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Chapter 1 : Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals Summary - www.nxgvision.com

Philosophy may be divided into three fields: physics (the study of the physical world), ethics (the study of morals), and logic (the study of logical principles). These fields may involve either "empirical" study of our experiences, or "pure" analysis of concepts. "Metaphysics" is the study of pure.

Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals Essay introduction. Otherwise it is likely to be dismissed, as it was by his disciple Hegel, as putting too much faith in reason to determine moral action. He trusts far more the common and untutored attitude of the masses to discover morality, a point to be made. Contingent reason does not deliver morality; only pure reason is capable of doing so. Being mired in a maze of contingent reason, it is very difficult for the lettered to arrive at morality. Those expecting a hard and fast rule of morality from Kant and Hegel must be counted among their number come away disappointed and having misunderstood purpose of why a metaphysics of morals is necessary. A metaphysics of human understanding is what Kant had spelt out in the Critique, and more plainly in Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics. The central precept presented here was that human mind possesses synthetic a priori faculties that impose meaning upon the sensible world beyond, which comes to it as chaos of sense perceptions. Pure reason thus resides within the human mind, and gives rise to contingent reason in the phenomenal world, that which enables understanding. Metaphysics is defined as reason turned inwards and examining itself. Kant makes this out to be an impossible endeavor, for understanding is only geared to the phenomenal world, and is unable to grasp pure reason. Even if he tried he could not abandon metaphysics, for reason never rests and is spurred on by unflagging curiosity. If metaphysics leads to despair then it can only be because it lacks clarity and solid foundations. At stake was the very essence of man; so Kant perceived it as an emergency. At several points Kant makes it clear that he is acting out of duty. The claims he made of the importance of the Critique sound outrageous to the ears of many. He made it an obligation on any one who had any inclination to serious metaphysics, that they should read the Critique, or else abandon that pursuit altogether. Prolegomena, 6 For the unlettered, and those incapable of metaphysics, he devised the categorical imperative, a simple rule of thumb to judge morality, resembling the Golden Rule of Christianity. The rule is supposed to have the same purifying effect as does metaphysical clarity. Thereby a link is pre-established between pure metaphysics and the metaphysics of morality. Metaphysics is not possible, in the sense that we cannot understand pure reason with any degree of finality. But clarity in metaphysical thinking is not only possible, but is indeed a binding obligation. In other world, pure reason leads us to morality. The morality cannot stop with thinking, but must carry on into action. The next logical step, therefore, is to put the metaphysics of morals on a foundation, just as has been done with pure metaphysics. Kant starts out by putting the study in its context. The Greeks had divided knowledge into three disciplines physics, ethics and logic. Ethics, as derived from experience, is a practical science, and is better described as psychology, and does not touch the sphere of morality. The human being has reason, which considered as an organ must too have a rightful function. Now, if the function of reason were to effect happiness and self-preservation the common inclination then it would seem to be a most imperfect arrangement on the part of God, for reason is hesitant and bungling: Now in a being which has reason and a will, if the proper object of nature were its conservation, its welfare, in a word, its happiness, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose. For all the actions which the creature has to perform with a view to this purpose, and the whole rule of its conduct, would be far more surely prescribed to it by instinct, and that end would have been attained thereby much more certainly than it ever can be by reason. Grounding, 56 Indeed this is exactly how instinct works, providing an automatic mechanism that works instantaneously towards self-preservation and well-being. This being the case it must be investigated as to what the true function of reason is. From what we learn from Critique, the function of reason is not to effect the contingent good, but rather the universal good, i. We have reason so that we may choose the right way, not the useful or productive way. A corollary to this is

that the moral act cannot coincide with inclination, for the latter is described as that which depends of instinct and feeling to attain the goals of happiness and self-preservation. Next there is interest, in which we exercise judgment, through empirical means, calculating so that we may obtain happiness. But even our best calculations cannot confirm to us that the happiness will be permanent, so and interested action cannot be a moral one either. Morality is not the product of the best reason, but of pure reason, and therefore cannot allow imperfection in its aim. But such a reason is contingent, and therefore the act cannot be a moral one. Not to pursue moral sense, but to abide by moral law, this is the criteria for judging whether an act is moral or not. Hereby is introduced the concept of duty. Kant describes it thus: If there was a reason it would be one measured towards gaining something "happiness, respectability, honor etc" and so would be an interested act, and would cease to be a duty. As such, duty determines the moral law. It is above all petty interest, or inclination, and must have a rationale that is universal. So he opts for compromise "probably the only occasion he does so in his vast corpus. He suggests that, not particular reasons, but maxims are to be followed. The maxims should be worded so as to aim for the universal good. And thus he proposed the categorical imperative: But in order to embody morality it needs to be framed as a binding law. This is achieved by the consideration of free will. Any reasoning creature is able to comprehend that it is free; the very act of reasoning is an act of freedom. But when we come to consider degrees of freedom we realize that things are quite the opposite of what we expect. Any exercise of reason mires us in antinomies "mutually contradicting assertions, both of which can be shown as valid. The act is thus binding, and not at all allowing for freedom. It binds us to contingent reality. But then we recall that conscious reason consist of pure concepts of understanding, like the concept of causation, which are meant for understanding the sensory world, and not for metaphysics. Freedom is obtained only by overcoming the binds of contingent reason. Therefore, contrary to expectation, autonomy is not gained by an interested exercise of the will, but through the rejection of it. When the will has before it a particular object of interest, external to itself, it is dependent on that object. The object in turn is dependent on another, giving rise to an endless chain of dependency. Autonomy is only gained when the act of reason is an end in itself. In such a place there is freedom and the moral law has been established. Where does this law come from? It comes from rational beings exercising free will. The autonomous will is the source of moral law. We can sum up by saying that, free individuals are the lawgivers in the kingdom of ends. In no society is morality determined by considering the deepest dynamics of it metaphysics. To the contrary, morality is result of wisdom that has accrued through history. Even then it is not the learned circles that are the upholder of morality, but rather the common unlettered lot, whose pious ways and robust common sense are responsible. Recognizing the significance of Kantian antinomies, he went on to elaborate on it, and came to develop what is known as the Hegelian dialectic. It is the centrally most influential idea of the modern era, and many see it as the starting point to all modern philosophy in the West. The Hegelian dialectic was found useful, whereas the Kantian antinomies were not, for the simple reason that the former tool was applied to history, whereas the latter did not escape metaphysics. Hegel described thesis as begetting antithesis, in the same way as Kant did, but he also posited that there is a synthesis of the two, which occurs in history, i. In a continual, omnipresent and unceasing process, thesis begets antithesis, and both are resolved through synthesis, and this is the dynamic of the progress of civilization. Morality is thus a product of history and local circumstance. But it is unfair to suggest that all this escapes Kant. He did admit that the reasoning mind is prone to the most immoral tendencies, whereas the unlettered masses have far better instincts for what is moral, and affinity towards the moral life. Reason is not only a lure, it is also ineffective in bringing about the happy and moral life: In fact the premise of the argument is that a metaphysics of morals is impossible, just as metaphysics itself is impossible. But the fact is that as rational creatures we cannot help being metaphysical, just as we cannot help searching for the moral way. In order that we do not become misguided in these endeavors, our metaphysical effort needs to be laid on solid foundations, and this is what Kant pleads for, and tries to provide. He is saying that, only when our own house is in order can morality ensue. In fact the position of Kant is hardly different from that of Socrates, who spoke two thousand years

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earlier. The motto of Socrates was: For Kant, too, is asking that we examine ourselves, indeed making it the sole criterion of our investigation. The Sophists were the masters of philosophy in his day, and at the end of their learning they has arrived at the conclusion that nothing can be known, that probabilities are our only guide, and these should be used towards material gain alone. Against the hegemony of the Sophists Socrates preached the message of self investigation. The Sophists were right, he admitted, but only in so far as the sensory world in concerned. This knowledge does not come to us in discursive terms, so that we know explicitly what it is. Rather it appears as wisdom. This is what rules the world for in it is contained the natural law. It comes from the self, and therefore the rational being is a lawgiver. The last description is deliberately put in the terms of Kant in order to bring out the exact similitude between the two philosophies. Thus, the messages of Socrates and Kant are identical, even though their approaches are vastly dissimilar. Kant reasoned from a tiny corner in Konigsberg, confined to his study. It is reputed that he never left his hometown his entire long life.

