

IMMANUEL
KANT

The Doctrine of Virtue

Part II of *THE METAPHYSIC OF MORALS*

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by
MARY J. GREGOR • Foreword by H. J. PATON



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KANT



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Part II of The Metaphysic of Morals

*With the Introduction to The Metaphysic of Morals
and the Preface to The Doctrine of Law*

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MARY J. GREGOR

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THE DOCTRINE OF VIRTUE

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Foreword

by H. J. Paton



If we wish to understand Kant's moral philosophy as a whole, we must know something of the way in which he attempted to apply his fundamental moral principles to the particular virtues and duties of our everyday life. In his great ethical works—the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*—this problem is reserved till later. There he is concerned only with the form of morality, with what he calls its supreme principle. If we may use a more simple idiom, he asks "What is moral goodness?"—not "What kinds of action are morally good?" Or again, he asks "What is Duty?"—not "What kinds of action are to be regarded as duties?"

It is true that in a few places he does refer to particular moral duties—negative duties, for example, like the duty not to commit suicide or the duty not to borrow money unless we intend to pay it back; and also positive duties like the duty to cultivate our talents or to show kindness to others. These are offered as illustrations of the way in which our ordinary moral judgments can be derived from his supreme moral principle; and without some such illustrations his whole discussion would be very much in the air. He may give some of us the impression that he thought the problem here to be much easier than it really is, but he makes it clear enough that his account of particular duties and their classification is only provisional.

part of the *Metaphysic of Morals* will be only the *Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Law*; for in applying those principles to empirical cases we cannot expect to achieve the system itself: the most we can expect is to approximate to it. Accordingly we shall handle this as we did the (earlier) metaphysical first principles of natural science: the Law that belongs to the system traced out *a priori* will go into the text, while the laws drawn from particular cases of experience will be put into notes, [205] which will sometimes be extensive. Otherwise it would be hard to distinguish what is metaphysics from what belongs to empirical practice of Law.

We hear often enough the charge that writers of philosophical treatises make them obscure and even deliberately unintelligible, as a masquerade for deep insight. I can best anticipate and forestall this charge by gladly complying with the duty which Herr Garve, a philosopher in the true sense of the word, lays upon the philosophical writer. My only reservation is imposed by the nature of science itself, which is to correct and increase our knowledge.

This wise man rightly insists (in his work entitled *Vermischte Aufsätze*, page 352 ff.) that a philosophical writer is open to the suspicion of being muddled in his own concepts unless he can make his work *popular* (that is, sufficiently concrete to be communicated to everybody). I freely admit this requirement, and except from it only the systematic critique of the power of reason itself, along with what can be established only through the conclusions of a critique; for this concerns the distinction of the sensible in our knowledge from reason's [Ideas of the] supersensible. This can never be put into popular form—no formal metaphysics can—although its results can be made quite clear to the sound reason (of an unwitting metaphysician).

Popularity (popular language) is out of the question here; on the contrary, we must insist on scholastic *precision*, even if we are charged with hair-splitting (for using the *language of the schools*). For only by such precision can precipitate reason be brought to understand itself and give up its dogmatic assertions.

But if *pedants* presume to address the public (from pulpits or in popular writings) in technical terms which belong only in the schools, the Critical philosopher is no more responsible for their behaviour than is the grammarian for the folly of quibblers (*logodaedalus*). Here ridicule can hit only the man, not the science.

To say that before the advent of Critical Philosophy there was as yet no philosophy at all sounds arrogant, egoistic, and disparaging to those who still cling to their old systems. [206]—To clear ourselves of this supposed effrontery, we must ask *whether there could really be more than one philosophy*. There have been different ways of philosophizing and of going back to the first principles of reason in order to base a system, more or less successfully, on them; indeed there must be many experiments of this kind, each of which has its merit in its own time. But since, to consider the matter objectively, there can be only *one* human reason, there cannot be many philosophies: in other words, there can be only *one* true system of philosophy from principles, no matter in how many different and even contradictory ways men may have philosophized about one and the same proposition. So the *moralist* is justified in saying that there is only *one* doctrine of virtue—that is, one single system that connects all duties of virtue by a principle; the *chemist*, that there is only *one* chemistry (*Lavoisier's*); the *teacher of medicine*, that there is only *one* principle for systematically classifying diseases (*Brown's*).

