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Translated by
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gardly provision of stepmotherly nature, this will should be wholly lacking in the power to accomplish its purpose; if with the greatest effort it should yet achieve nothing, and only the good will should remain (not, to be sure, as a mere wish but as the summoning of all the means in our power), yet would it, like a jewel, still shine by its own light as something which has its full value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitlessness can neither augment nor diminish this value. Its usefulness would be, as it were, only the setting to enable us to handle it in ordinary dealings or to attract to it the attention of those who are not yet experts, but not to recommend it to real experts or to determine its value.

395 But there is something so strange in this idea of the absolute value of a mere will, in which no account is taken of any useful results, that in spite of all the agreement received even from ordinary reason, yet there must arise the suspicion that such an idea may perhaps have as its hidden basis merely some high-flown fancy, and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature in assigning to reason the governing of our will. Therefore, this idea will be examined from this point of view.

In the natural constitution of an organized being, i.e., one suitably adapted to the purpose of life, let us take as a principle that in such a being no organ is to be found for any end unless it be the most fit and the best adapted for that end. Now if that being's preservation, welfare, or in a word its happiness, were the real end of nature in the case of a being having reason and will, then nature would have hit upon a very poor arrangement in having the reason of the creature carry out this purpose. For all the actions which such a creature has to perform with this purpose in view, and the whole rule of his conduct would have been prescribed much more exactly by instinct; and the purpose in question could have been attained much more certainly by instinct than it ever can be by reason. And if in addition reason had been imparted to this favored creature, then it would have had to serve him only to contemplate the happy constitution of his nature, to admire that nature, to rejoice in it, and to feel grateful to the cause that bestowed it; but reason would not have served him to subject his faculty of desire to its weak and delusive guidance nor would it have served him to meddle incompetently with the purpose of nature. In a word, nature would have taken care that reason did not strike out into a practical use nor presume, with its weak insight, to think out for itself a plan for happiness and the means for attaining it. Nature would have taken upon herself not only the choice of ends but also that of the means, and would with wise foresight have entrusted both to instinct alone.

And, in fact, we find that the more a cultivated reason devotes itself to the aim of enjoying life and happiness, the further does man get away from true contentment. Because of this there arises in many persons, if only they are candid enough to admit it, a certain degree of misology, i.e., hatred of reason. This is especially so in the case of those who are the most experienced in the use of reason, because after calculating all the advantages they derive, I say not from the invention of all the arts of com-

mon luxury, but even from the sciences be also a luxury of the understanding), only brought more trouble on their happiness. Therefore, they come to envy, r mon run of men who are closer to the and who do not allow their reason much we must admit that the judgment of t reduce below zero, the boastful eulog which reason is supposed to provide as ment of life is by no means morose on which the world is governed. There li rather, the idea that existence has an pose, for which, and not for happiness, and which must, therefore, be regard which the private purpose of men mu

Reason, however, is not competent o regards its objects and the satisfaction even multiplies); to this end would an i much more certainly. But inasmuch as i practical faculty, i.e., as one which is true function must be to produce a w means to some further end, but is good itself reason was absolutely necessary, i her capacities has everywhere gone to w such a will may not indeed be the sole a theless, be the highest good and the co desire for happiness. In this case there wisdom of nature that the cultivation o first and unconditioned purpose, may this life, the attainment of the second I always conditioned. Indeed happiness nothing, without nature's failing the recognizes as its highest practical fun will, whereby in the attainment of this own kind of satisfaction, viz., that of fu determined only by reason, even though terfere with the purposes of inclination

The concept of a will estimable in its further end must now be developed. T natural sound understanding and needs ly to be elucidated. It always holds f worth of our actions and constitutes Therefore, we shall take up the concep good will, though with certain subje which far from hiding a good will or re bring it out by contrast and make it sh