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Chapter 2 : Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals - Wikipedia

Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (German: *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*; ; also known as the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*) is the first of Immanuel Kant's mature works on moral philosophy and remains one of the most influential in the field.

Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, by Immanuel Kant, Second Section Transition from Popular Moral Philosophy to the Metaphysic of Morals If we have hitherto drawn our notion of duty from the common use of our practical reason, it is by no means to be inferred that we have treated it as an empirical notion. Although many things are done in conformity with what duty prescribes, it is nevertheless always doubtful whether they are done strictly from duty, so as to have a moral worth. Hence there have at all times been philosophers who have altogether denied that this disposition actually exists at all in human actions, and have ascribed everything to a more or less refined self-love. Not that they have on that account questioned the soundness of the conception of morality; on the contrary, they spoke with sincere regret of the frailty and corruption of human nature, which, though noble enough to take its rule an idea so worthy of respect, is yet weak to follow it and employs reason which ought to give it the law only for the purpose of providing for the interest of the inclinations, whether singly or at the best in the greatest possible harmony with one another. In fact, it is absolutely impossible to make out by experience with complete certainty a single case in which the maxim of an action, however right in itself, rested simply on moral grounds and on the conception of duty. Sometimes it happens that with the sharpest self-examination we can find nothing beside the moral principle of duty which could have been powerful enough to move us to this or that action and to so great a sacrifice; yet we cannot from this infer with certainty that it was not really some secret impulse of self-love, under the false appearance of duty, that was the actual determining cause of the will. We like them to flatter ourselves by falsely taking credit for a more noble motive; whereas in fact we can never, even by the strictest examination, get completely behind the secret springs of action; since, when the question is of moral worth, it is not with the actions which we see that we are concerned, but with those inward principles of them which we do not see. Moreover, we cannot better serve the wishes of those who ridicule all morality as a mere chimera of human imagination over stepping itself from vanity, than by conceding to them that notions of duty must be drawn only from experience as from indolence, people are ready to think is also the case with all other notions ; for or is to prepare for them a certain triumph. I am willing to admit out of love of humanity that even most of our actions are correct, but if we look closer at them we everywhere come upon the dear self which is always prominent, and it is this they have in view and not the strict command of duty which would often require self-denial. Without being an enemy of virtue, a cool observer, one that does not mistake the wish for good, however lively, for its reality, may sometimes doubt whether true virtue is actually found anywhere in the world, and this especially as years increase and the judgement is partly made wiser by experience and partly, also, more acute in observation. This being so, nothing can secure us from falling away altogether from our ideas of duty, or maintain in the soul a well-grounded respect for its law, but the clear conviction that although there should never have been actions which really sprang from such pure sources, yet whether this or that takes place is not at all the question; but that reason of itself, independent on all experience, ordains what ought to take place, that accordingly actions of which perhaps the world has hitherto never given an example, the feasibility even of which might be very much doubted by one who founds everything on experience, are nevertheless inflexibly commanded by reason; that, e. When we add further that, unless we deny that the notion of morality has any truth or reference to any possible object, we must admit that its law must be valid, not merely for men but for all rational creatures generally, not merely under certain contingent conditions or with exceptions but with absolute necessity, then it is clear that no experience could enable us to infer even the possibility of such apodeictic laws. For with what right could we bring into unbounded respect as a universal

precept for every rational nature that which perhaps holds only under the contingent conditions of humanity? Or how could laws of the determination of our will be regarded as laws of the determination of the will of rational beings generally, and for us only as such, if they were merely empirical and did not take their origin wholly a priori from pure but practical reason? Nor could anything be more fatal to morality than that we should wish to derive it from examples. For every example of it that is set before me must be first itself tested by principles of morality, whether it is worthy to serve as an original example, i. Even the Holy One of the Gospels must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognise Him as such; and so He says of Himself, "Why call ye Me whom you see good; none is good the model of good but God only whom ye do not see? Simply from the idea of moral perfection, which reason frames a priori and connects inseparably with the notion of a free will. Imitation finds no place at all in morality, and examples serve only for encouragement, i. If then there is no genuine supreme principle of morality but what must rest simply on pure reason, independent of all experience, I think it is not necessary even to put the question whether it is good to exhibit these concepts in their generality in abstracto as they are established a priori along with the principles belonging to them, if our knowledge is to be distinguished from the vulgar and to be called philosophical. In our times indeed this might perhaps be necessary; for if we collected votes whether pure rational knowledge separated from everything empirical, that is to say, metaphysic of morals, or whether popular practical philosophy is to be preferred, it is easy to guess which side would preponderate. This descending to popular notions is certainly very commendable, if the ascent to the principles of pure reason has first taken place and been satisfactorily accomplished. This implies that we first found ethics on metaphysics, and then, when it is firmly established, procure a hearing for it by giving it a popular character. But it is quite absurd to try to be popular in the first inquiry, on which the soundness of the principles depends. It is not only that this proceeding can never lay claim to the very rare merit of a true philosophical popularity, since there is no art in being intelligible if one renounces all thoroughness of insight; but also it produces a disgusting medley of compiled observations and half-reasoned principles. Shallow pates enjoy this because it can be used for every-day chat, but the sagacious find in it only confusion, and being unsatisfied and unable to help themselves, they turn away their eyes, while philosophers, who see quite well through this delusion, are little listened to when they call men off for a time from this pretended popularity, in order that they might be rightfully popular after they have attained a definite insight. By this designation we are also at once reminded that moral principles are not based on properties of human nature, but must subsist a priori of themselves, while from such principles practical rules must be capable of being deduced for every rational nature, and accordingly for that of man. Such a metaphysic of morals, completely isolated, not mixed with any anthropology, theology, physics, or hyperphysics, and still less with occult qualities which we might call hypophysical, is not only an indispensable substratum of all sound theoretical knowledge of duties, but is at the same time a desideratum of the highest importance to the actual fulfilment of their precepts. My answer was postponed in order that I might make it complete. But it is simply this: For the commonest understanding shows that if we imagine, on the one hand, an act of honesty done with steadfast mind, apart from every view to advantage of any kind in this world or another, and even under the greatest temptations of necessity or allurements, and, on the other hand, a similar act which was affected, in however low a degree, by a foreign motive, the former leaves far behind and eclipses the second; it elevates the soul and inspires the wish to be able to act in like manner oneself. Even moderately young children feel this impression, and one should never represent duties to them in any other light. From what has been said, it is clear that all moral conceptions have their seat and origin completely a priori in the reason, and that, moreover, in the commonest reason just as truly as in that which is in the highest degree speculative; that they cannot be obtained by abstraction from any empirical, and therefore merely contingent, knowledge; that it is just this purity of their origin that makes them worthy to serve as our supreme practical principle, and that just in proportion as we add anything empirical, we detract from their genuine influence and from the absolute value of actions; that it is not only of the greatest necessity, in a purely speculative point of view, but is also of the greatest practical importance, to

