxims merely their lawful form, without regard to an object. But since an object conceived in terms of good and evil had already been made the foundation of every practical law, and since without a preceding law that object could be thought only through empirical concepts, one had already deprived oneself in advance of even the possibility of thinking a pure practical law. If, on the contrary, [AA V 64] one had first investigated such a law analytically, one would have found that it is not the concept of the good as an object that determines the moral law; rather, the moral law first determines and makes possible the concept of the good insofar as it deserves that name without qualification.

This observation, which concerns only the method of the most fundamental moral investigations, is important. It explains at once the source of all the philosophers' errors concerning the supreme principle of morality. For they sought an object of the will in order to make it the matter and foundation of a law, which was then to determine the will not immediately but through that object as brought into relation with the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. Instead, they should first have [A 113] sought a law determining the will *a priori* and immediately, and only then determining the object in accordance with the will. Whether they placed this object of pleasure, which was to furnish the supreme concept of the good, in happiness, perfection, moral feeling, or the will of God, their principle was always heteronomy. They inevitably encountered empirical conditions for a moral law, because they could call their object

good or evil, as an immediate determining ground of the will, only according to its immediate relation to feeling, which is always empirical. Only a formal law—that is, one prescribing to reason nothing beyond the form of its universal legislation as the supreme condition of maxims—can be a determining ground of practical reason *a priori*. The ancients, however, revealed this error openly by directing their entire moral inquiry toward determining the concept of the *highest good*, hence of an object they afterward intended to make the determining ground of the will in the moral law. Such an object can be presented to the will only much later, after the moral law has first been established on its own and justified as the will's immediate determining ground, so that the will is now determined *a priori* as to its form. We shall attempt this in [A 114] the Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason. The moderns, among whom the question of the highest good seems to have fallen out of use, or at least to have become merely incidental, conceal this error, as in many other cases, behind indefinite words. [AA V 65] Yet one still sees it showing through their systems, where it everywhere betrays a heteronomy of practical reason from which a moral law commanding universally *a priori* can never arise.

Now, since the concepts of good and evil, as consequences of the determination of the will *a priori*, also presuppose a pure practical principle, and hence a causality of pure reason, they do not originally refer to objects as do the pure concepts of the understanding, or categories of reason in its theoretical use—for example, as determinations of the synthetic unity of the manifold of given intuitions in one consciousness. Rather, they presuppose these objects as given. They are all, instead, *modes* of a single category, namely causality, insofar as its determining ground consists in reason's representation of a law of causality that reason gives itself as a law of freedom, thereby proving itself practical *a priori*. Yet actions [A 115] belong *on the one hand* under a law that is not a law of nature but a law of freedom, and thus to the conduct of intelligible beings, while *on the other hand*, as events in the sensible world, they also belong to appearances. The determinations of practical reason can therefore have a place only in relation to the latter, and thus in accordance with the categories of the understanding. This is not, however, for the purpose of using the understand-

ing theoretically to bring the manifold of sensible *intuition* under one consciousness *a priori*, but only to subject the manifold of *desires a priori* to the unity of consciousness of a practical reason commanding in the moral law, or of a pure will.

These *categories of freedom*—as we shall call them in contrast to those theoretical concepts as categories of nature—have an evident advantage over the latter. The latter are merely forms of thought that, through universal concepts, designate only indeterminately objects in general for any intuition possible for us. The former, by contrast, concern the determination of a *free power of choice*. No fully corresponding intuition can indeed be given for this power, but it has a pure practical law *a priori* as its foundation, which is true of no concept belonging to the theoretical use of our faculty of cognition. Thus, as elementary practical concepts, instead of having as their given foundation the form of intuition [A 116]—space and time—which does not lie in reason itself but must be drawn from elsewhere, [AA V 66] namely from sensibility, they have the *form of a pure will* within reason, and hence within the faculty of thought itself. Consequently, since all the precepts of pure practical reason concern only the *determination of the will*, not the natural conditions, belonging to the practical faculty, for *carrying out its intention*, practical concepts *a priori*, in relation to the supreme principle of freedom, become cognitions at once and need not await intuitions to acquire meaning. This is for the remarkable reason that they themselves produce the actuality of that to which they refer—the disposition of the will—something theoretical concepts do not do at all. It must only be carefully noted that these categories concern practical reason in general alone, and therefore proceed in order from those that are still morally undetermined and sensibly conditioned to those that, unconditioned by sensibility, are determined solely by the moral law.

Table [A 117]

of the categories of freedom with regard to the concepts of good and evil.

1.

Quantity

- Subjective, according to maxims (the individual's *opinions of the will*)

Objective, according to principles (*precepts*)

A priori objective as well as subjective principles of freedom (*laws*).

2.

Quality

- Practical rules of *commission* (*praeceptivae*)

Practical rules of *omission* (*prohibitivae*)

Practical rules of *exceptions* (*exceptivae*).

3.

Relation

- To *personality*

To the *condition* of the person

Reciprocally, of one person to the condition of another.

4.

Modality

- The *permitted* and the *forbidden*

Duty and what is *contrary to duty*

Perfect and *imperfect duty*.

[AA V 67] It will soon be apparent that in this table freedom is considered as a [A 118] kind of causality not subject to empirical determining grounds, with regard to the actions possible through it as appearances in the sensible world, and therefore in relation to the categories of their possibility in nature. Yet each category is taken so generally that the determining ground of that causality can also be assumed outside the sensible world, in freedom as a property of an intelligible being, until the categories of modality introduce the transition from practical principles in general to those of morality, but only *problematically*; only afterward can the latter be presented *dogmatically* through the moral law. I add nothing further here to explain this table, since it is sufficiently intelligible on its own. A division of this kind, framed according to principles, greatly benefits every science, both in thoroughness and in intelligibility. Thus, for example, the table above and its first heading tell us at once where practical deliberations must begin: with the maxims each person bases on his inclination; with the precepts valid for a class of rational beings insofar as they share certain incli-

nations; and finally with the law valid for all, regardless of their inclinations, and so forth. In [A 119] this way one surveys the entire plan of what must be accomplished, indeed every question of practical philosophy that must be answered, and at the same time the order to be followed.

On the typic of pure practical judgment.

The concepts of good and evil first determine an object for the will. But they themselves stand under a practical rule of reason which, if reason is pure, determines the will *a priori* with regard to its object. Whether an action possible for us in sensibility is a case falling under the rule requires practical judgment, through which what was stated universally in the rule (*in the abstract*) is applied to an action *in the concrete*. But a practical rule of pure reason, *first*, as *practical*, concerns the existence of an object, and *second*, as a *practical rule* of pure reason, carries with it necessity concerning the existence of the action. It is therefore a practical law, and indeed [AA V 68] not a law of nature operating through empirical determining grounds, but a law of freedom, according to which the will is to be determinable [A 120] independently of everything empirical, merely through the representation of a law in general and its form. Yet all cases that arise for possible actions can only be empirical, that is, belong to experience and nature. It therefore seems paradoxical to seek in the sensible world a case that, although always subject thus far only to the law of nature, nevertheless admits the application of a law of freedom, and to which the supersensible idea of the morally good can be applied, so as to be exhibited in it *in the concrete*. Thus the judgment of pure practical reason faces the very same difficulties as that of pure theoretical reason. The latter, however, had a means at hand for escaping them: since its theoretical use required intuitions to which pure concepts of the understanding could be applied, such intuitions, although only of objects of the senses, could nevertheless be given *a priori*, and hence, as regards the connection of their manifold, in conformity *a priori* with the pure concepts of the understanding, as *schemata*. The morally good, by contrast, is something supersensible in respect of its object, for which nothing corresponding can therefore be found in any sensible intuition. Judgment under laws of

pure practical reason thus seems subject to special difficulties, arising from the requirement that a law of freedom be applied to actions as events occurring in the [A 121] sensible world and to that extent belonging to nature.

Yet here a favorable prospect opens once again for pure practical judgment. Subsuming an action possible for me in the sensible world under a *pure practical law* is not a matter of the possibility of the *action* as an event in the sensible world. That belongs to the judgment of reason in its theoretical use according to the law of causality, a pure concept of the understanding for which reason has a *schema* in sensible intuition. Physical causality, or the condition under which it occurs, belongs among the concepts of nature, whose schema is drawn up by the transcendental imagination. Here, however, the issue is not the schema of a case under laws, but the schema—if that word is appropriate here—of a law itself. For the *determination of the will* [AA V 69] (not the action in relation to its outcome) through the law alone, without any other determining ground, binds the concept of causality to conditions quite different from those constituting the connection of nature.

A law of nature, as a law to which objects of sensible intuition as such are subject, must have a corresponding schema, that is, a universal [A 122] procedure of the imagination for presenting *a priori* to the senses the pure concept of the understanding that the law determines. But no intuition, hence no schema for its application *in the concrete*, can be supplied for the law of freedom, as a causality not sensibly conditioned at all, nor therefore for the concept of the unconditionally good. Consequently the moral law has no faculty of cognition mediating its application to objects of nature except the understanding, not the imagination. The understanding can supply for an idea of reason not a *schema* of sensibility but a law—one, however, that can be exhibited *in the concrete* in objects of the senses, hence a law of nature, but only as to its form—as a law for the use of judgment. We can therefore call this the *type* of the moral law.

The rule of judgment under laws of pure practical reason is this: ask yourself whether, if the action you intend were to occur according to a law of nature of which you yourself were a part, you could regard it as possible through your will. By this rule everyone does in fact judge whether actions are morally good

or evil. Thus we say: what if *everyone*, whenever he [A 123] believed it would serve his advantage, permitted himself to deceive, or considered himself entitled to shorten his life as soon as he became thoroughly weary of it, or looked on others' distress with complete indifference—and you too belonged to such an order of things: would you be there with the consent of your will? Now everyone knows perfectly well that if he secretly permits himself a deception, this does not mean everyone else does the same; or that if he is unloving without being noticed, everyone else would not immediately be so toward him. Hence this comparison of the maxim of his actions with a universal law of nature is not the determining ground of his will. Yet the latter is a *type* for judging the former according to moral principles. If the maxim of the action is not such that it withstands the test of the form of a [AA V 70] law of nature in general, it is morally impossible. Even the most ordinary understanding judges in this way; for a law of nature always underlies all its most familiar judgments, even its judgments of experience. It therefore always has such a law at hand, except that, in cases where causality through freedom is to be judged, it makes that *law of nature* merely the type of a *law of freedom*. For without having at hand something it could use as an example in a case of experience, it could not provide the law of pure practical reason with a use in application.

It is therefore also permissible to use the *nature of the sensible world* as the *type* [A 124] of an *intelligible nature*, provided that I do not transfer to the latter the intuitions and what depends on them, but relate to it only the *form of lawfulness* in general. The concept of this form occurs even in the most ordinary use of reason, but can be cognized determinately *a priori* for no other purpose than the pure practical use of reason alone. For laws as such are to this extent alike, wherever they may obtain their determining grounds.

Moreover, of everything intelligible, absolutely nothing is available to us except freedom, through the moral law, and even freedom only insofar as it is a presupposition inseparable from that law. Furthermore, any intelligible objects to which reason might yet lead us under that law's guidance have, in turn, no reality for us beyond what serves that same law and the use of pure practical reason. Yet reason is entitled, and indeed required, to use nature, as regards its pure

form of understanding, as a type for judgment. The present observation therefore serves to prevent what belongs merely to the *typic* of concepts from being counted among the concepts themselves. This typic of judgment guards against the *empiricism* of practical reason, which places the practical concepts [A 125] of good and evil merely in consequences of experience, in so-called happiness. Happiness and the endlessly beneficial consequences of a will determined by self-love, if that will at the same time made itself a universal law of nature, can indeed serve as a wholly appropriate type for the morally good, but are not identical with it. The same typic also guards against the *mysticism* of practical reason, which turns what served only as a *symbol* into a *schema*: [AA V 71] that is, it supplies actual yet nonsensible intuitions—of an invisible kingdom of God—as the basis for applying moral concepts, and strays into the transcendent. Only the *rationalism* of judgment is appropriate to the use of moral concepts. It takes from sensible nature nothing beyond what pure reason can also think for itself, namely lawfulness, and carries into supersensible nature nothing beyond what, conversely, can actually be exhibited through actions in the sensible world according to the formal rule of a law of nature in general. Nevertheless, guarding against the *empiricism* of practical reason is far more important and advisable. For *mysticism* remains compatible with the purity and sublimity of the moral law; moreover, it is not exactly natural or in keeping with ordinary ways of thinking to strain one's imagination toward supersensible [A 126] intuitions, so the danger on this side is not so widespread. Empiricism, by contrast, tears morality out of dispositions by the roots—although it is in dispositions, not merely in actions, that the high worth consists which humanity can and should acquire through morality. In place of duty it substitutes something quite different, namely an empirical interest through which inclinations conduct their mutual dealings. For precisely this reason, and because it allies itself with all inclinations—which, whatever shape they take, degrade humanity when raised to the dignity of a supreme practical principle, yet are so congenial to everyone's way of feeling—it is far more dangerous than any fanaticism, which can never become the lasting condition of many people.

⁸ Moreover, the expression *under the aspect of good* is also ambiguous. It can mean: we represent something to ourselves as good when and *because* we *desire* (will) it; but also: we desire something *because* we *represent it to ourselves as good*. Thus either desire is the determining ground of the concept of the object as good, or the concept of the good is the determining ground of desire (of the will). In the former case, *under the aspect of good* would mean that we will something *under the idea* of the good; in the second, *as a consequence of this idea*, which must precede willing as its determining ground.

Book I, Chapter III: The incentives of pure practical reason



Chapter III. On the Incentives of Pure Practical Reason.

What is essential to all moral worth in actions is *that the moral law determine the will immediately*. If the will is determined *in accordance with* the moral law, but only through a feeling, of whatever kind, that [A 127] must be presupposed for the law to become a sufficient determining ground of the will, and thus not *for the sake of the law*, then the action will contain *legality* but not *morality*. If, [AA V 72] then, by an *incentive* (*elater animi*) we understand the subjective determining ground of the will of a being whose reason is not, by its nature, already necessarily in conformity with the objective law, it follows first that no incentives at all can be attributed to the divine will. The incentive of the human will, however—and of the will of every created rational being—can never be anything other than the moral law. Thus the objective determining ground must always, entirely on its own, also be the subjectively sufficient determining ground of the action, if the action is not merely to fulfill the *letter* of the law without containing its *spirit*.⁹

For the sake of the moral law, then, and to give it influence over the will, we must not seek some other incentive that would allow us to dispense with the incentive of the moral law; for all this [A 128] would produce nothing but hypocrisy without substance. It is even *questionable* to let any other incentives, such as those of advantage, cooperate *alongside* the moral law. Nothing therefore remains but to determine carefully how the moral law becomes an incentive, and what happens to the human faculty of desire, as an effect of that determining ground upon it, when the law is such an incentive. For how a law can of itself and immediately be a determining ground of the will—which is nevertheless the essence of all morality—is a problem insoluble for human reason, and is identical with the problem of how a free will is possible. We shall therefore have to indicate *a priori*, not the ground from which the moral law in itself supplies an incentive, but what it effects—or, better, must effect—in the mind insofar as it is an incentive.

What is essential to every determination of the will through the moral law is that the will, as a free will, be determined by the law alone: thus not merely without the cooperation of sensible impulses, but even by rejecting them all and restricting every inclination insofar as it might conflict with that law. To this extent, then, the effect of the moral law as incentive is only negative, and as such this incentive can be cognized *a priori*. For every inclination and every sensible impulse is founded on [A 129] [AA V 73] feeling, and the negative effect upon feeling, through the restriction imposed on inclinations, is itself feeling. Consequently we can discern *a priori* that the moral law, as the determining ground of the will, must, by thwarting all our inclinations, produce a feeling that can be called pain. Here we have the first, and perhaps the only, case in which we could determine from concepts *a priori* the relation of a cognition—here, a cognition of pure practical reason—to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure. All inclinations together, which can also be brought into a tolerable system whose satisfaction is then called one's own happiness, constitute *selfishness* (*solipsismus*). This is either *self-love*, a *benevolence* toward oneself that takes precedence over everything (*Philautia*), or *satisfaction* with oneself (*Arrogantia*). The former is specifically called *self-love*, the latter *self-conceit*.

Pure practical reason merely *restricts* self-love: since it is natural and already active in us before the moral law, reason only limits it to the condition of agreement with that law, whereupon it is called *rational self-love*. But it *strikes* self-conceit *down* altogether. For all claims to self-esteem that precede conformity with the moral law are null [A 130] and wholly unjustified, since certainty of a disposition conforming to this law is precisely the first condition of all personal worth, as we shall soon make clearer; and every pretension prior to it is false and contrary to law. Now the propensity to self-esteem, insofar as it rests merely on sensibility, belongs among the inclinations that the moral law restricts. The moral law therefore strikes down self-conceit. Yet this law is something positive in itself, namely the form of an intellectual causality, that is, of freedom. Thus, as it *weakens* self-conceit by opposing its subjective antagonist, the inclinations within us, it is at the same time an object of *respect*; and as it even *strikes down*, that is, humiliates self-conceit, it is an object of the greatest *respect*. Hence it is also the ground of a positive feeling that is not empirical in origin and is cognized *a priori*. Respect for the moral law is therefore a feeling produced by an intellectual ground, and this feeling is the only one that we cognize completely *a priori* and whose necessity we can discern.

[AA V 74] In the preceding chapter we saw that everything presenting itself as an object of the will *before* the moral law is, by that law itself as the supreme condition of practical reason, [A 131] excluded from the determining grounds of the will under the name of the unconditionally good. We also saw that the mere practical form, consisting in the fitness of maxims for universal legislation, first determines what is good in itself and without qualification, and establishes the maxim of a pure will, which alone is good in every respect. Yet we now find our nature as sensible beings so constituted that the matter of the faculty of desire—objects of inclination, whether of hope or fear—presses itself upon us first. Our self, determinable by feeling, although wholly unfit through its maxims for universal legislation, nevertheless strives to assert its claims beforehand as the first and original claims, just as if it constituted our entire self. This propensity to make oneself, according to the subjective determining grounds of one's power of choice, the objective determining ground of the will in general

may be called *self-love*. When it makes itself legislative and an unconditional practical principle, it may be called *self-conceit*. Now the moral law, which alone is truly objective, namely in every respect, entirely excludes the influence of self-love on the supreme practical principle and infinitely restricts self-conceit, which prescribes the subjective conditions of self-love as laws. Whatever restricts our self-conceit in our own judgment humiliates us. Thus [A 132] the moral law inevitably humiliates every human being when he compares with it the sensible propensity of his nature. That whose representation *as a determining ground of our will* humiliates us in our self-consciousness arouses *respect* for itself insofar as it is positive and a determining ground. The moral law is therefore also subjectively a ground of respect. Now everything found in self-love belongs to inclination, and every inclination rests on feelings. Hence whatever restricts all the inclinations together in self-love necessarily influences feeling by that very fact. We thus comprehend how it is possible to discern *a priori* that the moral law, by excluding inclinations and the propensity to make them the supreme practical condition—that is, self-love—from any participation in supreme legislation, can exert an effect upon feeling [AA V 75] that is on the one hand merely *negative*, but on the other, with regard to the restricting ground of pure practical reason, *positive*. For this purpose no special kind of feeling, under the name of practical or moral feeling, need be assumed as preceding the moral law and lying at its foundation.

The negative effect upon feeling, that of disagreeableness, is, like [A 133] every influence upon it and like every feeling in general, *pathological*. But as an effect of consciousness of the moral law, and hence in relation to an intelligible cause, namely the subject of pure practical reason as supreme legislator, this feeling of a rational subject affected by inclinations is indeed called humiliation, or intellectual contempt. Yet in relation to its positive ground, the law, it is at the same time respect for that law. No feeling on behalf of the law takes place; rather, in reason's judgment, insofar as the law clears resistance out of the way, the removal of a hindrance is reckoned equivalent to a positive furthering of causality. Thus this feeling can now also be called a feeling of respect for the moral law, and on both grounds together a *moral feeling*.