I here omit all actions already rec

though they may be useful for this or that end; for in the case of these the question does not arise at all as to whether they might be done from duty, since they even conflict with duty. I also set aside those actions which are really in accordance with duty, yet to which men have no immediate inclination, but perform them because they are impelled thereto by some other inclination. For in this [second] case to decide whether the action which is in accord with duty has been done from duty or from some selfish purpose is easy. This difference is far more difficult to note in the [third] case where the action accords with duty and the subject has in addition an immediate inclination to do the action. For example,¹ that a dealer should not overcharge an inexperienced purchaser certainly accords with duty; and where there is much commerce, the prudent merchant does not overcharge but keeps to a fixed price for everyone in general, so that a child may buy from him just as well as everyone else may. Thus customers are honestly served, but this is not nearly enough for making us believe that the merchant has acted this way from duty and from principles of honesty; his own advantage required him to do it. He cannot, however, be assumed to have in addition [as in the third case] an immediate inclination toward his buyers, causing him, as it were, out of love to give no one as far as price is concerned any advantage over another. Hence the action was done neither from duty nor from immediate inclination, but merely for a selfish purpose.

On the other hand,² to preserve one's life is a duty; and, furthermore, everyone has also an immediate inclination to do so. But on this account the often anxious care taken by most men for it has no intrinsic worth, and the maxim of their action has no moral content. They preserve their lives, to be sure, in accordance with duty, but not from duty. On the other hand,³ if adversity and hopeless sorrow have completely taken away the taste for life, if an unfortunate man, strong in soul and more indignant at his fate than despondent or dejected, wishes for death and yet preserves his life without loving it—not from inclination or fear, but from duty—then his maxim indeed has a moral content.⁴

1. [The ensuing example provides an illustration of the second case.]

2. [This next example illustrates the third case.]

3. [The ensuing example illustrates the fourth case.]

4. [Four different cases have been distinguished in the two foregoing paragraphs. Case 1 involves those actions which are contrary to duty (lying, cheating, stealing, etc.). Case 2 involves those which accord with duty but for which a person perhaps has no immediate inclination, though he does have a mediate inclination thereto (one pays his taxes not because he likes to but in order to avoid the penalties set for delinquents, one treats his fellows well not because he really likes them but because he wants their votes when at some future time he runs for public office, etc.). A vast number of so-called "morally good" actions actually belong to this case 2—they accord with duty because of self-seeking inclinations. Case 3 involves those which accord with duty and for which a person does have an immediate inclination (one does not commit suicide because all is going well with him, one does not commit adultery because he considers his wife to be the most desirable creature in the whole world,

To be beneficent where one can is many persons who are so sympathetic further motive of vanity or self-interested spreading joy around them and can revalue their own work. But I maintain that in however dutiful and amiable it may be worth.⁵ It is on a level with such actions e.g., the inclination for honor, which is in fact beneficial and accords with duty, praise and encouragement, but not esthetic content of an action done not from inclination but from duty. Then the mind of this friend of mankind sorrow so that all sympathy with the lowly pose him still to have the power to benefit him is not touched by their trouble because his own; and now suppose that, even though he never touches his trouble any longer, he nevertheless tears himself to pieces. Then for the first time his action has genuine worth. Nature has put little sympathy in this character (an honest man in other respects) he is therefore to the sufferings of others, perhaps he is endowed with the special qualities that expects or even requires that others should be (who would truly not be nature's work). fashioned by her to be a philanthropist, source from which he might give himself a good-natured temperament might have

etc.). Case 4 involves those actions which accommodate inclination (one does not commit suicide even though he has turned his wife into a shrew). Case 4 is the crucial test case of the will's possible good. One should lead his life in such a way as to encounter a constant temptation to test his virtue (deliberately marry a shrew or commit adultery). Life itself forces enough such cases out. But when there is a conflict between duty and inclination, Case 3 makes for the easiest living and the wish that life might present him with far more opportunities. One should not arrange his life in such a way as to avoid as much as possible (become a recluse so as to avoid with frequent association with one's fellows, avoid the rich and the poor so as to spare oneself the pangs of sympathy, benefiting those in distress, etc.). For the purpose of this paper, case 4 as being the test case of the will's possible good. [puritanism.]

5. [This is an example of case 3.]

6. [This is an example of case 4.]