derive these notions and laws from pure reason, to present them pure and unmixed, and even to determine the compass of this practical or pure rational knowledge, i. In this way, although for its application to man morality has need of anthropology, yet, in the first instance, we must treat it independently as pure philosophy, i. But in order that in this study we may not merely advance by the natural steps from the common moral judgement in this case very worthy of respect to the philosophical, as has been already done, but also from a popular philosophy, which goes no further than it can reach by groping with the help of examples, to metaphysic which does allow itself to be checked by anything empirical and, as it must measure the whole extent of this kind of rational knowledge, goes as far as ideal conceptions, where even examples fail us, we must follow and clearly describe the practical faculty of reason, from the general rules of its determination to the point where the notion of duty springs from it. Everything in nature works according to laws. Rational beings alone have the faculty of acting according to the conception of laws, that is according to principles, i. Since the deduction of actions from principles requires reason, the will is nothing but practical reason. If reason infallibly determines the will, then the actions of such a being which are recognised as objectively necessary are subjectively necessary also, i. But if reason of itself does not sufficiently determine the will, if the latter is subject also to subjective conditions particular impulses which do not always coincide with the objective conditions; in a word, if the will does not in itself completely accord with reason which is actually the case with men, then the actions which objectively are recognised as necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determination of such a will according to objective laws is obligation, that is to say, the relation of the objective laws to a will that is not thoroughly good is conceived as the determination of the will of a rational being by principles of reason, but which the will from its nature does not of necessity follow. The conception of an objective principle, in so far as it is obligatory for a will, is called a command of reason, and the formula of the command is called an imperative. All imperatives are expressed by the word ought [or shall], and thereby indicate the relation of an objective law of reason to a will, which from its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by it an obligation. They say that something would be good to do or to forbear, but they say it to a will which does not always do a thing because it is conceived to be good to do it. That is practically good, however, which determines the will by means of the conceptions of reason, and consequently not from subjective causes, but objectively, that is on principles which are valid for every rational being as such. It is distinguished from the pleasant, as that which influences the will only by means of sensation from merely subjective causes, valid only for the sense of this or that one, and not as a principle of reason, which holds for every one. The dependence of a contingently determinable will on principles of reason is called an interest. This therefore, is found only in the case of a dependent will which does not always of itself conform to reason; in the Divine will we cannot conceive any interest. But the human will can also take an interest in a thing without therefore acting from interest. The former signifies the practical interest in the action, the latter the pathological in the object of the action. The former indicates only dependence of the will on principles of reason in themselves; the second, dependence on principles of reason for the sake of inclination, reason supplying only the practical rules how the requirement of the inclination may be satisfied. In the first case the action interests me; in the second the object of the action because it is pleasant to me. We have seen in the first section that in an action done from duty we must look not to the interest in the object, but only to that in the action itself, and in its rational principle viz. A perfectly good will would therefore be equally subject to objective laws viz. Therefore no imperatives hold for the Divine will, or in general for a holy will; ought is here out of place, because the volition is already of itself necessarily in unison with the law. Therefore imperatives are only formulae to express the relation of objective laws of all volition to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being, e. Now all imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. The former represent the practical necessity of a possible action as means to something else that is willed or at least which one might possibly will. The categorical imperative would be that which represented an action as necessary of itself without reference to another end, i. Since every practical law represents a possible action as good and, on this account, for a subject who is practically determinable by reason,

necessary, all imperatives are formulae determining an action which is necessary according to the principle of a will good in some respects. If now the action is good only as a means to something else, then the imperative is hypothetical; if it is conceived as good in itself and consequently as being necessarily the principle of a will which of itself conforms to reason, then it is categorical. Thus the imperative declares what action possible by me would be good and presents the practical rule in relation to a will which does not forthwith perform an action simply because it is good, whether because the subject does not always know that it is good, or because, even if it know this, yet its maxims might be opposed to the objective principles of practical reason. Accordingly the hypothetical imperative only says that the action is good for some purpose, possible or actual. In the first case it is a problematical, in the second an assertorial practical principle. The categorical imperative which declares an action to be objectively necessary in itself without reference to any purpose, i. Whatever is possible only by the power of some rational being may also be conceived as a possible purpose of some will; and therefore the principles of action as regards the means necessary to attain some possible purpose are in fact infinitely numerous. All sciences have a practical part, consisting of problems expressing that some end is possible for us and of imperatives directing how it may be attained. These may, therefore, be called in general imperatives of skill. Here there is no question whether the end is rational and good, but only what one must do in order to attain it. The precepts for the physician to make his patient thoroughly healthy, and for a poisoner to ensure certain death, are of equal value in this respect, that each serves to effect its purpose perfectly. Since in early youth it cannot be known what ends are likely to occur to us in the course of life, parents seek to have their children taught a great many things, and provide for their skill in the use of means for all sorts of arbitrary ends, of none of which can they determine whether it may not perhaps hereafter be an object to their pupil, but which it is at all events possible that he might aim at; and this anxiety is so great that they commonly neglect to form and correct their judgement on the value of the things which may be chosen as ends. There is one end, however, which may be assumed to be actually such to all rational beings so far as imperatives apply to them, viz. The hypothetical imperative which expresses the practical necessity of an action as means to the advancement of happiness is assertorial. We are not to present it as necessary for an uncertain and merely possible purpose, but for a purpose which we may presuppose with certainty and a priori in every man, because it belongs to his being. The latter is the sagacity to combine all these purposes for his own lasting benefit. This latter is properly that to which the value even of the former is reduced, and when a man is prudent in the former sense, but not in the latter, we might better say of him that he is clever and cunning, but, on the whole, imprudent. Finally, there is an imperative which commands a certain conduct immediately, without having as its condition any other purpose to be attained by it. This imperative is categorical. It concerns not the matter of the action, or its intended result, but its form and the principle of which it is itself a result; and what is essentially good in it consists in the mental disposition, let the consequence be what it may. This imperative may be called that of morality. There is a marked distinction also between the volitions on these three sorts of principles in the dissimilarity of the obligation of the will. In order to mark this difference more clearly, I think they would be most suitably named in their order if we said they are either rules of skill, or counsels of prudence, or commands laws of morality. For it is law only that involves the conception of an unconditional and objective necessity, which is consequently universally valid; and commands are laws which must be obeyed, that is, must be followed, even in opposition to inclination. Counsels, indeed, involve necessity, but one which can only hold under a contingent subjective condition, viz. For sanctions are called pragmatic which flow properly not from the law of the states as necessary enactments, but from precaution for the general welfare. A history is composed pragmatically when it teaches prudence, i. Now arises the question, how are all these imperatives possible? This question does not seek to know how we can conceive the accomplishment of the action which the imperative ordains, but merely how we can conceive the obligation of the will which the imperative expresses. No special explanation is needed to show how an imperative of skill is possible. Whoever wills the end, wills also so far as reason decides his conduct the means in his power which are indispensably necessary thereto. This proposition is, as regards the volition,

analytical; for, in willing an object as my effect, there is already thought the causality of myself as an acting cause, that is to say, the use of the means; and the imperative educes from the conception of volition of an end the conception of actions necessary to this end. Synthetical propositions must no doubt be employed in defining the means to a proposed end; but they do not concern the principle, the act of the will, but the object and its realization. If it were only equally easy to give a definite conception of happiness, the imperatives of prudence would correspond exactly with those of skill, and would likewise be analytical. For in this case as in that, it could be said: The reason of this is that all the elements which belong to the notion of happiness are altogether empirical, i. Now it is impossible that the most clear-sighted and at the same time most powerful being supposed finite should frame to himself a definite conception of what he really wills in this. Does he will riches, how much anxiety, envy, and snares might he not thereby draw upon his shoulders? Does he will knowledge and discernment, perhaps it might prove to be only an eye so much the sharper to show him so much the more fearfully the evils that are now concealed from him, and that cannot be avoided, or to impose more wants on his desires, which already give him concern enough. Would he have long life? In short, he is unable, on any principle, to determine with certainty what would make him truly happy; because to do so he would need to be omniscient.