Thus, just as the moral law is, through pure practical reason, the formal determining ground of the action, and just as it is also the material, though only objective, determining ground of the objects of action under the names of good and evil, so it is also the subjective determining ground, that is, the incentive, to this action. For it influences the subject's sensibility and produces a feeling conducive to the law's influence on the will. Here [A 134] no feeling attuned to morality *precedes* in the subject. That is impossible, because all feeling is sensible, whereas the incentive of a moral disposition must be free of every sensible condition. Rather, sensible feeling, which underlies all our inclinations, is indeed the condition of the sensation we call respect; but the cause determining it lies in pure practical reason. This sensation, because of its origin, therefore cannot be called pathological, but must be called *practically produced*. For the representation of the moral law deprives self-love of its influence and self-conceit of its delusion, thereby diminishing the hindrance to pure practical reason. By removing the counterweight, it produces in reason's judgment the representation of the superiority [AA V 76] of reason's objective law over the impulses of sensibility, and thus the relative weight of the former with regard to a will affected by the latter. Respect for the law is therefore not an incentive to morality; it is morality itself, considered subjectively as an incentive. Pure practical reason, by rejecting every claim of self-love in opposition to itself, gives authority to the law, which now alone has influence. Here we must note that, since respect is an effect upon feeling, and hence upon [A 135] the sensibility of a rational being, it presupposes this sensibility, and therefore also the finitude of those beings upon whom the moral law imposes respect. Respect for the *law* cannot be attributed to a supreme being, or even to a being free from all sensibility, for whom sensibility therefore cannot hinder practical reason. This feeling, under the name of moral feeling, is thus produced solely by reason. It serves neither to judge actions nor, still less, to establish the objective moral law itself, but merely as an incentive to make that law one's maxim. Yet what name could more fittingly be given to this singular feeling, which cannot

be compared with any pathological feeling? It is of so distinctive a kind that it seems to be at the command of reason alone, and indeed of pure practical reason.

Respect is always directed only toward persons, never toward things. Things can arouse *inclination* in us and, if they are animals, such as horses, dogs, and so forth, even *love*; or they can arouse *fear*, as do the sea, a volcano, or a beast of prey, but never *respect*. Something closer to this feeling is *admiration*, which as an emotion—astonishment—can also be directed toward things: for example, mountains towering to the sky; the size, [A 136] number, and distance of the heavenly bodies; the strength and speed of certain animals, and so on. But none of this is respect. A human being, too, can be an object of love, fear, or admiration, even to the point of astonishment, without thereby being an object of respect. His playful humor, his courage and strength, his power through his rank among others, can inspire such sensations in me, yet inward respect for him is still lacking. Fontenelle says: “*Before a person of rank I bow, but my spirit [AA V 77] does not bow.*” I can add: before a humble, ordinary citizen in whom I perceive an uprightness of character to a degree of which I am not conscious in myself, *my spirit bows*, whether I will it or not, however high I hold my head to keep him from overlooking my superior position. Why? His example holds before me a law that strikes down my self-conceit when I compare it with my conduct; and I see before me its observance, hence its *practicability*, proved in deed. I may even be conscious of an equal degree of uprightness myself, and still the respect remains. For since everything good in a human being is always imperfect, the law, made vivid through [A 137] an example, always strikes down my pride. The man I see before me provides a standard for this: any impurity that may still cling to him is not known to me as my own is, so he appears to me in a purer light. *Respect* is a *tribute* we cannot refuse to merit, whether we will it or not. We may at most withhold it outwardly, but we cannot prevent ourselves from feeling it inwardly.

Respect is so *far* from being a feeling of *pleasure* that we yield to it toward another person only reluctantly. We try to discover something that can lighten its burden for us, some fault to compensate us for the humiliation such an

example brings upon us. Even the dead are not always safe from this criticism, especially when their example seems beyond imitation. Even the moral law itself, in its *solemn majesty*, is exposed to this effort to ward off respect for it. Can we really suppose there is any other reason why we would gladly lower it to the level of our familiar inclination, or why everyone takes such pains to make it the favored precept of our own well-understood advantage, than the desire to be rid of that daunting respect which holds our own unworthiness before us so [A 138] sternly? Yet, conversely, there is also so *little displeasure* in it that once we have laid aside self-conceit and allowed that respect a practical influence, we cannot gaze enough upon the splendor of this law. The soul believes itself elevated in the same measure as it sees the holy law exalted above itself and its frail nature. Great talents and [AA V 78] activity proportionate to them can indeed also produce respect, or a feeling analogous to it; it is entirely fitting to accord it to them, and here admiration seems identical with that sensation. On closer inspection, however, we notice that, since it always remains uncertain how much of the ability is due to inborn talent and how much to cultivation through one's own diligence, reason conjecturally represents it to us as the fruit of cultivation, and hence as merit. This perceptibly lowers our self-conceit and either reproaches us on that account or imposes upon us the emulation of such an example in a manner suited to us. The respect we show such a person—properly speaking, the law his example holds before us—is therefore not mere admiration. This is also confirmed by the fact that when the common crowd of admirers believes it has learned from elsewhere of the bad character of such a man, for instance Voltaire, [A 139] it abandons all respect for him, while the true scholar still feels it, at least from the standpoint of his talents. For the scholar himself is engaged in a task and calling that makes emulation of that man, to a certain extent, a law for him.

Respect for the moral law is therefore the sole and at the same time indubitable moral incentive, just as this feeling is directed toward an object only on this ground alone. First, the moral law determines the will objectively and immediately in reason's judgment. But freedom, whose causality is determinable solely through the law, consists precisely in limiting all inclinations, and hence the

estimation of the person himself, to the condition of observing its pure law. This limitation now has an effect upon feeling and produces a sensation of displeasure that can be cognized *a priori* from the moral law. But to that extent it is merely a *negative* effect, which, as arising from the influence of pure practical reason, above all restricts the activity of the subject insofar as inclinations are its determining grounds, and hence diminishes the opinion of his personal worth, which is reduced to nothing without agreement with the moral law. Thus the effect of this law [A 140] upon feeling is merely humiliation. We can indeed discern this *a priori*, but in it we can recognize not the force of the pure practical law as incentive, but only the resistance to incentives of sensibility. [AA V 79] Yet the same law is objectively—that is, in the representation of pure reason—an immediate determining ground of the will, so this humiliation occurs only in relation to the purity of the law. Consequently, lowering the claims of moral self-esteem, that is, humiliation on the sensible side, is an elevation of the moral, that is, practical estimation of the law itself on the intellectual side: in a word, respect for the law. It is thus also a feeling positive in its intellectual cause, cognized *a priori*. For every reduction of hindrances to an activity furthers that activity itself. Acknowledgment of the moral law, however, is consciousness of an activity of practical reason from objective grounds that fails to manifest its effect in actions only because subjective, pathological causes hinder it. Respect for the moral law must therefore also be regarded as its positive but indirect effect upon feeling, insofar as the law weakens the obstructive influence of inclinations by humiliating self-conceit. It must thus be regarded as a subjective ground of activity, that is, as an *incentive* to observing the law, and [A 141] as a ground for maxims of a way of life conforming to it. From the concept of an incentive arises that of an *interest*. This is never attributed to any being except one possessing reason, and means an *incentive* of the will insofar as it is *represented through reason*. Since in a morally good will the law itself must be the incentive, *moral interest* is a pure interest of practical reason alone, free from sensibility. The concept of a *maxim* is also founded on that of an interest. A maxim is therefore morally genuine only when it rests on the mere interest one takes in observing the law. All three concepts, however—an *incentive*, an *inter-*

est, and a *maxim*—can be applied only to finite beings. For they all presuppose a limitation in a being's nature: the subjective constitution of its power of choice does not of itself agree with the objective law of practical reason. They presuppose a need to be impelled to activity by something, because an inner hindrance opposes it. They cannot, therefore, be applied to the divine will.

There is something so singular in the boundless esteem for the pure moral law, stripped of every advantage, as practical [A 142] [AA V 80] reason presents it to us for observance—reason whose voice makes even the boldest offender tremble and compels him to hide from its sight—that we should not be surprised to find this influence of a merely intellectual idea upon feeling unfathomable to speculative reason. We must be content that we can nevertheless discern this much *a priori*: such a feeling is inseparably connected with the representation of the moral law in every finite rational being. If this feeling of respect were pathological, and thus a feeling of pleasure founded on inner *sense*, it would be futile to discover a connection of it with any idea *a priori*. But it is a feeling directed solely toward the practical, attached to the representation of a law merely on account of its form, not on account of any object of it. It can therefore be counted neither as enjoyment nor as pain, and yet it produces an *interest* in observing the law that we call *moral*. Indeed, the capacity to take such an interest in the law—or respect for the moral law itself—is properly *moral feeling*.

Consciousness of a *free* submission of the will to the law, yet combined with an unavoidable constraint imposed on all inclinations, [A 143] though only by one's own reason, is respect for the law. The law that demands and also inspires this respect is, as we see, none other than the moral law, for no other excludes all inclinations from immediately influencing the will. An action objectively practical according to this law, with every determining ground drawn from inclination excluded, is called *duty*. Because of this exclusion, duty contains in its concept practical *necessitation*, that is, determination to actions however *reluctantly* they may be performed. The feeling arising from consciousness of this necessitation is not pathological, as if produced by an object of the senses, but is possible only practically, that is, through a preceding objective determi-

nation of the will and causality of reason. As *submission* to a law, that is, to a command announcing constraint for the sensibly affected subject, it therefore contains no pleasure, but rather, to this extent, displeasure in the action. Yet since this constraint is exercised solely through the legislation of one's *own* reason, it also contains *elevation*. The [AA V 81] subjective effect upon feeling, insofar as pure practical reason is its sole cause, can thus be called only *self-approval* with regard to that reason: one recognizes oneself as determined to the action without any interest, solely by the [A 144] law, and now becomes conscious of an entirely different interest, subjectively produced through it, which is purely practical and *free*. Taking this interest in an action conforming to duty is not something an inclination advises; rather, reason commands it unconditionally through the practical law and also actually produces it. It therefore bears a name entirely its own: respect.

The concept of duty thus requires of the action *objectively* that it agree with the law, but of its maxim subjectively that it contain respect for the law as the sole way in which the law determines the will. On this rests the distinction between consciousness of having acted *in conformity with duty* and of having acted *from duty*, that is, from respect for the law. The former, legality, is also possible if inclinations alone have been the determining grounds of the will; but the latter, *morality*, or moral worth, must be placed solely in the action's being done from duty, that is, merely for the sake of the law.¹⁰

In all moral judgments it is of the greatest importance [A 145] to attend with the utmost precision to the subjective principle of every maxim, so that all morality of actions is placed in their necessity *from duty* and from respect for the law, not from love and fondness for what the actions are to produce. For human beings and all created rational beings, moral necessity is necessitation, that is, obligation; and every action founded on it must be represented as duty, not as a way of proceeding that we already favor of ourselves or could come to favor. It is as though we could ever reach a point where, without respect [AA V 82] for the law, which is connected with fear or at least apprehension of transgression, we could ever attain *holiness* of will of ourselves, like the Deity exalted above all dependence. This would require a conformity of the will with the

pure moral law that had, as it were, become our nature and could never be disturbed; since we could never be tempted to be unfaithful to the law, [A 146] it might finally cease altogether to be a command for us.

For the will of a supremely 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 its actions through *respect* for this law and reverence for its duty. No other subjective principle must be assumed as incentive. Otherwise the action may indeed turn out as the law prescribes, but since it conforms to duty without being done from duty, the disposition behind it is not moral—and in this legislation it is the disposition that really matters.

It is very beautiful to do good to human beings out of love and sympathetic benevolence, or to be just out of love of order. But this is not yet the genuine moral maxim of our conduct suited to our position among rational beings *as human beings*, if we presume, as volunteers, so to speak, to set ourselves above the thought of duty with proud conceit, and, as though independent of command, to will merely from our own pleasure what would require no command for us. We stand under a *discipline* of [A 147] reason, and in all our maxims must not forget our subjection to it. We must withdraw nothing from it, nor diminish the authority of the law, although our own reason gives it, through the self-loving delusion of placing the determining ground of our will, even when in conformity with the law, in anything other than the law itself and respect for it. Duty and obligation are the only names we must give to our relation to the moral law. We are indeed legislative members of a moral kingdom possible through freedom, presented to us by practical reason as an object of respect; but we are at the same time subjects, not its sovereign. To mistake our lower station as creatures, and in self-conceit to resist the authority of the [AA V 83] holy law, is already to desert it in spirit, even if its letter were fulfilled.

The possibility of a command such as “*Love God above all and your neighbor as yourself*”¹ is entirely consistent with this. For as a command it demands respect for a law that [A 148] *commands love*, and does not leave it to arbitrary choice to make love one’s principle. But love for God as inclination—pathological love—is impossible, for he is not an object of the senses. The same love toward

human beings is indeed possible, but cannot be commanded, for no human being has it in his power to love someone merely on command. It is therefore only *practical love* that is meant in this core of all laws. To love God in this sense means to carry out his commands *gladly*; to love one's neighbor means to fulfill every duty toward him *gladly*. But the command that makes this a rule cannot command us to *have* this disposition in actions conforming to duty, but only to *strive* for it. For a command that one should do something gladly is self-contradictory, because if we already know of ourselves what we are obliged to do, and were also conscious of doing it gladly, a command concerning it would be wholly unnecessary; and if, on the other hand, we do it, but not gladly, only out of respect for the law, a command making this respect the incentive of the maxim would work directly against the disposition commanded. Thus that law of all laws, like every moral precept of the Gospel, presents the moral [A 149] disposition in its complete perfection. As an ideal of holiness, this is unattainable by any creature, yet it is the archetype we should strive to approach and to equal in an unbroken but infinite progress. For if a rational creature could ever reach the point of obeying all moral laws entirely *gladly*, this would mean that within it there was not even the possibility of a desire tempting it to deviate from them. Overcoming such a desire always costs the subject a sacrifice, and thus requires self-constraint, that is, inner necessitation to do what one [AA V 84] does not do altogether gladly. But a creature can never reach this degree of moral disposition. For since it is a creature, and hence always dependent with regard to what it requires for complete satisfaction with its condition, it can never be wholly free from desires and inclinations. Because these rest on physical causes, they do not of themselves agree with the moral law, which has entirely different sources. They therefore always make it necessary, in relation to them, to found the disposition of one's maxims on moral necessitation, not on ready devotion; on respect, which *demand*s observance of the law even if it is reluctant, not on love, [A 150] which fears no inner resistance of the will to the law. Nevertheless, a creature must make the latter, mere love of the law, the constant though unattainable goal of its striving (since the law would then cease to be a *command*, and morality, now passing subjectively into holiness, would

cease to be *virtue*). For in the case of what we esteem highly yet shrink from because we are conscious of our weaknesses, greater ease in satisfying it transforms reverential awe into affection and respect into love. At least, this would be the perfection of a disposition devoted to the law, if any creature could ever attain it.

This reflection is intended here not so much to bring the Gospel command cited above into clear concepts in order to check *religious fanaticism* concerning the love of God, as to determine precisely the moral disposition directly concerning duties toward human beings as well, and to restrain, or if possible prevent, a *merely moral* fanaticism that infects many minds. The moral level on which the human being stands—and, so far as we can discern, every rational creature—is respect for the moral law. The disposition incumbent upon him in observing it is to obey it from duty, not from [A 151] voluntary affection, nor even from an unbidden striving gladly undertaken of his own accord. The moral condition in which he can always find himself is *virtue*, that is, moral disposition *in struggle*, not *holiness* in the supposed *possession* of a complete *purity* of the will's dispositions. It is sheer moral fanaticism and an inflation of self-conceit to attune minds by encouraging actions as noble, sublime, and magnanimous [AA V 85] in such a way as to delude them. For then they suppose that the determining ground of their actions is not duty, that is, respect for the law, whose yoke they *must* bear, even reluctantly—though it is gentle, since reason itself imposes it upon us—and which still humbles them as they observe it, or *obey* it. Instead, they suppose that those actions are expected of them not from duty but as pure merit. For by imitating such deeds from such a principle they would not in the least have satisfied the spirit of the law, which consists in the disposition submitting to the law, not in the action's conformity to law, whatever its principle may be. They place the incentive in the *pathological*, in sympathy or even self-love, rather than in the moral, in the law. Moreover, in this way they produce a flighty, extravagant, fantastical way of thinking, flattering themselves with the spontaneous [A 152] goodness of their mind, which supposedly needs neither spur nor bridle, nor even a command at all. In doing so they forget their obligation, which ought to occupy their thoughts before merit does.

Actions of others performed with great sacrifice and indeed solely for duty's sake may certainly be praised as *noble* and *sublime* deeds—but only insofar as there are signs suggesting that they were done entirely from respect for duty, not from surges of feeling. If, however, one wishes to present them to someone as examples to follow, respect for duty, as the sole genuine moral feeling, must absolutely be employed as the incentive: this earnest, holy precept does not leave our vain self-love free to play with pathological impulses insofar as they are analogous to morality, or to pride ourselves on *meritorious* worth. If we only search carefully, we shall find for every praiseworthy action a law of duty that *commands*, and does not leave to our pleasure what might gratify our propensity. This is the only way of presenting things that morally forms the soul, because it alone admits firm and precisely determined principles.

If *fanaticism*, in its most general meaning, is a transgression of the limits of human reason undertaken [A 153] on principles, then *moral fanaticism* is this transgression of the limits pure practical reason sets to humanity. [AA V 86] Reason forbids placing the subjective determining ground of actions conforming to duty, that is, their moral incentive, in anything other than the law itself, or placing the disposition thereby introduced into maxims anywhere other than in respect for this law. It therefore commands us to make the thought of duty, which strikes down all *arrogance* as well as vain *self-love*, the supreme *principle of life* of all morality in the human being.

If this is so, then not only novelists and sentimental educators, however vehemently they denounce sentimentality, but sometimes even philosophers—indeed, the strictest of all, the Stoics—have introduced *moral fanaticism* in place of a sober but wise moral discipline. The fanaticism of the latter was more heroic, that of the former insipid and melting. Without hypocrisy, one can say with complete truth of the moral teaching of the Gospel that it first, through the purity of its moral principle and at the same time through that principle's fitness for the [A 154] limitations of finite beings, subjected all good human conduct to the discipline of a duty set before their eyes. This duty does not let

them indulge in fantasies of imagined moral perfections; and it sets bounds of humility, that is, self-knowledge, to both self-conceit and self-love, which alike are eager to mistake their limits.

Duty! Sublime and mighty name, embracing nothing endearing or ingratiating, but demanding submission; yet threatening nothing that would arouse natural aversion in the mind and frighten it, in order to move the will. You merely set forth a law that of itself finds entry into the mind, and yet wins reverence even against our will, though not always obedience—a law before which all inclinations fall silent, even as they secretly work against it. What origin is worthy of you? Where is the root of your noble descent, which proudly rejects all kinship with inclinations, and from which to descend is the indispensable condition of that worth which human beings can receive only from themselves?

It can be nothing less than what raises the human being above himself as a part of the sensible world, what binds him to an order of things that only the understanding can think, and that at the same time has beneath it the [A 155] whole sensible world, together with the human being's empirically determinable existence [AA V 87] in time and the entirety of all ends, which alone is adequate to unconditional practical laws such as the moral law. It is nothing other than *personality*: freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature, yet considered at the same time as a faculty of a being subject to distinctive pure practical laws given by its own reason. Thus the person, as belonging to the sensible world, is subject to his own personality insofar as he also belongs to the intelligible world. It is therefore no wonder that the human being, belonging to both worlds, must regard his own being in relation to his second and highest vocation only with reverence, and its laws with the greatest respect. On this origin rest various expressions that designate the worth of objects according to moral ideas. The moral law is *holy*, inviolable. The human being is indeed unholy enough, but *humanity* in his person must be holy to him. In the whole of creation, anything one wishes and has power over may also be used *merely as a means*; only the human being, and with him every rational creature, is an *end in itself*. For he is [A 156] the subject of the moral law, which is holy, by virtue of the autonomy of his freedom. Precisely because of this autonomy,

every will—even each person’s own will directed toward himself—is limited by the condition of agreement with the *autonomy* of the rational being. It must not subject that being to any purpose impossible according to a law that could arise from the will of the affected subject himself; thus it must never use him merely as a means, but always at the same time as an end himself. We rightly ascribe this condition even to the divine will with regard to rational beings in the world as its creatures, since it rests on their *personality*, through which alone they are ends in themselves.

This respect-inspiring idea of personality, which sets before our eyes the sublimity of our nature in its vocation, while at the same time making us notice our conduct’s failure to measure up to it and thereby striking down self-conceit, is natural and readily apparent even to the most ordinary human reason. Has not every even moderately honest man sometimes found that he refrained from an otherwise harmless lie, by which he could either [AA V 88] extricate himself from an unpleasant affair or even benefit a beloved and deserving friend, merely [A 157] so that he would not have to despise himself secretly in his own eyes? In the greatest misfortune of life, which he could have avoided had he only been able to set duty aside, is an upright man not still sustained by the consciousness that he has nevertheless preserved and honored the dignity of humanity in his person, that he has no cause to be ashamed before himself or to shrink from the inward gaze of self-examination? This comfort is not happiness, nor even the smallest part of it. For no one will wish for an occasion for it, or perhaps even for a life in such circumstances. But he lives, and cannot endure being unworthy of life in his own eyes. This inward reassurance is therefore merely negative in relation to everything that might make life agreeable: it wards off the danger of sinking in personal worth after he has already wholly surrendered the worth of his condition. It is the effect of respect for something quite different from life, in comparison and contrast with which life, with all its agreeableness, has no worth at all. He lives on only from duty, not because he finds the slightest relish in living.