- 399 does the worth of the character come out; this worth is moral and incomparably the highest of all, viz., that he is beneficent, not from inclination, but from duty.⁷

To secure one's own happiness is a duty (at least indirectly); for discontent with one's condition under many pressing cares and amid unsatisfied wants might easily become a great temptation to transgress one's duties. But here also do men of themselves already have, irrespective of duty, the strongest and deepest inclination toward happiness, because just in this idea are all inclinations combined into a sum total.⁸ But the precept of happiness is often so constituted as greatly to interfere with some inclinations, and yet men cannot form any definite and certain concept of the sum of satisfaction of all inclinations that is called happiness. Hence there is no wonder that a single inclination which is determinate both as to what it promises and as to the time within which it can be satisfied may outweigh a fluctuating idea; and there is no wonder that a man, e.g., a gouty patient, can choose to enjoy what he likes and to suffer what he may, since by his calculation he has here at least not sacrificed the enjoyment of the present moment to some possibly groundless expectations of the good fortune that is supposed to be found in health. But even in this case, if the universal inclination to happiness did not determine his will and if health, at least for him, did not figure as so necessary an element in his calculations; there still remains here, as in all other cases, a law, viz., that he should promote his happiness not from inclination but from duty, and thereby for the first time does his conduct have real moral worth.⁹

Undoubtedly in this way also are to be understood those passages of Scripture which command us to love our neighbor and even our enemy. For love as an inclination cannot be commanded; but beneficence from duty, when no inclination impels us¹⁰ and even when a natural and unconquerable aversion opposes such beneficence,¹¹ is practical, and not pathological, love. Such love resides in the will and not in the propensities of feeling, in principles of action and not in tender sympathy; and only this practical love can be commanded.

The second proposition¹² is this: An action done from duty has its moral worth, not in the purpose that is to be attained by it, but in the maxim ac-

cording to which the action is determined; therefore, not on the realization of the purpose, but on the principle of volition according to which the action is determined by the faculty of desire, the action has its worth before it is clear that the purposes which well as their effects regarded as ends give to actions any unconditioned and this worth lie if it is not to be found in effect? Nowhere but in the principle of ends that can be brought about through as it were, at a crossroads between its ends and its a posteriori incentive, which determined by something; it must be determined by the principle of volition, if the action is done from the material principle is taken away from

The third proposition, which follows, is expressed thus: Duty is the necessity of a law. I can indeed have an inclination for a proposed action; but I can never have respect for it merely as effect and is not an activity; it is merely an effect and is not an activity; no respect for inclination as such, when can at most, if my own inclination, even love it, i.e., consider it to be a favorite object of respect can only be what is connected with it and never as effect—something that does not rather, outweighs it, or at least excludes it; choice is made—in other words, only respect and hence can be a command. Not altogether exclude the influence of inclinations of the will. Hence there is nothing left which objectively the law and subjectively p. i.e., the will can be subjectively determined to follow such a law even if all my inclinations

Thus the moral worth of an action does not depend on the maxim from it nor in any principle of action that is not the maxim of the expected effect. For all these effects and even the furtherance of other people's ends can be brought about also through other causes, the will of a rational being, in which the highest effect can alone be found. Therefore, the pre-eminent maxim can consist in nothing but the representation that a representation can admittedly be found to be as this representation, and not some other representation.

13. A maxim is the subjective principle of volition which would serve all rational beings also subjectively as a principle of action (i.e., as a principle of control over the faculty of desire) is the practical law.

7. [This is an even more extreme example of case 4.]

8. [This is an example of case 3.]

9. [This example is a weak form of case 4; the action accords with duty but is not contrary to some immediate inclination.]

10. [This is case 4 in its weak form.]

11. [This is case 4 in its strong form.]