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Chapter 3 : Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals Quotes by Immanuel Kant

Video: Immanuel Kant's Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals In this lesson, you'll think about the different reasons why you use the word 'should.'

After much deliberation, I found to my embarrassment that he was right: I had misunderstood it. I had misunderstood it badly. Having thought a lot about it, I wish to give a fairly pedantic examination of the theory forgive me! I was under the impression that the categorical imperative was this: I could will universal suicide or a universal fight to the death, just so long as I was willing to commit suicide or fight to the death myself. The second formulation also confused me: All of my objections managed to completely and totally miss the point. My friend got frustrated because I was bringing up all these irrelevant objections, and I felt very confused. Here is what I found. My Attempt to Derive the Categorical Imperative: When we look at nature, we often find determinism. Equations determine the movement of particles and the temperatures of stars; chemical structures determine the qualities of materials; instincts honed by natural selection determine animal behavior. Sometimes, we also see random chance. We run into an old friend in a distant country, or we accidentally drop our mug of beer. But freedom is incompatible with either determinism and chance: Nonetheless, we cannot help but suppose ourselves free; otherwise, we can never decide what to do—since all decision-making presupposes freedom. We can relieve this tension in one of two ways. One way would be to declare freedom illusory. We presuppose freedom when we decide, but this is just a feeling of freedom; we are just as determined by natural laws as anything else in nature, and just as subject to random processes. And here we might ask ourselves, what is freedom, anyway? So we say a person is free when they make coolly rational decisions, not forced by some outside party, not overwhelmed by some strong desire, and not affected by some random process. But is this justifiable? Is this really freedom? And do we have it? So is freedom—at least in the fundamental sense of an action being undetermined by all previous events, nor at all random—is this freedom possible? Kant thinks it is; but he has a job to do in proving that it is possible. We can attempt to resolve these conflicts by hypothesizing that there is a part of us that is neither determined nor subject to chance. But what would this part of us be? I can find two possibilities, not mutually exclusive: Humans are distinguished from other creatures by our self-consciousness and by our ability to reason. First, let us suppose it is consciousness only that makes us free. But what are we conscious of? Hunger, thirst, exhaustion, desire, and various other things in our surroundings. If something external to our bodies forces us to do something, we are obviously not free, just as a dog is not free when being trained by its master. Consciousness seems to make no difference in that case. But we also seem not to be free when following some desire. For example, a dog is probably conscious of hunger, too, yet we do not usually think that dogs have free will when they pursue food. Perhaps you can say you are free because you can chose which desire to satisfy; but then what is the criterion by which one makes such a decision? Clearly, something extra is needed: Our ability to use reason is what sets our decision-making apart from that of dogs and cats. Using reason, we can establish criterion that are not themselves desires. So not only must reason be the criterion, but reason must be the motivation, for free decisions. We must both be determining our own actions and not pursuing some desire. Now we are in a position to ask ourselves: To be moral is to decide to do the right thing; it requires decision-making, and therefore can only apply to rational creatures. Not only can morality only apply to rational creatures, but morality can only apply to creatures insofar as they are rational. Anything non-rational, therefore, cannot be moral. Animals and inanimate objects cannot reason, so morality cannot apply to them. We have previously determined that things like hunger, thirst, and other desires are non-rational; so such things are not the basis of morality. Neither is morality concerned with achieving any particular goal in the world, because all goals derive their value from desiring them. Phrased in a slightly different way, all goals are contingent: Nor can morality even have anything to do with human nature, since all other rational creatures—human, alien, or angel—would be equally subject to it. So morality, being derived from

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rationality and only applicable to creatures insofar as they are rational, must not have anything to do with empirical reality; it is, in other words, a priori. Now, morality deals in oughts, commands, or imperatives—what we should do. Since morality cannot take into account states of fact, the commands of morality must apply under all conceivable conditions. Also, since every rational creature is equally subject to the commands of morality, all moral imperatives must apply equally to all rational creatures. It is not dependent on any circumstances: From this alone we can draw the conclusion that any action which makes an exception of the actor cannot be moral. In other words, any action which could not be universalized is immoral since the categorical imperative applies to everyone equally at all times. Also, since morality applies to all rational agents equally, any actions which treat a rational agent as not deserving of equal respect is immoral. This is to say, any action which treats a rational agent as a non-rational part of nature is forbidden; there is no valid reason for doing so. This test is a negative test. The categorical imperative cannot tell you what to do; it can only tell you what you may not do. You may not make an exception of yourself; you may not treat another rational agent as a part of nature. In other words, act only on maxims that can be willed as universals; never treat other rational agents as means only, but as ends in themselves deserving of respect. The Categorical Imperative in a Nutshell: So Kant does a very clever thing here. Kant essentially makes morality and freedom synonymous. You are only free if you are motivated by reason; and when you are motivated by reason, you are abiding by the categorical imperative, and are thus moral. Rationality is, for Kant, the basis of free will. So when rationality fully determines the will, it is the will giving a law unto itself. This removes the paradox of freedom. We are not free when we are following a law from outside ourselves, nor when we are following our own desires; we are only free when we are following the laws we created for ourselves you can see the Rousseau influence here. And not only must we abide by these self-made laws, but we must abide them purely for the sake of abiding by them, because only then are we free and moral. Stealing, for example, treats people as ends and not means; to steal makes an exception of yourself from a general rule; it cannot be willed as universal. This consonance with popular opinion is at first sight, at least an encouraging sign. Because Kant has divorced morality from all consequences, and founded it purely on consistency, all moral actions are equally moral, and all immoral actions are equally immoral. This is apparent at once, when one considers that one can either be consistent or inconsistent, not half consistent; one can either treat someone as an end or not, not half as an end. Therefore, lying and murder are equally immoral and equally forbidden. The white lie you told your wife puts you on a level with the murderer in prison. This means that all bets are off regarding animal cruelty. Because animals are non-rational, there is no restrictions on how one must treat them. Kant says so much himself: One wonders whether this exemption from the strictures of morality applies to young children and the insane, who are also not capable of reason. If so, infanticide is permissible, as is the mistreatment of the mentally ill. In fact, a person acting in accordance with the categorical imperative may reasonably expect to be miserable; their unerring code of behavior would make them easy prey for anyone who wished to take advantage of them. This is not a theoretical objection to Kant. But one may reasonably ask, "then why be moral? But was Kant Right? Rationality, for Kant, is not part of the world of nature, and is therefore the basis of freedom. I am extremely skeptical that this is the case. I do not see how anybody could make an absolutely free decision, independent of the normal laws of nature. We cannot, so to speak, take ourselves out of the stream of causation. It therefore seems more likely that freedom is an illusion, or a particular kind of ignorance. Their idea of freedom, therefore, is simply their ignorance of any cause for their actions. Refraining from stealing based on the categorical imperative is just as "free" a decision as eating lunch because of hunger, or sleeping because of exhaustion. Even the strict Kantian is motivated by his desire to abide by the categorical imperative. In other words, Kant says that, even if freedom is an illusion, his conclusions still hold.

