If we have thus far drawn our concept of duty from the common use of our practical reason, it is by no means to be inferred from this that we have treated it as a concept of experience. Rather, if we attend to the experience of the deeds and omissions of human beings, we encounter frequent and, as we ourselves concede, just complaints that one could cite no safe examples of the disposition to act from pure duty; that, even if some of what is done may accord with what duty commands, nevertheless it always remains doubtful whether it is really done from duty and thus has a moral worth. Hence in all ages there have been philosophers who have absolutely denied the actuality of this disposition in human actions, and have ascribed everything to a more or less refined self-love, yet without bringing the correctness of the concept of morality into doubt; rather, they have mentioned with inward regret the fragility and impurity of human nature, which is, to be sure, noble enough to make an idea so worthy of respect into its precept, but at the same time is too weak to follow it, and uses reason, which ought to serve it for legislation, only in order to take care of the interest of inclinations, whether singly or at most in their greatest compatibility with one another.

In fact it is absolutely impossible to settle with complete certainty through experience whether there is even a single case in which the maxim

1. 1785: “thus”
2. 1785: “that”
3. 1785 omits this word and treats the following sentence as a clause subordinate to the previous sentence.
4. 1786 adds this verb construction Erwähnung taten
5. In *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant lists “fragility” (the inability to hold to good maxims, once they are adopted) and “impurity” (the need for nonmoral incentives to do one’s duty) as the two lesser degrees of the radical evil in human nature, along with the highest degree, “depravity” (the propensity to place incentives of inclination ahead of those of duty) (Ak 6:29–30).
of an otherwise dutiful action has rested solely on moral grounds and on the representation of one’s duty. For it is sometimes the case that with the most acute self-examination we encounter nothing that could have been powerful enough apart from the moral ground of duty to move us to this or that good action and to so great a sacrifice; but from this it cannot be safely inferred that it was not actually some covert impulse of self-love, under the mere false pretense of that idea, that was the real determining cause of the will; so we would gladly flatter ourselves with a false presumption of a nobler motive, while in fact even through the most strenuous testing, we can never fully get behind the covert incentives, because when we are talking about moral worth, it does not depend on the actions, which one sees, but on the inner principles, which one does not see.6

One cannot better serve the wishes of those who ridicule all morality, as a mere figment of the mind overreaching itself though self-conceit, than to concede to them that the concepts of duty must be drawn solely from experience (as one is gladly persuaded, for the sake of convenience, in the case of all other concepts); for in this way one prepares for them a certain triumph. From love of humanity I will concede that most of our actions are in conformity with duty; but if one looks more closely at “the imagination of the thoughts of their hearts,”7 then everywhere one runs into the dear self, which is always thrusting itself forward; it is upon this that the aim is based, and not on the strict command of duty, which would often demand self-renunciation. One does not need to be an enemy of virtue, but only a cold-blooded observer, who does not take the liveliest wish for the good straightway as its reality, in order (especially with advancing years, and a power of judgment grown shrewder through experience and more acute for observation) to become doubtful at certain moments whether any true virtue is ever really to be encountered in the world. And here nothing can protect us from falling away entirely from our ideas of duty and preserve in our soul a well-grounded respect toward its law, except the clear conviction that even if there have never been actions that have arisen from such pure

6. Cf. 2 Corinthians 4:18: “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things that are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

7. Ihr Dichten und Trachten; this is an allusion to the phrase Tichten und Trachten in the Lutheran translation of Genesis 6:5, which reads (in the King James version): “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

sources, yet nevertheless we are not talking here about whether this or that happens, but rather reason commands, for itself and independently of all appearances, what ought to happen; hence actions, of which perhaps the world has up to now given no example and about which one might, grounding everything on experience, very much doubt even their feasibility, are nevertheless commanded unremittingly by reason; and that, e.g., pure honesty in friendship can no less be demanded of every human being, even if up to now there may not have been a single honest friend, because this duty, as duty in general, lies prior to all experience in the idea of a reason determining the will through a priori grounds.

If one adds that unless one wants to dispute whether the concept of morality has any truth and relation to any possible object, one could not deny that its law is of such an extensive significance that it would have to be valid not merely for human beings but for all rational beings in general, and not merely under contingent conditions and with exceptions, but with absolute necessity, then it is clear that no experience could give occasion for inferring even the possibility of such apodictic laws. For with what right could we bring into unlimited respect, as a universal precept for every rational nature, that which is perhaps valid only under the contingent conditions of humanity, and how should laws for the determination of our will be taken as laws for the determination of the will of a rational being in general, and only as such also for our will, if they were merely empirical and did not take their origin fully a priori from pure but practical reason?

Nor could one give worse advice to morality than by trying to get it from examples. For every example of morality that is to be represented to me as such must itself be previously judged in accordance with principles of

9. “Friendship thought of as attainable in its purity or completeness (between Orestes and Pylades, Thesesus and Pirithous) is the hobbyhorse of writers of romances. On the other hand, Aristotle says: ‘My dear friends, there are no friends!’ ” (Metaphysics of Morals, Ak 6:470). The statement attributed to Aristotle is based on Diogenes Laertius, Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers 5.1.21.

10. The original meaning of ‘apodictic’ is ‘self-evident’ (from the Greek ‘από + δείκνυμι’). But Kant more typically uses it in the sense of ‘necessary’ (this is its apparent meaning in the Table of Judgments, Critique of Pure Reason A70/B95); yet an epistemic element of certainty is often intended as well. For example: “Geometrical propositions are all apodictic, i.e., combined with consciousness of their necessity” (Critique of Pure Reason B 41; cf. A160/B199); “[Mathematical cognition] carries with it thoroughly apodictic certainty (i.e., absolute necessity), hence rests on no grounds of experience” (Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, § 6, Ak 4:280).
morality as to whether it is worthy to serve as an original\textsuperscript{11} example, i.e., as a model; but it can by no means by itself\textsuperscript{12} supply the concept of morality. Even the holy one of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before one can recognize him as holy; he says this about himself too: Why do you call me (whom you see) good? No one is good (the archetype of the good) except the one God (whom you do not see).\textsuperscript{13} But where do we get the concept of God as the highest good? Solely from the idea that reason projects \textit{a priori} of moral perfection and connects inseparably with the concept of a free will. In morality there is no imitation, and examples serve only for encouragement, i.e., they place beyond doubt the feasibility of what the law commands, they make intuitive what the practical rule expresses universally; but they can never justify setting aside their true original,\textsuperscript{14} which lies in reason, and in directing ourselves in accordance with examples.

If, then, there is no genuine supreme principle of morality which does not have to rest on pure reason independent of all experience, then I believe it is not necessary even to ask whether it is good to expound these concepts in general (\textit{in abstracto}), as they, together with the principles belonging to them, are fixed \textit{a priori}, provided that this cognition is distinguished from common cognition and is to be called ‘philosophical’. But in our age this might well be necessary. For if one were to collect votes on which is to be preferred, a pure rational cognition abstracted from everything empirical, hence a metaphysics of morals, or popular practical philosophy, then one would soon guess on which side the preponderance\textsuperscript{15} will fall.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{11} 1785: “genuine”
\textsuperscript{12} zu oberst
\textsuperscript{13} “ ‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No one is good except God alone’ ” (Luke 18:19; cf. Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18). As in note 6 above, compare also 2 Corinthians 4:18.
\textsuperscript{14} Original
\textsuperscript{15} 1785: “the truth”
\textsuperscript{16} Kant’s references to “popular philosophy” are primarily allusions to a movement of German Enlightenment philosophers, centered chiefly in Berlin, whose best-known representatives were Christian Garve (1742–1798), Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), Christoph Meiners (1747–1810), and Christoph Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811). Other critical references to this movement can be found throughout Kant’s writings (\textit{Critique of Pure Reason} A x, A855/B883; \textit{Prolegomena}, Ak 4:261–62, 371–83; \textit{What Does It Mean To Orient Oneself in Thinking?} Ak 8:133–46; \textit{On the Common Saying “That May Be Correct in Theory, but Does Not Work in Practice”} Ak 8:278–89; \textit{Metaphysics of Morals},
This condescension to popular concepts is to be sure very laudable when the elevation to principles of pure reason has already been achieved to full satisfaction, and that would mean first *grounding* the doctrine of morals on metaphysics, but procuring *entry* for it by means of popularity, once it stands firm. But it is quite absurd to want to humor popularity in the first investigation, upon which depends the correctness of principles. Not only can this procedure never lay claim to the extremely rare merit of a true *philosophical popularity*, since there is no art in being commonly understandable if one relinquishes all well-grounded insight; this produces only a disgusting mish-mash of patched-together observations and half-reasoned principles, in which superficial minds revel, because there is always something serviceable for everyday chitchat, but which insightful people disregard, feeling confused and dissatisfied without being able to help themselves; yet philosophers, who can very well see through the illusion, find little hearing when for certain occasions they decry this supposed popularity, in order, through acquiring determinate insight, finally to gain the right to be popular.

One need only look at the essays on morality adapted to this favored taste; then one will sometimes encounter the particular vocation of human nature (but occasionally also the idea of a rational nature in general), sometimes perfection, sometimes happiness, here moral feeling, there fear of God, some of this and some of that, all in a wondrous mixture, without its occurring to anyone to ask whether the principles of morality are to be sought anywhere in the knowledge of human nature (which we can obtain only through experience); and if not, if these principles are to be encountered in pure concepts of reason, fully *a priori*, free from everything empirical, and nowhere else even in the smallest part, then one may seize the

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17. *Volksbegriffen*

18. *Blendwerk*
But such a fully isolated metaphysics of morals, mixed with no anthropology, with no theology, with no physics or hyperphysics, still less with occult qualities (which one might call ‘hypophysical’), is not only an indispensable substrate of all theoretical cognition of duties which is securely determined, but it is at the same time also a desideratum of the highest importance for the actual fulfillment of its precepts. For the pure representation of duty and the moral law in general, mixed with no alien addition from empirical stimuli, has, by way of reason alone (which thereby for the first time becomes aware that it can for itself be practical), an influence on the human heart so much more powerful than all other incentives** that might

*One can, if one wants, distinguish the ‘pure’ philosophy of morals (metaphysics) from the ‘applied’ (namely to human nature) (just as ‘pure’ mathematics and ‘pure’ logic are distinguished from ‘applied’). By this terminology one is directly reminded that moral principles are not grounded on the peculiarities of human nature, but must be subsistent a priori for themselves; but from them human practical rules must be derivable, as for every rational nature.