12. [The first proposition of morality says that an action must be done from duty in order to have any moral worth. It is implicit in the preceding examples but was never explicitly stated.]

ground of the will. This good is already present in the person who acts according to this representation, and such good need not be awaited merely from the effect.¹⁴

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But what sort of law can that be the thought of which must determine the will without reference to any expected effect, so that the will can be called absolutely good without qualification? Since I have deprived the will of every impulse that might arise for it from obeying any particular law, there is nothing left to serve the will as principle except the universal conformity of its actions to law as such, i.e., I should never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law.¹⁵ Here mere conformity to law as such (without having as its basis any law determining particular actions) serves the will as principle and must so serve it if duty is not to be a vain delusion and a chimerical concept. The ordinary reason of mankind in its practical judgments agrees completely with this, and always has in view the aforementioned principle.

For example, take this question. When I am in distress, may I make a promise with the intention of not keeping it? I readily distinguish here the two meanings which the question may have; whether making a false promise conforms with prudence or with duty. Doubtless the former can often be the case. Indeed I clearly see that escape from some present difficulty by means of such a promise is not enough. In addition I must carefully consider whether from this lie there may later arise far greater inconvenience for me than from what I now try to escape. Furthermore, the consequences of my false promise are not easy to foresee, even with all my supposed cunning; loss of confidence in me might prove to be far more disadvantageous than the misfortune which I now try to avoid. The more

14. There might be brought against me here an objection that I take refuge behind the word "respect" in an obscure feeling, instead of giving a clear answer to the question by means of a concept of reason. But even though respect is a feeling, it is not one received through any outside influence but is, rather, one that is self-produced by means of a rational concept; hence it is specifically different from all feelings of the first kind, which can all be reduced to inclination or fear. What I recognize immediately as a law for me, I recognize with respect; this means merely the consciousness of the subordination of my will to a law without the mediation of other influences upon my sense. The immediate determination of the will by the law, and the consciousness thereof, is called respect, which is hence regarded as the effect of the law upon the subject and not as the cause of the law. Respect is properly the representation of a worth that thwarts my self-love. Hence respect is something that is regarded as an object of neither inclination nor fear, although it has at the same time something analogous to both. The object of respect is, therefore, nothing but the law—indeed that very law which we impose on ourselves and yet recognize as necessary in itself. As law, we are subject to it without consulting self-love; as imposed on us by ourselves, it is a consequence of our will. In the former aspect, it is analogous to fear; in the latter, to inclination. All respect for a person is properly only respect for the law (of honesty, etc.) of which the person provides an example. Since we regard the development of our talents as a duty, we think of a man of talent as being also a kind of example of the law (the law of becoming like him by practice), and that is what constitutes our respect for him. All so-called moral interest consists solely in respect for the law.

15. [This is the first time in the *Grounding* that the categorical imperative is stated.]

prudent way might be to act according to it a habit not to promise anything without such a maxim is, nevertheless, always the case. The sequences becomes clear to me at once, however, quite different from being hasty and hasty consequences; in the first case I can always contain a law for me, while in the second I can only see what are the results for me that are to be expected. For to deviate from the principle of prudence and to abandon my maxim of prudence can be done, though to abide by it is certainly safe. In order, however, to answer the question, the cords with duty is to ask myself whether I can hold this maxim (of extricating myself from difficult situations) as a universal law for myself. I can really say to myself that everyone must be in himself in a difficulty from which he cannot extricate himself. Then I immediately become a universal law for myself, but can not at all will a universal law to be valid. There can really be no promises at all, since in virtue of the maxim, I would be professed to other people who would then believe that they over-hastily did believe, then they would be compelled to do the same. Therefore, my maxim would necessarily be a universal law.¹⁶

Therefore, I need no far-reaching and far-reaching a law as possible in order that my will may be morally good. I am not capable of being a law of the world and incapable of being a law of all people. I only ask myself whether I can also will a universal law. If not, then the maxim must be abandoned, since the disadvantage accruing to me or even to all people is not fitting as a principle in a possible legislation. The maxim does not exacts from me immediate respect for the law, but only no insight into the grounds of such a law (which I must then investigate). But I at least understand that the worth of a law is far greater than any worth of inclination, and that the necessity of acting from a law is what constitutes duty, to which all other considerations because duty is the condition of a will greater than all else.

Thus within the moral cognition of all people, the law is derived at its principle. To be sure, such a law is not yet known abstractly in its universal form, but it is known in view and does use it as the standard of all people.