Such is the genuine incentive of pure practical reason. [A 158] It is none other than the pure moral law itself, insofar as it lets us sense the sublimity of our own supersensible existence and subjectively produces respect for their higher vocation in human beings who are at the same time conscious of their sensible existence and their consequent dependence on their nature, so strongly affected in that respect by feeling. Now so many charms and amenities of life can readily be joined with this incentive that even for their sake alone the most prudent choice of a rational *Epicurean*, reflecting on life's greatest well-being, would favor morally good conduct. It can also be advisable to combine this prospect of a cheerful enjoyment of life with that supreme motive, already sufficiently determining on its own—but only to counterbalance the enticements that vice never fails to hold out on the other side, not to place in it even the smallest part of the actual moving force when duty is at issue. For that would amount to wishing to contaminate the moral disposition [AA V 89] at its source. The venerability of duty has nothing to do with the enjoyment of life. Duty has its own distinctive law and its own distinctive tribunal; and however vigorously one tried to shake the two together in order to administer their mixture as a medicine [A 159] for the sick soul, they would immediately separate of themselves. If they do not, the former has no effect at all; and even if physical life gained some strength in the process, moral life would nevertheless fade away beyond rescue.

- 9 Of every action conforming to law that nevertheless was not done for the sake of the law, one can say that it is morally good merely according to the *letter*, but not according to the *spirit*, the disposition.
- 10 If one carefully considers the concept of respect for persons as set out above, one will notice that it always rests on consciousness of a duty that an example holds before us. Respect can therefore never have any ground other than a moral one. Wherever we use this expression, it is very good—and even, from a psychological standpoint, very useful for understanding human beings—to attend to the secret and remarkable, yet frequently occurring regard that a human being pays to the moral law in his judgments.

- ¹¹ With this law, the principle of one's own happiness, which some wish to make the supreme principle of morality, forms a strange contrast. It would read: *"Love yourself above all, but God and your neighbor for your own sake."*

BOOK I

Critical examination of the analytic of pure practical reason



By the critical examination of a science, or of a section of it that forms a system in its own right, I mean the investigation and justification of why it must have precisely this systematic form and no other, when compared with another system grounded in a similar cognitive faculty. Now practical reason rests on the same cognitive faculty as speculative reason insofar as both are *pure reason*. The difference between their systematic forms must therefore be determined by comparing them, and its ground must be given.

The Analytic of pure theoretical reason dealt with the cognition of objects that may be given to the understanding, [A 160] and therefore had to begin with *intuition*, hence with sensibility (since intuition is always sensible); only from there could it advance to concepts (of the objects of this intuition), and only after both had been presented could it end with *principles*. Practical reason, by contrast, deals not with objects in order to *cognize* them, but with its own capacity to *make them actual* (in accordance with cognition of them): that is, with a *will*, which is a causality insofar as reason contains its determining ground. Consequently, it has no object of intuition to specify, but, as practical reason, *only a law* of that causality (since the concept of causality always

involves reference to a law determining the existence of a manifold in its mutual relations). A critique of its analytic must therefore, insofar as it is to be practical reason—which is the task proper—begin with the *possibility of practical* [AA V 90] *principles a priori*. Only from there could it advance to *concepts* of the objects of practical reason, namely those of the unconditionally good and evil, in order first to supply them in accordance with those principles (for before these principles no cognitive faculty can supply these objects as good and evil). Only then could the final chapter, on the [A 161] relation of pure practical reason to sensibility and its necessary influence on sensibility, which can be cognized *a priori*—that is, on *moral feeling*—bring the section to a close. Thus the Analytic of pure practical reason divided the whole range of conditions of its use in complete analogy with theoretical reason, but in reverse order. The Analytic of pure theoretical reason was divided into transcendental aesthetic and transcendental logic; that of practical reason, conversely, into the logic and aesthetic of pure practical reason (if I may employ these otherwise quite inappropriate names here merely for the sake of analogy). Logic, in turn, was divided there into the analytic of concepts and that of principles, and here into that of principles and concepts. There the aesthetic had two further parts, because sensible intuition is of two kinds; here sensibility is considered not at all as a capacity for intuition, but merely as feeling (which can be a subjective ground of desire), and in this respect pure practical reason permits no further division.

It is also quite easy to see why this division into two parts, with their subdivisions, was not actually carried out here—as the example of the former might initially have tempted one to attempt. For since it is *pure reason* [A 162] that is considered here in its practical use, thus proceeding from principles *a priori* and not from empirical determining grounds, the division of the Analytic of pure practical reason must resemble that of a syllogism. It proceeds from the universal in the *major premise* (the moral principle), through the subsumption of possible actions (as good or evil) under it in the *minor premise*, to the *conclusion*: the subjective determination of the will (an interest in the practically possible good and the maxim grounded on it). Anyone who has been [AA V 91]

convinced by the propositions presented in the Analytic will take pleasure in such comparisons. For they rightly encourage the hope that we may perhaps someday attain insight into the unity of the entire faculty of pure reason, theoretical as well as practical, and derive everything from one principle. This is the unavoidable need of human reason, which finds complete satisfaction only in a fully systematic unity of its cognitions.

But if we also consider the content of the cognition that we can have of and through pure practical reason, as its Analytic presents it, we find differences no less remarkable than the analogy between it and theoretical reason. In the case of theoretical reason, the *capacity* [A 163] *for pure rational cognition a priori* could be proved quite easily and evidently through examples drawn from the sciences. Since they test their principles in so many ways through methodical use, there is less reason here than in ordinary cognition to fear a hidden admixture of empirical grounds of cognition. But that pure reason, without any admixture of an empirical determining ground, is also practical on its own had to be demonstrable from the *most ordinary practical use of reason*. This required establishing the supreme practical principle as one that every natural human reason recognizes as entirely *a priori*, independent of all sensible data, and as the supreme law of its will. The purity of its origin first had to be confirmed and justified even *in the judgment of this ordinary reason*, before science could take it in hand and make use of it—as a fact, so to speak, that precedes all quibbling about its possibility and all consequences that might be drawn from it. But this circumstance too is readily explained by what was said just above: pure practical reason must necessarily begin with principles, which must therefore underlie all science as its first data and cannot first [A 164] arise from it. This justification of moral principles as principles of pure reason could also be carried out quite satisfactorily and with sufficient certainty by appealing solely to the judgment of ordinary human understanding. For everything empirical that might steal into our [AA V 92] maxims as a determining ground of the will immediately *reveals itself* through the feeling of pleasure or pain that necessarily accompanies it insofar as it arouses desire; and pure practical reason directly *resists* admitting this feeling into its principle as a condition. The het-

erogeneity of the determining grounds, empirical and rational, is made recognizable through this resistance of practically legislative reason to every interfering inclination, through a distinctive kind of *sensation*. This sensation does not precede practical reason's legislation, but is produced solely by it, and indeed as a constraint: it is the feeling of respect, such as no human being has for inclinations, whatever their kind, but does have for the law. This renders that heterogeneity so clear, so prominent and striking, that no one, not even the most ordinary human understanding, could fail to recognize at once, in an example presented to it, that empirical grounds of willing may indeed advise it to follow their attractions, [A 165] but can never demand that it *obey* anything other than the pure practical law of reason alone.

Distinguishing the *doctrine of happiness* from the *doctrine of morals*—in the former empirical principles constitute the entire foundation, while in the latter they form not even the slightest addition—is therefore the first and most important business incumbent on the Analytic of pure practical reason. In this it must proceed as *precisely*, indeed, even at the risk of being called *painstaking*, as any geometer in his work. Yet the philosopher, who here faces greater difficulty—as always in rational cognition through mere concepts without their construction—because he cannot take any intuition of a pure noumenon as his basis, also enjoys an advantage: almost like the chemist, he can at any time perform an experiment with anyone's practical reason to distinguish the moral (pure) determining ground from the empirical. He need only add the moral law, as a determining ground, to the empirically affected will—for example, that of someone who would like to lie because he can gain something by it. It is as though the chemist added alkali to a solution of calcareous earth in hydrochloric acid: the acid immediately leaves the lime, combines with the alkali, and the lime precipitates. Just so, [A 166] present the moral [AA V 93] law to someone who is otherwise an honest person—or who, for this occasion, merely imagines himself in an honest person's place—and he recognizes by it the worthlessness of a liar. His practical reason immediately abandons advantage in its judgment of what he ought to do and unites with what preserves his respect for his own person: truthfulness. Once advantage has been separated

and washed free of every attachment to reason, which is entirely on the side of duty, anyone can then weigh it, so that it may indeed enter into combination with reason in other cases, but never where it could conflict with the moral law, which reason never abandons but unites with most intimately.

But this *distinction* between the principle of happiness and that of morality does not at once make them *opposites*. Pure practical reason does not require us to *give up* our claims to happiness, but only to *disregard* them altogether whenever duty is at issue. In a certain respect, it can even be a duty to attend to one's happiness: partly because it includes means for fulfilling one's duty, among them skill, health, and wealth; partly because its absence—poverty, for example—contains temptations [A 167] to transgress one's duty. But promoting one's happiness can never be a duty directly, still less a principle of all duty. Now all determining grounds of the will apart from the single pure practical law of reason, the moral law, are empirical without exception, and as such belong to the principle of happiness. They must therefore all be separated from the supreme moral principle and never incorporated into it as a condition, because doing so would destroy all moral worth, just as an empirical admixture in geometrical principles would destroy all mathematical evidence—the most excellent quality mathematics possesses, in Plato's judgment, and one that takes precedence even over all its usefulness.

In place of a deduction of the supreme principle of pure practical reason—that is, an explanation of the possibility of such cognition *a priori*—nothing further could be offered than this: if we understood the possibility of the freedom of an efficient cause, we would also understand not merely the possibility but the necessity of the moral law as the supreme practical law of rational beings to whom we attribute freedom in the causality of their will. For the two concepts are so inseparably connected that practical [AA V 94] freedom could also be defined as the will's independence of every law other than [A 168] the moral law alone. Yet how the freedom of an efficient cause is possible, especially in the sensible world, cannot by any means be understood. We are fortunate if we can merely be sufficiently assured that no proof of its impossibility is available, and then, compelled by the moral law that postulates it, are thereby also entitled to

assume it. Many, however, still believe that they can explain this freedom from empirical principles, like any other natural capacity. They regard it as a *psychological* property, whose explanation would depend solely on a closer investigation of the *nature of the soul* and the incentive of the will, rather than as a *transcendental* predicate of the causality of a being belonging to the sensible world—which is really the sole issue here. In this way they annul the magnificent disclosure granted us by pure practical reason through the moral law: the disclosure of an intelligible world by giving reality to the otherwise transcendent concept of freedom. They thereby annul the moral law itself, which admits absolutely no empirical determining ground. It will therefore be necessary to add something here to guard against this illusion and expose *empiricism* in the full nakedness of its shallowness.

The concept of causality as *natural necessity*, in distinction [A 169] from causality as *freedom*, concerns only the existence of things insofar as it is *determinable in time*, hence as appearances, in contrast with their causality as things in themselves. Now if we take the determinations of the existence of things in time to be determinations of things in themselves, as our most usual way of representing them does, necessity in causal relations cannot in any way be reconciled with freedom; rather, they stand in contradictory opposition. For the former entails that every event, and thus every action occurring at a point in time, is necessary under the condition of what existed in the preceding time. Since past time is no longer within my power, every action I perform must be necessary through determining grounds *that are not within my power*: that is, at the moment when I act, I am never free. Indeed, even if I assumed my entire existence to be independent of any external cause—God, for example—[AA V 95] so that the determining grounds of my causality, and even of my entire existence, were not outside me at all, this would still not in the least transform that natural necessity into freedom. For at every point in time I always remain subject to the necessity of being determined to act by *what is not within my power*. [A 170] The series of events, infinite *toward the past*, which I would only ever

continue according to an already predetermined order and would nowhere begin of myself, would be an unbroken chain of nature; my causality would therefore never be freedom.

If, then, we wish to attribute freedom to a being whose existence is determined in time, we cannot, at least in this respect, exempt it from the law of natural necessity governing all events in its existence, and thus also its actions; that would amount to handing it over to blind chance. But since this law inevitably concerns all causality of things insofar as their *existence is determinable in time*, freedom would have to be rejected as an empty and impossible concept if this were also the way we had to represent the *existence of these things in themselves*. Consequently, if we still wish to save freedom, no course remains but to attribute a thing's existence insofar as it is determinable in time, and thus also its causality according to the law of *natural necessity, solely to appearance*, while attributing *freedom* to the very *same being as a thing in itself*. This is certainly unavoidable if we wish to preserve both these mutually opposed concepts together. Yet in applying them, when we wish to regard them as united in one and the same action [A 171] and thus to explain this union itself, great difficulties emerge that seem to make such a union unworkable.

If I say of someone who commits a theft that, under the natural law of causality, this deed is a necessary consequence of the determining grounds of the preceding time, then it was impossible for it not to occur. How, then, can judgment according to the moral law alter anything here and presuppose that it could nevertheless have been left undone, because the law says that it ought to have been left undone? That is, how can someone be called entirely free at the very same point in time, and with regard to the very same action, at which, and with regard to which, he nevertheless stands under an unavoidable [AA V 96] natural necessity? To seek an escape by merely adapting the *kind* of determining grounds of his causality under natural law to a *comparative* concept of freedom is a miserable expedient. According to this concept, an effect is sometimes called free when its determining natural ground lies *within* the acting being: for example, what a thrown body does in free motion, where the word freedom is used because, while in flight, it is not driven by anything external; or as we also

call a clock's motion free because it drives its own hand, which therefore need not be pushed [A 172] from outside. In the same way, human actions, though necessary through their determining grounds preceding them in time, are still called free because they involve internal representations produced by our own powers, desires generated through these according to the circumstances that occasion them, and hence actions effected at our own discretion. Some still let themselves be put off with this expedient and think they have solved by a little verbal quibbling that difficult problem on which millennia have labored in vain—a solution therefore hardly likely to lie so entirely on the surface. For in the question of the freedom that must underlie all moral laws and the imputation appropriate to them, it does not matter at all whether causality determined according to a natural law is necessitated by determining grounds that lie *within* or *outside* the subject, or, in the former case, whether by instinct or by determining grounds thought through reason. If, as these very men themselves concede, these determining representations still have the ground of their existence in time, specifically in the *previous state*, and that state in another preceding it, and so on, then these determinations may indeed be internal; they may have psychological rather than mechanical causality [A 173]—that is, produce action through representations rather than through bodily motion. Yet they remain *determining grounds* of the causality of a being insofar as its existence is determinable in time, hence under necessitating conditions of past time that are therefore *no longer within its power* when the subject is to act. These conditions may indeed involve psychological freedom, if one insists on using this word for a merely internal linkage of the soul's representations; but they still involve natural necessity and thus leave no *transcendental* [AA V 97] *freedom*. This freedom must be thought as independence of everything empirical, and thus of nature in general, whether nature is considered as an object of inner sense merely in time or also of outer sense in both space and time. Without freedom in this latter, proper meaning, which alone is practical *a priori*, no moral law and no imputation according to it are possible. For precisely this reason, all necessity of events in time under the natural law of causality can also be called the *mechanism* of nature, although this does not mean that the things subject

to it must be actual material *machines*. Only the necessity of the connection of events in a temporal series, as it unfolds according to natural law, is considered here. The subject in which this [A 174] course of events takes place may be called an *automaton materiale*, if its machinery is driven by matter, or, with Leibniz, *spirituale*, if it is driven by representations. And if the freedom of our will were nothing other than the latter—say, psychological and comparative, not at the same time transcendental, that is, absolute—then at bottom it would be no better than the freedom of a roasting spit, which also performs its motions by itself once it has been wound up.

To resolve, in the case presented, the apparent contradiction between natural mechanism and freedom in one and the same action, we must recall what was said in the Critique of Pure Reason, or follows from it: natural necessity, which cannot coexist with the subject's freedom, attaches solely to the determinations of a thing that stands under temporal conditions, hence only to those of the acting subject as appearance. In this respect, therefore, the determining grounds of each of its actions lie in what belongs to past time and *is no longer within its power*. This must also include its deeds already committed and the character thereby determinable for it in its own eyes as a phenomenon. But the very same subject, [A 175] which is also conscious of itself on the other hand as a thing in itself, considers its existence *insofar as it does not stand under temporal conditions*, and itself as determinable only through laws that it gives itself through reason. In this existence of its own, nothing precedes its determination of the will. Rather, every action and, in general, [AA V 98] every determination of its existence that changes in accordance with inner sense—even the entire sequence of its existence as a sensible being—is, in the consciousness of its intelligible existence, to be regarded solely as a consequence, never as a determining ground of its causality as a *noumenon*. In this respect, a rational being can rightly say of every unlawful action it commits that it could have left it undone, even though as appearance the action is sufficiently determined in the past and to that extent is unavoidably necessary. For the action, together with everything

past that determines it, belongs to a single phenomenon of its character, which it supplies for itself, and in accordance with which it imputes to itself, as a cause independent of all sensibility, the causality of those appearances.

The verdicts of that wondrous faculty within us which we call conscience agree perfectly with this. A person may use all the ingenuity he pleases to portray to himself some unlawful conduct [A 176] he remembers as an unintentional oversight, a mere carelessness that can never be entirely avoided, and thus as something in which he was swept along by the current of natural necessity, and on this basis declare himself free of guilt. Yet he finds that the advocate speaking in his favor can by no means silence the accuser within him if he is conscious that, at the time he committed the wrong, he was in possession of his senses—that is, exercising his freedom. And although he *explains* his offense to himself from some bad habit acquired through gradually neglecting attention to himself, to the point that he can regard it as a natural consequence of that habit, this still cannot protect him against the self-reproach and rebuke he directs at himself. On this too rests remorse for a deed long since committed, whenever it is remembered: a painful sensation produced by a moral disposition, practically empty insofar as it cannot serve to undo what has been done. It would even be absurd—as *Priestley*, a genuine and consistent *fatalist*, also declares it to be. For this candor he deserves more approval than those who, while in fact asserting the mechanism of the will and affirming its freedom only in [A 177] words, still wish to be credited—without making the possibility of such imputation intelligible—[AA V 99] with including freedom in their syncretistic system. Yet as pain it is entirely justified, because reason, when the law of our intelligible existence—the moral law—is at issue, recognizes no distinction of time and asks only whether the event belongs to me as my deed. It then always morally connects the same sensation with it, whether it is happening now or happened long ago. For *sensible life*, in relation to the *intelligible* consciousness of its existence (freedom), has the absolute unity of a phenomenon. Insofar as this phenomenon contains merely appearances of the disposition with which the moral law is concerned—of character—it must be judged not according to the natural necessity that belongs to it as appearance, but according to the absolute spon-

taneity of freedom. We may therefore grant that, if we could gain so deep an insight into a person's way of thinking, as manifested in both inner and outer actions, that we knew every incentive to these actions, even the slightest, and likewise every external occasion acting upon them, we could calculate that person's future conduct with as much certainty as a lunar or solar eclipse, and nevertheless maintain that the person [A 178] is free. For if we were capable of yet another view, namely an intellectual intuition of the same subject—a view certainly not granted to us, in place of which we have only the concept supplied by reason—we would recognize that this entire chain of appearances, with regard to everything that can in any way concern the moral law, depends on the spontaneity of the subject as a thing in itself, whose determination admits of no physical explanation whatever. In the absence of this intuition, the moral law assures us of the distinction between the relation of our actions as appearances to the sensible being of our subject and the relation through which this sensible being itself is referred to the intelligible substratum within us.—From this standpoint, which is natural to our reason though inexplicable, we can also justify judgments that, although passed with complete conscientiousness, nevertheless seem at first sight to contradict all fairness. There are cases in which people show such early wickedness, from childhood onward, even under an upbringing that has benefited others alongside them, and continue to advance in it so far into adulthood, that they are considered born villains and, in their way of thinking, wholly incorrigible. [AA V 100] Yet they are judged for their acts and omissions just like anyone else; [A 179] their crimes are reproached to them as guilt, and they themselves—even as children—find these reproaches entirely well grounded, as though, despite the hopeless natural constitution of mind attributed to them, they remained as responsible as every other human being. This could not happen unless we presupposed that everything arising from their power of choice—as every intentionally committed action undoubtedly does—rests on a free causality. From earliest youth this causality expresses its character in its appearances, its actions, which reveal through the uniformity of conduct a natural connection. But this connection does not necessitate the

bad constitution of the will; it is rather the consequence of freely adopted evil and unalterable principles, which make the person only all the more reprehensible and deserving of punishment.