**I have a letter from the late excellent Sulzer, in which he asks me what the cause might be that the doctrines of virtue, however convincing they may be to reason, yet accomplish so little. My answer, through being prepared so as to be complete, came too late. Yet it is nothing except that the teachers have not brought their concepts to purity, and because they were trying to do too much by scaring up motivations to be morally good from everywhere, in trying to strengthen their medicine they ruin it. For the most common observation shows that when one represents an upright action as it is carried out with a steadfast soul even under the greatest temptations of distress or of enticement, separate from every intention for any advantage in this or in another world, it leaves far behind and eclipses every similar action which is affected even in the slightest with an alien incentive; it elevates the soul and inspires the wish to be able also to act that way. Even moderately young children feel this impression, and one should never represent duty to them otherwise than this. [Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–1779), director of the philosophical division of the Prussian Academy of Sciences (1777–1779). The letter in question is usually thought to be the
be summoned from the empirical field, that reason, in the consciousness of its dignity, despises the latter, and can gradually become their master; in place of this, a mixed doctrine of morals, composed from incentives of feelings and inclinations and simultaneously from concepts of reason, must make the mind waver between motivations that cannot be brought under any principle, and can lead us only very contingently to the good, but often also to the evil.

From what we have adduced it is clear that all moral concepts have their seat and origin fully *a priori* in reason, and this as much in the most common human reason as in that reason which is in highest measure speculative; that these concepts cannot be abstracted from any empirical, and therefore mere contingent, cognition; that their dignity lies precisely in this purity of their origin, so that they serve us as supreme practical principles; that whatever one adds to them of the empirical, one withdraws that much from their genuine influence and from the unlimited worth of actions; that it is not only of the greatest necessity for theoretical aims, when it is merely a matter of speculation, but it is also of the greatest practical importance, to demand that their concepts and laws should be taken from pure reason, to expound them pure and unmixed, indeed, to determine the range of this entire practical or pure rational cognition, i.e., the entire faculty of pure practical reason; but not as speculative philosophy permits, or indeed at times finds necessary, making the principles dependent on the particular nature of human reason, but rather, since moral laws are to be valid for every rational being in general, to derive them from the universal concept of a rational being in general; and in such a way all morality, which needs

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one dated December 8, 1770 (see Ak 13:51), which, however, does not directly raise the question Kant says it does. What Sulzer does say is this: “I really wished to hear from you whether we may soon hope to see your work on the metaphysics of morals. This work is of the highest importance, given the present unsteady state of moral philosophy. I have tried to do something of this sort myself in attempting to resolve the question, ‘What actually is the physical or psychological difference between a soul that we call virtuous and one which is vicious?’ I have sought to discover the true dispositions of virtue and vice in the first manifestations of representations and sensations, and I now regard my undertaking of this investigation as less futile, since it has led me to concepts that are simple and easy to grasp, and which one can effortlessly apply to the teaching and raising of children. But this work, too, is impossible for me to complete at present” (Ak 10:112).]

19. This word added in 1786
anthropology for its application to human beings, must first be expounded completely, independently of anthropology, as pure philosophy, i.e., as metaphysics (which it is possible to do in this species of entirely separate cognitions); but we must also be conscious that without being in possession of this, it would be futile, I will not say to determine precisely for speculative judgment what is moral about duty in everything that conforms to duty, but that it would even be impossible in a common and practical use, chiefly in moral instruction, to ground morality on its genuine principles and thereby to effect pure moral dispositions and implant them in people’s minds for the highest good of the world.  

But now in order to progress by natural steps in this work not merely from the common moral judgment (which is here worthy of great respect) to the philosophical, as has already been done, but also from a popular philosophy, which goes no further than it can get through groping by means of examples, up to metaphysics (which is not any longer held back by anything empirical and, since it must cover the entire sum total of rational cognition of this kind, goes as far as ideas, where even examples desert us), we must follow and distinctly exhibit the practical faculty of reason from its universal rules of determination up to where the concept of duty arises from it.

Every thing in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the faculty to act in accordance with the representation of laws, i.e., in accordance with principles, or a will. Since for the derivation of actions from laws reason is required, the will is nothing other than practical reason. If reason determines the will without exception, then the actions of such a being, which are recognized as objectively necessary, are also subjectively necessary, i.e., the will is a faculty of choosing only that which reason, independently of inclination, recognizes as practically necessary, i.e., as good. But if reason for itself alone does not sufficiently determine the will, if the will is still subject to subjective conditions (to certain incentives) which do not always agree with the objective conditions, in a word, if the will is not in itself fully in accord with reason (as it actually is with human beings), then the actions which are objectively recognized as necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will, in accord with objective laws, is necessitation, i.e., the relation of objective laws to a will which is not thoroughly good is represented as the determination of the will of a rational being through grounds of reason to which, however, this will in accordance with its nature is not necessarily obedient.

20. Vom höchsten Weltbesten
The representation of an objective principle, insofar as it is necessitating for a will, is called a ‘command’ (of reason), and the formula of the command is called an imperative.

All imperatives are expressed through an ought and thereby indicate the relation of an objective law of reason to a will which in its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by that law (a necessitation). They say that it would be good to do or refrain from something, but they say it to a will that does not always do something just because it is represented to it as good to do. Practical good, however, is that which determines the will by means of representations of reason, hence not from subjective causes, but objectively, i.e., from grounds that are valid for every rational being as such. It is distinguished from the agreeable, as that which has influence on the will only by means of sensation from merely subjective causes, those which are valid only for the senses of this or that one, and not as a principle of reason, which is valid for everyone.*

A perfectly good will would thus stand just as much under objective laws (of the good), but it would not be possible to represent it as necessitated by them to lawful actions, because of itself, in accordance with its subjective constitution, it can be determined only through the representation of the good. Hence for the divine will, and in general for a holy will, no imperatives are valid; the ought is out of place here, because the volition is of itself already necessarily in harmony with the law. Hence imperatives are

*The dependence of the faculty of desire on sensations is called ‘inclination’, and this always therefore proves a need. But the dependence of a contingently determinable will on principles of reason is called an interest. This occurs, therefore, only with a dependent will, which does not always of itself accord with reason; with the divine will one cannot think of any interest. But the human will, too, can take an interest without therefore acting from interest. The former signifies the practical interest in the action, the second the pathological interest in the object of the action. The first indicates only the dependence of the will on principles of reason in itself, the second on those principles of reason on behalf of inclination, where, namely, reason furnishes only the practical rule as to how the need of inclination is to be supplied. In the first case the action interests me, in the second the object of the action (insofar as it is agreeable to me). In the First Section we have seen that with an action from duty it is not the interest in an object that has to be looked to, but merely the action itself and its principle in reason (the law).
only formulas expressing the relation of objective laws of volition in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, e.g., to the human being.

Now all imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as a means to attain something else which one wills (or which it is possible that one might will). The categorical imperative would be that one which represented an action as objectively necessary for itself, without any reference to another end.

Because every practical law represents a possible action as good, and therefore as necessary for a subject practically determinable by reason, all imperatives are formulas of the determination of action, which is necessary in accordance with the principle of a will which is good in some way. Now if the action were good merely as a means to something else, then the imperative is hypothetical; if it is represented as good in itself, hence necessary, as the principle of the will, in a will that in itself accords with reason, then it is categorical.

The imperative thus says which action possible through me would be good, and represents the practical rule in relation to a will[23] that does not directly do an action because it is good, in part because the subject does not always know that it is good, in part because if it did know this, its maxims could still be contrary to the objective principles of a practical reason.

The hypothetical imperative thus says only that the action is good for some possible or actual aim. In the first case it is a problematically,²⁴ in the second an assertorically practical principle. The categorical imperative, which declares the action for itself as objectively necessary without reference to any aim, i.e., also without any other end, is valid as an apodictically practical principle.

One can think of that which is possible only through the powers of some rational being also as a possible aim of any will, and hence the principles of the action, insofar as it is represented as necessary in order to achieve any aim to be effected through it, are infinitely many. All sciences have some

²². 1785: “for some aim”
²³. 1785: “the will”
²⁴. In his (unpublished) First Introduction to the Critique of the Power of Judgment (Ak 20:200 note), Kant retracts the term ‘problematical’ for this kind of imperative, replacing it with the term ‘technical’, which he also uses already in the Groundwork (Ak 4:416).
practical part, consisting of the problems whether any end is possible for us and of imperatives about how it can be attained. These can therefore in general be called imperatives of skill. Whether the end is rational and good is not the question here, but only what one has to do in order to achieve them. The precepts for the physician, how to make his patient healthy in a well-grounded way, and for the poisoner, how to kill him with certainty, are to this extent of equal worth, since each serves to effect its aim perfectly. Because in early youth one does not know what ends he will run up against in life, parents seek chiefly to have their children learn many things, and they concern themselves about skill in the use of means toward all kinds of discretionary ends, about none of which they can determine whether it will perhaps actually become an aim of his pupil in the future, but about any of which, however, it is possible that he might someday have it, and this concern is so great that they commonly neglect to educate and correct their judgment over the worth of the things that they may perhaps make their ends.

There is one end, however, that one can presuppose as actual for all rational beings (insofar as imperatives apply to them, namely as dependent beings) and thus one aim that they not merely can have, but of which one can safely presuppose that without exception they do have it in accordance with a natural necessity, and that is the aim at happiness. The hypothetical imperative that represents the practical necessity of the action as a means to furthering happiness is assertoric. One may expound it as necessary not merely to an uncertain, merely possible aim, but to an aim that one can presuppose safely and a priori with every human being, because it belongs to his essence. Now one can call skill in the choice of means to his own greatest well-being prudence* in the narrowest sense. Thus the imp-

*The word ‘prudence’ is taken in a twofold sense; in the first it can bear the name of ‘worldly prudence’ and in the second that of ‘private prudence.’ The first is the skill of a human being to have influence on others, in order to use them for his aims. The second is the insight to unite all these aims to his own enduring advantage. The latter is really that to which the worth of the first is reduced, and about someone who is prudent in the first way but not in the second way one can better say that he is clever and sly, but on the whole imprudent.

25. Aufgaben, daß, a construction somewhat opaque in meaning and almost as awkward in German as “problems that” would be in English.
26. sicher, which could also be translated “safely”
27. insgesamt
28. “and a priori” added in 1786
29. 1785: “to his nature”
ative that refers to the choice of means to one’s own happiness, i.e., the precept of prudence, is always hypothetical; the action is commanded not absolutely but only as a means to another aim.