Although the new system excludes all others, its advocates do not, in asserting this, detract from the merit of the older moralists, chemists, and teachers of medicine; for without their discoveries and even their miscarried attempts we should not have succeeded in unifying the whole of philosophy in one system according to its true principle.—Thus anyone who originates a system of philosophy says, in effect, that before his philosophy there was no philosophy at all. For were he willing to admit that there had been another (and a true) one, then there would be two different and true philosophies on one and the same subject; and this is self-contradictory.—Accordingly when the Critical Philosophy proclaims itself a philosophy such that before it there was as yet no philosophy at all, it does nothing more than what every new philosophy has done, will do, and in fact must do.

The charge that a doctrine which essentially distinguishes the Critical Philosophy is not original to it and may have been borrowed from another philosophy (or mathematics) would be *less* important but not altogether negligible. A reviewer from Tübingen claims to have discovered something of this sort in a doctrine of the Critical Philosophy which concerns the definition of philosophy as such: namely, that what the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* gives out as his own—and not inconsiderable—discovery was put forward many years ago by someone else, in almost the same words.* [207] I leave it to anyone to

* *Porro de actuali constructione hic non quaeritur, cum ne possint quidem sensibiles figurae ad rigorem definitionem effingi; sed requiritur cognitio eorum, quibus absolvitur formatio, quae intellectualis quaedam constructio est.* C. A. Hausen, *Elem. Mathes.*, Pars I, p. 86 A 1734. [Moreover, we are not speaking here of the actual construction, since perceptible figures cannot be devised according to the strictness of definitions; we are rather seeking knowledge of what goes to make up the figure, and this is, as it were, a construction made by the understanding.]

judge whether the words *intellectualis quaedam constructio* could have yielded the notion of *exhibiting a given concept in a priori intuition*—a notion which at one stroke clearly distinguishes philosophy from mathematics. I am sure that Hausen himself would not have allowed his term to be interpreted in this way. The possibility of an *a priori* intuition implies that space is an *a priori* intuition and not, as Wolff explains it, a mere juxtaposition of the manifold outside one another, given in empirical intuition; and Hausen, not wanting to get involved in far-reaching philosophical investigations, would have been frightened away by it. To this acute mathematician the “construction,” as it were, made by the understanding means nothing more than the (empirical) *drawing* of a *line* [inadequately] corresponding to a concept, an unavoidable deviation from which the mathematician abstracts in the proof itself, attending only to the rule. This can be perceived, again, in the “construction” of equations in geometry.

So far as the spirit of Critical Philosophy is concerned, the *least* important consideration is the mischief that certain of its imitators have made by using its terms—which in the *Critique of Pure Reason* itself cannot be replaced by more customary words—outside the *Critique*, for the free exchange of thought. This, in any case, deserves to be blamed, as Herr Nicolai censures it, although he will reserve his own judgment as to whether these terms should be used in their own proper field, where they may merely conceal a general poverty of thought.¹—However, the *unpopular pedant* does deserve to be laughed at more than the *un-Critical ignoramus* (and the metaphysician who clings obstinately to his old system, heedless of all critique, can really be considered ignorant, even though he simply *ignores* arbitrarily what he wants to prevent from spreading because it does not belong to his older school of thought).

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INTRODUCTION TO THE

knowledge of the object* (or even knowledge of our own [211] state). Even sensations have, over and above the quality (of e.g. red or sweet) added to them by the subject's nature, a reference to an object, which is part of our knowledge of the object. But pleasure or pain (at red or sweet) expresses nothing at all in the object, but simply a relation to the subject. For this reason we cannot give a more precise description of pleasure and pain in themselves. We can at most only make them recognizable in usage by citing the results they have in certain relations.