But freedom faces yet another difficulty insofar as it is to be united with natural mechanism in a being belonging to the sensible world—a difficulty that, even after everything so far has been conceded, still threatens freedom with complete destruction. Yet amid this danger one circumstance also offers hope of an outcome favorable to the assertion of freedom: the same difficulty weighs far more heavily—in [A 180] fact, as we shall soon see, exclusively—upon the system in which existence determinable in time and space is taken to be the existence of things in themselves. It therefore does not compel us to abandon our principal presupposition of the ideality of time as a mere form of sensible intuition, hence as a mere way of representing that is peculiar to the subject as belonging to the sensible world. It requires only that we reconcile the difficulty with this idea.

For even if we are granted that the intelligible subject can still be free with regard to a given action, although as a subject also belonging to the sensible world it is mechanically conditioned with regard to that action, it nevertheless seems that we must concede something further as soon as we assume that God, as the universal original being, is also *the cause of the existence of substance*. This proposition can never be abandoned without also abandoning the concept of God as the being of all beings, and hence his all-sufficiency, on which everything in theology depends. It seems we must then concede that human actions have their determining ground in [AA V 101] something *entirely beyond human power*: namely, in the causality of a supreme being distinct from the human being, on whom the latter's existence and the entire determination of his causality wholly depend. Indeed, if [A 181] human actions, insofar as they belong to a person's determinations in time, were not mere determinations of that person as appearance but as a thing in itself, freedom could not be saved. A human being would be a marionette, or a Vaucanson automaton, built and wound up by the supreme master of all works of art. Self-consciousness would indeed make it a thinking automaton, but the consciousness of its spontaneity,

if taken for freedom, would be mere deception. For this spontaneity would deserve that name only comparatively: the immediate determining causes of its motion, and a long series ascending to their determining causes, would indeed be internal, but the final and highest cause would still be found entirely in another's hands. I therefore do not see how those who still insist on regarding time and space as determinations belonging to the existence of things in themselves intend to avoid the fatal necessity of actions here. Nor, if they simply concede—as the otherwise penetrating *Mendelssohn* did—that the two are conditions necessarily belonging only to the existence of finite and derivative beings, but not to that of the infinite original being, do I see how they intend to justify their authority to make such a distinction. I do not even see how they can avoid the contradiction [A 182] they commit when they regard existence in time as a determination necessarily attaching to finite things in themselves: God is the cause of this existence, yet cannot be the cause of time or space itself, because these must be presupposed *a priori* as necessary conditions of the existence of things. His causality with respect to the existence of these things must consequently itself be conditioned by time, whereupon all the contradictions with the concepts of his infinity and independence must inevitably arise. By contrast, it is quite easy for us to distinguish the determination of divine existence as independent of all temporal conditions from that of a being of the sensible world, as the *existence of a being in itself* from that of a *thing in appearance*. Hence, unless we accept this ideality of time and space, [AA V 102] *Spinozism* alone remains. In it, space and time are essential determinations of the original being itself, while the things dependent on it—and thus we ourselves as well—are not substances but merely accidents inhering in it. For if these things exist merely as its effects *in time*, which would be the condition of their existence in themselves, then the actions of these beings too would have to be merely its actions, performed somewhere and sometime. Despite the absurdity of its fundamental idea, [A 183] *Spinozism* therefore argues far more conclusively than the theory of creation can when it regards beings assumed to be

substances and *existing in themselves in time* as effects of a supreme cause, yet not at the same time as belonging to that cause and its action, but as substances in their own right.

The difficulty mentioned above is resolved briefly and clearly as follows. If existence *in time* is merely a sensible way in which thinking beings in the world represent existence, and consequently does not concern them as things in themselves, then the creation of these beings is a creation of things in themselves. For the concept of creation does not belong to the sensible way of representing existence and causality, but can be referred only to noumena. Consequently, when I say of beings in the sensible world that they are created, I consider them in that respect as noumena. Just as it would therefore be a contradiction to say that God is a creator of appearances, so it is also a contradiction to say that, as creator, he is the cause of actions in the sensible world, hence as appearances, although he is the cause of the existence of the acting beings as noumena. Now if it is possible to maintain freedom without prejudice to the natural mechanism [A 184] of actions as appearances—provided we take existence in time to hold merely of appearances, not of things in themselves—then the fact that the acting beings are creatures cannot make the slightest difference here. For creation concerns their intelligible, not their sensible existence, and thus cannot be regarded as a determining ground of appearances. But the outcome would be entirely different if beings in the world existed as things in themselves *in time*, since the creator of the substance would then also be the author of the entire mechanism in that substance.

Such is the great importance of separating time, as well as space, from the existence of things in themselves, as accomplished in the Critique of Pure Speculative [AA V 103] Reason.

But, it will be said, the resolution of the difficulty presented here still contains much that is difficult and scarcely admits of a lucid exposition. Yet is any other resolution that has been attempted, or might be attempted, easier and more comprehensible? One might rather say that the dogmatic teachers of metaphysics showed more cunning than sincerity in keeping this difficult point out of sight as far as possible, in the hope that, if they said nothing about it, no one

else would readily think of it either. If a science is to be helped, all its difficulties must be *exposed*, and even those that stand most secretly [A 185] in its way must be *sought out*. For each calls forth a remedy that cannot be found without providing the science with an increase either in scope or in precision; thus even the obstacles become means of advancing the science's thoroughness. By contrast, if difficulties are deliberately concealed or removed only by palliatives, sooner or later they break out into incurable evils that destroy the science in a complete skepticism.

Since it is really the concept of freedom alone, among all the ideas of pure speculative reason, that affords so great an extension in the field of the supersensible, though only with respect to practical cognition, I ask myself: *why has it alone been endowed with such great fruitfulness*, while the other ideas merely indicate the vacant place for possible pure beings of the understanding, but cannot determine their concept in any way? I soon realize that, since I can think nothing without a category, the category must first be sought out in the rational idea of freedom with which I am occupied; here it is the category of *causality*. And although no corresponding intuition can be supplied [A 186] for the *rational concept* of freedom, as a concept that transcends experience, a sensible intuition must nevertheless first be given for the *concept of the understanding*—causality—for whose synthesis *that rational concept* demands the unconditioned. Through this intuition its objective reality [AA V 104] is first secured. Now all categories are divided into two classes: the *mathematical*, which concern merely the unity of synthesis in the representation of objects, and the *dynamical*, which concern that unity in the representation of the existence of objects. The former, those of magnitude and quality, always contain a synthesis of the *homogeneous*. In this synthesis, the unconditioned for the conditioned given in sensible intuition in space and time can never be found, since it would itself have to belong to space and time and thus always be conditioned in turn. Hence in the Dialectic of pure theoretical reason, the two opposed ways of finding the unconditioned and the totality of conditions for these categories were both false. The categories of the second class, those of causality and of the necessity of a thing, did not require this homogeneity of the conditioned and

the condition in the synthesis at all. For what had to be represented here was not how intuition is composed of a manifold within it, but only how the existence of the conditioned object corresponding to it is added to the existence of the condition, as connected with it in the understanding. [A 187] Here it was permissible to place the unconditioned, though otherwise undetermined, in the intelligible world as the condition of what is thoroughly conditioned in the sensible world—both with regard to causality and to the contingent existence of things themselves—and to make the synthesis transcendent. Hence the Dialectic of pure speculative reason also found that the two seemingly opposed ways of finding the unconditioned for the conditioned did not in fact contradict one another. For example, in the synthesis of causality, we may think, for what is conditioned in the series of causes and effects of the sensible world, a causality that is not itself sensibly conditioned. The same action, which as belonging to the sensible world is always sensibly conditioned—that is, mechanically necessary—may nevertheless also, as belonging to the causality of the acting being insofar as it belongs to the intelligible world, rest on a sensibly unconditioned causality, and thus be thought as free. All that remained was to transform this *could be* into an *is*: that is, in an actual case, to prove, as though by a fact, that certain actions presuppose such a causality—an intellectual, sensibly unconditioned causality—whether these actions are actual or merely commanded, that is, objectively practically necessary. We could not hope to encounter [A 188] [AA V 105] this connection in actions actually given in experience as events in the sensible world, because causality through freedom must always be sought outside the sensible world, in the intelligible. Yet no things other than sensible beings are given to us for perception and observation. Nothing therefore remained but perhaps to find an incontestable and indeed objective principle of causality that excludes every sensible condition from its determination: a principle in which reason does not appeal to anything *else* as a determining ground with regard to causality, but already contains that ground itself through this principle, and in which it is thus itself practical as *pure reason*. This principle, however, needs neither searching out nor invention. It has long been present in the reason of all human beings and incorpo-

rated into their very being: it is the principle of *morality*. Thus that unconditioned causality and the capacity for it, freedom, and with freedom a being—myself—that belongs to the sensible world yet also to the intelligible world, are not merely *thought* indeterminately and problematically, as speculative reason could already establish was possible. They are even, *with respect to the law* of their causality, *determined* and assertorically *cognized*. In this way the actuality of the intelligible world is given to us, and given *determinately* in a practical respect. This determination, [A 189] which for theoretical purposes would be *transcendent*, exceeding experience, is for practical purposes *immanent*. But we could take no such step with regard to the second dynamical idea, that of a *necessary being*. We could not ascend to it from the sensible world without the mediation of the first dynamical idea. For if we wished to try, we would have to risk the leap of leaving everything given to us behind and soaring toward something of which nothing is given to us that could mediate the connection of such an intelligible being with the sensible world, since the necessary being was to be cognized as given *outside us*. By contrast, as is now evident, this is quite possible with respect to *our own* subject: through the moral law it determines itself *on the one hand* as an intelligible being, by virtue of freedom, and *on the other* cognizes itself as active in the sensible world according to this determination. The concept of freedom alone allows us to find the unconditioned and intelligible for the conditioned and sensible without having to go outside ourselves. For it is our reason [AA V 106] itself that, through the supreme and unconditioned practical law, cognizes itself and the being conscious of this law—our own person—as belonging to the pure world of understanding, and indeed even determines the manner [A 190] in which it can be active as such a being. We can thus understand why, within the entire faculty of reason, *only the practical* can lead us beyond the sensible world and supply cognitions of a supersensible order and connection; but precisely for this reason, of course, these cognitions can be extended only as far as is strictly necessary for the pure practical purpose.

Allow me on this occasion to draw attention to just one more thing: every step taken with pure reason, even in the practical field, where subtle *speculation* is entirely disregarded, nevertheless accords so precisely and spontaneously with every element of the critique of theoretical reason that it is as though each step had been deliberately and carefully devised solely to confirm that critique. This exact agreement of the most important propositions of practical reason with the often seemingly oversubtle and unnecessary observations of the critique of speculative reason is in no way sought out, but arises of itself—as anyone can be convinced by simply pursuing moral investigations to their principles. It surprises us, fills us with wonder, and strengthens the maxim already recognized and praised by others: in every scientific investigation, continue undisturbed on your course with all possible precision and openness, without attending to [A 191] what it might conflict with outside its field, but carry it through on its own as truthfully and completely as you can. Repeated observation has convinced me that, once this work is brought to completion, what halfway through sometimes seemed very doubtful to me in relation to other doctrines outside it finally agreed perfectly, in an unexpected way, with what had emerged of itself without the slightest regard for those doctrines, without partiality or preference for them—provided I set that doubt aside for the time being and attended solely to my work until it was complete. Writers would spare themselves many errors and much wasted effort, wasted because directed toward illusion, if only they could resolve to proceed with a little more openness.

Book II, Chapter I: A dialectic of pure practical reason in general



Book II. [A 192] [AA V 107] Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason.

Chapter I. On a Dialectic of Pure Practical Reason in General.

Pure reason always has its dialectic, whether considered in its speculative or its practical use. For it demands the absolute totality of conditions for a given conditioned thing, and this can be found only in things in themselves. But all concepts of things must be referred to intuitions, which for us human beings can never be other than sensible. They therefore allow us to cognize objects not as things in themselves, but merely as appearances, in whose series of conditioned things and conditions the unconditioned can never be found. Hence an unavoidable illusion arises from applying this rational idea of the [A 193] totality of conditions, and thus of the unconditioned, to appearances as though they were things in themselves—as they are always taken to be in the absence of a critique to warn us. Yet this illusion would never be noticed as deceptive if it did not betray itself through a *conflict* of reason with itself in applying to appearances its principle of presupposing the unconditioned for everything conditioned. Reason is thereby compelled to trace this illusion to its source and discover how it can be removed, which can be done only through a complete

critique of the entire faculty of pure reason. Thus the antinomy of pure reason, revealed in its dialectic, is in fact the most beneficial error into which human reason could ever have fallen. For it finally drives us to seek the key to escape from this labyrinth; once found, that key also discloses what we did not seek but nevertheless need: a view into a higher, unchanging order of things, in which we already exist, and in which we can now be instructed by definite precepts to continue our existence in accordance with reason's highest vocation. [AA V 108]

How this natural [A 194] dialectic is to be resolved in the speculative use of pure reason, and error arising from an otherwise natural illusion prevented, can be found at length in the critique of that faculty. But reason fares no better in its practical use. As pure practical reason, it likewise seeks the unconditioned for the practically conditioned, which rests on inclinations and natural need. It seeks this not as the determining ground of the will, but, even when that ground has been given in the moral law, as the unconditioned totality of the *object* of pure practical reason, under the name of the *highest good*.

To determine this idea sufficiently for practice—that is, for the maxim of our rational conduct—is the *doctrine of wisdom*. This in turn, as a *science*, is *philosophy* in the sense in which the ancients understood the word: for them it was instruction in the concept of what the highest good consists in, and in the conduct through which it is to be attained. It would be good to leave this word with its old meaning, as a *doctrine of the highest good*, insofar as reason strives to make it a *science*. For, on the one hand, the limiting condition appended to it would accord with the Greek expression, which means love of *wisdom*, while also sufficing to include under the name of philosophy love of *science*, and hence all [A 195] speculative cognition of reason insofar as it serves reason both for that concept and for the practical determining ground. Yet it would not let us lose sight of the chief end for whose sake alone philosophy can be called a doctrine of wisdom. On the other hand, it would also be well to discourage the self-conceit of anyone who dared claim the title of philosopher for himself by presenting him, in the very definition, with a standard of self-assessment that would greatly lower his pretensions. For to be a *teacher of wisdom* would surely

mean something more than to be a pupil who has still not advanced far enough to guide himself, much less others, with a sure expectation of attaining so high an end. It would mean being a *master in the knowledge of wisdom*, which is more than a modest person will claim for himself. Philosophy, like [AA V 109] wisdom itself, would thus always remain an ideal, represented completely and objectively in reason alone, but subjectively, for the individual, only the goal of his unceasing striving. Only someone who can also exhibit in his own person, as an example, wisdom's unfailing effect—in mastery of himself and the unquestionable interest he takes above all [A 196] in the common good—is entitled to profess that he possesses this ideal under the arrogated name of philosopher. The ancients too required this if that honorable name was to be deserved.

With regard to the dialectic of pure practical reason in determining the concept of *the highest good*, we need preface only one further reminder. If its resolution succeeds, this dialectic, no less than that of theoretical reason, promises the most beneficial effect: the contradictions of pure practical reason with itself, candidly set out and not concealed, compel a complete critique of its own faculty.

The moral law is the sole determining ground of the pure will. But since it is merely formal, requiring only the form of the maxim as universally legislative, it abstracts, as a determining ground, from all matter, hence from every object of willing. Thus, although the highest good may be the entire *object* of pure practical reason, that is, of a pure will, it must not on that account be taken as its *determining ground*. The moral law alone must be regarded as the ground for making the highest good, and its realization or promotion, our object. This reminder is important in so delicate a matter as the determination of moral [A 197] principles, where even the slightest misinterpretation corrupts dispositions. For the Analytic will have shown that, if we assume any object under the name of a good as the determining ground of the will prior to the moral law, and then derive the supreme practical principle from it, this would always bring about heteronomy and displace the moral principle.

But it goes without saying that, if the moral law is already included in the concept of the highest good as its supreme condition, then the highest good is not merely an *object*: its concept and the representation of its existence [AA V 110] as possible through our practical reason are also, at the same time, the *determining ground* of the pure will. For then it is in fact the moral law, already included and thought in this concept, and no other object, that determines the will according to the principle of autonomy. This order of the concepts concerning the determination of the will must not be lost from view; otherwise we misunderstand ourselves and believe we are contradicting ourselves where everything stands together in the most perfect harmony.

Book II, Chapter II: The dialectic of pure reason in determining the highest good



Chapter II. [A 198] On the Dialectic of Pure Reason in Determining the Concept of the Highest Good.

The concept of the *highest* already contains an ambiguity that, if overlooked, can give rise to needless disputes. The highest can mean either the supreme (*supremum*) or the complete (*consummatum*). The former is the condition that is itself unconditioned, that is, subordinate to no other (*originarium*); the latter is the whole that forms no part of a still greater whole of the same kind (*perfectissimum*). That virtue (as worthiness to be happy) is the *supreme condition* of everything that can seem desirable to us, and thus of all our pursuit of happiness as well, and is therefore the *supreme* good, has been proved in the Analytic. But this does not yet make it the whole and complete good, as the object of the faculty of desire of rational finite beings; for that, *happiness* is also required—not merely in the partial eyes of the person who makes himself his end [A 199], but even in the judgment of an impartial reason that regards that person, in the world generally, as an end in himself. For to need happiness, to be worthy of it as well, and yet not to share in it cannot possibly be consistent with the perfect willing of a rational being who at the same time possessed all power, even if we

think of such a being only as an experiment. Now insofar as virtue and happiness together constitute a person's possession of the highest good, and, when happiness is distributed in exact proportion to morality (as the person's worth and worthiness to be happy), constitute the *highest good* of a possible world, this means the [AA V 111] whole, the complete good. Within it, however, virtue, as the condition, is always the supreme good, because it has no further condition above it; happiness is always something that, though agreeable to its possessor, is not by itself good absolutely and in every respect, but always presupposes morally lawful conduct as its condition.

Two determinations *necessarily* united in one concept must be connected as ground and consequence, either so that this *unity* is regarded as *analytic* (a logical connection) or as *synthetic* (a real combination): the former according to the law of identity, the latter according to that of [A 200] causality. The connection of virtue with happiness can therefore be understood in either of two ways. The endeavor to be virtuous and the rational pursuit of happiness might be not two different actions but wholly identical ones, so that the former would need no other maxim as its basis than the latter. Or that connection is taken to mean that virtue produces happiness as something distinct from the consciousness of virtue, as a cause produces an effect.

Among the ancient Greek schools, only two properly followed the same method in determining the concept of the highest good to this extent: they did not allow virtue and happiness to count as two different elements of the highest good, and thus sought the unity of the principle according to the rule of identity. Yet they differed again in which of the two they chose as the basic concept. The *Epicurean* said: to be conscious of one's maxim leading to happiness is virtue; the *Stoic*: to be conscious of one's virtue is happiness. For the former, *prudence* amounted to morality; for the latter, who chose a loftier name for virtue, *morality* alone was true wisdom.

It is regrettable that these men's acuteness (though [A 201] we must also admire them for having attempted, so early, every conceivable path of philosophical conquest) was unhappily employed in reasoning out an identity between utterly heterogeneous concepts, those of happiness and virtue. But it

suit the dialectical spirit of their age—a spirit that even now sometimes misleads subtle minds—to abolish essential differences between principles that can never be reconciled by trying to turn them into verbal disputes, thus contriving a semblance of conceptual unity under merely [AA V 112] different names. This generally happens where the union of heterogeneous grounds lies so deep or so high, or would require so complete a transformation of the doctrines otherwise accepted in the philosophical system, that people shrink from entering deeply into the real distinction and prefer to treat it as a disagreement over mere formalities.

Although both schools tried to reason out an identity between the practical principles of virtue and happiness, they did not agree on how to force this identity into being. Rather, they diverged infinitely from one another: one placed its principle on the aesthetic side, the other on the logical; the former in consciousness of sensible need, the latter in the independence [A 202] of practical reason from all sensible determining grounds. According to the *Epicurean*, the concept of virtue already lay in the maxim of promoting one's own happiness; according to the *Stoic*, by contrast, the feeling of happiness was already contained in the consciousness of one's virtue. But what is contained in another concept is indeed identical with a part of what contains it, not with the whole; and two wholes can moreover differ specifically from one another, though they consist of the very same material, if the parts are combined into a whole in entirely different ways in each. The Stoic maintained that virtue was the *entire highest good*, and happiness only the consciousness of possessing it, as belonging to the subject's condition. The Epicurean maintained that happiness was the *entire highest good*, and virtue only the form of the maxim for pursuing it, namely the rational use of the means to it.