Finally, there is one imperative that, without being grounded on any other aim to be achieved through a certain course of conduct as its condition, commands this conduct immediately. This imperative is categorical. It has to do not with the matter of the action and what is to result from it, but with the form and the principle from which it results; and what is essentially good about it consists in the disposition, whatever the result may be. This imperative may be called that of morality.

The volition in accordance with these three kinds of principles is also clearly distinguished by a difference in the necessitation of the will. Now in order to make this noticeable too, I believe that the most suitable terminology to use in ordering them is to say that they are either rules of skill, or counsels of prudence or commands (laws) of morality. For only law carries with it the concept of an unconditional and objective, hence universally valid necessity, and commands are laws that must be obeyed, i.e., followed even against inclination. The giving of counsel contains necessity, to be sure, but can be valid merely under a subjective, pleasing condition, whether this or that human being counts this or that toward his happiness; the categorical imperative, by contrast, is not limited by any condition, and as absolutely, though practically necessary, can be called quite authentically a command. One could also call the first imperative technical (belonging to art), the second pragmatic* (to welfare), the third moral (belonging to free conduct in general, i.e., to morals).

Now the question arises: How are all these imperatives possible? This

*It seems to me that the authentic signification of the word ‘pragmatic’ could be determined most precisely in this way. For those sanctions are called ‘pragmatic’ which really flow not from the rights of states, as necessary laws, but from provision for the general welfare. A history is written ‘pragmatically’ when it makes us prudent, i.e., teaches how the world could take care of its advantage better than, or at any rate at least as well as, the world of antiquity has done.

30. Ungleichheit, which might also be translated “inequality.” Kant may be suggesting, that is, not only that the three imperatives are different in kind, but also that the three kinds of necessitation have unequal rational weight: moral necessitation is unconditional, hence prior to the other two, overriding them in cases of conflict; pragmatic necessitation by imperatives of prudence, in turn, overrides technical necessitation by imperatives of skill that merely tell us how to achieve some optional end we have contingently chosen.

31. gefälliger; editors often correct this to zufälliger, “contingent.”
question does not demand the knowledge how to think the execution of the action that the imperative commands, but rather merely how to think the necessitation of the will that the imperative expresses in the problem. How an imperative of skill is to be possible probably needs no particular discussion. Whoever wills the end, also wills (insofar as reason has decisive influence on his actions) the means that are indispensably necessary to it that are in his control. As far as volition is concerned, this proposition is analytic; for in the volition of an object, as my effect, is already thought my causality as an acting cause, i.e., the use of means; and the imperative extracts the concept of actions necessary for this end out of the concept of a volition of this end (to be sure, synthetic propositions belong to determining the means themselves to a proposed aim, but they have nothing to do with the ground, with making the act\(^2\) of the will actual, but rather with how to make the object actual). That in order to divide a line into two equal parts in accordance with a secure principle I must draw two arcs from its endpoints — this mathematics obviously teaches only through synthetic propositions; but that if I know that the specified effect can occur only through such an action, then if I completely will the effect, I would also will the action that is required for it — that is an analytic proposition; for to represent something as an effect possible through me in a certain way and to represent myself, in regard to it, acting in this same way — those are entirely the same.

Imperatives of prudence would be equally analytic, and entirely coincide with those of skill, if only it were so easy to provide a determinate concept of happiness. For here, as there, it would be said: whoever wills the end, also wills (necessarily in accord with reason) the sole means to it in his control. Yet it is a misfortune that the concept of happiness is such an indeterminate concept that although every human being wishes to attain it, he can never say, determinately and in a way that is harmonious with himself, what he really wishes and wills. The cause of this is that all the elements that belong to the concept of happiness are altogether empirical, i.e., have to be gotten from experience, while for the idea of happiness an absolute whole, a maximum of welfare, is required, in my present and in every future condition. Now it is impossible for the most insightful, and at the same time most resourceful, yet finite being to make a determinate concept of what he really wills here. If he wills wealth, how much worry, envy, and harassment\(^3\) will he not bring down on his shoulders?\(^4\) If he

\[\text{Aktus}\]

\[\text{Nachstellung}\]

\[\text{Kant ends this sentence, which seems halfway between an assertion and a rhetorical question, with a period instead of a question mark.}\]
wills much cognition and insight, perhaps that could only give him a more acute eye, to show him all the more terribly those ills that are now hidden from him and yet cannot be avoided, or to burden his desires, which already give him quite enough to do, with still more needs. If he wills a long life, who will guarantee him that it would not be a long misery? If he wills at least health, how often have bodily discomforts not deterred him from excesses into which unlimited health would have allowed him to fall, etc.? In short, he is not capable of determining with complete certainty, in accordance with any principle, what will make him truly happy, because omniscience would be required for that. Thus one cannot act in accordance with determinate principles in order to be happy, but only in accordance with empirical counsels, e.g., of diet, frugality, politeness, restraint, etc., of which experience teaches that they most promote welfare on the average. It follows from this that the imperatives of prudence, to speak precisely, cannot command at all, i.e., cannot exhibit actions objectively as practically necessary; that they are sooner to be taken as advisings (consilia) than as commands (praecipita) of reason; that the problem of determining, certainly and universally, what action will promote the happiness of a rational being, is fully insoluble, hence no imperative in regard to it is possible, which would command us, in the strict sense, to do what would make us happy, because happiness is an ideal not of reason but of imagination, resting merely on empirical grounds, of which it would be futile to expect that they should determine an action through which to attain the totality of a series of consequences which are in fact infinite. This imperative of prudence, meanwhile, would be an analytically practical proposition if one assumes that the means to happiness could be specified with certainty; for it is distinguished from the imperative of skill only in this, that with the latter the end is merely possible, but with the former it is given: since, however, both merely command the means to that which it is presupposed that one wills as an end, then the imperative that commands the volition of the means for him who wills the end is in both cases analytic. Thus there is also no difficulty in regard to the possibility of such an imperative.

By contrast, how the imperative of morality is possible is without doubt the sole question in need of a solution, since it is not at all hypothetical, and thus the necessity, represented as objective, cannot be based on any presupposition, as with the hypothetical imperatives. Yet in this connection it must not be left out of account that whether there is any such imperative anywhere cannot be settled by any example, hence not empirically; but the

35. sicher
36. sicher
worry is rather that all those that seem categorical might be, in some hidden wise, hypothetical. E.g., if it is said: “You ought not to make a deceiving promise,” and one assumes that the necessity of this omission is not mere advice for the avoidance of some ill or other, so that it might really mean: “You should not make a lying promise, so that if it were revealed then you would lose your credit”; if an action of this kind must be considered as evil for itself, then the imperative forbidding it would be categorical; then one still cannot with certainty give an example in which the will is determined merely by the law, without any other incentive, although it might appear so; for it is always possible that fear of disgrace, or perhaps also an obscure worry about other dangers, might secretly have had an influence on the will. Who can prove through experience the nonexistence of a cause, since experience teaches us nothing beyond the fact that we do not perceive one? But in such a case the so-called moral imperative, which appears as such to be categorical and unconditioned, would in fact be only a pragmatic precept, which alerts us to our own advantage and merely teaches us to pay attention to it.

Thus we will have to investigate the possibility of a categorical imperative entirely a priori, since here we cannot have the advantage that its reality is given in experience, so that its possibility would be necessary not for its establishment but only for its explanation. Meanwhile, we can provisionally have insight into this much: that the categorical imperative alone can be stated as a practical law, while the others collectively are, to be sure, principles of the will, but cannot be called ‘laws’; for what it is necessary to do for the attainment of a discretionary aim can be considered in itself to be contingent, and we can always be rid of the precept if we give up the aim; whereas the unconditioned command leaves the will no free discretion in regard to the opposite, hence it alone carries with it that necessity which we demand for a law.

Secondly, with this categorical imperative, or law of morality, the ground of difficulty (of having insight into its possibility) is very great

37. 1785: “but rather if one asserts that an action of this kind”
38. 1785: “even if it might appear so”
39. 1785: “For who”
40. Erklärung, which could also be translated “definition.” Kant holds that for a well-formed (real) definition of a thing, we require a demonstration of its (real) possibility. See Critique of Pure Reason A727–30/B755–59.
41. 1785: “But we can provisionally”
indeed. It is a synthetically practical proposition* a priori, and since there is so much difficulty in gaining insight into the possibility of propositions of this kind in theoretical cognition, it is easy to gather that there will be no less in the practical.

Regarding this problem we will first try to see whether perhaps the mere concept of a categorical imperative does not also provide us with its formula, containing the proposition which alone can be a categorical imperative; for how such an absolute command is possible, even if we know how it is stated, will still demand particular and difficult effort, which, however, we will postpone until the last section.

If I think of a hypothetical imperative in general, then I do not know beforehand what it will contain until the condition is given to me. But if I think of a categorical imperative, then I know directly what it contains. For since besides the law, the imperative contains only the necessity of the maxim,** that it should accord with this law, but the law contains no condition to which it is limited, there remains nothing left over with which the maxim of the action is to be in accord, and this accordance alone is what the imperative really represents necessarily.

The categorical imperative is thus only a single one, and specifically this: Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law.

Now if from this one imperative all imperatives of duty can be derived as from their principle, then although we leave unsettled whether in general

*I connect the deed a priori with the will, without a presupposed condition from any inclination, hence necessarily (though only objectively, i.e., under the idea of reason, which would have full control over all subjective motivations). This is therefore a practical proposition that does not derive the volition of an action analytically from any other volition already presupposed (for we have no such perfect will), but is immediately connected with the concept of the will of a rational being, as something not contained in it.