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Chapter 4 : Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals - Immanuel Kant - Google Books

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Physics, Ethics, and Logic. This division is perfectly suitable to the nature of the thing, and the only improvement that can be made in it is to add the principle on which it is based, so that we may both satisfy ourselves of its completeness, and also be able to determine correctly the necessary subdivisions. All rational knowledge is either material or formal: Formal philosophy is called Logic. Material philosophy, however, which has to do with determinate objects and the laws to which they are subject, is again two-fold; for these laws are either laws of nature or of freedom. The science of the former is Physics, that of the latter, Ethics; they are also called natural philosophy and moral philosophy respectively. Logic cannot have any empirical part; that is, a part in which the universal and necessary laws of thought should rest on grounds taken from experience; otherwise it would not be logic, i. Natural and moral philosophy, on the contrary, can each have their empirical part, since the former has to determine the laws of nature as an object of experience; the latter the laws of the human will, so far as it is affected by nature: We may call all philosophy empirical, so far as it is based on grounds of experience: When the latter is merely formal it is logic; if it is restricted to definite objects of the understanding it is metaphysic. In this way there arises the idea of a two-fold metaphysic—a metaphysic of nature and a metaphysic of morals. Physics will thus have an empirical and also a rational part. It is the same with Ethics; but here the empirical part might have the special name of practical anthropology, the name morality being appropriated to the rational part. All trades, arts, and handiworks have gained by division of labour, namely, when, instead of one man doing everything, each confines himself to a certain kind of work distinct from others in the treatment it requires, so as to be able to perform it with greater facility and in the greatest perfection. Where the different kinds of work are not so distinguished and divided, where everyone is a jack-of-all-trades, there manufactures remain still in the greatest barbarism. It might deserve to be considered whether pure philosophy in all its parts does not require a man specially devoted to it, and whether it would not be better for the whole business of science if those who, to please the tastes of the public, are wont to blend the rational and empirical elements together, mixed in all sorts of proportions unknown to themselves 5 , and who call themselves independent thinkers, giving the name of minute philosophers to those who apply themselves to the rational part only—if these, I say, were warned not to carry on two employments together which differ widely in the treatment they demand, for each of which perhaps a special talent is required, and the combination of which in one person only produces bunglers. As my concern here is with moral philosophy, I limit the question suggested to this: Whether it is not of the utmost necessity to construct a pure moral philosophy, perfectly cleared of everything which is only empirical, and which belongs to anthropology? Everyone must admit that if a law is to have moral force, i. Thus not only are moral laws with their principles essentially distinguished from every other kind of practical knowledge in which there is anything empirical, but all moral philosophy rests wholly on its pure part. No doubt these laws require a judgment sharpened by experience, in order on the one hand to distinguish in what cases they are applicable, and on the other to procure for them access to the will of the man, and effectual influence on conduct; since man is acted on by so many inclinations that, though capable of the idea of a practical pure reason, he is not so easily able to make it effective in concreto in his life. For in order that an action should be morally good, it is not enough that it conform to the moral law, but it must also be done for the sake of the law, otherwise that conformity is only very contingent and uncertain; since a principle which is not moral, although it may now and then produce actions conformable to the law, will also often produce actions which contradict it 7. Now it is only in a pure philosophy that we can look for the moral law in its purity and genuineness and, in a practical matter, this is of the utmost consequence: That which mingles these pure principles with the empirical does not deserve the name of philosophy for what distinguishes philosophy from common rational knowledge is,

that it treats in separate sciences what the latter only comprehends confusedly ; much less does it deserve that of moral philosophy, since by this confusion it even spoils the purity of morals themselves, and counteracts its own end. By this it is distinguished from a metaphysic of morals, just as general logic, which treats of the acts and canons of thought in general, is distinguished from transcendental philosophy, which treats of the particular acts and canons of pure thought, i. For the metaphysic of morals has to examine the idea and the principles of a possible pure will, and not the acts and conditions of human volition generally, which for the most part are drawn from psychology 8. It is true that moral laws and duty are spoken of in the general practical philosophy contrary indeed to all fitness. Intending to publish hereafter a metaphysic of morals, I issue in the first instance these fundamental principles. Indeed there is properly no other foundation for it than the critical examination of a pure practical reason; just as that of metaphysics is the critical examination of the pure speculative reason, already published. But in the first place the former is not so absolutely necessary as the latter, because in moral concerns human reason can easily be brought to a high degree of correctness and completeness, even in the commonest understanding, while on the contrary in its theoretic but pure use it is wholly dialectical; and in the second place if the critique of a pure practical reason is to be complete, it must be possible at the same time to show its identity with the speculative reason in a common principle, for it can ultimately be only one and the same reason which has to be distinguished merely in its application. I could not, however, bring it to such completeness here, without introducing considerations of a wholly different kind, which would be perplexing to the reader 9. On this account I have adopted the title of Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, instead of that of a Critical Examination of the pure practical Reason. But in the third place, since a metaphysic of morals, in spite of the discouraging title, is yet capable of being presented in a popular form, and one adapted to the common understanding, I find it useful to separate from it this preliminary treatise on its fundamental principles, in order that I may not hereafter have need to introduce these necessarily subtle discussions into a book of a more simple character. The present treatise is, however, nothing more than the investigation and establishment of the supreme principle of morality, and this alone constitutes a study complete in itself, and one which ought to be kept apart from every other moral investigation. No doubt my conclusions on this weighty question, which has hitherto been very unsatisfactorily examined, would receive much light from the application of the same principle to the whole system, and would be greatly confirmed by the adequacy which it exhibits throughout; but I must forego this advantage, which indeed would be after all more gratifying than useful, since the easy applicability of a principle and its apparent adequacy give no very certain proof of its soundness, but rather inspire a certain partiality, which prevents us from examining and estimating it strictly in itself, and without regard to consequences. I have adopted in this work the method which I think most suitable, proceeding analytically from common knowledge to the determination of its ultimate principle, and again descending synthetically from the examination of this principle and its sources to the common knowledge in which we find it employed. The division will, therefore, be as follows Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a Good Will. Intelligence, wit, judgment, and the other talents of the mind, however they may be named, or courage, resolution, perseverance, as qualities of temperament, are undoubtedly good and desirable in many respects; but these gifts of nature may also become extremely bad and mischievous if the will which is to make use of them, and which, therefore, constitutes what is called character, is not good. It is the same with the gifts of fortune. The sight of a being who is not adorned with a single feature of a pure and good will, enjoying unbroken prosperity, can never give pleasure to an impartial rational spectator Thus a good will appears to constitute the indispensable condition even of being worthy of happiness. There are even some qualities which are of service to this good will itself, and may facilitate its action, yet which have no intrinsic unconditional value, but always presuppose a good will, and this qualifies the esteem that we justly have for them, and does not permit us to regard them as absolutely good. Moderation in the affections and passions, self-control and calm deliberation are not only good in many respects, but even seem to constitute part of the intrinsic worth of the person; but they are far from deserving

