

ethical theory

André Tournon (Paris: Imprimerie nationale Éditions, 1998), I:388. "There is nothing so unsociable and sociable as man; the one by his vice, the other by his nature," "On Solitude," *Complete Essays*, tr. M. A. Screech (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 267.

- 3 See Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, *Turgot on Progress, Sociology and Economics: A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind, On Universal History [and] Reflections On the Formation and the Distribution of Wealth*. Translated, edited, and with an introd. by Ronald L. Meek (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1973). For a recent defense of this idea in the Cold War context, see Diane R. Kunz, *Guns and Butter: America's Cold War Economic Diplomacy* (New York: The Free Press, 1997).
- 4 Compare Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, tr. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §324.
- 5 "The fates lead the willing, drive the unwilling" (Seneca, *Moral Epistles*, 18.4).
- 6 Pauline Kleingeld, *Fortschritt und Vernunft: Zur Geschichtsphilosophie Kants* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995), p. 215.

Kant's moral philosophy is grounded on several related values. Its primary idea is that of the rational agent as a self-governing being. This is closely related to the equal dignity of all rational beings as ends in themselves, deserving of respect in all rational actions. These two values are combined in the conception of an ideal community, or "realm of ends," in which every rational being is a legislating member, and in which all the ends of rational beings are to be combined in a single harmonious system as an object of striving by all of them. These basic values, and their philosophical grounding, are articulated in Kant's two principal foundational works in ethics: *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and the *Analytic of the Critique of Practical Reason* (1788).

Kant's direct and acknowledged influence on the history of moral philosophy rests almost exclusively on these two foundational writings in ethics. In Kant's ethical thought, however, these fundamental values are placed in the context of what Kant calls an "empirical anthropology," a distinctive theory of human nature and the human condition. If Kant's theoretical critique is about the limits of reason in its attempt to acquire knowledge *a priori*, then his practical philosophy is about the proper limitations of *empirically conditioned* reason – reason acting in the service of non-rational desires (KpV 5:15–16). The basic Kantian contrast between "duty" and "inclination," and between the *a priori* or "formal" principle of morality and "material" principles based on our natural desires, depend not only on the *a priori* foundations of Kant's theory but also on his theory of human nature. The historical basis of this crucial empirical side of Kant's ethical thought was discussed in the previous chapter. He never developed the "practical anthropology" that he said was needed for a complete moral philosophy (G 4:388), but he did include "anthropological" considerations in the reasonings through which he derived the system of juridical and ethical duties presented in his final work on ethics, the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797–8).

In addition to the foundational works in ethics and the historical or anthropological writings, Kant also produced a number of writings in

which he applies ethical principles. This includes not only the system of duties in the *Metaphysics of Morals* but also works on politics and religion that constituted his chief output during the last decade in which he wrote: *An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?* (1784), *What Does It Mean To Orient Oneself in Thinking?* (1786), *On the Common Saying: That May Be Correct in Theory but It Is of No Use in Practice* (1793), *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1794), *The End of All Things* (1794), *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795), *On A Presumed Right to Lie from Philanthropy* (1797), and *Conflict of the Faculties* (1798). One result of emphasizing Kant's foundational writings in ethics has been to neglect these writings and to give chief emphasis to Kant's most formalistic statements of the moral principle, and to treat the opposition of the motive of duty or reason to that of feeling or inclination as a consequence of Kant's ethical 'formalism'. In this chapter I will be concerned to correct the misperceptions that have resulted from this misemphasis on Kant's foundational writings in ethics and the neglect of the larger context of writings on anthropology and applied ethics in which they need to be understood. For this reason, I will draw on Kant's philosophy of history, discussed in the last chapter, to provide a context in which the foundations of Kantian ethics should be understood.

Categorical imperatives and inflexible moral rules

But at the outset, some even more elementary sources of misunderstanding and resistance to Kant's ethical theory should be dealt with. Kant notoriously held some very extreme (even repellent) positions on certain ethical issues. He held that murderers should always be put to death, that suicide is contrary to a strict duty to yourself, that sexual intercourse is inherently degrading to our humanity, that masturbation is an even more serious moral crime than suicide, that no disobedience to duly constituted political authority is ever justifiable except when the authority orders you to do something that is in itself wrong, and he once argued that lying for the purpose of adding to human welfare, even to save the life of an innocent person from a would-be murderer, is always wrong.¹ It is not uncommon for unsympathetic interpreters to exaggerate Kant's views on these matters, but even charitably interpreted many of his moral opinions on particular subjects seem inflexible even to the point of inhumanity. Some of these views were idiosyncratic even in his own day, though most were certainly shared in his time far more widely than they are now. If we wish to learn anything from, or about, Kantian moral theory (as distinct from merely providing ourselves with a plausible pretext for refusing to learn from it), then we need to ask about Kant's scandalous opinions whether they actually follow from the values and principles contained in his moral theory.