Now the Analytic makes it clear that the maxims of virtue and those of one's own happiness are entirely heterogeneous as regards their supreme practical principle. Far from being in agreement, although they belong to one highest good, they greatly restrict and impair one another within the same subject when it comes to making that good possible. Thus the question, *How is the highest good practically [A 203] possible?* remains an unsolved problem despite

all previous *attempts at coalition*. What makes it difficult to solve, however, is given in the Analytic: happiness and morality are two specifically quite *different elements* of the highest good, and their connection therefore *cannot be cognized analytically* [AA V 113] (as though someone seeking his happiness would, simply by analyzing his concepts, find himself virtuous in this conduct, or someone pursuing virtue would find himself already happy *by that very fact* in his consciousness of such conduct). Rather, it is a *synthesis* of concepts. But because this connection is cognized as *a priori*, and thus as practically necessary, consequently not as derived from experience, and because the possibility of the highest good therefore rests on no empirical principles, the *deduction* of this concept will have to be *transcendental*. It is *a priori* (morally) necessary *to bring about the highest good through freedom of the will*; therefore the condition of its possibility must likewise rest solely on grounds of cognition *a priori*.

I. [A 204] The antinomy of practical reason.

In the highest good that is practical for us, that is, to be made actual through our will, virtue and happiness are thought as necessarily connected, so that pure practical reason cannot accept the one without the other's also belonging to it. Now this connection, like any connection at all, is either *analytic* or *synthetic*. Since the connection in question cannot be analytic, as was just shown, it must be thought as synthetic, specifically as the connection of cause with effect, because it concerns a practical good, that is, something possible through action. Therefore either the desire for happiness must be the motive for maxims of virtue, or the maxim of virtue must be the efficient cause of happiness. The first is *absolutely* impossible, because, as was proved in the Analytic, maxims that place the determining ground of the will in the desire for one's happiness are not moral at all and cannot ground virtue. But the second is *also impossible*, because every practical connection of causes and effects in the world resulting from the determination of the will conforms not to [A 205] the will's moral dispositions, but to knowledge of natural laws and the physical capacity to use them for one's purposes. Consequently, even the most exact [AA V 114] observance of the moral laws cannot be expected to produce a necessary connection of happiness with virtue in the world sufficient for the highest good. Now,

since promoting the highest good, whose concept contains this connection, is an *a priori* necessary object of our will and is inseparably bound up with the moral law, the impossibility of the former must also prove the falsity of the latter. If, then, the highest good is impossible according to practical rules, the moral law, which commands us to promote it, must also be fanciful and directed toward empty imaginary ends, and thus in itself false.

II. Critical resolution of the antinomy of practical reason.

In the antinomy of pure speculative reason, a similar conflict occurs between natural necessity and freedom in the causality of events in the world. It was resolved by proving that there is no true conflict if events [A 206], and even the world in which they occur, are regarded—as indeed they should be—only as appearances. For one and the same acting being, *as appearance* (even before its own inner sense), has a causality in the sensible world that always conforms to the mechanism of nature; yet with regard to the same event, insofar as the acting person also regards himself as a *noumenon* (as pure intelligence, in his existence not determinable in time), he can contain a determining ground of that causality according to natural laws which is itself free from every natural law.

The same holds for the present antinomy of pure practical reason. The first of the two propositions, that the pursuit of happiness produces a ground for a virtuous disposition, is *absolutely false*. But the second, that a virtuous disposition necessarily produces happiness, is *not absolutely false*. It is false only insofar as that disposition is regarded as the form of causality in the sensible world, and hence if I assume existence in that world to be the only kind of existence a rational being has; thus it is false only *conditionally*. But since I am not merely entitled to think of my existence also as a noumenon in a world of understanding, but even [AA V 115] possess in the moral law a purely intellectual determining ground of my causality (in the sensible world), it is not impossible [A 207] that morality of disposition should have a connection as cause with happiness as effect in the sensible world—a connection that, if not immediate, is nevertheless mediated (through an intelligible author of nature), and indeed necessary. In a nature that is merely an object of the senses, this connection can never occur otherwise than contingently and cannot suffice for the highest good.

Thus, despite this apparent conflict of practical reason with itself, the highest good is the necessary highest end of a morally determined will, a true object of practical reason. For it is practically possible, and the maxims of that will, which relate to it as regards their matter, have objective reality. This reality was at first assailed by that antinomy in the connection of morality with happiness according to a universal law, but only through a misunderstanding: the relation between appearances was taken for a relation of things in themselves to these appearances.

If we find ourselves compelled to seek the possibility of the highest good—this goal of all moral wishes that reason sets before all rational beings—so far afield, namely in connection with an intelligible world, it must seem strange [A 208] that philosophers of both ancient and modern times have nevertheless been able to find happiness in an entirely fitting proportion to virtue already *in this life* (in the sensible world), or to persuade themselves that they were conscious of it. For both *Epicurus* and the *Stoics* exalted above everything the happiness that arises in life from consciousness of virtue. And the former was not so base in his practical precepts as one might infer from the principles of his theory, which he used for explanation, not for action, or as many interpreted them, misled by the expression “sensual pleasure” for contentment. Rather, he included the most unselfish practice of goodness among the ways of enjoying the deepest joy; and contentment with little and restraint of the inclinations, such as the strictest moral philosopher might ever demand, also belonged to his plan of pleasure (by which he meant the ever-cheerful heart). In this he differed from the *Stoics* chiefly only by making this pleasure the motive, which they refused to do, and rightly. For on the one hand [AA V 116] the virtuous *Epicurus*, like many morally well-disposed men even now who do not reflect deeply enough on their principles, fell into the error of already presupposing a virtuous *disposition* in the persons for whom he wished first to specify the incentive to virtue. (And in fact an upright person cannot find himself happy [A 209] unless he is first conscious of his uprightness: given such a disposition, the reproaches his own way of thinking would compel him to make against himself for transgressions, and his moral self-condemnation, would rob him of

all enjoyment of the pleasant things his condition might otherwise contain.) But the question is: what first makes possible such a disposition and way of thinking, which values one's existence in this manner, since before it the subject would have no feeling at all for moral worth in general? Certainly, if a person is virtuous, he will not enjoy life without being conscious of his uprightness in every action, however favorable fortune may be to the physical circumstances of his life. But to make him virtuous in the first place, and thus before he rates the moral worth of his existence so highly, can one really commend to him the peace of soul that will arise from consciousness of an uprightness for which he has as yet no feeling?

On the other hand, however, there always lies here a ground for an error of illicit substitution (*vitium subreptionis*) and, as it were, an optical illusion in our self-consciousness of what we *do*, as distinct from what we *feel*, which even the most experienced person cannot entirely avoid [A 210]. A moral disposition is necessarily connected with consciousness that the will is determined *immediately by the law*. Now consciousness of a determination of the faculty of desire is always the ground of satisfaction in the action thereby produced. But this pleasure, this satisfaction with oneself, is not the determining ground of the action; rather, the immediate determination of the will by reason alone is the ground of the feeling of pleasure, and that determination remains a purely practical, not an aesthetic, determination of the faculty of desire. Since this determination produces inwardly precisely the same effect of an impulse to activity as would a feeling of agreeableness expected from the desired action, we easily mistake what we ourselves do for something we merely passively feel, and take the moral [AA V 117] incentive for a sensible impulse, as always happens in so-called illusion of the senses (here, of inner sense). There is something very sublime in human nature's being determined to act immediately by a pure law of reason, and even in the illusion of taking the subjective aspect of this intellectual determinability of the will for something aesthetic and the effect of a special sensible feeling (for an intellectual feeling would be a contradiction). It is also of great importance to call attention to this property of our personality [A 211] and to cultivate reason's effect on this feeling as fully as possible. But we

must also beware of degrading and disfiguring the true, genuine incentive, the law itself, as though by a false foil, through spurious praise of this moral determining ground as an incentive, when we make feelings of special joys its grounds (though they are only consequences). Respect, then, and not pleasure or the enjoyment of happiness, is something for which no *antecedent* feeling laid at reason's foundation is possible (since such a feeling would always be aesthetic and pathological). As consciousness of the will's immediate necessitation by law, it is scarcely an analogue of the feeling of pleasure, although in relation to the faculty of desire it does precisely the same thing, but from other sources. Yet only by this way of representing the matter can we achieve what we seek: that actions be done not merely in conformity with duty (as a result of agreeable feelings), but from duty, which must be the true aim of all moral cultivation.

But is there not a word that designates, not an enjoyment such as happiness, but nevertheless a satisfaction with one's existence, an analogue of happiness that must necessarily accompany consciousness of virtue? Yes! The word is *self-contentment* [A 212], which in its proper meaning always signifies only a negative satisfaction with one's existence, in which one is conscious of needing nothing. Freedom, and consciousness of it as a capacity to follow the moral law with an overriding disposition, is *independence from inclinations*, at least as determining motives of our desire (even if not as motives that *affect* it). Insofar as I am conscious of this freedom in following my moral maxims, it is the sole source of an unchanging [AA V 118] contentment necessarily connected with it, resting on no special feeling; and this contentment may be called intellectual. Aesthetic contentment (which is improperly so called), resting on the satisfaction of inclinations, however subtly they may be devised, can never be adequate to what we think of it. For inclinations change, grow with the indulgence shown them, and always leave behind a still greater emptiness than we had intended to fill. Hence they are always *burdensome* to a rational being, and even if he cannot cast them off, they nevertheless force from him the wish to be rid of them. Even an inclination toward what conforms to duty (for example, beneficence) can greatly facilitate the effectiveness of *moral* maxims, but can

produce none. [A 213] For in moral action everything must be directed toward the representation of the law as determining ground, if the action is to contain not merely *legality*, but also *morality*. Inclination is blind and servile, whether good-natured or not; and where morality is at issue, reason must not merely play its guardian, but, without regard to it, must as pure practical reason attend entirely to its own interest alone. Even this feeling of compassion and tender-hearted sympathy, if it precedes reflection on what duty is and becomes a determining ground, is itself burdensome to right-thinking people, confuses their considered maxims, and produces the wish to be rid of it and subject only to legislative reason.

From this we can understand how consciousness of this capacity of a pure practical reason, through its exercise in deed (virtue), can produce consciousness of mastery over one's inclinations, and thus of independence from them and consequently also from the discontent that always accompanies them; hence a negative satisfaction with one's condition, that is, *contentment*, which at its source is contentment with one's person. In this way freedom itself becomes capable (namely indirectly) of an enjoyment that cannot be called happiness, because it [A 214] does not depend on the positive addition of a feeling, nor, strictly speaking, *bliss*, because it does not contain complete independence from inclinations and needs. Yet it resembles the latter, insofar as at least the determination of one's will can remain free of their influence, and is thus, at least in its origin, analogous to the self-sufficiency that can be attributed only to the highest being.

[AA V 119] From this resolution of the antinomy of pure practical reason, it follows that in practical principles a natural and necessary connection between consciousness of morality and the expectation of happiness proportionate to it, as its consequence, can at least be thought as possible (though certainly not yet cognized and understood on that account). By contrast, principles for pursuing happiness cannot possibly produce morality. Thus morality constitutes the *supreme* good (as the first condition of the highest good), while happiness indeed constitutes its second element, but in such a way that it is only the morally conditioned, yet necessary, consequence of the former. Only in this

subordination is the *highest good* the entire object of pure practical reason, which must necessarily represent it as possible, because it commands us to contribute everything possible to bringing it about. But the possibility of such a connection [A 215] of the conditioned with its condition belongs wholly to the supersensible relation of things and cannot be given at all according to laws of the sensible world, although the practical consequence of this idea, namely the actions aimed at making the highest good actual, belongs to the sensible world. We shall therefore try to set out the grounds of that possibility, first with regard to what lies immediately within our power, and then, second, in what reason offers us as a supplement to our incapacity for making the highest good possible (a supplement necessary according to practical principles), and which is not within our power.

III. On the primacy of pure practical reason in its union with speculative reason.

By primacy among two or more things connected through reason, I understand the precedence of one in being the first determining ground of the connection with all the others. In a narrower, practical sense, it means the precedence of the interest of one, insofar as the interest of the others is subordinated to it (an interest that cannot itself be ranked below any other). To every faculty of the mind we can [A 216] attribute an *interest*, that is, a principle containing the condition under which alone its exercise is promoted. Reason, as the faculty of principles, determines the interest of all [AA V 120] powers of the mind, but determines its own interest for itself. The interest of its speculative use consists in the *cognition* of the object up to the highest principles *a priori*; that of its practical use, in the determination of the *will* with regard to the final and complete end. What is required for the possibility of any use of reason at all, namely that its principles and assertions must not contradict one another, forms no part of its interest, but is the condition of having reason at all. Only its extension, not its mere agreement with itself, counts as its interest.

If practical reason may accept and think as given nothing beyond what *speculative* reason could independently offer it from its own insight, then the latter holds primacy. But suppose practical reason had original principles *a priori* of

its own, with which certain theoretical positions were inseparably connected, although these eluded every possible insight of speculative reason (though they need not contradict it either). The question then is which interest is supreme [A 217] (not which must yield, for the one does not necessarily conflict with the other): whether speculative reason, which knows nothing of all that practical reason offers it for acceptance, must take up these propositions and, though they transcend its powers, seek to unite them with its concepts as a foreign possession transferred to it; or whether it is entitled to follow its own separate interest obstinately and, according to the canon of *Epicurus*, reject as empty rationalizing everything that cannot authenticate its objective reality through evident examples available in experience—even if it were most intimately interwoven with the interest of the practical (pure) use of reason and did not in itself contradict theoretical reason—merely because it actually impairs the interest of speculative reason to this extent: it removes the boundaries speculative reason has set for itself and exposes it to every absurdity or delusion of the imagination.

Indeed, if practical reason were taken as pathologically conditioned, that is, as merely administering the interest of the inclinations under the sensible principle of happiness, no such demand could be made of speculative reason at all. *Muhammad's* paradise, or the *theosophists'* and *mystics'* melting union with the deity, as each one's fancy takes him, would thrust their [AA V 121] monstrosities upon reason, and it would be just as well to have no reason at all as [A 218] to abandon it in this way to every fantasy. But if pure reason can be practical of itself, and actually is so, as consciousness of the moral law demonstrates, then it is always only one and the same reason that judges according to principles *a priori*, whether for a theoretical or a practical purpose. And then it is clear that, even if its capacity in the former does not suffice to establish certain propositions affirmatively, provided they do not contradict it either, it must accept these very propositions as soon as they *belong inseparably to the practical interest* of pure reason. It must accept them, admittedly, as a foreign offering that has not grown on its own soil, but is nevertheless sufficiently authenticated, and must seek to compare and connect them with everything in its power as specu-

lative reason. It must, however, acknowledge that these are not its insights, but nevertheless extensions of its use for some other purpose, namely a practical one; and this is not in the least contrary to its interest, which consists in restraining speculative presumption.

Thus, in the union of pure speculative with pure practical reason in one cognition, the latter holds *primacy*, provided, that is, that this union is not *contingent* and arbitrary, but grounded *a priori* in reason itself, and hence *necessary* [A 219]. For without this subordination a conflict of reason with itself would arise: if they were merely placed side by side (coordinated), the former would strictly close its boundary on its own account and admit nothing from the latter into its domain, while the latter would nevertheless extend its boundaries over everything and, where its need required, would seek to include the former within them as well. But pure practical reason cannot possibly be asked to subordinate itself to speculative reason and thus reverse the order, because all interest is ultimately practical, and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete solely in practical use.

IV. [AA V 122] The immortality of the soul as a postulate of pure practical reason.

Bringing about the highest good in the world is the necessary object of a will determinable by the moral law. Within this good, however, the *complete conformity* of dispositions to the moral law is the supreme condition of the highest good. It must therefore be possible just as its object is, since it is contained in the same command to [A 220] promote that object. But the complete conformity of the will to the moral law is *holiness*, a perfection of which no rational being in the sensible world is capable at any moment of its existence. Yet since it is nevertheless required as practically necessary, it can be found only in a *progress* toward that complete conformity extending to *infinity*; and according to principles of pure practical reason, it is necessary to assume such practical advancement as the real object of our will.

This infinite progress, however, is possible only on the presupposition of an *existence* and personality of the same rational being enduring to *infinity* (which is called the immortality of the soul). Thus the highest good is practically possi-

ble only on the presupposition of the soul's immortality; consequently this immortality, as inseparably connected with the moral law, is a *postulate* of pure practical reason (by which I understand a *theoretical* proposition, though not demonstrable as such, insofar as it is inseparably attached to a *practical* law that holds unconditionally *a priori*).

The proposition concerning our nature's moral vocation—that we can attain complete conformity with the moral law only in a progress extending to infinity—is of the greatest use [A 221], not merely with regard to our present supplementation of speculative reason's incapacity, but also with regard to religion. Without it, either the moral law is wholly degraded from its *holiness*, by being artificially represented as *indulgent* and thus suited to our convenience; or else we stretch our vocation, and with it our expectation, toward an unattainable destiny, namely a hoped-for complete acquisition of holiness of will [AA V 123], and lose ourselves in extravagant *theosophical* dreams that utterly contradict self-cognition. Both merely hinder the unceasing *striving* to observe, exactly and throughout, a strict and unyielding command of reason that is nevertheless not imaginary, but real. For a rational but finite being, only progress to infinity from lower to higher stages of moral perfection is possible. The *Infinite One*, for whom the condition of time is nothing, sees in this series, endless for us, the whole of conformity with the moral law; and the holiness that his command unremittingly requires, in order to accord with his justice in the share he assigns each in the highest good, is to be found entire in a single intellectual intuition of the existence of rational beings. [A 222] All that can belong to the creature with regard to hope of this share would be consciousness of his tested disposition: on the basis of his previous progress from the worse to the morally better, and of the unalterable resolve made known to him through it, he may hope for a further uninterrupted continuation of that progress, however far his existence may extend, even beyond this life¹². And so, never here or at any foreseeable future [A 223] point in his existence, but only in the infinity (surveyable by God alone) [AA V 124] of his continued duration, may he hope to be fully adequate to God's will (without indulgence or remission, which cannot be reconciled with justice).

V. The existence of God as a postulate of pure practical reason.

In the preceding analysis, the moral law led to the practical task prescribed by pure reason alone, without any contribution from sensible incentives: the necessary completion of the first and foremost part of the highest good, *morality*. And since this task can be fully accomplished only in an eternity, it led to the postulate of *immortality*. This same law must also lead to the possibility of the second element of the highest good, namely *happiness* proportionate to that morality, just as unselfishly as [A 224] before, from mere impartial reason. It must, that is, lead to the presupposition of the existence of a cause adequate to this effect, or postulate the *existence of God* as necessarily belonging to the possibility of the highest good (an object of our will necessarily connected with the moral legislation of pure reason). We shall set forth this connection convincingly.

Happiness is the condition of a rational being in the world for whom, in the whole of his existence, *everything goes according to his wish and will*. It therefore rests on the harmony of nature with his entire end, and likewise with the essential determining ground of his will. Now the moral law, as a law of freedom, commands through determining grounds that are to be wholly independent of nature and of its harmony with our faculty of desire (as incentives). But the acting rational being in the world is not at the same time the cause of the world and of nature itself. Thus the moral law contains not the slightest ground for a necessary connection between morality and proportionate happiness in a being that belongs to the world as a part and is therefore dependent on it—a being that, for this very reason, cannot through its will be the cause of this nature, nor by its own powers make nature, as regards its happiness, agree throughout [A 225] [AA V 125] with its practical principles. Nevertheless, in the practical task of pure reason, that is, the necessary work toward the highest good, such a connection is postulated as necessary: we *ought* to seek to promote the highest good (which must therefore, after all, be possible). Thus the existence of a cause of all nature, distinct from nature, which contains the ground of this connection, namely the exact harmony of happiness with morality, is also *postulated*. But this supreme cause must contain the ground of nature's harmony

not merely with a law of the will of rational beings, but with the representation of this *law*, insofar as these beings make it the *supreme determining ground of the will*: thus not merely with their conduct in its form, but also with its morality as its motive, that is, with their moral disposition. Hence the highest good in the world is possible only insofar as a supreme cause of nature is assumed that has a causality in keeping with moral disposition. Now a being capable of actions according to the representation of laws is an *intelligence* (a rational being), and such a being's causality according to this representation of laws is its *will*. Therefore the supreme cause of nature, insofar as it must be presupposed for the highest good, is a being that [A 226] is the cause (and consequently the author) of nature through *understanding* and *will*, that is, *God*. Consequently, the postulate of the possibility of the *highest derived good* (the best world) is at the same time the postulate of the actuality of a *highest original good*, namely the existence of God. Now it was our duty to promote the highest good; hence there was not merely an entitlement, but also a necessity, connected with duty as a need, to presuppose the possibility of this highest good. Since this possibility obtains only on the condition of God's existence, it inseparably connects the presupposition of that existence with duty; that is, it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God.