to be called good without qualification, although they have been so unconditionally praised by the ancients. For without the principles of a good will, they may become extremely bad, and the coolness of a villain not only makes him far more dangerous, but also directly makes him more abominable in our eyes than he would have been without it. A good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition, that is, it is good in itself, and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought about by it in favour of any inclination, nay, even of the sum total of all inclinations. Even if it should happen that, owing to special disfavour of fortune, or the niggardly provision of a step-motherly nature, this will should wholly lack power to accomplish its purpose, if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing, and there should remain only the good will not, to be sure, a mere wish, but the summoning of all means in our power, then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add to nor take away anything from this value. It would be, as it were, only the setting to enable us to handle it the more conveniently in common commerce, or to attract to it the attention of those who are not yet connoisseurs, but not to recommend it to true connoisseurs, or to determine its value. There is, however, something so strange in this idea of the absolute value of the mere will, in which no account is taken of its utility, that notwithstanding the thorough assent of even common reason to the idea, yet a suspicion must arise that it may perhaps really be the product of mere high-flown fancy, and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature in assigning reason as the governor of our will. Therefore we will examine this idea from this point of view. In the physical constitution of an organized being, that is, a being adapted suitably to the purposes of life, we assume it as a fundamental principle that no organ for any purpose will be found but what is also the fittest and best adapted for that purpose. Now in a being which has reason and a will, if the proper object of nature were its conservation, its welfare, in a word, its happiness, then nature would have hit upon a very bad arrangement in selecting the reason of the creature to carry out this purpose. For all the actions which the creature has to perform with a view to this purpose, and the whole rule of its conduct, would be far more surely prescribed to it by instinct, and that end would have been attained thereby much more certainly than it ever can be by reason. Should reason have been communicated to this favoured creature over and above, it must only have served it to contemplate the happy constitution of its nature¹⁴, to admire it, to congratulate itself thereon, and to feel thankful for it to the beneficent cause, but not that it should subject its desires to that weak and delusive guidance, and meddle bunglingly with the purpose of nature. In a word, nature would have taken care that reason should not break forth into practical exercise, nor have the presumption, with its weak insight, to think out for itself the plan of happiness, and of the means of attaining it. Nature would not only have taken on herself the choice of the ends, but also of the means, and with wise foresight would have entrusted both to instinct. And, in fact, we find that the more a cultivated reason applies itself with deliberate purpose to the enjoyment of life and happiness, so much the more does the man fail of true satisfaction. And from this circumstance there arises in many, if they are candid enough to confess it, a certain degree of misology, that is, hatred of reason, especially in the case of those who are most experienced in the use of it, because after calculating all the advantages they derive, I do not say from the invention of all the arts of common luxury, but even from the sciences which seem to them to be after all only a luxury of the understanding, they find that they have, in fact, only brought more trouble on their shoulders, rather than gained in happiness; and they end by envying, rather than despising, the more common stamp of men who keep closer to the guidance of mere instinct, and do not allow their reason much influence on their conduct. And this we must admit, that the judgment of those who would very much lower the lofty eulogies of the advantages which reason gives us in regard to the happiness and satisfaction of life, or who would even reduce them below zero, is by no means morose or ungrateful to the goodness with which the world is governed, but that there lies at the root of these judgments the idea¹⁵ that our existence has a different and far nobler end, for which, and not for happiness, reason is properly intended, and which must, therefore, be regarded as the supreme condition to which the private ends of man must, for the most part, be postponed. For as reason is not

competent to guide the will with certainty in regard to its objects and the satisfaction of all our wants which it to some extent even multiplies, this being an end to which an implanted instinct would have led with much greater certainty; and since, nevertheless, reason is imparted to us as a practical faculty, i. This will then, though not indeed the sole and complete good, must be the supreme good and the condition of every other, even of the desire of happiness. Under these circumstances, there is nothing inconsistent with the wisdom of nature in the fact that the cultivation of the reason, which is requisite for the first and unconditional purpose, does in many ways interfere, at least in this life, with the attainment of the second, which is always conditional, namely, happiness. Nay, it may even reduce it to nothing, without nature thereby failing of her purpose. For reason recognises the establishment of a good will as its highest practical destination, and in attaining this purpose is capable only of a satisfaction of its own proper kind, namely, that from the attainment of an end, which end again is determined by reason only, notwithstanding that this may involve many a disappointment to the ends of inclination. We have then to develop the notion of a will which deserves to be highly esteemed for itself, and is good without a view to anything further, a notion which exists already in the sound natural understanding, requiring rather to be cleared up than to be taught, and which in estimating the value of our actions always takes the first place, and constitutes the condition of all the rest. In order to do this we will take the notion of duty, which includes that of a good will, although implying certain subjective restrictions and hindrances. These, however, far from concealing it, or rendering it unrecognisable, rather bring it out by contrast, and make it shine forth so much the brighter. I omit here all actions which are already recognised as inconsistent with duty, although they may be useful for this or that purpose, for with these the question whether they are done from duty cannot arise at all, since they even conflict with it. I also set aside those actions which really conform to duty, but to which men have no direct inclination, performing them because they are impelled thereto by some other inclination. For in this case we can readily distinguish whether the action which agrees with duty is done from duty, or from a selfish view. It is much harder to make this distinction when the action accords with duty, and the subject has besides a direct inclination to it. For example, it is always a matter of duty that a dealer should not overcharge an inexperienced purchaser, and wherever there is much commerce the prudent tradesman does not overcharge, but keeps a fixed price for everyone, so that a child buys of him as well as any other. Men are thus honestly served; but this is not enough to make us believe that the tradesman has so acted from duty and from principles of honesty: Accordingly the action was done neither from duty nor from direct inclination, but merely with a selfish view. But on this account the often anxious care which most men take for it has no intrinsic worth, and their maxim has no moral import. They preserve their life as duty requires, no doubt, but not because duty requires. On the other hand, if adversity and hopeless sorrow have completely taken away the relish for life; if the unfortunate one, strong in mind, indignant at his fate rather than desponding or dejected, wishes for death, and yet preserves his life without loving it—“not from inclination or fear, but from duty”—then his maxim has a moral worth. To be beneficent when we can is a duty; and besides this, there are many minds so sympathetically constituted that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest, they find a pleasure in spreading joy around them, and can take delight in the satisfaction of others so far as it is their own work. But I maintain that in such a case an action of this kind, however proper, however amiable it may be, has nevertheless no true moral worth, but is on a level with other inclinations, e. For the maxim lacks the moral import, namely, that such actions be done from duty, not from inclination. Put the case that the mind of that philanthropist were clouded by sorrow of his own, extinguishing all sympathy with the lot of others, and that while he still has the power to benefit others in distress, he is not touched by their trouble because he is absorbed with his own; and now suppose that he tears himself out of this dead insensibility, and performs the action without any inclination to it, but simply from duty, then first has his action its genuine moral worth. Further still; if nature has put little sympathy in the heart of this or that man; if he, supposed to be an upright man, is by temperament cold and indifferent to the sufferings of others, perhaps because in respect of his own he is provided with the special gift of patience and fortitude, and supposes, or even requires, that others should have the same—and such a

man would certainly not be the meanest product of nature”but if nature had not specially framed him for a philanthropist, would he not still find in himself a source from whence to give himself a far higher worth than that of a good-natured temperament could be? It is just in this that the moral worth of the character is brought out which is incomparably the highest of all, namely, that he is beneficent, not from inclination, but from duty. But here again, without looking to duty, all men have already the strongest and most intimate inclination to happiness, because it is just in this idea that all inclinations are combined in one total. But the precept of happiness is often of such a sort that it greatly interferes with some inclinations, and yet a man cannot form any definite and certain conception of the sum of satisfaction of all of them which is called happiness. It is not then to be wondered at that a single inclination, definite both as to what it promises and as to the time within which it can be gratified, is often able to overcome such a fluctuating idea, and that a gouty patient, for instance, can choose to enjoy what he likes, and to suffer what he may, since, according to his calculation, on this occasion at least, he has [only] not sacrificed the enjoyment of the present moment to a possibly mistaken expectation of a happiness which is supposed to be found in health. But even in this case, if the general desire for happiness did not influence his will, and supposing that in his particular case health was not a necessary element in this calculation, there yet remains in this, as in all other cases, this law, namely, that he should promote his happiness not from inclination but from duty, and by this would his conduct first acquire true moral worth. It is in this manner, undoubtedly, that we are to understand those passages of Scripture also in which we are commanded to love our neighbour, even our enemy. This is practical love, and not pathological”a love which is seated in the will, and not in the propensions of sense”in principles of action and not of tender sympathy; and it is this love alone which can be commanded. The second 1 proposition is: That an action done from duty derives its moral worth, not from the purpose which is to be attained by it, but from the maxim by which it is determined, and therefore does not depend on the realization of the object of the action, but merely on the principle of volition by which the action has taken place, without regard to any object of desire. It is clear from what precedes that the purposes which we may have in view in our actions, or their effects regarded as ends and springs of the will, cannot give to actions any unconditional or moral worth. In what, then, can their worth lie, if it is not to consist in the will and in reference to its expected effect? It cannot lie anywhere but in the principle of the will without regard to the ends which can be attained by the action. The third proposition, which is a consequence of the two preceding, I would express thus: Duty is the necessity of acting from respect for the law. I may have inclination for an object as the effect of my proposed action, but I cannot have respect for it, just for this reason, that it is an effect and not an energy of will. It is only what is connected with my will as a principle, by no means as an effect”what does not subserve my inclination, but overpowers it, or at least in case of choice excludes it from its calculation”in other words, simply the law of itself, which can be an object of respect, and hence a command.