Pleasure is *practical* if it is necessarily connected with appetite (for an object whose representation affects feeling in this way); the pleasure may be either the cause or the effect of the appetitive act. But if the pleasure is not connected with appetite for an object and so is not basically a pleasure in the existence of the object represented, but one that is attached to the representation taken simply by itself, it can be called a merely contemplative pleasure or *inactive satisfaction*. The feeling of contemplative pleasure is called *taste*. If practical philosophy speaks of contemplative pleasure at all, it mentions it only in passing, and not as if the concept were indigenous to it. As for practical pleasure, the

* Sensibility in general is the subjective aspect of our representations; for it is understanding that first refers the representations to an object or *thinks* something through them. Now sensibility has two sides: sense and feeling. If the subjective element in our representations can be referred to an object for knowledge of it (either knowledge of its form, in which case it is pure intuition, or knowledge of its matter, in which case it is sensation), then sensibility, as receptivity to this representation, is *sense*. But if the subjective aspect of our representation cannot become *part of our knowledge* because it is merely the reference of the representation to the *subject* and contains nothing that can be utilized for knowledge of the object, then this receptivity to the representation is called *feeling*. Feeling is the effect of the representation (which may be either sensuous or intellectual) on the subject, and it belongs to sensibility, although the representation itself may belong to understanding or reason.

METAPHYSIC OF MORALS

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Neigung

act of the appetitive power which is preceded and caused by the pleasure is called *desire* in the narrow sense, while habitual desire is called *inclination*. If understanding judges the connection of the pleasure with the appetitive power to be valid according to a general rule (but valid only for the subject), this connection is called an *interest*. In the case of desire, the practical pleasure must accordingly be called an interest of the inclination. But if the pleasure can only follow from a preceding act of the appetitive power, then it is an intellectual pleasure and the interest in the object is an interest of reason. For if the interest were sensuous and not based merely on pure rational principles, [212] then the pleasure would have to have sensation connected with it in order to determine the appetitive power. In cases where we must admit a pure rational interest, we cannot substitute any interest of inclination for it; but to conform with the common use of language, we can speak of inclination to what can be an object only of intellectual pleasure—a habitual appetite proceeding from a pure rational interest. But a *non-sensuous inclination* of this sort (*propensio intellectualis*) would not be the cause of this pure rational interest, but rather its effect.

Furthermore, we must distinguish *concupiscence* (sensuality), as that which stimulates the appetitive act, from the appetite itself. It is always a sensuous function of the mind, but it is not itself able to produce any act of the appetitive power.

The appetitive power which acts in accordance with concepts, in so far as the ground determining it to action lies in itself and not in the object, is called a power to act or to refrain from acting at one's discretion. It is called *choice* [*Willkür*] when it is joined with consciousness that its action can produce the object; otherwise its act is called a

wish. The appetitive power whose inner determining ground, and so the decision itself, lies in the subject's reason is called the *will* [*Wille*]. The will is therefore the appetitive power viewed in relation to the ground that determines the power of choice to the action, while the power of choice is the appetitive power viewed in relation to the action. The will itself has, properly speaking, no determining ground: in so far as reason can determine the power of choice, the will is, rather, practical reason itself.

In as much as reason can determine the appetitive power as such, the will can include under itself not only *choice* but also mere *wish*. The power of choice that can be determined by *pure reason* is called free choice [*freie Willkür*]. That which can be determined only by *inclination* (sensuous impulse, *stimulus*) would be animal choice (*arbitrium brutum*). Human choice is such that, while it can be affected by impulses, it cannot be determined by them. Hence in itself (apart from an acquired facility of reason) it is not pure, but it can still be determined to actions by pure will. *Freedom* of choice is this independence from sensuous impulse in the determination of choice. This is the negative concept of freedom. The positive concept of freedom is that of the [213] power of pure reason to be of itself practical. But pure reason can be practical only if the maxim of every action is subjected to the condition that it qualifies as a universal law. For as pure reason applied to the power of choice without regard to the object of choice, in as much as it is a power of principles (here of practical principles—hence in as much as it is a legislative power) it can make only the form of the maxim, its fitness for universal law, into the first principle and determining ground of choice, since the matter of the law is excluded. And since the maxims of men, based on subjective grounds, do not of

themselves agree with that objective ground, pure practical reason can lay down this law only as an imperative that commands or prohibits absolutely.