**A maxim is the subjective principle for action, and must be distinguished from the objective principle, namely the practical law. The former contains the practical rule that reason determines in accord with the conditions of the subject (often its ignorance or also its inclinations), and is thus the principle in accordance with which the subject acts; but the law is the objective principle, valid for every rational being, and the principle in accordance with which it ought to act, i.e., an imperative.
what one calls ‘duty’ is an empty concept, we can at least indicate what we are thinking in the concept of duty and what this concept means.\textsuperscript{42}

Because the universality of the law in accordance with which effects happen constitutes that which is really called \textit{nature} in the most general sense (in accordance with its form), i.e., the existence of things insofar as it is determined in accordance with universal laws, thus the universal imperative of duty can also be stated as follows: \textit{So act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature.}

Now we will enumerate\textsuperscript{43} some duties, in accordance with their usual division into duties toward ourselves and toward other human beings, and into perfect and imperfect duties:\textsuperscript{*}

(1) One person, through a series of evils that have accumulated to the point of hopelessness, feels weary of life but is still so far in possession of his reason that he can ask himself whether it might be contrary to the duty to himself to take his own life. Now he tries out whether the maxim of his action could become a universal law of nature. But his maxim is: ‘From self-love, I make it my principle to shorten my life when by longer term it threatens more ill than it promises agreeableness’. The question is whether this principle of self-love could become a universal law of nature. But then one soon sees that a nature whose law it was to destroy life through the same feeling\textsuperscript{44} whose vocation it is to impel the furtherance of life would contra-

\textsuperscript{*}Here one must note well that I reserve the division of duties entirely for a future \textit{metaphysics of morals}; the division here therefore stands only as a discretionary one (to order my examples). For the rest, I understand by a perfect duty that which permits no exception to the advantage of inclination, and I do have \textit{perfect duties} that are not merely external but also internal, which runs contrary to the use of words common in the schools; but I do not mean to defend that here, because for my aim it is all the same whether or not one concedes it to me. [Cf. \textit{Metaphysics of Morals}, Ak 6:240, 391–98, 413, and the detailed taxonomy of duties of virtue, Ak 6:417–68. The “use of words common in the schools,” according to which perfect duties are externally enforceable actions, is based on Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694), \textit{De Jure Naturale} (1672), 1.1.19–20. But Pufendorf’s distinction was anticipated by Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) and had been taken up also by, among others, Christian Thomasius (1655–1728) and J. G. Sulzer.]

\textsuperscript{42. sagen wolle} \textsuperscript{43. herzählen, which could also be translated “reckon” or “calculate”} \textsuperscript{44. Empfindung}
dict itself, and thus could not subsist as nature; hence that maxim could not possibly obtain as a universal law of nature, and consequently it entirely contradicts the supreme principle of all duty.

(2) Another sees himself pressured by distress into borrowing money. He knows very well that he will not be able to pay, but he also sees that nothing will be lent him if he does not firmly promise to pay at a determinate time. He wants to make such a promise; yet he has conscience enough to ask himself: “Is it not impermissible and contrary to duty to get out of distress in such a way?” Supposing he nevertheless resolved on it, his maxim would be stated as follows: ‘If I believe myself to be in pecuniary distress, then I will borrow money and promise to pay it back, although I know this will never happen’. Now this principle of self-love, or of what is expedient for oneself, might perhaps be united with my entire future welfare, yet the question now is: “Is it right?” I thus transform this claim\(^45\) of self-love into a universal law and set up the question thus: “How would it stand if my maxim became a universal law?” Yet I see right away that it could never be valid as a universal law of nature and still agree with itself, but rather it would necessarily contradict itself. For the universality of a law that everyone who believes himself to be in distress could promise whatever occurred to him with the intention of not keeping it would make impossible the promise and the end one might have in making it, since no one would believe that anything has been promised him, but rather would laugh about every such utterance as vain pretense.

(3) A third finds in himself a talent, which could, by means of some cultivation, make him into a human being who is useful for all sorts of aims. But he sees himself as in comfortable circumstances and sooner prefers to indulge\(^46\) in gratification than to trouble himself with the expansion and improvement of his fortunate natural predispositions. Yet he still asks whether, apart from the agreement of his maxim of neglecting his gifts of nature with his propensity to amusement, it also agrees with what one calls ‘duty’. Then he sees that, although a nature could still subsist in accordance with such a universal law, though then the human being (like the South Sea Islanders) would think only of letting his talents rust and applying his life merely to idleness, amusement, procreation, in a word, to enjoyment; yet it is impossible for him to will that this should become a universal law of nature, or that it should be implanted in us as such by natural instinct. For as a rational being he necessarily wills that all the faculties in him should be

\(^{45}\) Zumutung

\(^{46}\) 1785: “and he prefers it that he indulge”
developed, because they are serviceable and given\textsuperscript{47} to him for all kinds of possible aims.

(4)\textsuperscript{48} Yet a fourth — for whom it is going well, while he sees that others have to struggle with great hardships (with which he could well help them) — thinks: “What has it to do with me? Let each be as happy as heaven wills, or as he can make himself, I will not take anything from him or even envy him; only I do not want to contribute to his welfare or to his assistance in distress!” Now to be sure, if such a way of thinking were to become a universal law of nature, then the human race could well subsist, and without doubt still better than when everyone chatters about sympathetic participation\textsuperscript{49} and benevolence, and even on occasion exerts himself to practice them, but, on the contrary also deceives wherever he can,\textsuperscript{50} sells out, or otherwise infringes on the right of human beings. But although it is possible that a universal law of nature could well subsist in accordance with that maxim, yet it is impossible to will that such a principle should be valid without exception\textsuperscript{51} as a natural law. For a will that resolved on this would conflict with itself, since the case could sometimes arise in which he needs the love and sympathetic participation of others, and where, through such a natural law arising from his own will, he would rob himself of all the hope of assistance that he wishes for himself.

Now these are some of the many actual duties, or at least of what we take to be duties, whose partitioning\textsuperscript{52} from the single principle just adduced

\textsuperscript{47} “and given” added in 1786

\textsuperscript{48} Kant’s text, although it emphasizes the word “fourth,” omits the (4) required by the parallel with his three other examples.

\textsuperscript{49} Teilnehmung

\textsuperscript{50} 1785: “wherever one can”

\textsuperscript{51} allenthalben

\textsuperscript{52} Abteilung; some editors correct this to Ableitung, “derivation.” In favor of the emendation is that if Kant meant ‘classification,’ one would expect him to use Einteilung (“division,” as he did above, Ak 4:421); Abteilung refers more properly to one of the parts or subcategories marked out by a division or classification than it does to the act of dividing or classifying or to the entire system of classification; where it does refer to an act of dividing, abteilen means the partitioning off of one space from another, and not the creation of a system of classification. The construction Abteilung aus dem einigen Prinzip is also awkward, in the same way that this English translation of it is; and no such construction is found anywhere else in Kant’s writings. Further, Kant did speak earlier of being able to “derive” (ableiten) all imperatives of duty from a single categorical imperative (Ak 4:421). But despite all these reasons, the emendation to Ableitung (“derivation”)}
clearly meets the eye. One must *be able to will* that a maxim of our action should become a universal law: this is the canon of the moral judgment of this action in general. Some actions are so constituted that their maxim cannot even be *thought* without contradiction as a universal law of nature, much less could one *will* that it *ought* to become one. With others, that internal impossibility is not to be encountered, but it is impossible to *will* remains doubtful. Against it is the following: Kant goes on in the present paragraph to discuss the relation of his principle only to the *classification* of duties, not to their *derivation*. Further, it is not at all clear that when Kant spoke of deriving duties from a single categorical imperative, he meant to restrict the formula of that imperative to the two formulations that have been presented so far. He may well have meant that a derivation of duties would require the entire system of formulas, first introduced later at Ak 4:436. His practice in the *Metaphysics of Morals* strongly suggests the latter position. There Kant does propose to derive an entire system of ethical duties; but only the duty of beneficence (which pertains only to the fourth example here) is related to anything in the present formula of the moral law (Ak 6:453). This is possible only because the maxim of pursuing one’s own happiness (and the consequent volition of others’ voluntary assistance, as required to achieve this end) can be ascribed to all rational beings, so that the principle of morality can require them to adopt it in a universalizable form. Apart from this unique case, universalizability enables us only to disqualify certain specific maxims, and cannot yield anything like a positive duty (e.g., to refrain from suicide, keep promises, or develop talents). All fifteen of the other ethical duties explicitly enumerated there (including three of the four that are exemplified here) are derived by appeal to the second formula, that of humanity as end in itself (first stated in the *Groundwork* at Ak 4:429). Kant says that suicide is a “debasing of humanity in one’s person” (Ak 6:422–423); the duty to develop one’s natural perfection is “bound up with the end of humanity in our own person” (Ak 6:391–92; cf. 6:444–46). In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant treats promising under the heading of externally enforceable right rather than of ethics (as his use here of the term ‘right’ might also imply). There Kant even denies that it is either possible or necessary to demonstrate that promises ought to be kept (Ak 6:273). The principle of right is distinct from the supreme principle of morality (Ak 6:230); but the fundamental right (the innate human right to freedom) is said “to belong to every human being by virtue of his humanity” (Ak 6:237). But he does discuss the ethical duty not to lie under the heading of strict duties to oneself, where it is said to be a violation of “the humanity in his own person” because it uses his capacity to communicate as a mere means (Ak 6:429). Kant’s definitive presentation of the duties enumerated here thus has far less affinity with the present discussion of them (based on the formula of the law of nature) than it does with his discussion of them below in connection with the second formula, that of humanity as end in itself (Ak 4:429–30).
that their maxims should be elevated to the universality of a natural law, because such a will would contradict itself. One easily sees that the first conflict with strict or narrow (unremitting) duty, the second only with wide (meritorious) duty, and thus all duties regarding the kind of obligation (not the object of their action) have been completely set forth through these examples in their dependence on the one principle.

Now if we attend to ourselves in every transgression of a duty, then we find that we do not actually will that our maxim should become a universal law, for that is impossible for us, but rather will that its opposite should remain a law generally; yet we take the liberty of making an exception for ourselves, or (even only for this once) for the advantage of our inclination. Consequently, if we weighed everything from one and the same point of view, namely that of reason, then we would encounter a contradiction in our own will, namely that objectively a certain principle should be necessary as a universal law and yet subjectively that it should not be universally valid, but rather that it should admit of exceptions. But since we consider our action at one time from a point of view that accords entirely with reason, and then, however, also the same action from the point of view of a will affected by inclination, there is actually no contradiction here, but only a resistance of inclination against the precept of reason (antagonismus), through which the universality of the principle (universalitas) is transformed into a mere general validity (generalitas), so that the practical principle of reason is supposed to meet the maxim halfway. Now although this cannot be justified in our own impartially rendered judgment, it proves that we actually recognize the validity of the categorical imperative and (with every respect for it) allow ourselves only a few exceptions, which are, as it seems to us, insignificant and forced upon us.