Perhaps a theory whose fundamental value is the autonomy of reason and the dignity of rational beings can be expected to provide reasons not to accept pleasure and expediency as sufficient grounds to lie or to destroy one's own rational nature. But it is hard to see how such values could justify inflexible rules against lying or suicide, not to mention justifying some of Kant's other scandalous opinions. (Human dignity is also seen as providing reasonable grounds for making exceptions to moral rules against lying or suicide in certain cases.) Those who care about the particular moral issues should look at Kant's own reasoning from his principles to his conclusions, but it should not be taken for granted that such reasoning is valid, or that Kant's views on particular moral issues necessarily represent a correct interpretation of the basic principles of his moral theory.

One way of associating the inflexibility of some of Kant's views with something fundamental to his moral theory is to see them as expressive of his idea that moral duties are "categorical imperatives." Categorical imperatives are supposed to be unconditionally valid. Therefore, any principle that is seen as a categorical imperative (for example, 'Do not lie') must be viewed inflexibly as having no exceptions whatever. But this ridiculously fallacious argument rests on a very simple confusion. For Kant, a rational normative principle (or "imperative") guiding our action is "categorical" if its validity is not conditional on having set some end to which the action is to serve as a means. This does not entail, however, that the validity of rules which, *when they are valid*, are categorical imperatives, cannot be conditional on particular circumstances, or that there cannot be grounds for making exceptions to a generally valid moral rule. When lying is wrong, according to Kant, its wrongness is not conditional on whether some desirable end (such as human happiness) is achieved by abstaining from lies. But it does not follow that there cannot be exceptions to the rule 'Do not lie' – that is, cases in which this rule is not in fact binding as a categorical imperative. How often such exceptions occur must be decided by looking at the derivation of the moral rule 'Do not lie' from more basic Kantian principles, such as "Treat every rational being as an end in itself," and considering possible cases in which this more basic value might not require strict adherence to that rule. Kant treats *exceptivae* (exceptions to moral rules) as one of the twelve fundamental categories of practical reason (KpV 5:66), and the twenty-odd "casuistical questions" that Kant raises about specific duties in the Doctrine of Virtue deal mainly with cases in which there may arguably be exceptions to rules that hold generally, though not universally.

It is true that Kant also regularly calls our attention to (and is highly critical of) the human tendency to make exceptions of ourselves in the case of moral rules we expect others to follow, and to use the fact that

moral rules may sometimes have exceptions as a shabby excuse for failing to follow moral rules when we should follow them. But the passages in which he says those things are surely not open to criticism on the grounds of excessive inflexibility or inhumanity. For Kant is surely right that people do often do this, and that their doing it is responsible for much evil and much that is reprehensible in human conduct.

I practical anthropology

In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant divides ethics into two parts: the *metaphysics of morals*, consisting in moral principles valid *a priori* for every rational being, and *practical anthropology*, an empirical study of the human nature to which the principles are to be applied (G 4:388). It is too seldom appreciated that Kant there treats practical anthropology as a necessary part of ethics, without which, in his view, it would not be possible to specify determinate duties. Perhaps this is because Kant never wrote a work specifically on practical anthropology, despite the fact that his lectures on anthropology, begun in 1772 and continuing to the end of his teaching career, were the most popular and the most frequently offered lecture course he gave. Kant's various remarks about the present state of our sciences of human nature show him to believe both that despite the importance of this study, there are severe limitations on our capacity to treat it scientifically, and also that the present state of the study of human nature is very poor even in relation to its limited possibilities. It is also less often appreciated than it should be that when he finally came to write a *Metaphysics of Morals* at the very end of his career, Kant recast the distinction between 'metaphysics of morals' and 'practical anthropology', integrating the empirical 'principles of application' into 'metaphysics of morals' itself and restricting 'practical anthropology' to the study of the "subjective conditions in human nature that hinder people or help them in fulfilling the laws of a metaphysics of morals" (MS 6:217).

The only approach to the study of human nature that Kant works out with confidence is to be found in his writings on the philosophy of history. As we saw in the last chapter, Kant's thesis is that human history can be made theoretically intelligible to us only by finding in it a natural end, which is the full (hence temporally endless) development of the natural predispositions of the human species (I 8:18). This end does not belong to the conscious intentions of people, but is a natural end, posited by reflective judgment as a regulative idea for maximizing the intelligibility of the data to us (I 8:17; cf. KU §§75–79, 5:397–417). Since in a rational species, these predispositions do not belong to any individual specimen but only to the entire species as it develops through time, the

ends which make human history intelligible must be collective ends of the whole species through time, which individuals serve unintentionally and of which they can become conscious only through the philosophical study of history (I 8:17–20).

This much already gives us enough to make two points controverting common misunderstandings of Kantian ethics. First, it is not merely oversimplified but fundamentally erroneous to represent Kant as having a 'timeless' or 'ahistorical' conception of reason, and to see Hegel (for example) as "correcting" it by introducing a "historical" conception (this representation badly misreads Hegel too, but there is no time to go into that here). Second, the thesis that human history is grounded on an unconscious collective purposiveness, which is quite rightly associated with German Idealism and more specifically with Hegel, was already fully present in the philosophy of Kant (though for him it was not to be regarded as a dogmatic principle of speculative metaphysics, but a regulative principle of judgment, adopted because it is a necessary heuristic device for making the empirical facts of history intelligible to us).