Chapter 5 : Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals | Global Grey

Kant's Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals G. J. Mattey Spring, / Philosophy 1 The Division of Philosophical Labor Kant generally endorses the ancient Greek division of philosophy into three.

Preface[edit] In the preface to the Groundwork Kant motivates the need for pure moral philosophy and makes some preliminary remarks to situate his project and explain his method of investigation. Kant opens the preface with an affirmation of the ancient Greek idea of a threefold division of philosophy into logic, physics, and ethics. Logic is purely formal—it deals only with the form of thought itself, not with any particular objects. Physics and ethics, on the other hand, deal with particular objects: Additionally, logic is an a priori discipline, i. By contrast, physics and ethics are mixed disciplines, containing empirical and non-empirical parts. The empirical part of physics deals with contingently true phenomena, like what kind of physical entities there are and the relations in which they stand; the non-empirical part deals with fundamental concepts like space, time, and matter. Similarly, ethics contains an empirical part, which deals with the question of what—given the contingencies of human nature—tends to promote human welfare, and a non-empirical part, which is concerned with an a priori investigation into the nature and substance of morality. Given that the moral law, if it exists, is universal and necessary, the only appropriate means to investigate it is through a priori rational reflection. Thus, a correct theoretical understanding of morality requires a metaphysics of morals. The purpose of the Groundwork is to prepare a foundation for moral theory. Because Kant believes that any fact which is grounded in empirical knowledge must be contingent, he can only derive the necessity that the moral law requires from a priori reasoning. It is with this significance of necessity in mind that the Groundwork attempts to establish a pure a priori ethics. Section One[edit] In section one, Kant argues from common sense morality to the supreme principle of morality, which he calls the categorical imperative. The Good Will Kant thinks that, with the exception of the good will, all goods are qualified. By qualified, Kant means that those goods are good insofar as they presuppose or derive their goodness from something else. Take wealth as an example. Wealth can be extremely good if it is used for human welfare, but it can be disastrous if a corrupt mind is behind it. In a similar vein, we often desire intelligence and take it to be good, but we certainly would not take the intelligence of an evil genius to be good. The good will, by contrast, is good in itself. What guides the will in those matters is inclination. The argument is based on the assumption that our faculties have distinct natural purposes for which they are most suitable, and it is questionable whether Kant can avail himself of this sort of argument. The Three Propositions Regarding Duty The teleological argument, if flawed, still offers that critical distinction between a will guided by inclination and a will guided by reason. That will which is guided by reason, Kant will argue, is the will that acts from duty. Although Kant never explicitly states what the first proposition is, it is clear that its content is suggested by the following common-sense observation. Common sense distinguishes among: Kant illustrates the distinction between b and c with the example of a shopkeeper 4: Because this person acts from duty, his actions have moral worth. Kant thinks our actions only have moral worth and deserve esteem when they are motivated by duty. Scholars disagree about the precise formulation of the first proposition. One interpretation asserts that the missing proposition is that an act has moral worth only when its agent is motivated by respect for the law, as in the case of the man who preserves his life only from duty. Another interpretation asserts that the proposition is that an act has moral worth only if the principle acted upon generates moral action non-contingently. If the shopkeeper in the above example had made his choice contingent upon what would serve the interests of his business, then his act has no moral worth. A maxim of an action is its principle of volition. By this, Kant means that the moral worth of an act depends not on its consequences, intended or real, but on the principle acted upon. Kant combines these two propositions into a third proposition, a complete statement of our common sense notions of duty. The Categorical Imperative Kant thinks that all of our actions, whether motivated by inclination or morality, must follow some law. For example, if a person wants to qualify

for nationals in ultimate frisbee, he will have to follow a law that tells him to practice his backhand pass, among other things. Notice, however, that this law is only binding on the person who wants to qualify for nationals in ultimate frisbee. In this way, it is contingent upon the ends that he sets and the circumstances that he is in. We know from the third proposition, however, that the moral law must bind universally and necessarily, that is, regardless of ends and circumstances. Thus, Kant arrives at his well-known categorical imperative, the moral law referenced in the above discussion of duty. Kant defines the categorical imperative as the following: Kant begins Section II of the Groundwork by criticizing attempts to begin moral evaluation with empirical observation. He states that even when we take ourselves to be behaving morally, we cannot be at all certain that we are purely motivated by duty and not by inclinations. Kant observes that humans are quite good at deceiving themselves when it comes to evaluating their motivations for acting, and therefore even in circumstances where individuals believe themselves to be acting from duty, it is possible they are acting merely in accordance with duty and are motivated by some contingent desire. However, the fact that we see ourselves as often falling short of what morality demands of us indicates we have some functional concept of the moral law. Kant begins his new argument in Section II with some observations about rational willing. All things in nature must act according to laws, but only rational beings act in accordance with the representation of a law. In other words, only rational beings have the capacity to recognize and consult laws and principles in order to guide their actions. Thus, only rational creatures have practical reason. The laws and principles that rational agents consult yield imperatives, or rules that necessitate the will. For example, if a person wants to qualify for nationals in ultimate frisbee, he will recognize and consult the rules that tell him how to achieve this goal. These rules will provide him with imperatives that he must follow as long as he wants to qualify for nationals. Imperatives are either hypothetical or categorical. Hypothetical imperatives provide the rules an agent must follow when she adopts a contingent end an end based on desire or inclination. So, for example, if I want ice cream, I should go to the ice cream shop or make myself some ice cream. But notice that this imperative only applies if I want ice cream. If I have no interest in ice cream, the imperative does not apply to me. Kant thinks that there are two types of hypothetical imperative—rules of skill and counsels of prudence. Rules of skill are determined by the particular ends we set and tell us what is necessary to achieve those particular ends. However, Kant observes that there is one end that we all share, namely our own happiness. Unfortunately, it is difficult, if not impossible, to know what will make us happy or how to achieve the things that will make us happy. Therefore, Kant argues, we can at best have counsels of prudence, as opposed to outright rules. The Categorical Imperative Recall that the moral law, if it exists, must apply universally and necessarily. Therefore, a moral law could never rest on hypothetical imperatives, which only apply if one adopts some particular end. Rather, the imperative associated with the moral law must be a categorical imperative. The categorical imperative holds for all rational agents, regardless of whatever varying ends a person may have. If we could find it, the categorical imperative would provide us with the moral law. What would the categorical imperative look like? We know that it could never be based on the particular ends that people adopt to give themselves rules of action. Kant thinks that this leaves us with one remaining alternative, namely that the categorical imperative must be based on the notion of a law itself. Laws or commands, by definition, apply universally. From this observation, Kant derives the categorical imperative, which requires that moral agents act only in a way that the principle of their will could become a universal law. The Formula of the Universal Law of Nature The first formulation states that an action is only morally permissible if every agent could adopt the same principle of action without generating one of two kinds of contradiction. This formula is called the Formula for the Universal Law of Nature. For example, suppose a person in need of money makes it her maxim to attain a loan by making a false promise to pay it back. If everyone followed this principle, nobody would trust another person when she made a promise, and the institution of promise-making would be destroyed. But, the maxim of making a false promise in order to attain a loan relies on the very institution of promise-making that universalizing this maxim destroys. For example, a person might have a maxim never to help others when they are in need. However, Kant thinks that all agents