Thus we have established at least this much: that if duty is a concept that is to contain significance and actual legislation for our actions, then this duty could be expressed only in categorical imperatives, but by no means in hypothetical ones; likewise, which is already quite a bit, we have exhibited distinctly and for every use the content of the categorical imperative which would have to contain the principle of all duty (if there is such a thing at all). But we are still not ready to prove a priori that there actually is such an imperative, that there is a practical law which commands for itself absolutely and without any incentives, and that it is a duty to follow this law.

With the aim of attaining that, it is of the utmost importance to let this serve as a warning that one must not let it enter his mind to try to derive the

53. 1785: “are completely set forth”
reality of this principle from the particular quality of human nature. For duty ought to be the practically unconditioned necessity of action; thus it must be valid for all rational beings (for only to them can an imperative apply at all), and must only for this reason be a law for every human will. That which, by contrast, is derived only from what is proper to the particular natural predisposition of humanity, or from certain feelings and propensities, or indeed, if possible, from a particular direction of human reason, and would not have to be valid necessarily for the will of every rational being—that can, to be sure, be a maxim for us, but cannot yield any law; it can yield a subjective principle, in accordance with which we may have a propensity and inclination, but not an objective one, in accordance with which we would be assigned to act, even if it were to go directly contrary to all our propensities, inclinations, and natural adaptations; it even proves all the more the sublimity and inner dignity of the command in a duty, the less subjective causes are for it and the more they are against it, without on this account the least weakening the necessitation through the law or taking anything away from its validity.

Now here we see philosophy placed in fact at a perilous standpoint, which is to be made firm, regardless of anything either in heaven or on earth from which it may depend or by which it may be supported. Here it should prove its purity as self-sustainer of its own laws, not as a herald of those that an implanted sense or who knows what tutelary nature whispers to it, which, taken collectively, although they may be better than nothing at all, yet they can never yield the principles that reason dictates and that must have their source fully a priori and therewith at the same time their commanding authority: expecting nothing of the inclination of the human being, but everything from the supremacy of the law and the respect owed to it; or else, if that fails, condemning the human being to self-contempt and inner abhorrence.

Thus everything that is empirical is, as a contribution toward the principle of morality, not only entirely unfit for it, but even highly disadvantageous to the purity of morals themselves, in which precisely consists the sublime worth of a will absolutely good in itself and elevated above all price, that the principle of the actions is free of all influences of contingent grounds that only experience can provide. One cannot be given too many or

54. Lauterkeit
55. Lauterkeit
57. Cf. below, Ak 4:434.
too frequent warnings against this negligent or even base way of thinking, which seeks out the principle among empirical motivations and laws, since human reason in its weariness gladly repossession this pillow and, in the dream of sweet illusions\footnote{Vorspiegelungen} (which lets it embrace a cloud instead of Juno),\footnote{In Greek mythology, Ixion (a legendary king of Thessaly) schemed to win the love of Hera, queen of the gods (Latin name: Juno). Her husband, Zeus, discovered his intention and formed a cloud, Nephelē, that resembled Hera. By the cloud Ixion conceived Centaurus (for which the scholiast gives the false etymology “what penetrates the air”). Centaurus was the ancestor of the centaurs, a race of beings half human and half equine (perhaps Kant’s “bastard patched together from limbs of quite diverse ancestry” is a reference to them). Zeus punished Ixion for his presumptuousness by having him bound on a wheel in Hades that turns forever. The myth is told by Pindar, Pythian Ode 2.21–50. Since Kant’s knowledge of Latin poetry was better, he is more likely to have known the Ixion story from Ovid (Metamorphoses 4.461, 9.124, 10.42, 12.503–5) or Virgil (Georgics 3.38, 4.484; Aeneid 6.601), although these later versions emphasize Ixion’s underworld punishment rather than the story of Juno and the cloud.} supplants the place of morality with a bastard patched together from limbs of quite diverse ancestry, which looks similar to whatever anyone wants to see, but not to virtue, for him who has once beheld it in its true shape.*

The question is therefore this: Is it a necessary law for all rational beings to judge their actions always in accordance with those maxims of which they themselves can will that they should serve as universal laws? If it is, then it must be bound up (fully \textit{a priori}) with the concept of the will of a rational being in general. But in order to discover this connection, one must, however much one may resist it, take one step beyond, namely to metaphysics, though into a domain of metaphysics that is distinguished from that of speculative philosophy, namely into the metaphysics of morals. In a practical philosophy, where what are to be established are not grounds for what \textit{happens}, but laws for what \textit{ought to happen}, even if it never does happen, i.e., objectively practical laws, there we do not find it necessary to institute an investigation into the grounds why something pleases or displeases, how the gratification of mere sensation is to be distinguished from taste, and whether the latter is distinct from a universal satisfaction of

\footnote{To behold virtue in its authentic shape is nothing other than to exhibit morality denuded of all admixture of the sensible and all unguenuine adornment of reward or self-love. How completely it eclipses everything else that appears charming to inclinations, everyone can easily be aware of by means of the least attempt of his reason, if it is not entirely corrupted for abstraction.}
reason; on what the feelings of pleasure and displeasure rest, and how from
them arise desires and inclinations, and from these, again, through the
cooperation of reason, maxims arise; for all that belongs to an empirical
discipline of the soul, which constitutes the second part of the doctrine of
nature, if one considers it as philosophy of nature insofar as it is grounded
on empirical laws. Here, however, we are talking about objectively prac-
tical laws, hence about the relation of a will to itself insofar as it determines
itself merely through reason, such that everything that has reference to the
empirical falls away of itself; because if reason for itself alone determines
conduct (the possibility of which we will investigate right now), it must
necessarily do this a priori.

The will is thought as a faculty of determining itself to action in accord
with the representation of certain laws. And such a faculty can be there to
be encountered only in rational beings. Now that which serves the will as
the objective ground of its self-determination is the end, and this, if it is
given through mere reason, must be equally valid for all rational beings. By
contrast, what contains merely the ground of the possibility of the action
whose effect is the end is called the means. The subjective ground of desire
is the incentive, the objective ground of volition is the motive; hence the
distinction between subjective ends, which rest on incentives, and objective
ones, which depend on motives that are valid for every rational being.
Practical principles are formal when they abstract from all subjective ends;
but they are material when they are grounded on these, hence on certain
incentives. The ends that a rational being proposes as effects of its action at
its discretion (material ends) are all only relative; for only their relation to a
particular kind of faculty of desire of the subject gives them their worth,
which therefore can provide no necessary principles valid universally for all
rational beings and hence valid for every volition, i.e., practical laws. Hence
all these relative ends are only the ground of hypothetical imperatives.

But suppose there were something whose existence in itself had an abso-
lute worth, something that, as end in itself, could be a ground of determinate
laws; then in it and only in it alone would lie the ground of a possible
categorical imperative, i.e., of a practical law.

Now I say that the human being, and in general every rational being,
exists as end in itself, not merely as means to the discretionary use of this or
that will, but in all its actions, those directed toward itself as well as those
directed toward other rational beings, it must always at the same time be
considered as an end. All objects of inclinations have only a conditioned
worth; for if the inclinations and the needs grounded on them did not exist,
then their object would be without worth. The inclinations themselves,
however, as sources of needs, are so little of absolute worth, to be wished for in themselves, that rather to be entirely free of them must be the universal wish of every rational being. Thus the worth of all objects to be acquired through our action is always conditioned. The beings whose existence rests not on our will but on nature nevertheless have, if they are beings without reason, only a relative worth as means, and are called things; rational beings, by contrast, are called persons, because their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves, i.e., as something that may not be used merely as means, hence to that extent limits all arbitrary choice (and is an object of respect). These are not merely subjective ends whose existence as effect of our action has a worth for us; but rather objective ends, i.e., things whose existence in itself is an end, and specifically an end such that no other end can be set in place of it, to which it should do service merely as means, because without this nothing at all of absolute worth would be encountered anywhere; but if all worth were conditioned, hence contingent, then for reason no supreme practical principle could anywhere be encountered.

If, then, there is supposed to be a supreme practical principle, and in regard to the human will a categorical imperative, then it must be such from the representation of that which, being necessarily an end for everyone, because it is an end in itself, constitutes an objective principle of the will, hence can serve as a universal practical law. The ground of this principle is: Rational nature exists as end in itself. The human being necessarily represents his own existence in this way; thus to that extent it is a subjective principle of human actions. But every other rational being also represents his existence in this way as consequent on the same rational ground as is valid for me; thus it is at the same time an objective principle, from which, as a supreme practical ground, all laws of the will must be able to be derived. The practical imperative will thus be the following: Act so that you

*This proposition I here set forth as a postulate. In the last section one will find the grounds for it.

60. “Considered in themselves, natural inclinations are good, i.e., not reprehensible, and to want to extirpate them would be not only futile, but harmful and blameworthy as well; we must rather only curb them, so that they will not wear each other out but will instead be harmonized into a whole called ‘happiness’ ” (Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, Ak 6:58).

61. Willkür

62. See Conjectural Beginning of Human History, Ak 8:114; Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect, Ak 7:127, 130.
use humanity,⁶³ as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means. We will see whether this can be accomplished.

In order to remain with the previous examples,

First, in accordance with the concept of the necessary duty toward oneself, the one who has suicide in mind will ask himself whether his action could subsist together with the idea of humanity as an end in itself. If he destroys himself in order to flee from a burdensome condition, then he makes use of a person merely as a means, for the preservation of a bearable condition up to the end of life. The human being, however, is not a thing, hence not something that can be used merely as a means, but must in all his actions always be considered as an end in itself. Thus I cannot dispose of the human being in my own person, so as to maim, corrupt, or kill him.⁶⁴ (The nearer determination of this principle, so as to avoid all misunderstanding, e.g., the amputation of limbs in order to preserve myself, or the risk at which I put my life in order to preserve my life, etc., I must here pass over; they belong to morals proper.)⁶⁵

Second, as to the necessary or owed duty toward others, the one who has it in mind to make a lying promise to another will see⁶⁶ right away that he wills to make use of another human being merely as means, without the end also being contained in this other. For the one I want to use for my aims through such a promise cannot possibly be in harmony with my way of

⁶³. *Menschlichkeit*; this term refers to one of our three fundamental predispositions: (1) animality (through which we have instincts for survival, procreation, and sociability); (2) humanity, through which we have the rational capacities to set ends, use means to them, and organize them into a whole (happiness); and (3) personality, through which we have the capacity to give ourselves moral laws and are accountable for following them (see *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Ak 6:26–28; *Anthropology in a Pragmatic Respect*, Ak 7:322–25). ‘Humanity’ thus means the same as ‘rational nature’, and Kant’s use of it involves no retraction of the claim that moral commands must be valid for all rational beings, not only for members of the human species.

