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GROUNDING METAPHYSICS MORALS

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On a Supposed Reason
Because of Phila

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mon luxury, but even from the sciences (which may be also a luxury of the understanding), only brought more trouble on their happiness. Therefore, they come to envy, not the common run of men who are closer to the earth and who do not allow their reason much scope, but we must admit that the judgment of the philosophers, which reduces below zero, the boastful eulogium of reason, which reason is supposed to provide as a purpose of life is by no means morose or gloomy, in which the world is governed. There lies rather, the idea that existence has another purpose, for which, and not for happiness, men are created, and which must, therefore, be regarded as a luxury, which the private purpose of men must

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

The concept of a will estimable in itself for a further end must now be developed. The concept is a natural sound understanding and needs no further analysis to be elucidated. It always holds for the worth of our actions and constitutes the highest good. Therefore, we shall take up the concept of a good will, though with certain subject-matter, which far from hiding a good will or reason, brings it out by contrast and make it shine forth.

I here omit all actions already reco

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-interest spreading joy around them and can re their own work. But I maintain that in however dutiful and amiable it may be worth.⁵ It is on a level with such action e.g., the inclination for honor, which is fact beneficial and accords with duty praise and encouragement, but not est content of an action done not from in then the mind of this friend of mankind sorrow so that all sympathy with the lo pose him still to have the power to ben he is not touched by their trouble beca his own; and now suppose that, even any longer, he nevertheless tears himse performs the action without any inclin then for the first time his action has gen nature has put little sympathy in this c an honest man in other respects) he is ferent to the sufferings of others, perha ferings he is endowed with the special expects or even requires that others sho (who would truly not be nature's wor fashioned by her to be a philanthropist, source from which he might give himse a good-natured temperament might hav

etc.). Case 4 involves those actions which accor mediate inclination (one does not commit suicide c commit adultery even though his wife has turned case 4 is the crucial test case of the will's possible g should lead his life in such a way as to encounter a stantly to test his virtue (deliberately marry a shrew commit adultery). Life itself forces enough such ca out. But when there is a conflict between duty followed. Case 3 makes for the easiest living and th wish that life might present him with far more of one should not arrange his life in such a way as to a as much as possible (become a recluse so as to avo with frequent association with one's fellows, avoid and the poor so as to spare oneself the pangs of sym benefiting those in distress, etc.). For the purpose case 4 as being the test case of the will's possible 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 principle of volition according to which of the faculty of desire, the action has before it is clear that the purposes which as 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 a and its a posteriori incentive, which is determined by something; it must be determined by volition, if the action is done from material principle is taken away from

The third proposition, which follows 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 it is merely an effect and is not an action with no respect for inclination as such, where I can at most, if my own inclination, and even love it, i.e., consider it to be favorable, the object of respect can only be what is connected and never as effect—something that duty rather, outweighs it, or at least excludes choice is made—in other words, only respect and hence can be a command. Not altogether exclude the influence of inclination of the will. Hence there is nothing left with objectively the law and subjectively principle, i.e., the will can be subjectively determined follow such a law even if all my inclination

Thus the moral worth of an action lies from it nor in any principle of action through this expected effect. For all these effects, and even the furtherance of other purposes brought about also through other causes, will of a rational being, in which the highest alone be found. Therefore, the pre-eminent can consist in nothing but the representation a representation can admittedly be found as this representation, and not some external

13. A maxim is the subjective principle of volition would serve all rational beings also subjectively as 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 with such a maxim is, nevertheless, always sequences becomes clear to me at once, however, quite different from being a prudent consequence; in the first case I maintain a law for me, while in the second I try to see what are the results for me that I can expect. For to deviate from the principle of prudence and to abandon my maxim of prudence can be a prudent way, however, to answer the question of duty, cords with duty is to ask myself whether my maxim (of extricating myself from difficulty) were to hold as a universal law for my people. I really say to myself that everyone might be in himself in a difficulty from which he could extricate himself. Then I immediately become aware that I but can not at all will a universal law that I really be no promises at all, since in vain I can be professed to other people who would not believe they over-hastily did believe, then the maxim would not hold. Therefore, my maxim would necessarily not be made a universal law.¹⁶

Therefore, I need no far-reaching investigation to do in order that my will may be morally good, but only ask myself whether I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law. If not, then the maxim is not a law, disadvantage accruing to me or even to others is not fitting as a principle in a possible legislation. I exacts from me immediate respect for the law, yet no insight into the grounds of such respect (I must investigate). But I at least understand that the worth that far outweighs any worth of inclination, and that the necessity of acting from duty is what constitutes duty, to which I am bound because duty is the condition of a will that is good in all else.

Thus within the moral cognition of duty I have arrived at its principle. To be sure, such a cognition is only abstractly in its universal form, but it is in view and does use it as the standard of duty.

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

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.

424 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.*, Ak. 452–54.]

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. C everything from one and the same st we would find a contradiction in our ciple be objectively necessary as a uni hold universally but should admit of e ment regard our action from the stan with reason and then at another mor from the standpoint of a will affected contradiction here. Rather, there is an elination to the precept of reason, v salitas) of the principle is changed into that the practical principle of reason Although this procedure cannot be ju ment, yet it does show that we actual categorical imperative and (with all re a few exceptions which, as they seem upon us.

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

In order to attain this proof there warned that we must not take it into o principle from the special characterist to be a practical, unconditioned necess all rational beings (to whom alone an for this reason only can it also be a law hand, whatever is derived from the sp ty, from certain feelings and propensit from some special tendency peculiar necessarily for the will of every rational a maxim valid for us, but not a law. subjective principle according to whi have the propensity and inclination, b ple according to which we would be di propensity, inclination, and natural te the sublimity and inner worth of the co dent in a duty, the fewer subjective ca they oppose it; such causes do not in th erted by the law or take away anythin



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