16. [This means that when you tell a lie, you do not thereby will that everyone else should tell the truth and be honest. It says everyone should always tell the truth and be honest. If you lie, you do not thereby will that everyone else is honest, because in such a case your lie would not be honest.]

- 421 maxim⁹ should accord with this law, while the law contains no condition to restrict it, there remains nothing but the universality of a law as such with which the maxim of the action should conform. This conformity alone is properly what is represented as necessary by the imperative.

Hence there is only one categorical imperative and it is this: Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.¹⁰

Now if all imperatives of duty can be derived from this one imperative as their principle, then there can at least be shown what is understood by the concept of duty and what it means, even though there is left undecided whether what is called duty may not be an empty concept.

The universality of law according to which effects are produced constitutes what is properly called nature in the most general sense (as to form), i.e., the existence of things as far as determined by universal laws. Accordingly, the universal imperative of duty may be expressed thus: Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature.¹¹

We shall now enumerate some duties, following the usual division of them into duties to ourselves and to others and into perfect and imperfect duties.¹²

- 422 1. A man reduced to despair by a series of misfortunes feels sick of life but is still so far in possession of his reason that he can ask himself whether taking his own life would not be contrary to his duty to himself.¹³ Now he asks whether the maxim of his action could become a universal law of nature. But his maxim is this: from self-love I make as my principle to shorten my life when its continued duration threatens more evil than it promises satisfaction. There only remains the question as to whether this

9. A maxim is the subjective principle of acting and must be distinguished from the objective principle, viz., the practical law. A maxim contains the practical rule which reason determines in accordance with the conditions of the subject (often his ignorance or his inclinations) and is thus the principle according to which the subject does act. But the law is the objective principle valid for every rational being, and it is the principle according to which he ought to act, i.e., an imperative.

10. [This formulation of the categorical imperative is often referred to as the formula of universal law.]

11. [This is often called the formula of the law of nature.]

12. There should be noted here that I reserve the division of duties for a future *Metaphysics of Morals* [in Part II of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, entitled *The Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, Ak. 417-474]. The division presented here stands as merely an arbitrary one (in order to arrange my examples). For the rest, I understand here by a perfect duty one which permits no exception in the interest of inclination. Accordingly, I have perfect duties which are external [to others], while other ones are internal [to oneself]. This classification runs contrary to the accepted usage of the schools, but I do not intend to justify it here, since there is no difference for my purpose whether this classification is accepted or not.

13. [Not committing suicide is an example of a perfect duty to oneself. See *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, Ak. 422-24.]

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2. Another man in need finds him who knows well that he won't be able to return the money and will not get any loan unless he firmly promises to pay it back. He wants to make such a promise, but he asks himself whether it is not permissible to do so in view of the difficulty in this way. Suppose, however, that the maxim of his action would then be established: if I promise myself to be in need of money, I will be compelled to keep my promise and return the money. In this case, however, I will be compelled to do so even if I have no love or personal advantage may perhaps be gained at the expense of my entire future welfare, but the question is whether this would not transform the requirement of self-love into a contradiction. The question thus: how would things stand if this were a universal law? He then sees at once that this would be a universal law of nature and be consequently self-contradictory. For the universal law of nature would be that anyone believing himself to be in dire need of money and desiring to be relieved of it, would please with the intention of not keeping his promise and the end to be attained thereby would be that he would believe what was promised him to be true, even though his utterances as being vain pretenses.

3. A third finds in himself a talent man useful in many respects. But he circumstances and prefers to indulge himself about broadening and improving. But he asks himself further whether gifts, besides agreeing of itself with agree also with what is called duty.¹⁵ could indeed always subsist accord though every man (like South Sea Islander) resolve to devote his life entirely to and, in a word, to enjoyment. But he become a universal law of nature or be natural instinct. For as a rational being faculties should be developed, inasmuch of possible purposes.

14. [Keeping promises is an example of a p

15. [Cultivating one's talents is an example
Ak. 444-46.]