⁶⁴. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant discusses the duty not to maim oneself in connection with the duty forbidding suicide (Ak 6:422–23). *Verderben* (‘corrupt’) therefore probably carries with it the broad sense of ruining or destroying (sc. one’s body or parts of it) rather than the narrower sense of moral corruption. Duties to oneself as a moral being, which Kant classifies as duties against lying, avarice, false humility (or servility), and duties as moral judge of oneself, are dealt with separately, 6:428–42.

⁶⁵. zur eigentlichen Moral

⁶⁶. einsehen
conducting myself toward him and thus contain in himself the end of this action.\textsuperscript{67} Even more distinctly does this conflict with the principle of other human beings meet the eye if one approaches it through examples of attacks on the freedom and property of others. For then it is clearly evident that the one who transgresses the rights of human beings is disposed to make use of the person of others merely as a means, without taking into consideration that as rational beings, these persons ought always to be esteemed at the same time as ends, i.e., only as beings who have to be able to contain in themselves the end of precisely the same action.\textsuperscript{*}

Third, in regard to the contingent (meritorious) duty toward oneself, it is not enough that the action does not conflict with humanity in our person as end in itself; it must also harmonize with it. Now in humanity there are predispositions to greater perfection, which belong to ends of nature in regard to the humanity in our subject; to neglect these would at most be able to subsist with the preservation of humanity as end in itself, but not with the furthering of this end.

Fourth, as to the meritorious duty toward others, the natural end that all human beings have is their own happiness. Now humanity would be able to subsist if no one contributed to the happiness of others yet did not intentionally remove anything from it; only this is only a negative and not a positive agreement with humanity as end in itself; if everyone does not aspire, as much as he can, to further the ends of others. For regarding the subject which is an end in itself: if that representation is to have its total effect on me, then its ends must as far as possible also be my ends.

This principle of humanity and of every rational nature in general as end

\textsuperscript{*}Let one not think that the trivial \textit{quod tibi non vis fieri, etc.} [What you do not want to be done to yourself do not do to another] could serve here as a standard or principle. For it is only derived from that principle, though with various limitations; it cannot be a universal law, for it does not contain the ground of duties toward oneself, nor that of the duties of love toward others (for many would gladly acquiesce that others should not be beneficent to him, if only he might be relieved from showing beneficence to them), or finally of owed duties to one another, for the criminal would argue on this ground against the judge who punishes him, etc. [Here Kant is distinguishing his principle from the so-called Golden Rule of the Gospels: “Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matthew 7:12; cf. Luke 6:31).]

\textsuperscript{67} It is essential to Kant’s conception of a promise that it involves a “united will” of the promisor and the promisee (\textit{Metaphysics of Morals}, Ak 6: 272).
in itself (which is the supreme limiting condition of the freedom of the actions of every human being) is not gotten from experience, first, on account of its universality, since it applies to all rational beings in general, and no experience is sufficient to determine anything about that; second, because in it humanity is represented not as an end of human beings (subjectively), i.e., as an object that one actually from oneself makes into an end, but as an objective end which, whatever ends we may have, is to constitute as a law the supreme limiting condition of all subjective ends, hence must arise from pure reason. The ground of all practical legislation, namely, lies objectively in the rule and the form of universality, which makes it capable of being a law (at least a law of nature) (in accordance with the first principle), but subjectively it lies in the end; but the subject of all ends is every rational being as end in itself (in accordance with the second principle): from this now follows the third practical principle of the will, as the supreme condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law.

All maxims are repudiated in accordance with this principle which cannot subsist together with the will’s own universal legislation. The will is thus not solely subject to the law, but is subject in such a way that it must be regarded also as legislating to itself, and precisely for this reason as subject to the law (of which it can consider itself as the author).

Imperatives represented in the above way, namely of the lawfulness of actions generally similar to an order of nature, or of the universal preference of the end of rational beings themselves, just by being represented as categorical, excluded from their commanding authority all admixture of any interest as an incentive; but they were only assumed as categorical, because one had to assume such a thing if one wanted to explain the concept

68. 1785: “of the human being”
69. 1785: “not subject to the law except in such a way that”
70. 1785: “as a self-legislating [being]”
71. On the distinction between the “legislator” of a law (who promulgates and attaches sanctions to it) and the “author” of a law (whose will actually imposes the obligation), see Metaphysics of Morals, Ak 6:227. Although Kant frequently speaks here of the rational being as “legislator” of the moral law, his position (more precisely expressed, in this terminology) is that only the rational being who is obligated can be the author of the law; Kant allows that we can speak of God (or the “supreme head of the realm of ends”) as the legislator of the moral law (see below, 4:433–34; Moral Philosophy Collins, Ak 27:282–83; and Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, Ak 6:99–100.
of duty. But that there are practical propositions which command categorically cannot be proven for itself here, just as little as this can still happen\textsuperscript{72} anywhere in this section; yet one thing could have happened, namely that the withdrawal of all interest in the case of volition from duty, in the imperative itself, through any determination that it could contain, is indicated as the specific sign distinguishing the categorical from the hypothetical imperative, and this happens in the third formula of the principle, namely the idea of the will of every rational being as a universally legislative will.

For if we think of such a will, then although a will that stands under laws may be bound by means of an interest in this law, nevertheless it is impossible for a will that is itself supremely legislative to depend on any interest; for such a dependent will would need yet another law, which limited the interest of its self-love to the condition of a validity for the universal law.

Thus the principle of every human will as a will legislating universally through all its maxims,\textsuperscript{*} if otherwise everything were correct about it, would be quite well suited for the categorical imperative by the fact that precisely for the sake of the idea of universal legislation, it grounds itself on no interest and hence it alone among all\textsuperscript{73} possible imperatives can be unconditioned; or still better, by converting the proposition, if there is a categorical imperative (i.e., a law for every will of a rational being), then it can command only that everything be done from the maxim of its will as a will that could at the same time have as its object itself as universally legislative; for only then is the practical principle and the imperative it obeys unconditioned, because it cannot have any interest at all as its ground.

Now it is no wonder, when we look back on all the previous efforts that have ever been undertaken to bring to light the principle of morality, why they all had to fail. One saw the human being bound through his duty to laws, but it did not occur to one that he was subject only to his own and yet universal legislation, and that he was obligated only to act in accord with his own will, which, however, in accordance with its natural end, is a universally legislative will. For if one thought of him only as subject to a law (whatever it might be), then this would have to bring with it some interest as a stimulus or coercion, because as a law it did not arise from his

\textsuperscript{*}I can be exempted here from providing examples to elucidate this principle, since those that first elucidated the categorical imperative and its formula can all serve here for precisely that end.

\textsuperscript{72} 1785: “just as little as this still cannot happen”

\textsuperscript{73} This word added in 1786
will, but rather this will was necessitated by something else to act in a certain way in conformity with the law. Through this entirely necessary consequence, however, all the labor of finding a supreme ground of duty was irrevocably lost. For from it one never got duty, but only necessity of action from a certain interest. Now this might be one’s own interest or someone else’s. But then the imperative always had to come out as conditioned, and could never work at all as a moral command. Thus I will call this principle the principle of the autonomy of the will, in contrast to every other, which on this account I count as heteronomy.

The concept of every rational being that must consider itself as giving universal law through all the maxims of its will in order to judge itself and its actions from this point of view, leads to a very fruitful concept depending on it, namely that of a realm of ends. By a realm, however, I understand the systematic combination of various rational beings through communal laws. Now because laws determine ends in accordance with their universal validity, there comes to be, if one abstracts from the personal differences between rational beings, as likewise from every content of their private ends, a whole of all ends—(of rational beings as ends in themselves, as well as of their own ends, which each may set for himself) in systematic connection, i.e., a realm of ends—can be thought, which is possible in accordance with the above principles.

For rational beings all stand under the law that every one of them ought to treat itself and all others never merely as means, but always at the same time as end in itself. From this, however, arises a systematic combination of rational beings through communal objective laws, i.e., a realm that, because these laws have as their aim the reference of these beings to one another as ends and means, can be called a ‘realm of ends’ (obviously only an ideal).

But a rational being belongs as a member to the realm of ends if in this

74. 1785: “Thus I will call this the principle of”
75. The editors suggest jenem, which would translate: “in contrast to that other, which.”
76. The obvious source for Kant’s conception of a “realm of ends” is Leibniz’s conception of the “city of God” as the “realm of minds,” and the relationship of the “realm of nature” to this “realm of grace.” Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), Discourse on Metaphysics (1686), § 36; Principles of Nature and Grace Based on Reason (1714), § 15; Monadology (1714), §§ 85–90.
77. 1785: “may”
78. 1785: “as their aim their relation to one another”
realm it gives universal law but is also itself subject to these laws. It belongs to it as supreme head, if as giving law it is subject to no will of another.79

The rational being must always consider itself as giving law in a realm of ends possible through freedom of the will, whether as member or as supreme head. It can assert the place of the latter, however, not merely through the maxim of its will, but only when it is a fully independent being, without need and without limitation of faculties that are adequate to that will.

Morality thus consists in the reference of all action to that legislation through which alone a realm of ends is possible. But the legislation must be encountered in every rational being itself, and be able to arise from its will, whose principle therefore is: ‘Do no action in accordance with any other maxim, except one that could subsist with its being a universal law, and hence only so that the will could through its maxim at the same time consider itself as universally legislative’. Now if the maxims are not through their nature already necessarily in harmony with this objective principle of the rational beings, as universally legislative, then the necessity of the action in accordance with that principle is called ‘practical necessitation’, i.e., duty. Duty does not apply to the supreme head in the realm of ends, but it does to every member, and specifically, to all in equal measure.

The practical necessity of acting in accordance with this principle, i.e., duty, does not rest at all on feelings, impulses, or inclinations, but merely on the relation of rational beings to one another, in which the will of one rational being must always at the same time be considered as universally legislative, because otherwise the rational being could not think of the other rational beings as ends in themselves. Reason thus refers every maxim of the will as universally legislative to every other will and also to every action toward itself, and this not for the sake of any other practical motive or future advantage, but from the idea of the dignity of a rational being that obeys no law except that which at the same time it gives itself.