These laws of freedom (as distinguished from laws of nature) are called *moral*. In so far as they have to do only with mere external actions and their lawfulness they are called *juridical laws*; but if they also require that they themselves (the laws) be the ground determining choice to actions, then they are *ethical laws*. So we say that conformity with juridical law comprises the *legality* of the action, and conformity with ethical law, its *morality*. In so far as choice is determined by laws of reason, its exercise is free. But the freedom to which juridical laws refer can be only freedom in the outer exercise of choice, whereas the freedom with which ethical laws are concerned is freedom in both the outer and the inner exercise of choice. In theoretical philosophy it is said that only objects of outer sense are in space, whereas all objects—those of outer as well as of inner sense—are in time, because the representations of both, in so far as they are representations, belong to inner sense. In the same way, whether we consider freedom in the outer or in the inner exercise of choice, its laws, as pure practical laws of reason for free choice as such, must be also the inner determining ground of choice, though we need not always view them in this way.

II.

ON THE IDEA AND NECESSITY OF A METAPHYSIC OF MORALS

I have elsewhere proved that natural science, which deals with objects of outer sense, must have *a priori* principles and that a system of these principles, called a metaphysical science of nature, [214] can and, indeed, must precede physics—that is, its application to particular experience. In

himself to sleep by pleasures and distractions, but he cannot avoid coming to himself or waking up from time to time; and when he does, he hears at once its fearful voice. He can at most, in the extremity of corruption, induce himself to pay no more attention to it, but he still cannot help *hearing* it.

Now this inherent intellectual and (since it is the thought of duty) moral disposition called *conscience* has something peculiar about it: although its business is an affair of man with himself, man yet sees himself necessitated by his reason to carry it on as if at the bidding of *another person*. For this action is the bringing of a *case* (*causa*) before a court; and to think of the man *accused* by his conscience as *one and the same person* with the judge is an absurd way of representing a court of justice, since then the prosecutor would always lose.—Hence for every duty man's conscience will have to conceive someone *other* than himself (*i.e.* other than man as such) as the judge of his actions; otherwise it would be in contradiction with itself. This other may be a [438] real person or a merely ideal person which reason itself produces.*

* The man who accuses and judges himself in conscience must think of himself as a twofold personage, a doubled self who, on the one hand, has to stand in fear and trembling at the bar of the tribunal which is yet entrusted to him, but who, on the other hand, must himself administer the office of judge which he holds by inborn authority. And this requires clarification, if reason is not to fall into self-contradiction.—I, the prosecutor and yet the accused as well, am the same *man* (*numero idem*). But man as the subject of the moral legislation which proceeds from the concept of freedom and in which he is subject to a law that he himself gives (*homo noumenon*) is to be considered different (*specie diversus*) from man as a member the sensible world who is endowed with reason. But it is only from the viewpoint of practical knowledge that he is to be regarded in this way, since there is no theoretical knowledge of the causal relation of the intelligible to the sensible; and this specific difference is that of the human faculties (the higher and the lower) which characterize man. The first is the prose-

Such an ideal person (the authorized judge of conscience) must be a scrutinizer of hearts, since the court of justice is set up *within* man. But at the same time he must *impose all obligation*: since conscience is the inner judge of all free actions, he must be, or must be conceived as, a person in relation to whom all our duties are to be regarded as also his commands.—Now since such a moral being must also have all power (in heaven and on earth) in order to be able to give his law its due effect (a function essential to the office of judge), and since such an omnipotent moral being is called God, conscience must be conceived as a subjective principle of responsibility before God for our deeds. In fact the latter concept will always be contained (even if only in an obscure way) in the moral self-awareness of conscience.

This is not to say that man is entitled, on the grounds of the Idea to which his conscience inevitably leads him, to *posit* such a Supreme Being as *really existing* outside himself—still less that he is *obligated* to do so. For the Idea is not given to him *objectively*, by theoretical reason, but only *subjectively*, by practical reason which obligates [439] itself to act in conformity with this Idea. And only *by way of analogy* with a lawgiver for all rational beings in the world does this Idea merely guide man to think of conscientiousness (which is also called *religio*) as responsibility before a holy Being (morally legislative reason) distinct from man yet present in his inmost being, and to submit himself to the will of this Being, as the rules of

cutor, against whom the accused is granted a legal adviser (defence counsel). When the proceedings are concluded the inner judge, as the person vested with authority, pronounces the sentence of happiness or misery, as the moral consequences of the deed. Our reason cannot pursue further his authority (as ruler of the world) in this function; we can only reverence his unconditioned *iubeo* or *veto*.