4. A fourth man finds things going well for himself but sees others (whom he could help) struggling with great hardships; and he thinks: what does it matter to me? Let everybody be as happy as Heaven wills or as he can make himself; I shall take nothing from him nor even envy him; but I have no desire to contribute anything to his well-being or to his assistance when in need. If such a way of thinking were to become a universal law of nature, the human race admittedly could very well subsist and doubtless could subsist even better than when everyone prates about sympathy and benevolence and even on occasion exerts himself to practice them but, on the other hand, also cheats when he can, betrays the rights of man, or otherwise violates them. But even though it is possible that a universal law of nature could subsist in accordance with that maxim, still it is impossible to will that such a principle should hold everywhere as a law of nature.¹⁶ For a will which resolved in this way would contradict itself, inasmuch as cases might often arise in which one would have need of the love and sympathy of others and in which he would deprive himself, by such a law of nature springing from his own will, of all hope of the aid he wants for himself.

These are some of the many actual duties, or at least what are taken to be such, whose derivation from the single principle cited above is clear. We must be able to will that a maxim of our action become a universal law; this is the canon for morally estimating any of our actions. Some actions are so constituted that their maxims cannot without contradiction even be thought as a universal law of nature, much less be willed as what should become one. In the case of others this internal impossibility is indeed not found, but there is still no possibility of willing that their maxim should be raised to the universality of a law of nature, because such a will would contradict itself. There is no difficulty in seeing that the former kind of action conflicts with strict or narrow [perfect] (irremissible) duty, while the second kind conflicts only with broad [imperfect] (meritorious) duty.¹⁷ By means of these examples there has thus been fully set forth how all duties depend as regards the kind of obligation (not the object of their action) upon the one principle.

If we now attend to ourselves in any transgression of a duty, we find that we actually do not will that our maxim should become a universal law—because this is impossible for us—but rather that the opposite of this maxim should remain a law universally.¹⁸ We only take the liberty of making an exception to the law for ourselves (or just for this one time) to

16. [Benefiting others is an example of an imperfect duty to others. See *ibid.* Al. 459, 541.]

17. [Compare *ibid.*, Ak. 390-94, 410-11, 421-51.]

18. [This is to say, for example, that when you tell a lie, you do so on the condition that others are truthful and believe that what you are saying is true, because otherwise your lie will never work to get you what you want. When you tell a lie, you simply take exception to the general rule that says everyone should always tell the truth.]

the advantage of our inclination. Consequently, if we were to derive everything from one and the same standard, we would find a contradiction in our ethics. For the principle of reason, which we hold universally, should be objectively necessary as a universal standard, yet it should not be held universally but should admit of exceptions. For we must not regard our action from the standpoint of reason only, but with reason and then at another moment from the standpoint of a will affected by inclination. For there is a contradiction here. Rather, there is an apparent contradiction, for the principle of reason (the *salitas*) of the principle of reason is changed into the principle of inclination. Although this procedure cannot be justified, yet it does show that we actually derive the categorical imperative from the principle of reason, and (with all reasonable exceptions) the categorical imperative and (with all reasonable exceptions) the principle of reason are in agreement.

We have thus at least shown that if significance and real legislative authority can be expressed only in categorical hypothetical ones. We have also— and exhibited clearly and definitely for every the categorical imperative, which must (if there is such a thing at all). But we to prove a priori that there actually is there is a practical law which of itself any incentives, and that following this

In order to attain this proof there is a principle from the special character of the rational being, that we must not take it into account, but only the practical, unconditioned necessity of the rational being (to whom alone an *imperative* can be given). For this reason only can it also be a law of reason, that whatever is derived from the special tendency of the rational being, from certain feelings and propensities, from some special tendency peculiar to the rational being, is not necessarily for the will of every rational being a maxim valid for us, but not a law. For the subjective principle according to which we have the propensity and inclination, but not the *imperative*, according to which we would be disposed to act, is not the same as the propensity, inclination, and natural tendency of the rational being. The sublimity and inner worth of the command in a duty, the fewer subjective causes there are which oppose it; such causes do not in the least detract from the law, nor do they detract from the worth of the command, nor do they detract from the worth of the duty, nor do they detract from the worth of the rational being.



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