Here it must be carefully noted that this moral necessity is *subjective*, that is, a need, and not *objective*, that is, itself a duty; for there can be no duty at all to assume the existence of a thing (since this concerns only the theoretical use of reason). Nor is it meant that assuming the existence of God *as a ground of all obligation in general* is necessary (for this ground rests, as has been sufficiently proved, solely on the [AA V 126] autonomy of reason itself). What belongs to duty here is only the work of bringing about and promoting the highest good in the world, whose possibility can therefore be postulated, but which our reason [A 227] finds conceivable only on the presupposition of a supreme intelligence. Thus assuming its existence is connected with consciousness of our duty, although this assumption itself belongs to theoretical reason. With regard to theoretical reason alone, considered as a ground of explanation, it can be called a *hypothesis*; but in relation to making intelligible an object nevertheless

set before us by the moral law (the highest good), and hence to a need for a practical purpose, it can be called *faith*, and indeed pure *rational faith*, because pure reason alone (in both its theoretical and its practical use) is the source from which it springs.

From this *deduction* we can now understand why the *Greek* schools could never solve their problem of the practical possibility of the highest good: they always made the rule governing the human will's use of its freedom the sole and by itself sufficient ground of that possibility, without, in their opinion, needing God's existence for it. They were right, certainly, to establish the principle of morals independently of this postulate, on its own, from reason's relation to the will alone, and thus to make it the *supreme* practical condition of the highest good. But it was not on that account the *entire* condition of its possibility. The *Epicureans* had indeed [A 228] adopted an entirely false principle of morals as supreme, namely that of happiness, and had substituted for a law a maxim of arbitrary choice according to each person's inclination. Yet they proceeded *consistently* enough in likewise degrading their highest good in proportion to the baseness of their principle, expecting no greater happiness than can be acquired through human prudence (which also includes abstinence and moderation of inclinations). This, as we know, must turn out meager enough, and very differently according to circumstances—not even counting the exceptions their maxims continually had to allow, which make them unfit to be laws. The *Stoics*, by contrast, had quite rightly chosen their supreme practical principle, namely virtue, as the condition of the highest good. But by representing the degree of virtue required by its pure [AA V 127] law as fully attainable in this life, they not only exalted the moral capacity of the *human being*, under the name of a sage, beyond all limits of his nature, and assumed something contradicting all knowledge of humanity; above all, they also refused to recognize the second *component* belonging to the highest good, namely happiness, as a distinct object of the human faculty of desire. Instead, they made their [A 229] *sage*, like a deity, wholly independent of nature (as regards his contentment) through consciousness of his personal excellence. They exposed him to the ills of life, but did not subject him to them (at the same time representing him as

free from evil). Thus they actually left out the second element of the highest good, one's own happiness, by placing it merely in action and in contentment with one's personal worth, and so including it within consciousness of a moral way of thinking. Yet the voice of their own nature could have refuted them sufficiently on this point.

The doctrine of Christianity¹³, even when not yet considered as a religious doctrine, supplies on this point a concept of the highest [A 230] [AA V 128] good (the kingdom of God) that alone satisfies the strictest demand of practical [A 231] reason. The moral law is holy (unyielding) and demands holiness of conduct, although all the moral perfection a human being can attain is always only virtue: that is, a disposition conforming to law out of *respect* for the law, and hence consciousness of a continual propensity to transgression, or at least to impurity, that is, the admixture of many spurious (nonmoral) motives in following the law. Consequently it requires a self-appraisal joined with humility, and thus, with regard to the holiness the Christian law demands, leaves the creature nothing but progress to infinity; but for that very reason it also entitles the creature to hope for its continued existence to infinity. The *worth* of a disposition *fully* conforming to the moral law is infinite, because all possible happiness, in the judgment of a wise and all-powerful distributor of it, has no other limitation than rational beings' lack of conformity to their duty. Yet the moral law by itself *promises* no happiness, for according to concepts of a natural order in general, happiness is not necessarily connected with following it. Christian moral teaching now makes up for this lack (of the second indispensable component of the highest good) by representing the world in which rational beings dedicate themselves with all their soul to the moral law as a *kingdom of God*. In it, nature [A 232] and morals enter into a harmony, foreign to each in itself, through a holy author who makes the derived highest good possible. *Holiness* of conduct is already prescribed to them in this life as their [AA V 129] guiding rule; but well-being proportionate to it, *bliss*, is represented as attainable only in an eternity. For the *former* must always be the archetype of their conduct in every condition, and progress toward it is already possible and necessary in this life; the *latter*, however, cannot be attained in this world under the name of

happiness (so far as our powers are concerned), and is therefore made solely an object of hope. Despite this, the Christian principle of *morality* itself is not theological (and thus heteronomy), but the autonomy of pure practical reason on its own. For it makes cognition of God and his will the ground not of these laws, but only of attaining the highest good under the condition of following them; and it places even the proper *incentive* to following the former not in their desired consequences, but in the representation of duty alone, since only in its faithful observance does worthiness to acquire the latter consist.

In this way the moral law leads, through the concept of the [A 233] highest good as the object and final end of pure practical reason, to *religion*, that is, to *the cognition of all duties as divine commands—not as sanctions, that is, arbitrary ordinances of an alien will, contingent in themselves*, but as essential laws of every free will in itself. Nevertheless, they must be regarded as commands of the highest being, because only from a morally perfect (holy and benevolent), and at the same time all-powerful, will can we hope for the highest good, which the moral law makes it our duty to set as the object of our striving, and thus hope to attain it through agreement with this will. Here too, therefore, everything remains unselfish and founded solely on duty, without fear or hope being allowed as underlying incentives; for if these become principles, they destroy the entire moral worth of actions. The moral law commands me to make the highest possible good in a world the ultimate object of all my conduct. But I cannot hope to bring this about except through the agreement of my will with that of a holy and benevolent author of the world. And although the concept of the highest good, as a whole in which the greatest happiness is represented as combined in the most exact proportion with the greatest degree of moral perfection (possible in creatures) [A 234], also contains [AA V 130] *my own happiness*, it is nevertheless not this happiness, but the moral law—which rather strictly restricts my unlimited desire for it to conditions—that is the determining ground of the will directed to promote the highest good.

Hence morality is not, properly speaking, the doctrine of how we are to *make ourselves happy*, but of how we are to become *worthy* of happiness. Only when religion is added does the hope also arise of someday sharing in happiness to the

extent that we have taken care not to be unworthy of it.

Someone is *worthy* of possessing a thing or a condition when his possessing it accords with the highest good. We can now readily see that all worthiness depends on moral conduct, because in the concept of the highest good this constitutes the condition of the rest (what belongs to one's condition), namely one's share in happiness. It follows that *morality* in itself must never be treated as a *doctrine of happiness*, that is, as instruction in how to obtain a share in happiness; for it is concerned solely with the rational condition (*conditio sine qua non*) of happiness [A 235], not with a means of acquiring it. But once morality—which merely imposes duties and does not supply measures for selfish wishes—has been set forth completely, then, and only then, after the law-grounded moral wish to promote the highest good (to bring the kingdom of God to us), which could never previously have arisen in a selfish soul, has been awakened, and the step toward religion has been taken to support it, this moral doctrine can also be called a doctrine of happiness, because the *hope* for happiness begins only with religion.

From this we can also see that if we ask about *God's final end* in creating the world, we must name not the *happiness* of the rational beings in it, but *the highest good*. This adds to that wish of these beings a further condition, namely being worthy of happiness, that is, the *morality* of those same rational beings, which alone contains the standard according to which alone they can hope to share in happiness through the hand of a *wise* author. For since *wisdom*, considered theoretically, means *cognition of the highest good*, and practically, *the [AA V 131] conformity of the will to the highest good*, we cannot attribute to a supreme self-subsisting wisdom an end founded merely on *benevolence*. For the effect of benevolence (with [A 236] regard to the happiness of rational beings) can be thought adequate to the highest original good only under the limiting conditions of agreement with the *holiness*¹⁴ of his will. Hence those who placed the end of creation in the glory of God (provided this is not thought anthropomorphically, as an inclination to be praised) have surely found the best expression. For nothing honors God more than what is most estimable in the world: respect for his command, observance of the holy duty his law imposes upon us,

when his splendid provision is added [A 237] to crown so beautiful an order with proportionate happiness. If the latter makes him lovable (to speak in human terms), the former makes him an object of worship (adoration). Even human beings can indeed win love through doing good, but never respect through this alone, so that the greatest beneficence honors them only insofar as it is exercised according to worthiness.

That in the order of ends the human being (and with him every rational being) is an *end in himself*, that is, can never be used by anyone (not even by God) merely as a means without at the same time being himself an end, and that therefore the *humanity* in our person must be *holy* to us ourselves, now follows of itself. For the human being is the *subject of the moral law*, and hence of what is holy in itself [AA V 132], for whose sake and in agreement with which alone anything at all can be called holy. For this moral law rests on the autonomy of his will as a free will, which, according to its universal laws, must necessarily be able at the same time to *assent* to that to which it is to *submit*.

VI. [A 238] On the postulates of pure practical reason in general.

They all proceed from the principle of morality, which is not a postulate but a law through which reason immediately determines the will. Precisely because it is so determined, this will, as a pure will, requires these necessary conditions for following its precept. These postulates are not theoretical dogmas, but *presuppositions* from a necessarily practical standpoint. Thus, although they do not extend speculative cognition, they give objective reality to the ideas of speculative reason *in general* (through their relation to the practical), and entitle it to concepts whose very possibility it could otherwise not presume to assert.

These postulates are those of *immortality*, of *freedom* considered positively (as the causality of a being insofar as it belongs to the intelligible world), and of the *existence of God*. The *first* flows from the practically necessary condition that duration be adequate to the completeness of the fulfillment of the moral law; the *second*, from the necessary presupposition of independence from the sensible world and of the capacity to determine one's will according to the law of an

[A 239] intelligible world, that is, freedom; the *third*, from the necessity of the condition for such an intelligible world to be the highest good, through the presupposition of the highest self-subsisting good, that is, the existence of God. The aim directed toward the highest good, made necessary by respect for the moral law, and the presupposition of its objective reality that flows from this aim, thus lead through postulates of practical reason to concepts that speculative reason could indeed present as problems, but could not solve. Thus, 1. to the problem in whose solution [AA V 133] the latter could commit nothing but *paralogisms* (namely immortality), because it lacked the mark of persistence needed to complete the psychological concept of an ultimate subject, necessarily attributed to the soul in self-consciousness, into the real representation of a substance. Practical reason accomplishes this through the postulate of a duration required for conformity with the moral law in the highest good, as the entire end of practical reason. 2. It leads to that concerning which speculative reason contained nothing but *antinomy*, whose resolution it could ground only on a concept that could indeed be thought problematically, but whose objective reality it could neither prove nor determine: namely the *cosmological* idea of an intelligible world and consciousness of our [A 240] existence in it, by means of the postulate of freedom (whose reality practical reason demonstrates through the moral law, and with it also the law of an intelligible world, to which speculative reason could only point, without determining its concept). 3. It gives meaning to what speculative reason could indeed think, but had to leave undetermined as a mere transcendental *ideal*: the *theological* concept of the original being. It does so for a practical purpose, that is, as a condition of the possibility of the object of a will determined by that law, as the supreme principle of the highest good in an intelligible world through authoritative moral legislation within it.

But is our cognition actually extended in this way through pure practical reason, and is what was *transcendent* for speculative reason *immanent* in practical reason? Certainly, but *only for a practical purpose*. For through this we do not cognize the nature of our soul, or the intelligible world, or the highest being as to what they are in themselves. Rather, we have only united the concepts of

them in the *practical* concept of the *highest good*, as the object of our will, wholly *a priori* through pure reason, but only by means of the moral law, and solely in relation to it as regards the object it commands. Yet how even freedom [A 241] is possible, and how this kind of causality is to be represented theoretically and positively, is not thereby understood. Only that there is such a causality is postulated through the moral law and for its sake. The same holds for the remaining ideas: no human understanding will ever fathom their possibility, but neither will any sophistry ever wrest from the conviction even of the most ordinary person the belief that they are [AA V 134] true concepts.

VII. How is it possible to conceive an extension of pure reason for a practical purpose without thereby also extending its cognition as speculative?

To avoid becoming too abstract, we shall answer this question at once by applying it to the case before us.—To extend a pure cognition *practically*, an *aim* must be given *a priori*, that is, an end as object (of the will) which, independently of all theoretical principles, is represented as practically necessary through an imperative that immediately determines the will (a categorical imperative); here this is the *highest good*. But this is not possible without presupposing three theoretical concepts (for which, since they are merely pure concepts of reason, no corresponding intuition, and hence no objective reality by the theoretical [A 242] path, can be found): namely freedom, immortality, and God. Thus the practical law, which commands the existence of the highest good possible in a world, postulates the possibility of those objects of pure speculative reason, the objective reality that speculative reason could not secure for them. Through this, theoretical cognition of pure reason certainly receives an increment, but one consisting only in this: those concepts, otherwise problematic for it (merely thinkable), are now assertorically declared to be concepts to which objects actually belong. For practical reason unavoidably needs their existence for the possibility of its object, the highest good, which is indeed practically absolutely necessary; and theoretical reason is thereby entitled to presuppose them. But this extension of theoretical reason is no extension of speculation, that is, one permitting a positive use of them henceforth for a *theoretical purpose*. For practical reason has accomplished nothing here beyond establish-

ing that those concepts are real and actually have their (possible) objects, while giving us no intuition of them (nor can such an intuition be required). Thus no synthetic proposition is possible through this admitted reality of theirs. Consequently, this disclosure does not help us [A 243] in the least for a speculative purpose, but it does extend this cognition of ours [AA V 135] with regard to the practical use of pure reason. The three ideas of speculative reason mentioned above are not in themselves cognitions as yet; nevertheless, they are (transcendent) *thoughts* containing nothing impossible. Now, through an apodictic practical law, as necessary conditions of the possibility of what this law commands us *to make our object*, they acquire objective reality: that is, we are instructed by this law *that they have objects*, without being able to show how their concept relates to an object. And this is still not cognition *of these objects*, for through it we can make no synthetic judgment about them, nor determine their application theoretically, and thus can make no theoretical use of reason concerning them at all, in which all speculative cognition of them properly consists. Nevertheless, theoretical cognition, *though not of these objects*, but of reason in general, was thereby extended to this extent: through the practical postulates, *objects were nevertheless given* to those ideas, as a merely problematic thought thereby first acquired objective reality. Thus it was not an extension of cognition *of given supersensible objects*, but nevertheless an extension of theoretical reason and its [A 244] cognition with regard to the supersensible in general, insofar as it was compelled to admit *that there are such objects*, without being able to determine them more closely, and hence without being able to extend this cognition of the objects themselves (now given to it on a practical ground, and only for practical use). Pure theoretical reason, for which all those ideas are transcendent and without an object, therefore owes this increment solely to its pure practical capacity. Here they become *immanent* and *constitutive*, since they are grounds of the possibility of *making actual* the *necessary object* of pure practical reason (the highest good). Without this, they are *transcendent* and merely *regulative* principles of speculative reason, imposing on it not the assumption of a new object beyond experience, but only the task of bringing its use within experience closer to completeness. Once reason possesses this incre-

ment, however, it will, as speculative reason (properly speaking, only to safeguard its practical use), proceed negatively with those ideas—that is, not extending but purifying them—in order to ward off, on the one hand, *anthropomorphism* as the source of *superstition* [AA V 136], or the apparent extension of those concepts through supposed experience, and on the other, *fanaticism*, which promises such extension through supersensible intuition or similar feelings. All these are hindrances [A 245] to the practical use of pure reason. Warding them off therefore certainly belongs to the extension of our cognition for a practical purpose, without its contradicting this extension to admit at the same time that, for a speculative purpose, reason has thereby gained nothing in the least.

Every use of reason with regard to an object requires pure concepts of the understanding (*categories*), without which no object can be thought. These can be applied to the theoretical use of reason, that is, to cognition of this kind, only insofar as an intuition (which is always sensible) is at the same time supplied as their basis, and thus only to represent through them an object of possible experience. Here, however, what I would have to think through categories in order to cognize it consists of *ideas* of reason, which cannot be given in any experience. But here we are also concerned not with theoretical cognition of the objects of these ideas, but only with their having objects at all. Pure practical reason supplies this reality, and theoretical reason has nothing more to do here than merely to *think* those objects through categories. As we have clearly shown elsewhere, this is quite possible without needing intuition (either sensible or supersensible), because the categories have their seat and origin in the [A 246] pure understanding, independently of and prior to all intuition, solely as the faculty of thinking; and they always signify only an object in general, *however it may be given to us*. Now it is indeed impossible to give the categories an object in intuition insofar as they are to be applied to those ideas. Nevertheless, through an object that practical reason indubitably offers in the concept of the highest good, it is sufficiently secured for them *that such an object actually exists*, and hence that the category as a mere form of thought is not empty here,

but has meaning: the *reality of the concepts* belonging to the possibility of the highest good is secured, without this increment nevertheless effecting the slightest extension of cognition according to theoretical principles.

[AA V 137] If, moreover, these ideas of God, an intelligible world (the kingdom of God), and immortality are determined through predicates taken from our own nature, this determination must be regarded neither as *rendering sensible* those pure ideas of reason (anthropomorphisms), nor as a cognition of *supersensible* objects that exceeds our powers. For these predicates are none other than understanding and will, considered in relation to one another [A 247] as they must be thought in the moral law, and thus only insofar as a pure practical use is made of them. Everything else that attaches to these concepts psychologically is then abstracted away: that is, insofar as we empirically observe these faculties of ours *in their exercise* (for example, that the human understanding is discursive, and its representations are therefore thoughts, not intuitions; that these succeed one another in time; that its will is always bound up with a dependence of satisfaction on the existence of its object, and so on, which cannot be so in the highest being). Thus nothing remains of the concepts through which we think a pure being of understanding beyond precisely what is required for the possibility of thinking a moral law; hence there is indeed a cognition of God, but only in a practical relation. If we attempt to extend it into a theoretical cognition, we obtain an understanding of his that does not think but *intuits*, and a will directed toward objects on whose existence his satisfaction does not depend in the least. (I will not even mention transcendental predicates, such as a magnitude of existence, that is, duration, which nevertheless does not occur in time, the only means possible for us of representing existence as a magnitude.) These are all properties of which we can form no [A 248] concept at all suited to *cognition* of the object; and through this we learn that they can never be used for a *theory* of supersensible beings, and thus cannot ground speculative cognition on this side at all, but restrict their use solely to the practice of the moral law.

This last point is so evident, and can be proved so clearly in actual application, that we may confidently challenge all supposed *natural theologians* (a curious name)¹⁵ to name even a single property determining this [AA V 138] object of theirs (beyond merely ontological predicates), say a property of understanding or of will, of which one could not irrefutably demonstrate that, if everything [A 249] anthropomorphic is separated from it, only the bare word remains for us, without our being able to connect with it the slightest concept from which an extension of theoretical cognition might be hoped. In the practical sphere, however, there nevertheless remains to us, from the properties of an understanding and a will, the concept of a relation to which the practical law (which determines precisely this relation of understanding to will *a priori*) gives objective reality. Once this has occurred, reality is also given to the concept of the object of a morally determined will (that of the highest good), and with it to the conditions of its possibility, the ideas of God, freedom, and immortality—but always only in relation to the practice of the moral law (for no speculative purpose).