necessarily wish for the help of others from time to time. Therefore, it is impossible for the agent to will that her maxim be universally adopted. If an attempt to universalize a maxim results in a contradiction in conception, it violates what Kant calls a perfect duty. If it results in a contradiction in willing, it violates what Kant calls an imperfect duty. Perfect duties are negative duties, that is duties not to commit or engage in certain actions or activities for example theft. Imperfect duties are positive duties, duties to commit or engage in certain actions or activities for example, giving to charity. In the Groundwork, Kant says that perfect duties never admit of exception for the sake of inclination 4: However, in a later work *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant suggests that imperfect duties only allow for flexibility in how one chooses to fulfill them. Kant thinks that we have perfect and imperfect duties both to ourselves and to others. The Formula of Humanity The second formulation of the categorical imperative is the Formula of Humanity, which Kant arrives at by considering the motivating ground of the categorical imperative. Because the moral law is necessary and universal, its motivating ground must have absolute worth 4: Were we to find something with such absolute worth, an end in itself, that would be the only possible ground of a categorical imperative. However, Kant thinks that we also have an imperfect duty to advance the end of humanity. This is, therefore, a violation of a perfect duty. By contrast, it is possible to fail to donate to charity without treating some other person as a mere means to an end, but in doing so we fail to advance the end of humanity, thereby violating an imperfect duty. The Formula for the Universal Law of Nature involves thinking about your maxim as if it were an objective law, while the Formula of Humanity is more subjective and is concerned with how you are treating the person with whom you are interacting. The Formula of Autonomy combines the objectivity of the former with the subjectivity of the latter and suggests that the agent ask what she would accept as a universal law. To do this, she would test her maxims against the moral law that she has legislated. All ends that rational agents set have a price and can be exchanged for one another.

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Table of Contents Summary Philosophy may be divided into three fields: These fields may involve either "empirical" study of our experiences, or "pure" analysis of concepts. People generally presume that moral principles must apply to all rational beings at all places and all times. Moral principles must therefore be based on concepts of reason, as opposed to particularities of culture or personality. The goal of the Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals is to develop a clearer understanding of moral principles, so that people may better avert distractions. Several general principles about moral duties may be advanced. First, actions are moral if and only if they are undertaken for the sake of morality alone without any ulterior motive. Third, actions are moral if and only if they are undertaken out of respect for the moral law as opposed to some other motivation such as a need or desire. Since specific interests, circumstances, and consequences cannot be considered, the moral "law" must be a general formula that is applicable in all situations. Rather than commanding specific actions, it must express the principle that actions should be undertaken with pure motives, without consideration of consequences, and out of pure reverence for the law. The formula that meets these criteria is the following: People have a decent intuitive sense for this law. Still, it is helpful for philosophy to state the law clearly so that people can keep it in mind. It is nearly impossible to find examples of pure moral actions. Nearly every action we observe can be attributed to some interest or motivation other than pure morality. Yet this should not discourage us, for moral principles come from reason, not from experience. Indeed, moral principles could not come from experience, for all experiences depend on particular circumstances, whereas moral principles must have absolute validity, independent of all circumstances. When people violate the categorical imperative, they apply a different standard to their own behavior than they would want applied to everyone else in the form of a universal law. This is a contradiction that violates principles of reason. The categorical imperative may also be formulated as a requirement that we must not treat other rational beings as mere means to our own purposes. Rational beings have the capacity to pursue predetermined objectives "ends" by means of their will, yet in pursuing their goals they never think of themselves as mere means to another purpose; they are themselves the purpose of their actions- -they are "ends in themselves. If we treat other rational beings as mere means, we contradict the fact that all rational beings are ends in themselves. In this case, our principles could not be universal laws, and we would violate the categorical imperative. Another way of stating the point that rational beings are ends in themselves is to say that rational beings are simultaneously the authors and the subjects of the principles they execute through their will. The categorical imperative may also be formulated as a requirement that we act only according to principles that could be laws in a "kingdom of ends"--that is, a legal community in which all rational beings are at once the makers and subjects of all laws. The argument so far has established what the moral law is, but has not demonstrated why we feel we should be moral. The basis for morality is the concept of freedom. Freedom is the ability to give your own law to your will. When we follow the demands of some need, desire, or circumstance, we are in a state of "heteronomy"; our will is determined by something outside of ourselves. When we follow the categorical imperative and chose maxims that could be universal laws, we are in a state of "autonomy"; we use reason to determine our own law for ourselves. In other words, we are free. Freedom of the will can never be demonstrated by experience. It is a principle of reason that everything we understand may be explained on the basis of prior conditions. In other words, the world we observe and understand is a world governed by the principle that every event was caused by another event. Yet this world is nothing more than the picture that reason develops in making sense of "appearances. We can have no knowledge of things in themselves. Thus freedom of the will may be neither proven nor disproven. All that we may know is that we have a concept of freedom of the will, and that morality may be based on this concept.

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Chapter 7 : Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals, by Immanuel Kant,

A metaphysic of morals is therefore indispensably necessary, not merely for speculative reasons, in order to investigate the sources of the practical principles which are to be found a priori in our reason, but also because.

Chapter 1 Summary The one thing in the world that is unambiguously good is the "good will. By contrast, a good will is intrinsically good--even if its efforts fail to bring about positive results. It is a principle of the composition of natural organisms that each of their purposes is served by the organ or faculty most appropriate to that purpose. The highest purposes of each individual are presumably self-preservation and the attainment of happiness. Reason does not appear to be as well suited as instinct for these purposes. Indeed, people with a refined capacity for reason are often less happy than the masses. As a result, refined people often envy the masses, while common people view reason with contempt. The fact is that reason serves purposes that are higher than individual survival and private happiness. The specific obligations of a good will are called "duties. First, actions are genuinely good when they are undertaken for the sake of duty alone. People may act in conformity with duty out of some interest or compulsion other than duty. For instance, a grocer has a duty to offer a fair price to all customers, yet grocers abide by this duty not solely out of a sense of duty, but rather because the competition of other grocers compels them to offer the lowest possible price. Similarly, all people have a duty to help others in distress, yet many people may help others not out of a sense of duty, but rather because it gives them pleasure to spread happiness to other people. A more genuine example of duty would be a person who feels no philanthropic inclination, but who nonetheless works to help others because he or she recognizes that it is a duty to do so. The second proposition is that actions are judged not according to the purpose they were meant to bring about, but rather by the "maxim" or principle that served as their motivation. This principle is similar to the first. When someone undertakes an action with no other motivation than a sense of duty, they are doing so because they have recognized a moral principle that is valid a priori. By contrast, if they undertake an action in order to bring about a particular result, then they have a motivation beyond mere duty. The third proposition, also related to the first two, is that duties should be undertaken out of "reverence" for "the law. Chance events could bring about positive results. But only a rational being can recognize a general moral law and act out of respect for it. Rather, it is the moral motivation of a person who recognizes that the law is an imperative of reason that transcends all other concerns and interests. Since particular circumstances and motivations cannot be brought into the consideration of moral principles, the moral "law" cannot be a specific stipulation to do or not do this or that particular action. Rather, the moral law must be applicable in all situations. Thus the law of morality is that we should act in such a way that we could want the maxim the motivating principle of our action to become a universal law.

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