In the realm of ends everything has either a price or a dignity.80 What has a price is such that something else can also be put in its place as its equivalent; by contrast, that which is elevated above all price, and admits of no equivalent, has a dignity.

That which refers to universal human inclinations and needs has a mar-

79. See note 59 above (Ak 4:431).
80. The apparent source for this distinction is Seneca, Epistles 71.33. But it is an atypical passage in the Stoic literature, since typically both pretium and dignitas refer to the value of (preferred) indifferents rather than to virtue.
ket price; that which, even without presupposing any need, is in accord with a certain taste, i.e., a satisfaction in the mere purposeless play of the powers of our mind, an affective price; but that which constitutes the condition under which alone something can be an end in itself does not have merely a relative worth, i.e., a price, but rather an inner worth, i.e., dignity.

Now morality is the condition under which alone a rational being can be an end in itself, because only through morality is it possible to be a legislative member in the realm of ends. Thus morality and humanity, insofar as it is capable of morality, is that alone which has dignity. Skill and industry in labor have a market price; wit, lively imagination, and moods have an affective price; by contrast, fidelity in promising, benevolence from principle (not from instinct) have an inner worth. Lacking these principles, neither nature nor art contain anything that they could put in the place of them; for the worth of these principles does not consist in effects that arise from them, in the advantage and utility that they obtain, but rather in the dispositions, i.e., the maxims of the will, which in this way are ready to reveal themselves in actions, even if they are not favored with success. These actions also need no recommendation from any subjective disposition\textsuperscript{81} or taste, regarding them with immediate favor and satisfaction, and no immediate propensity or feeling for it;\textsuperscript{82} they exhibit the will that carries them out as an object of an immediate respect, for which nothing but reason is required in order to impose them on the will, not to cajole them from it by flattery, which latter would, in any event, be a contradiction in the case of duties. This estimation thus makes the worth of such a way of thinking to be recognized as dignity, and sets it infinitely far above all price, with which it cannot at all be brought into computation or comparison without, as it were, mistaking and assailing\textsuperscript{83} its holiness.

And now, what is it that justifies the morally good disposition or virtue in making such high claims? It is nothing less than the share that it procures for the rational being in the universal legislation, thereby making it suitable as a member in a possible realm of ends, for which it by its own nature was already destined, as end in itself and precisely for this reason as legislative in the realm of ends, as free in regard to all natural laws, obeying only those that it gives itself and in accordance with which its maxims can belong to a universal legislation (to which it at the same time subjects itself). For

\textsuperscript{81} Disposition

\textsuperscript{82} dieselbe, which would appear to refer to “morality”; some editors substitute the plural, so that this pronoun refers instead to “these actions.”

\textsuperscript{83} “mistaking and assailing” = vergreifen
nothing has a worth except that which the law determines\textsuperscript{84} for it. The legislation itself, however, which determines all worth, must precisely for this reason have a dignity, i.e., an unconditioned, incomparable worth; the word \textit{respect} alone yields a becoming expression for the estimation that a rational being must assign to it. \textit{Autonomy} is thus the ground of the dignity of the human and of every rational nature.

The three ways mentioned of representing the principle of morality are, however, fundamentally only so many formulas of precisely the same law, one of which unites the other two in itself. Nonetheless, there is a variety among them, which is to be sure more subjectively than objectively practical,\textsuperscript{85} namely that of bringing an idea of reason nearer to intuition (in accordance with a certain analogy) and, through this, nearer to feeling. All maxims have, namely,

(1) a \textit{form}, which consists in universality, and then the formula of the moral imperative is expressed thus: ‘That the maxims must be chosen as if they are supposed to be valid as universal laws of nature’;

(2) a \textit{matter},\textsuperscript{86} namely an end, and then the formula says: ‘That the rational being, as an end in accordance with its nature, hence as an end in itself, must serve for every maxim as a limiting condition of all merely relative and arbitrary ends’;

(3) a \textit{complete determination}\textsuperscript{87} of all maxims through that formula, namely ‘That all maxims ought to harmonize from\textsuperscript{88} one’s own legislation into a possible realm of ends as a realm of nature’.* A progression happens here, as through the categories of the \textit{unity} of the form of the will (its universality), the \textit{plurality} of the matter (the objects, i.e., the ends), and the \textit{allness} or totality of the system of them.\textsuperscript{89} But one does better in moral

*Teleology considers nature as a realm of ends, morality a possible realm of ends as a realm of nature. In the former, the realm of ends is a theoretical idea for the explanation of what exists. In the latter, it is a practical idea to bring about that which does not exist but what can become actual through our deeds and omissions and what we are to bring about in accord with precisely this idea.

84. 1785: “except the one the law determines”
85. This could also be translated “more subjective than objectively practical.”
86. Kant’s text reads \textit{Maxime}; but editors universally correct this to \textit{Materie}, as seems absolutely required by the second sentence of (3) below.
88. 1785: “as”
89. See \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, A70–71/B95–96, A80/B106.
judging always to proceed in accordance with the strict method and take as
ground the universal formula of the categorical imperative: *Act in accor-
dance with that maxim which can at the same time make itself into a
universal law*. But if one wants at the same time to obtain *access* for the
moral law, then it is very useful to take one and the same action through the
three named concepts and thus, as far as may be done, to bring the action
nearer to intuition.

Now we can end at the place from which we set out at the beginning,
namely with the concept of an unconditionally good will. That *will* is
*absolutely good* which cannot be evil, hence whose maxim, if it is made
into a universal law, can never conflict with itself. This principle is therefore
also its supreme law: ‘Act always in accordance with that maxim whose
universality as law you can at the same time will’; this is the single condi-
tion under which a will can never be in conflict with itself, and such an
imperative is categorical. Because the validity of the will as a universal law
for possible actions has an analogy with the universal connection of the
existence of things in accordance with universal laws, which is what is
formal in nature in general, the categorical imperative can also be expressed
thus: *Act in accordance with maxims that can at the same time have them-
selves as universal laws of nature for their object*. This, therefore, is the
way the formula of an absolutely good will is constituted.

Rational nature discriminates itself from the rest in that it sets itself an
end. This would be the matter of every good will. But since, in the idea of a
will that is absolutely good without a limiting condition (of the attainment
of this or that end), every end to be *effected* has to be thoroughly abstracted
from (as it would make every will only relatively good), the end here has to
be thought of not as an end to be effected *but as a self-sufficient* end, hence
only negatively, i.e., never to be acted against, which therefore has to be
estimated in every volition never merely as means but always at the same
time as end. Now this cannot be other than the very subject of all possible
ends, because this is at the same time the subject of a possible absolutely
good will; for this will cannot without contradiction be set after any other
object. The principle: 90 Accordingly, ‘Act in reference to every rational
being (to yourself and others) so that in your maxim it is always valid at the
same time as an end in itself’ is, fundamentally, the same as the principle
‘Act in accordance with a maxim that at the same time contains its own
universal validity for every rational being’. For that I ought to limit my
maxim in the use of means to every end to the condition of its universality

90. 1785: “But the principle: . . .”
as a law for every subject, says just as much as that the subject of ends, i.e., the rational being itself, must be made the ground of all maxims of actions never merely as means, but as the supreme limiting condition in the use of all means, i.e., always at the same time as end.

Now it incontestably follows from this that every rational being, as an end in itself, would have to be able to regard itself at the same time as universally legislative in regard to all laws to which it may be subject, because precisely this suitableness of its maxims for the universal legislation designates it as an end in itself, just as the fact that this dignity (prerogative) before all mere beings of nature brings with it to have to take its maxims always from its own point of view but also at the same time from that of every other rational being as a universally legislative being (which is why they are also called ‘persons’). Now in such a way a world of rational beings (mundus intelligibilis)\(^91\) is possible as a realm of ends, and specifically for all persons through their own legislation as members. Accordingly,\(^92\) every rational being must act as if it were through its maxims always a legislative member in a universal realm of ends. The formal principle of these maxims is: ‘Act as though your maxim should serve at the same time as a universal law (for all rational beings)’. A realm of ends is thus possible only in accordance with the analogy with a realm of nature, but only in accordance with maxims, i.e., with self-imposed rules, whereas the latter is possible only in accordance with laws of externally\(^93\) necessitated efficient causes. Regardless of this, even though nature as a whole is regarded as a machine, nevertheless one also gives to it, insofar as it has reference to rational beings as its ends, on that ground, the name ‘realm of nature’. Such a realm of ends would actually be brought about through maxims, the rule of which is prescribed by the categorical imperatives of all rational beings, if they were universally followed. Yet although the rational being might punctiliously follow these maxims himself, he cannot for that reason count on everyone else’s being faithful to them, nor on the realm of nature and its purposive order’s harmonizing with him, as a suitable member for a realm of ends that is possible through him, i.e., on its favoring his expectation of happiness; thus the law ‘Act in accordance with maxims of a universally legislative member for a merely possible realm of ends’ still remains in full force, because it commands categorically. And precisely in this lies the paradox that merely the dignity of humanity as rational nature,

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91. intelligible world
92. 1785: “Nevertheless”
93. 1785: “laws also of externally”
without any other end or advantage to be attained through it, hence the
respect for a mere idea, ought nevertheless to serve as an unremitting
precept of the will, and that the sublimity of the maxim consists in just its
independence of all incentives, and the dignity of every rational subject
consists in being a legislative member in the realm of ends; for otherwise it
would have to be represented as subject only to the natural law of its needs.
Although the natural realm, too, as well as the realm of ends, is thought of
as united under a supreme head, and the latter thereby would no longer
remain a mere idea but obtain true reality, so that through this the maxim
would receive the accretion of a strong incentive; yet no increase of its inner
worth would thereby come about; for irrespective of that, this sole un-
limited legislator must always be so represented as judging the worth of the
rational beings only in accordance with their selfless conduct as prescribed
by itself merely through that idea. The essence of things does not alter
through their external relations, and it is in accordance with that which
alone constitutes the absolute worth of the human being, without thinking
about such relations, that he must be judged by whoever it may be, even by
the highest being. Morality is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of
the will, that is, to the possible universal legislation through its maxims.
That action which can subsist with the autonomy of the will is permitted;
that which does not agree with it is impermissible. The will whose maxims
necessarily harmonize with the laws of autonomy is a holy, absolutely good
will. The dependence of a will which is not absolutely good on the principle
of autonomy (moral necessitation) is obligation. Thus the latter cannot be
referred to a holy being. The objective necessity of an action from obliga-
tion is called duty.