After these reminders, the answer to the important question is now also easy to find: *whether the concept of God belongs to physics* (and hence also to metaphysics, which contains only the pure principles *a priori* of physics in their general meaning) *or to morality*. To *explain* arrangements in nature or their alteration by taking refuge in God as the author of all things is at least no physical explanation, and is always an admission that one has reached the end of one's philosophy: for one is compelled to assume something of which one otherwise has no concept in itself, in order to form a concept of the [A 250] possibility of what one sees before one's eyes. But to proceed through metaphysics from knowledge of *this* world to the concept of God and the proof of his existence *by secure inferences* is impossible for this reason: we would have to cognize this world as the most perfect possible whole, and hence, for this purpose, all possible worlds (in order to compare them with this one); thus we would have to be omniscient [AA V 139] in order to say that it was possible only through a *God* (as we must think this concept). Moreover, to cognize this being's existence from mere concepts is absolutely impossible, because every existential proposi-

tion—that is, one that says of a being of which I form a concept that it exists—is a synthetic proposition. That is, it is a proposition through which I go beyond that concept and say more of it than was thought in the concept: namely, that to this concept *in the understanding* there is also posited a corresponding object *outside the understanding*, which obviously cannot be established through any inference. Thus only a single procedure remains for reason to attain this cognition: as pure reason, proceeding from the supreme principle of its pure practical use (since this use is in any case directed solely toward the *existence* of something as a consequence of reason), it determines its object. And here there appears, in its unavoidable task, namely the necessary direction of the will toward the highest good, not only [A 251] the necessity of assuming such an original being in relation to the possibility of this good in the world, but, most remarkably, something entirely lacking in reason’s advance along the path of nature: *an exactly determined concept of this original being*. Since we know this world only in small part, and are still less able to compare it with all possible worlds, we can indeed infer from its order, purposiveness, and magnitude a *wise, benevolent, powerful*, etc., author of it, but not his *omniscience, all-benevolence, omnipotence*, and so on. We can also readily concede that we are entitled to make up for this unavoidable lack through a permissible, entirely reasonable hypothesis: namely, that if wisdom, benevolence, etc., shine forth in so many particulars as present themselves to our closer knowledge, it will be the same in all the rest, and that it is therefore reasonable to attribute every possible perfection to the author of the world. But these are not *inferences* through which we may pride ourselves on our insight, but only permissions that may be granted us, and that still need a recommendation from elsewhere if we are to make use of them. Thus, on the empirical path (of physics), the concept of God always remains a *concept insufficiently determined* [A 252] as to the perfection of the first being for us to hold it adequate to the concept of a deity (while metaphysics, in its transcendental part, can accomplish nothing at all).

[AA V 140] I now try to set this concept against the object of practical reason, and find that the moral principle allows this object as possible only on the presupposition of an author of the world of *highest perfection*. He must be *omni-*

scient, in order to cognize my conduct down to the innermost part of my disposition, in all possible cases and for all the future; *omnipotent*, in order to accord it its appropriate consequences; likewise *omnipresent*, *eternal*, and so on. Thus the moral law, through the concept of the highest good as the object of a pure practical reason, determines the concept of the original being *as the highest being*, which the physical (and, carried higher, metaphysical), and hence the entire speculative, course of reason could not accomplish. Thus the concept of God is a concept belonging originally not to physics, that is, to speculative reason, but to morality; and the same can also be said of the other concepts of reason that we discussed above as its postulates in its practical use.

If in the history of Greek philosophy we find no clear traces of a pure rational theology before [A 253] *Anaxagoras*, the reason is not that the earlier philosophers lacked the understanding and insight to rise to it by way of speculation, at least with the help of an entirely reasonable hypothesis. What could be easier, what more natural, than the thought that presents itself to everyone of its own accord: instead of indeterminate degrees of perfection in various causes of the world, to assume a single rational cause possessing *all perfection*? But the evils in the world seemed to them far too weighty as objections for them to consider themselves entitled to such a hypothesis. Thus they showed understanding and insight precisely in not permitting themselves this assumption, but instead searching among natural causes to see whether they might find there the constitution and capacity required for an original being. But after this acute people had advanced so far in their inquiries as to treat philosophically even moral objects, about which other peoples had never done more than chatter, only then did they discover a new need, namely a practical one. This did not fail to give them a determinate concept of the original being, while speculative reason had to look on, with at most the further merit of embellishing a concept that had not grown on its own soil. With a retinue [A 254] [AA V 141] of confirmations from the contemplation of nature, which only now came forward, speculative reason could promote not so much the concept's authority (which was already established) as merely its ostentatious display of supposed theoretical rational insight.

From these reminders, the reader of the Critique of Pure Speculative Reason will be fully convinced how utterly necessary, how fruitful for theology and morality, was that laborious *deduction* of the categories. For only through it can we prevent ourselves, when we place them in the pure understanding, from taking them with *Plato* as innate and founding on them extravagant pretensions, with theories of the supersensible to which no end can be foreseen, thereby making theology into a magic lantern of phantoms; or, if we regard them as acquired, prevent ourselves from restricting, with *Epicurus*, each and every use of them, even for a practical purpose, solely to objects and determining grounds of the senses. Now, however, the Critique has in that deduction proved, *first*, that they are not of empirical origin, but have their seat and source *a priori* in the pure understanding; and *second*, that, since they are related *to objects in general*, independently of their intuition, they indeed produce *theoretical cognition* only when applied [A 255] to *empirical* objects, but nevertheless also serve, when applied to an object given through pure practical reason, for *determinate thinking of the supersensible*—although only insofar as this is determined merely through predicates necessarily belonging to the pure *practical aim* given *a priori* and to its possibility. The speculative restriction of pure reason and its practical extension first bring it into that *balanced relation* in which reason in general can be used purposively; and this example proves better than any other that, for us human beings, the path to *wisdom*, if it is to be secure and not impassable or misleading, must unavoidably pass through science. Yet we can be convinced that science leads to that goal only after its completion.

VIII. [AA V 142] On assent arising from a need of pure reason.

A *need* of pure reason in its speculative use leads only to *hypotheses*, but that of pure practical reason to [A 256] *postulates*. For in the first case I ascend from the derived as high in the series of grounds *as I please*, and need an original ground not to give objective reality to what is derived (for example, the causal connection of things and changes in the world), but only to satisfy my inquiring reason completely with regard to it. Thus I see order and purposiveness in nature before me, and do not need to proceed to speculation to assure myself of

their *actuality*, but only *to explain* them, by *presupposing a deity* as their cause. Since an inference from an effect to a determinate cause—especially one so exactly and completely determined as we must think God—remains uncertain and precarious, such a presupposition can be carried no further than to the degree of the most reasonable opinion for us human beings.¹⁶ By contrast [A 257], a need of pure *practical* reason is grounded on a *duty* to make something (the highest good) the object of my will, in order to promote it with all my powers. In doing so, however, I must presuppose its possibility, and hence also its conditions, namely God, freedom, and immortality, because through my speculative reason I can neither prove nor refute these. This duty rests on a law that is indeed quite independent of these latter presuppositions and apodictically certain in itself, namely the moral law; and to that extent it needs no further support [AA V 143] from theoretical opinion concerning the inner constitution of things, the secret aim of the world's order, or a ruler presiding over it, in order to bind us most completely to actions unconditionally conforming to law. But the subjective effect of this law, namely the *disposition* conforming to it and also made necessary by it, to promote the highest good practically possible, nevertheless presupposes at least that this good is *possible*. Otherwise it would be practically impossible to strive toward the object of a concept that was fundamentally empty and without an object. Now the postulates above concern only [A 258] the physical or metaphysical conditions—in a word, those lying in the nature of things—of the *possibility* of the highest good. But they do so not for an arbitrary speculative aim, but for a practically necessary end of the pure rational will, which here does not *choose* but *obeys* an unremitting command of reason. This command has its ground *objectively* in the constitution of things as they must be universally judged through pure reason, and is not founded on *inclination*, which is by no means entitled, for the sake of what we *wish* on merely *subjective* grounds, immediately to assume the means to it as possible, or even the object as actual. Thus this is a *need for an absolutely necessary purpose*, and justifies its presupposition not merely as a permissible hypothesis, but as a postulate for a practical purpose. And granted that the pure moral law unremittingly binds everyone as a command (not as a rule of prudence), the

upright person may well say: “I *will* that there be a God; that my existence in this world be also, beyond the nexus of nature, an existence in a pure world of understanding; and finally, that my duration be endless. I hold fast to this and will not let this faith be taken from me; for this is the sole case in which my interest, because I *may* not relinquish any of it, unavoidably determines my judgment, without [A 259] heeding rationalizations, however little I might be able to answer them or oppose them with others more plausible.”¹⁷

[AA V 144] To prevent misinterpretations in using a concept still so unfamiliar as that of a pure practical rational faith, [A 260] let me add one further remark. —It might almost seem as though this rational faith were itself being proclaimed here as a *command*, namely to assume the highest good as possible. But a faith that is commanded is an absurdity. Recall, however, the explanation above of what is required to be assumed in the concept of the highest good, and it will become clear that assuming this possibility must not be commanded at all, and that no practical dispositions are required to *concede* it; rather, speculative reason must grant it unasked. For no one would wish to assert that it is in itself *impossible* for the worthiness of rational beings in the world to be happy, in conformity with the moral law, to be connected with their possession of happiness proportionate to it. Now with regard to the first part of the highest good, namely morality, the moral law gives us only a command; and to doubt the possibility of this component would amount to calling the moral law itself into question. But as for the second part of that object, namely happiness conforming throughout to that worthiness, no command is needed at all to concede its possibility in general, for theoretical reason itself has nothing against it. Only *the manner in which* we are to think such a harmony of the laws of nature with those [A 261] [AA V 145] of freedom contains something about which a choice is open to us, because theoretical reason decides nothing here with apodictic certainty; and regarding this choice there can be a moral interest that tips the balance.

Above I said that, according to a mere natural course of things in the world, happiness exactly proportionate to moral worth cannot be expected and must be held impossible, and that therefore the possibility of the highest good, from

this side, can be conceded only on the presupposition of a moral author of the world. I deliberately withheld the restriction of this judgment to the *subjective* conditions of our reason, so as to make use of it only when the kind of assent involved was to be more closely determined. In fact, the impossibility mentioned is *merely subjective*: that is, our reason finds it *impossible for itself* to render comprehensible, according to a mere course of nature, so exactly proportionate and thoroughly purposive a connection between two events in the world occurring according to such different laws. Yet, as with everything else purposive in nature, it also cannot prove the impossibility of this connection according to universal natural laws, that is, demonstrate it sufficiently on objective [A 262] grounds.

Now, however, a deciding ground of another kind comes into play, to tip the balance amid speculative reason's uncertainty. The command to promote the highest good is objectively grounded (in practical reason), as is its possibility in general (in theoretical reason, which has nothing against it). But reason cannot objectively decide how we are to represent this possibility: whether according to universal natural laws without a wise author presiding over nature, or only on the presupposition of such an author. Here a *subjective* condition of reason now enters: the only way theoretically possible for it, and at the same time the only one conducive to morality (which stands under an *objective* law of reason), of thinking the exact agreement of the kingdom of nature with the kingdom of morals as the condition of the possibility of the highest good. Now, promoting this good, and hence presupposing its possibility, is *objectively* necessary (but only according to practical reason); yet the manner in which we choose to think it as possible lies within our choice, in which a free interest of [AA V 146] pure practical reason decides in favor of assuming a wise author of the world. Thus the principle determining our judgment here is indeed [A 263] *subjective* as a need, but at the same time, as a means of promoting what is *objectively* (practically) necessary, it is the ground of a *maxim* of assent for a moral purpose, that is, a *pure practical rational faith*. This faith, then, is not commanded. Rather, as a voluntary determination of our judgment to assume that existence and henceforth to lay it at the foundation of the use of reason—a

determination conducive to the moral (commanded) aim, and moreover in agreement with reason's theoretical need—it has itself arisen from the moral disposition. It can therefore sometimes waver, even repeatedly in well-disposed people, but can never pass into unbelief.

IX. On the proportion of our cognitive faculties wisely suited to the human being's practical vocation.

If human nature is destined to strive toward the highest good, the measure of its cognitive faculties, especially their relation to one another, must also be assumed suited to this end. Now, however, the Critique of Pure *Speculative* Reason proves its greatest inadequacy to solve, in a way appropriate to that end, the most important problems [A 264] set before it. It does not, admittedly, fail to recognize the natural and unmistakable hints of that same reason, or the great steps it can take to approach this great goal set before it, though never to attain it on its own, even with the aid of the greatest knowledge of nature. Thus nature here seems to have provided us only *stingily, like a stepmother*, with a faculty needed for our end.

Suppose, then, that nature had complied with our wish in this respect and granted us the capacity for insight or illumination we would gladly possess, or which some even *imagine* themselves actually to possess: what, by all appearances, would the consequence be? Unless our entire nature were transformed at the same time, the *inclinations*, which always have the first word, would first [AA V 147] demand their satisfaction and, joined with rational deliberation, their greatest possible and lasting satisfaction under the name of *happiness*. The moral law would speak afterward, to keep them within their proper limits and even to subject them all together to a higher end that takes no account of any inclination. But instead of the struggle the moral disposition now has to wage against the inclinations, in which, after some defeats, the soul's moral strength can nevertheless [A 265] gradually be acquired, *God* and *eternity*, with their *terrible majesty*, would lie incessantly *before our eyes* (for what we can prove completely counts for us, in point of certainty, as much as what we ascertain by direct sight). Transgression of the law would of course be avoided, and what is commanded would be done. But because the *disposition* from which actions

ought to proceed cannot be instilled by any command, while the spur to activity here would be immediately at hand and *external*, reason would not first have to work its way upward to gather strength for resistance to inclinations through a vivid representation of the law's dignity. Thus most actions conforming to law would be done from fear, only a few from hope, and none at all from duty; and a moral worth of actions, on which alone the worth of the person and even of the world depends in the eyes of the highest wisdom, would not exist at all. Human conduct, as long as human nature remained as it now is, would therefore be transformed into a mere mechanism in which, as in a puppet show, everything would *gesture* well, but *no life* would be found in the figures. As things stand with us, however, it is quite otherwise. With every exertion of our reason, we have only a very dim and ambiguous [A 266] prospect of the future; the ruler of the world lets us only conjecture his existence and his glory, not behold or clearly prove them. By contrast, the moral law within us, without promising or threatening us anything with certainty, demands unselfish respect from us; and only when this respect has become active and predominant, and only through it, does it further permit prospects into the realm of the supersensible, and even then only in faint glimpses. Thus a truly moral disposition, immediately dedicated to the law, can arise, and the rational creature can become worthy of a share in the highest good proportionate to the moral worth of his person and not merely to his actions [AA V 148]. Thus here too there may well be truth in what the study of nature and humanity otherwise teaches us sufficiently: that the unfathomable wisdom through which we exist is no less worthy of reverence in what it has denied us than in what it has bestowed upon us.

- 12 The *conviction* that one's disposition is unalterable in one's progress toward the good seems nevertheless impossible for a creature on its own. For this reason Christian religious doctrine also derives it solely from the same spirit that brings about sanctification, that is, this firm resolve and with it consciousness of perseverance in moral progress. But even in a natural way, someone conscious of having persisted for a long part of his life, up to its end, in progress

toward the better, and indeed from genuine moral motives, may well cherish the consoling hope, though not the certainty, that even in an existence continued beyond this life he will persevere in these principles. And although in his own eyes he is never justified here, nor may ever hope to be so with the hoped-for future increase of his natural perfection and, with it, of his duties, he may nevertheless have in this progress a prospect of a *blissful* future. For although this progress concerns a goal removed to infinity, it nevertheless counts for God as possession. This is the expression reason uses to designate complete *well-being*, independent of all contingent causes in the world, which, like *holiness*, is an idea that can be contained only in an infinite progress and its totality, and is therefore never fully attained by the creature.

- ¹³ It is commonly held that the Christian prescription of morals has no advantage in purity over the Stoics' moral concept; yet the difference between the two is very apparent. The Stoic system made consciousness of strength of soul the pivot around which all moral dispositions were to turn. Although its adherents spoke of duties, and also determined them quite well, they nevertheless placed the incentive and the true determining ground of the will in an elevation of one's way of thinking above the base incentives of the senses, which gain power only through weakness of soul. Virtue for them was therefore a certain heroism of the *sage*, rising above human animal nature, sufficient to himself, prescribing duties to others but himself exalted above them and subject to no temptation to transgress the moral law. But they could not have done all this had they represented this law to themselves in the purity and strictness with which the Gospel's prescription presents it. If by an *idea* I understand a perfection to which nothing adequate can be given in experience, moral ideas are not on that account beyond our powers—that is, of a kind whose very concept we could not even determine sufficiently, or of which it is uncertain whether any object at all corresponds to it, as with the ideas of speculative reason. Rather, as archetypes of practical perfection, they serve as the indispensable guiding rule of moral conduct and at the same time as the *standard of comparison*. If I now consider *Christian morality* from its philosophical side, it would appear, com-

pared with the ideas of the Greek schools, as follows: the ideas of the *Cynics*, the *Epicureans*, the *Stoics*, and the *Christians* are *natural simplicity*, *prudence*, *wisdom*, and *holiness*. As regards the path to attaining them, the Greek philosophers differed in that the Cynics found *common human understanding* sufficient, while the others found only the path of *science* sufficient; thus both found the mere *use of natural powers* sufficient. Christian morality, because it frames its prescription so purely and unyieldingly (as indeed it must), takes from the human being the confidence of being fully adequate to it, at least here in life. Yet it also restores this confidence by holding that, if we act as well as lies in our *power*, we may hope that what is not in our power will come to our aid from elsewhere, whether or not we know in what way. *Aristotle* and *Plato* differed only with regard to the *origin* of our moral concepts.

- 14 Here, to make clear what is distinctive about these concepts, I add only this remark. We attribute to God various properties whose quality we also find appropriate to creatures, except that in God they are raised to the highest degree: for example, power, knowledge, presence, goodness, etc., under the names of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, all-benevolence, etc. Yet there are three that are attributed exclusively to God, without any addition of magnitude, and all are moral: he is the *only holy one*, the *only blessed one*, the *only wise one*, because these concepts already carry unrestrictedness with them. According to their order, he is therefore also the *holy lawgiver* (and creator), the *benevolent ruler* (and sustainer), and the *just judge*: three properties containing everything through which God becomes the object of religion, and to which the metaphysical perfections fittingly add themselves of their own accord in reason.
- 15 *Erudition* is properly only the sum of *historical* sciences. Consequently, only the teacher of revealed theology can be called a *scholar of divinity*. But suppose we also wished to call someone who possesses rational sciences (mathematics and philosophy) a scholar, although this would already contradict the word's meaning, which always counts as erudition only what one must actually be

taught, and thus cannot discover for oneself through reason. Even then, the philosopher, with his cognition of God as a positive science, might cut too poor a figure to let himself be called a *scholar* on that account.

- ¹⁶ But even here we could not plead a need *of reason* unless we had before us a problematic yet unavoidable concept of reason, namely that of an absolutely necessary being. This concept now demands to be determined; and when the drive toward extension is added, this is the objective ground of a need of speculative reason: namely, to determine more closely the concept of a necessary being that is to serve as the original ground for others, and thus to make this ultimate being recognizable by some means. Without such antecedent necessary problems there are no *needs*, at least none of *pure reason*; the others are needs of *inclination*.
- ¹⁷ In the Deutsches Museum, Feb. 1787, there is an essay by a very subtle and lucid thinker, the late *Wizenmann*, whose early death is to be lamented. In it he disputes the entitlement to infer from a need the objective reality of its object, and illustrates his point through the example of a *lover* who, having become enamored of an idea of beauty that is merely a figment of his brain, would infer that such an object actually exists somewhere. I agree with him completely in all cases where the need is grounded on *inclination*. Inclination cannot postulate the existence of its object as necessary even for the person afflicted by it, much less contain a demand valid for everyone; it is therefore a merely *subjective* ground of wishes. Here, however, it is a *need of reason*, arising from an *objective* determining ground of the will, namely the moral law, which necessarily binds every rational being. It therefore entitles us *a priori* to presuppose the conditions in nature appropriate to it, and makes these inseparable from the complete practical use of reason. It is a duty to make the highest good actual to the utmost of our ability; therefore it must also be possible. Hence it is also unavoidable for every rational being in the world to presuppose what is necessary for its objective possibility. This presupposition is as necessary as the moral law, in relation to which alone it is also valid.

PART II

Doctrine of the method of pure practical reason



Of the [A 267] [AA V 149] Critique of Practical Reason

Part II. Doctrine of the Method of Pure Practical Reason.

[AA V 151] By the *doctrine of method* of pure *practical* reason we cannot [A 269] mean the way of proceeding, in reflection as well as exposition, with pure practical principles for the sake of a *scientific* cognition of them. In the *theoretical* sphere this alone is properly called method: popular cognition requires a *manner*, but science a *method*, that is, a procedure *according to principles* of reason, through which alone the manifold of a cognition can become a *system*. Rather, this doctrine of method means the way in which we can give the laws of pure practical reason *access* to the human mind and *influence* upon its maxims: that is, make objectively practical reason *subjectively* practical as well.