From what has just been said one can now easily explain how it is that
although under the concept of duty we think a subjection to the law, we at
the same time represent to ourselves a certain sublimity and dignity in a
person who fulfills all his duties. For to be sure, to the extent that the person
is subject to the moral law, there is no sublimity in him, but there is to the
extent that he is at the same time legislative in regard to this law, and is only
for that reason subject to them. Also we have shown above how neither fear
nor inclination, but solely respect for the law, is the incentive that can give
the action its moral worth. Our own will, insofar as it would act only under
the condition of a possible universal legislation through its maxims, this
will possible to us in the idea, is the authentic object of respect, and the

dignity of humanity consists precisely in this capacity for universal legisla-
tion, although with the proviso that it is at the same time itself subject to
this legislation.

**Autonomy of the will**
as the supreme principle of morality

Autonomy of the will is the property of the will through which it is a law
to itself (independently of all properties of the objects of volition). The
principle of autonomy is thus: ‘Not to choose otherwise than so that the
maxims of one’s choice are at the same time comprehended with it in the
same volition as universal law’. That this practical rule is an imperative, i.e.,
the will of every rational being is necessarily bound to it as a condition,
cannot be proven through the mere analysis of the concepts occurring in it,
because it is a synthetic proposition; one would have to advance beyond the
cognition of objects and to a critique of the subject, i.e., of pure practical
reason, since this synthetic proposition, which commands apodictically,
must be able to be cognized fully a priori; but this enterprise does not
belong in the present section. Yet that the specified principle of autonomy is
the sole principle of morals may well be established through the mere
analysis of the concepts of morality. For thereby it is found that its principle
must be a categorical imperative, but this commands neither more nor less
than just this autonomy.

**Heteronomy of the will**
as the source of all unguenuine principles of morality

If the will seeks that which should determine it anywhere else than in the
suitability of its maxims for its own universal legislation, hence if it, insofar
as it advances beyond itself, seeks the law in the constitution of any of its
objects, then heteronomy always comes out of this. Then the will does not
give itself the law but the object through its relation to the will gives the law
to it. Through this relation, whether it rests now on inclination or on repre-
sentations of reason, only hypothetical imperatives are possible: ‘I ought to
do something because I will something else’. By contrast, the moral, hence
categorical, imperative says: ‘I ought to act thus-and-so even if I did not will
anything else’. E.g., the former one says: ‘I ought not to lie, if I want to retain
my honorable reputation’; but the latter says: ‘I ought not to lie, even if I did

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95. Beding
96. 1785: “hence if it advances . . . , and seeks the law in”
97. bei Ehren bleiben
not incur the least disgrace’. The last must therefore abstract from every object to the extent that it has no influence on the will, hence practical reason (will) does not merely administer some other interest, but merely proves its own commanding authority as supreme legislation. Thus, e.g., I should seek to promote someone else’s happiness, not as if its existence mattered to me (whether through immediate inclination or any satisfaction indirectly through reason) but merely because the maxim that excludes it cannot be comprehended in one and the same volition as a universal law.

**Division**

of all possible principles of morality

from the

assumed fundamental concept of heteronomy

Here as elsewhere, human reason in its pure use, as long as it has gone without critique, has previously tried all possible incorrect routes before it succeeds in getting on the only true one.

All principles that one may take from this point of view are either empirical or rational. The first, from the principle of happiness, are built on physical or moral feeling; the second, from the principle of perfection, are built either on the rational concept of it as a possible effect or on the concept of a self-sufficient perfection (the will of God) as determining cause of our will.

**Empirical principles** are everywhere unsuited to having moral laws grounded on them. For the universality, with which they are to be valid for all rational beings without distinction, the unconditioned practical necessity, which is imposed on these beings through them, drops out if the ground of these principles is taken from the particular adaptation of human nature or from the contingent circumstances in which it is placed. Yet the principle of one’s own happiness is most reprehensible, not merely because it is false

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98. Schande


100. Kant associates this with the hedonism of Epicurus (341–270 B.C.) (*Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5:40).

101. Kant associates this with the moral sense theory of Francis Hutcheson (1694–1727) (*Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5:40).

102. Kant associates this with the position of Christian Wolff and the Stoics (*Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5:40).

103. Kant associates this with the divine command morality of Christian August Crusius (1715–1775) (*Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak 5:40).
and experience contradicts the pretense that one’s own welfare always accords with conducting oneself well; also not merely because it contributes nothing to the grounding of morality, since making a happy human being is something other than making a good one, and making him prudent and sharp-witted for his own advantage is something other than making him virtuous; but rather because it attributes incentives to morality that would sooner undermine it and annihilate its entire sublimity, since they put the motivations for virtue in the same class as those for vice and only teach us to draw better calculations, but utterly extinguish the specific difference between them; by contrast, moral feeling, this allegedly special sense* (however shallow the appeal to it may be, since those who cannot think believe they can help themselves out by feeling when it comes to universal laws, even though feelings, which by nature are infinitely distinguished from one another in degree, cannot yield an equal standard of good and evil, nor can one validly judge for others at all through his feeling) nevertheless remains closer to morality and its dignity by showing virtue the honor of ascribing to it immediately the satisfaction and esteem we have for it, and not saying directly to its face, as it were, that it is not its beauty, but only our advantage, that attaches us to it.

Among rational grounds of morality, the ontological concept of perfection (however empty, indeterminate, hence unusable it may be for finding in the immeasurable field of possible reality the greatest suitable sum for us, and however much it has an unavoidable propensity to turn in a circle in order to distinguish the reality talked about here specifically from every other, and cannot avoid covertly presupposing the morality it ought to explain) is nevertheless better than the theological concept, of deriving morality from a divine, all-perfect will, not merely because we do not intuit his perfection, but can derive it solely from our concepts, of which morality is the foremost one, but because if we do not do this (which, if we did, would be a crude circle in explanation), the concept of his will that is left over to us, the attributes of the desire for glory and domination, bound up

*I count the principle of moral feeling to that of happiness, because every empirical interest promises a contribution to welfare through the agreeableness something affords, whether this happens immediately and without any aim to advantage or in regard to the latter. Likewise one must, with Hutcheson, count the principle of sympathetic participation in another’s happiness under the same moral sense assumed by him.

104. rationalen oder Vernunftgründe
105. Eigenschaften
with frightful representations of power and vengeance, would have to make a foundation for a system of morals that is directly opposed to morality.

But if I had to choose between the concept of moral sense and that of perfection in general (both of which at least do not infringe morality, even if they are not at all suitable for supporting it as a foundation), then I would determine myself for the latter, because, since it at least transfers the decision of the question from sensibility to the court of pure reason, even if here it decides nothing, nevertheless it preserves unfalsified the indeterminate idea (of a will good in itself) for closer determination.

Besides, I believe I can dispense with an extensive refutation of all these doctrines. It is so easy, and even those whose office it is to declare themselves for one of these theories presumably have such good insight into it (because their hearers would not tolerate a postponement of judgment) that it would be only superfluous labor. What interests us more here is to know that these principles everywhere set up nothing but heteronomy of the will as the first ground of morality and just for this reason must necessarily miscarry their end.

Wherever an object of the will has to be taken as the ground in order to prescribe the rule determining that will, there the rule is nothing but heteronomy; the imperative is conditioned, namely: \textit{if} or \textit{because} one wills this object, one ought to act thus or so; hence it can never command morally, i.e., categorically. Now the object may determine the will by means of inclination, as with the principle of one’s own happiness, or by means of a reason directed to objects of our possible volition in general, in the principle of perfection; then the will never determines itself \textit{immediately} through the representation of the action, but only through the incentive, which the foreseen effect of the action has on the will; \textit{I ought to do something because I will something other than that}, and another law in my subject must therefore be taken as ground, in accordance with which I necessarily will this other thing, which law once again needs an imperative that limits this

\footnote{Kant’s fuller taxonomy (\textit{Critique of Practical Reason}, Ak 5:40) divides theories of heteronomy into four kinds. “Objective” theories are either (1) “internal” (the theory of perfection) or (2) “external” (divine command theory). (3) “Subjective internal” theories include both the theory of physical and the theory of moral feeling. This taxonomy makes a place for yet another classification not discussed in the \textit{Groundwork}, namely (4) “subjective external” theories. These include the theory that morality is grounded on education, which Kant associates with Michel Montaigne (1533–1592), and the theory that morality is grounded on the civil constitution, which Kant associates with Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733).}
maxim. For because the impulse that the representation of an object possible through our powers is supposed to exercise on the subject’s will in accordance with its natural constitution, whether it be of sensibility (of inclination and taste) or of understanding and reason—which, in accordance with the particular adaptation of its nature, that faculty exercises with satisfaction in an object\textsuperscript{107}—it is really nature that would give the law, which as such would have to be not only cognized and proven through experience, and hence is in itself contingent and thereby becomes unsuitable for an apodictic rule such as the moral rule has to be; but it is always only heteronomy of the will, the will does not give the law to itself, but rather an alien impulse gives it by means of the subject’s nature, which is attuned to the receptiveness of the will.

The absolutely good will, whose principle must be a categorical imperative, will therefore, undetermined in regard to all objects, contain merely the form of volition in general, and indeed as autonomy, i.e., the suitability of the maxim of every good will to make itself into a universal law is itself the sole law that the will of every rational being imposes on itself, without grounding it on any incentive or interest in it.

How such a synthetic practical proposition a priori is possible, and why it is necessary, is a problem whose solution no longer lies within the boundaries of the metaphysics of morals, neither have we here asserted its truth, much less pretended to have a proof of it in our control. We showed only, through the development of the generally accepted concept of morality,\textsuperscript{108} that it is unavoidably attached to, or rather is grounded on, an autonomy of the will. Thus whoever takes morality to be something, and not a chimerical idea without truth, must at the same time concede the stated principle of it. This section, therefore, like the first one, was merely analytical. Now that morality is no figment of the mind, which follows if the categorical imperative, and with it autonomy of the will, is true and absolutely necessary as a principle a priori—this requires a possible synthetic use of pure practical reason, upon which, however, we may not venture without preceding it with a critique of this very faculty of reason, which we have to exhibit in the last section as the main feature of this critique in a way sufficient for our aim.

\textsuperscript{107} Instead of “reason—which . . . object,” 1785 reads: “reason takes in perfection in general, (whose existence either from itself or only depending on the highest self-sufficient perfection),”

\textsuperscript{108} allgemein im Schwange gehenden Begriffs der Sittlichkeit