Now it is clear that the determining grounds of the will that alone make maxims properly moral and give them moral worth—the immediate representation of the law and the objectively necessary observance of it as duty—must be presented as the true incentives of actions. Otherwise the *legality* of actions would indeed be brought about, but not the *morality* of dispositions. [A 270] Yet it is not so clear—indeed, at first sight it must seem entirely improbable to everyone—that even subjectively this presentation of pure virtue can have *more power* over the human mind and provide a far stronger incentive to bring about even

that legality of actions, and produce firmer resolutions to prefer the law, out of pure respect for it, to every other consideration, than all the enticements arising from promises of pleasure and, in general, everything that may be counted as happiness, [AA V 152] or than all threats of pain and evils could ever accomplish. Nevertheless, this is in fact the case. Were human nature not so constituted, no way of representing the law through indirect approaches and inducements could ever produce morality of disposition either. Everything would be sheer hypocrisy: the law would be hated, or even despised, yet obeyed for one's own advantage. The letter of the law, legality, would be found in our actions, but its spirit, morality, would be entirely absent from our dispositions. And since, despite all our efforts, we cannot altogether detach ourselves from reason in our judgment, we would inevitably have to appear in our own eyes as worthless, depraved human beings. This would remain so even if we tried [A 271] to compensate for this humiliation before the inner tribunal by indulging in the pleasures that, in our delusion, a natural or divine law assumed by us had connected with the machinery of its enforcement—a machinery directed merely at what one does, without concerning itself with the motives for doing it.

Admittedly, to set a mind that is either still unformed or has become debased on the path of moral goodness initially requires some preparatory guidance, enticing it through its own advantage or frightening it through harm. But once this machinery, this leading string, has had some effect, the pure moral motive must without fail be brought before the soul. Not only is it the sole motive that establishes a character—a practically consistent way of thinking according to unchanging maxims—but, because it teaches a person to feel his own dignity, it also gives the mind a strength unexpected even by itself: the strength to tear itself free from every sensible attachment insofar as it seeks to rule, and to find ample compensation [A 272] for the sacrifices it makes in the independence of its intelligible nature and the greatness of soul for which it sees itself destined. We therefore intend to prove this property of our mind, this receptivity to a pure moral interest, and hence the moving power of the pure representation of virtue when properly brought home to the human heart, as the most powerful incentive to goodness [AA V 153] and, where lasting and exact observance of

moral maxims is concerned, the only one. We shall do so through observations anyone can make. Yet we must also remember that, if these observations prove only the actuality of such a feeling, not moral improvement brought about by it, this does not discredit, as though it were an empty fantasy, the sole method of making the objectively practical laws of pure reason subjectively practical through the mere pure representation of duty. For since this method has never yet been put into practice, experience cannot yet show anything of its success. We can demand only evidence of receptivity to such incentives, which I shall now briefly present, and afterward sketch in a few words the method of establishing and cultivating genuine moral dispositions.

If we attend to the course of conversation in mixed company, consisting not merely of scholars and reasoners but also of people [A 273] in business or women, we notice that, besides storytelling and joking, another kind of entertainment finds a place: reasoning. For the first is soon exhausted if it is to offer novelty and with it interest, while the second easily grows stale. But among all kinds of reasoning, none draws in people who otherwise soon tire of argument, or brings a certain liveliness to the company, more than reasoning about the *moral worth* of this or that action by which someone's character is to be determined. Those who otherwise find everything subtle and speculative in theoretical questions dry and tiresome soon join in when the moral substance of a reported good or evil action is to be assessed. They are as exact, as searching, as subtle in devising everything that might diminish, or even merely cast suspicion on, the purity of its intention and thus the degree of virtue in it, as we would never otherwise expect of them with any object of speculation. In these judgments we can often see the character of those judging others shine through. Some, exercising their judicial office chiefly over the dead, seem especially inclined to defend the good reported of [A 274] this or that deed against every disparaging objection of impurity, and ultimately to defend the person's entire moral worth against the charge of pretense and secret malice. Others, by contrast, are more intent on accusations and charges [AA V 154] challenging that worth. Yet we cannot always attribute to the latter an intention to reason virtue entirely out of every human example and thus reduce it to an empty name.

Often it is merely well-meant rigor in determining genuine moral substance according to an unyielding law. Compared with this law, rather than with examples, moral conceit sinks very low, and humility is not merely taught but felt by everyone in searching self-examination. Nevertheless, in those who defend the purity of intention in given examples, we can usually see a wish to wipe away even the slightest stain wherever the presumption of integrity favors it. Their motive is to prevent virtue, if the truth of all its examples were disputed and the purity of all human virtue denied, from finally being regarded as a mere figment, and thus every striving toward it disparaged as vain affectation and deceptive conceit.

I do not know why educators of the young have not long since made use of this tendency [A 275] of reason to take pleasure in even the subtlest examination of practical questions proposed to it. Having laid a purely moral catechism as their foundation, why have they not searched the biographies of ancient and modern times for illustrations of the duties presented, so as to have them at hand? Through these, especially by comparing similar actions under different circumstances, they could set their pupils' judgment to work in discerning the lesser or greater moral substance of those actions. They would soon find even young children, otherwise still unready for all speculation, very perceptive in this, and, because they feel their power of judgment advancing, not a little interested. Most importantly, they could confidently hope that frequent practice in recognizing good conduct in its complete purity and approving it, while noticing even the slightest deviation from it with regret or contempt, would leave a lasting impression of esteem on the one side and abhorrence on the other, even if pursued thus far merely as a game of judgment in which children can compete with one another. Through the mere habit of often regarding such actions as worthy of approval or blame, these impressions would form a good foundation for integrity in [A 276] [AA V 155] later conduct. I would only ask that they spare the children examples of so-called *noble*, supermeritorious actions, which our sentimental writings scatter about so freely, and stake everything solely on duty and on the worth a human being can and must give himself in his own eyes through the consciousness of not having transgressed it. For

what amounts to empty wishes and longings for an unattainable perfection produces nothing but heroes of romance. Priding themselves on their feeling for what is extravagantly great, they excuse themselves in return from observing ordinary and everyday obligations, which then seem to them merely insignificant trifles.¹⁸

But if we ask what *pure* morality actually is, [A 277] as the touchstone by which the moral substance of every action must be tested, I must admit that only philosophers can make the answer doubtful. For in ordinary human reason it has long been settled, not indeed through abstract universal formulas, but through ordinary use, much like the difference between the right and left hand. Let us therefore first show the criterion of pure virtue in an example and, imagining it presented for judgment to a boy of about ten, see whether he too would necessarily judge in this way on his own, without the teacher's guidance. Tell the story of an upright man whom others wish to induce to join the slanderers of an innocent but otherwise powerless person, such as Anne Boleyn when accused by Henry VIII of England. They offer him rewards—great gifts or high rank—and he refuses them. This will produce mere approval and assent [AA V 156] in the listener's soul, because what is at stake is gain. Now they begin to threaten loss. Among these slanderers are [A 278] his best friends, who now renounce their friendship; close relatives, who threaten to disinherit him, a man without means; powerful people who can persecute and injure him in every place and situation; a sovereign who threatens him with the loss of freedom, even of life itself. But to fill the measure of suffering, let him also feel the pain that only a morally good heart can feel in its full depth. Imagine his family, threatened with the utmost distress and deprivation, *imploring him to yield*. Imagine the man himself, though upright, by no means endowed with a firm insensibility to compassion or to his own distress, at a moment when he wishes he had never lived to see the day that exposed him to such inexpressible pain, nevertheless remaining faithful to his resolve to be upright, without wavering or even doubting. My young listener will then be raised by degrees from mere approval to admiration, from there to astonishment, and finally to the greatest reverence and a lively wish to be such a man himself—though certainly not in

his situation. Yet here virtue is worth so much only because it costs so much, not because it brings anything in. All the admiration, and even the effort to resemble this character, rests here entirely on the purity of the moral [A 279] principle. This purity can be presented with real vividness only by removing from the action's incentives everything that human beings might count as happiness. Morality must therefore have all the more power over the human heart the more purely it is presented. It follows that, if the moral law and the image of holiness and virtue are to exert any influence at all upon our soul, they can do so only insofar as they are brought home to the heart as an incentive in their purity, unmixed with aims directed at personal well-being, precisely because morality reveals itself most splendidly in suffering. But something whose removal strengthens the effect of a moving force must have been an obstacle. Consequently, every admixture of incentives drawn from one's own happiness is an obstacle to giving the moral law influence over the human heart.—I maintain further that, even in that admired action, if the motive from which it arose was high esteem [AA V 157] for one's duty, then this very respect for the law, rather than any pretension to regard oneself inwardly as magnanimous and as possessing a noble, meritorious way of thinking, has the greatest power over the spectator's mind. Duty, not merit, must therefore exert not only the most determinate influence upon the mind, but also, when presented in the true light of its inviolability, [A 280] the most penetrating.

In our times, when people hope to accomplish more with the mind through melting, tenderhearted feelings, or through soaring pretensions that inflate the heart and make it languid rather than strong, than through the dry and earnest representation of duty more appropriate to human imperfection and progress in goodness, drawing attention to this method is more necessary than ever. To hold up actions to children as noble, magnanimous, and meritorious models, hoping to win them over by inspiring enthusiasm for such actions, is entirely counterproductive. For since they are still so far behind in observing the most ordinary duty, and even in judging it correctly, this amounts to turning them into fantasists at an early age. But even among the better-instructed and more

experienced part of humanity, this supposed incentive has, if not a harmful effect, at least no genuinely moral effect on the heart, though that was what it was intended to produce.

All *feelings*, especially those meant to bring about unusual exertion, must produce their effect at the moment of their intensity and before they subside; otherwise they accomplish nothing. For the heart naturally returns to its normal, moderate rhythm of life [A 281] and then falls back into the languor previously its own, because something that excited it had been brought before it, but nothing that strengthened it. *Principles* must be founded on concepts; on any other foundation only passing impulses can arise, which can give the person no moral worth, not even confidence in himself. Without this confidence, consciousness of one's moral disposition and of such a character—the highest good in a human being—cannot exist at all. Now if these concepts are to become subjectively practical, they must not stop at the objective laws of morality in order to admire them and esteem them in relation to humanity, but must consider their representation in relation to the human being and to his own individual self. The law then appears in [AA V 158] a form that is indeed supremely worthy of respect, but not so agreeable as though it belonged to the element to which he is naturally accustomed. Rather, it compels him to leave that element, often not without self-denial, and enter a higher one in which he can maintain himself only with difficulty and with unceasing fear of relapse. In a word, the moral law demands observance from duty, not from preference, which we cannot and ought not presuppose at all.

Let us now see in an example whether the representation of an action [A 282] as noble and magnanimous contains more subjectively moving force as an incentive than when the action is represented merely as duty in relation to the stern moral law. When someone attempts to rescue people from a shipwreck at the greatest risk to his own life, and ultimately loses his life in doing so, the action is indeed reckoned on the one hand as duty, but on the other, and for the most part, also as a meritorious action. Yet our high esteem for it is greatly weakened by the concept of *duty to oneself*, which seems to suffer some infringement here. More decisive is the magnanimous sacrifice of one's life to

preserve one's country. Yet some scruple remains as to whether it is so completely a duty to devote oneself to this purpose voluntarily and without orders, and the action does not possess the full force of a model and an impulse to imitation. But if it is an indispensable duty, whose transgression violates the moral law in itself and without regard to human welfare and, as it were, tramples its holiness underfoot—duties of this kind are usually called duties to God, because in him we think the ideal of holiness as a substance—then we devote the most perfect [A 283] esteem to its observance at the sacrifice of everything that could have any value for even the deepest of our inclinations. We find our soul strengthened and elevated by such an example when it convinces us that human nature is capable of so great an elevation above everything nature can muster as incentives to the contrary. *Juvenal* presents such an example in a progression that makes the reader vividly feel the force of the incentive contained in the pure law of duty as duty:

*Be a good soldier, a good guardian, and likewise
 An upright judge; if ever called as witness in a doubtful
 [AA V 159] And uncertain case, though Phalaris commands you
 To lie, and bring his bull to dictate perjury,
 Believe it the greatest wrong to prefer life to honor
 And for life's sake to lose the reasons for living.*

If we can bring anything flattering about merit into our action, then the incentive is already somewhat mixed with self-love, and thus receives some assistance from sensibility. But to subordinate everything to the holiness of duty alone, and to become conscious that we *can* do so because our own reason recognizes this as its command and says that we *ought* to do it, means, as it were, to raise ourselves entirely above the sensible world itself. In that same consciousness of the law this is also inseparably connected with the law as the incentive of a capacity that *governs sensibility*, though not always [A 284] effectively. Yet frequent occupation with it and initially smaller attempts to use it also give hope of producing this effect, so as gradually to bring forth in us the greatest, yet pure, moral interest in it.

The method therefore takes the following course. *First*, the sole concern is to make judgment according to moral laws a natural occupation, accompanying our observation of our own free actions as well as those of others, and, as it were, a habit; and to sharpen it by first asking whether the action is objectively *in accordance with the moral law*, and which law. Here we distinguish, in directing attention, between the law that merely supplies a *ground* for obligation and the law that actually *obligates*—*laws supplying grounds of obligation from laws that obligate*. An example is the law of what human *need* requires of me as opposed to what human *right* requires: the latter prescribes essential duties, the former only nonessential duties. We thus teach the distinction between different duties that come together in one action. The other point to which attention must be directed is the question whether the action also occurred, subjectively, *for the sake of the moral law*, and thus possesses not only [A 285] moral correctness as a deed, but also moral worth as a disposition, according to its maxim. Now there is no doubt that this exercise, and consciousness of the cultivation it brings to our reason insofar as it judges merely about the practical, must gradually produce a certain interest in its law [AA V 160] itself, and hence in morally good actions. For we eventually come to love that whose contemplation makes us feel the extended use of our cognitive powers. This is promoted above all by that in which we find moral correctness, because only in such an order of things can reason feel at home with its capacity to determine *a priori*, according to principles, what ought to happen. After all, a student of nature eventually comes to love objects initially offensive to his senses when he discovers the great purposiveness of their organization and thus delights his reason in contemplating them. And Leibniz gently returned to its leaf an insect he had carefully examined through a microscope, because he felt instructed by the sight of it and as though he had received a kindness from it.

But this occupation of judgment, which makes us feel our own cognitive powers, is not yet interest in the actions [A 286] and their morality themselves. It merely makes us enjoy entertaining ourselves with such judgment, and gives virtue, or the way of thinking according to moral laws, a form of beauty that is admired but not yet sought—*praised, yet left in the cold*. In the same way, every-

thing whose contemplation subjectively produces a consciousness of the harmony of our powers of representation, and in which we feel our entire cognitive faculty—understanding and imagination—strengthened, brings forth a pleasure that can also be communicated to others. Yet the object's existence remains indifferent to us, since it is regarded merely as the occasion for becoming aware of the endowment of talents within us that raises us above animality. But now the *second* exercise begins its work: through the vivid presentation of moral disposition in examples, it makes the purity of the will noticeable, initially only as its negative perfection, insofar as in an action from duty no incentives of inclination influence the will as determining grounds at all. The pupil's attention is thereby kept on the consciousness of his *freedom*. And although this renunciation initially arouses a feeling of pain, nevertheless, by releasing the pupil from the constraint even of genuine needs, it also promises him liberation from the manifold dissatisfaction in which all these needs entangle him, and makes the mind [A 287] receptive to the feeling of contentment from other sources. [AA V 161] The heart is indeed freed and relieved of a burden that always secretly weighs upon it when examples of pure moral resolutions disclose to a human being an inner capacity otherwise not even properly known to himself: *inner freedom*, the capacity to free himself from the tempestuous importunity of inclinations so completely that none, not even the dearest, has any influence on a resolution for which we are now to use our reason. Take a case in which *I alone* know that the wrong is on my side. Although freely confessing it and offering satisfaction encounter such great resistance from vanity, self-interest, and even my otherwise not unjustified aversion to the person whose right I have infringed, I can nevertheless set all these misgivings aside. This contains a consciousness of independence from inclinations and fortunate circumstances, and of the possibility of being sufficient to myself—a consciousness beneficial to me in every other respect as well. And now the law of duty, through the positive worth that observing it makes us feel, gains easier access through *respect for ourselves* in the consciousness of our freedom. Upon this respect, if it is well grounded, [A 288] if a human being fears nothing more than finding himself contemptible and reprehensible in his own eyes during

inner self-examination, every good moral disposition can now be grafted. For it is the best, indeed the only, guardian that can keep ignoble and corrupting impulses from entering the mind.

My intention here has been only to indicate the most general maxims for a doctrine of method in moral education and exercise. Since the diversity of duties would require further particular determinations for each kind, and would thus constitute an extensive undertaking, I trust I shall be excused for leaving the matter at these outlines in a work such as this, which is only preparatory.

- 18 It is entirely advisable to praise actions in which a great, unselfish, sympathetic disposition and humanity shine forth. But here we must direct attention not so much to the *elevation of the soul*, which is very fleeting and transitory, as to the *heart's submission to duty*. A more lasting impression can be expected from the latter, because it brings principles with it, while the former brings only surges of feeling. One need only reflect a little to find some debt one has incurred in some way toward the human race—even if only that, through the inequality of human beings in civil society, one enjoys advantages for whose sake others must suffer all the greater deprivation—so that the self-loving fancy of *merit* does not displace the thought of *duty*.

Conclusion



Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily reflection dwells upon them: *the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me*. Neither need I seek or merely conjecture as veiled in darkness [AA V 162] or lying beyond experience, outside my field of vision. I see them before me and connect them immediately [A 289] with the consciousness of my existence. The first begins from the place I occupy in the outer sensible world and extends the connection in which I stand into an immeasurable vastness of worlds upon worlds and systems of systems, and beyond this into the boundless times of their periodic motion, its beginning and continuance. The second begins from my invisible self, my personality, and presents me in a world that has true infinity but is discernible only to the understanding, and with which—and thereby also with all those visible worlds—I cognize myself as standing not, as in the first case, in a merely contingent connection, but in a universal and necessary one. The first view, of a countless multitude of worlds, annihilates, as it were, my importance as an *animal creature* that must return the matter from which it was formed to the planet—a mere point in the universe—after having been endowed, one knows not how, with vital force for a short time. The second, by contrast, infinitely raises my worth as an *intelligence* through my personality, in which the moral law reveals to me a life independent of animality and even of the entire sensible world, at

least insofar as this can be inferred from the purposive determination of my existence by this law, a determination not restricted to the conditions and limits of this life but extending to infinity. [A 290]

Yet admiration and respect, though they can prompt inquiry, cannot make up for its absence. What, then, must be done to pursue this inquiry usefully and in a manner suited to the sublimity of its object? Examples may serve here both as a warning and as models for imitation. Contemplation of the world began with the most magnificent spectacle that human senses could ever present, and that our understanding could bear to follow in its vast extent, and ended—with astrology. Morality began with the noblest property in human nature, whose development and cultivation promise infinite benefit, and ended—with fanaticism or superstition. So it goes with all still crude attempts in which the chief part of the undertaking depends on the use of reason. Unlike the use of our feet, this use does not develop of itself through frequent practice, especially when it concerns properties [AA V 163] that cannot be presented so immediately in ordinary experience. But once the maxim became current, though late, of carefully considering in advance every step reason proposes to take, and allowing it to proceed only along the track of a method previously well thought out, judgment of the structure of the universe [A 291] took an entirely different direction, and with it achieved an incomparably more successful outcome. The fall of a stone and the motion of a sling, analyzed into their elements and the forces manifested in them and treated mathematically, finally produced that clear and for all future time unchanging insight into the structure of the universe which, with continued observation, can hope only to expand and need never fear having to retreat.

That example can recommend that we take the same path in treating the moral predispositions of our nature, and give us hope of similar success. We do, after all, have examples of morally judging reason at hand. To analyze these into their elementary concepts and, in the absence of *mathematics*, undertake a procedure resembling *chemistry*—*separating* the empirical from the rational that may be found in them, through repeated experiments on ordinary human understanding—can make both known to us in their *purity*, and with certainty

show what each can accomplish on its own. It can thus prevent both the errors of a still *crude*, unpracticed judgment and, what is far more necessary, the *flights of genius* through which, as commonly happens with adepts of the philosopher's stone, imaginary treasures are promised and real ones squandered without any methodical inquiry or knowledge of [A 292] nature. In a word, science, critically sought and methodically introduced, is the narrow gate that leads to the *doctrine of wisdom*, if by this we mean not merely what one ought to *do*, but what should serve *teachers* as a guide in laying out clearly and securely the path to wisdom that everyone ought to travel, and in safeguarding others from wrong turns. Philosophy must always remain the keeper of this science. The public need take no part in its subtle investigation, but should take part in the *teachings* that only after such an examination can become truly clear to it.