A third point becomes clear when we look at Kant's execution of his theoretical project in the *Idea for a Universal History*. Human nature develops in history chiefly through competitiveness; each individual seeks to "achieve a rank among his fellows, whom he cannot stand but also cannot leave alone" (I 8:21). The natural history of human reason is therefore a process driven by people's natural inclinations, behind which lurks a propensity to "self-conceit," a desire to be superior to other rational beings, hence to use them as mere means to one's ends and to exempt oneself from general rules one wants others to obey. It is this thesis that grounds Kant's famous (or notorious) suspicion of our empirical desires, or inclinations.

"The human being feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all commands of duty, which reason represents to him as so deserving of the highest respect – the counterweight of his needs and inclinations" (G 4:405). Kant's critics (beginning with Schiller, but including Hegel and countless others down to the present day) read such remarks as the one just quoted in a shallow and shortsighted manner when they attribute it to an artificial metaphysical "dualism," or to an unhealthy (stoical or ascetical) hostility to "nature" or "the senses" or "the body." As Kant makes quite clear, the counterweight to reason and duty is nothing so innocent. The opponent that respect for morality must overcome is always "self-conceit" (KpV 5:73), which arises not out of our animal nature but from our humanity or rationality (R 6:27). The enemy of morality within us is not "to be sought in our natural inclinations, which merely lack discipline and openly display themselves unconcealed to everyone's consciousness, but is rather as it were an invisible enemy, one who hides behind reason and hence is all the more dangerous" (R 6:57).

Our ironic predicament, in Kant's view, is that the natural device of social antagonism is required to develop our rational faculties, which (like all human faculties) belong more to the species than the individual, and show themselves chiefly through our capacity for self-criticism through free communication with others (KrV A xi-xii, A738-739/B766-767, O 8:144-146, KU 5:293-298). When reason develops, however, it recognizes a moral law whose fundamental value is the dignity (or absolute, incomparable worth) of rational nature in every rational being, hence the absolute equality of all rational beings (G 4:428-429, 435, MA 8:114, MS 6:314, 435-437, 462-466). Reason must therefore turn against the very propensity in our nature that made it possible. Kant therefore thinks that the most adequate conception of our human nature that we can form is a historical one, centered on the task of converting ourselves from competitive and antagonistic beings into beings capable of uniting with one another on terms of mutual respect: "What is characteristic of the human species in comparison with the idea of possible rational beings on earth is that nature has put in them the seed of *discord*, and willed that from it their own reason should produce *concord*, or at least the constant approximation to it" (VA 7:322). Our destiny is to be engaged in an endless struggle between "nature" and "culture," whose object is the moral perfection of the human character.

"Natural predispositions, since they were set up in a mere state of nature, suffer violation by progressing culture and also violate it, until perfected art once more becomes nature, which is the ultimate goal of the moral vocation of the human race" (MA 8:117-118). Kant is no more opposed than are his critics to understanding the aim of culture as that of bringing our natural desires into harmony with the demands of reason. His philosophy of history, however, gives him reason to think that this reconciliation will be an extremely long and difficult social process. It is not to be accomplished merely through a philosophical conversion by the adoption of more "healthy" (that is, more complacent and less self-critical) attitudes toward our desires. Nor will it help to "go beyond dualisms" if that is a euphemism for a state of denial concerning the fact that coming to terms with our nature (especially our corrupt *social* nature) will be an endless, painful historical task.

II the fundamental principle of morality

Kant's aim in the *Groundwork* is to "seek out and establish the fundamental principle of morality" (G 4:392). In the First Section of the *Groundwork*, Kant attempts to derive a formulation of the principle from what he calls "common rational moral cognition," or the

moral know-how he thinks every human being has just in being a rational moral agent. Kant's chief aim here is to distinguish the principle he derives from the kinds of principles that would be favored by moral sense theorists and by those who would base morality on the consequences of actions for human happiness. This attempt is not very successful, because Kant underestimates the extent to which the competing theoretical standpoints are capable of alternative interpretations of the issues and examples he discusses, yielding reactions to them that call into question the responses he regards as self-evident. Thus the opening pages of the *Groundwork*, especially its famous attempt to persuade us that actions have moral worth only when they are done from duty, has seldom won converts to Kant's theory and more often distracted attention from what is really important in Kant's ethical theory. Kant is more successful when he makes a second, more philosophically motivated attempt to expound the moral principle in the Second Section.

Kant thinks that if correct moral judgments are to constitute a well-grounded and consistent whole, they must ultimately be derivable from a single fundamental principle. But in the Second Section of the *Groundwork*, Kant considers this one principle from three different standpoints, and formulates it in three distinct ways. In two of the three cases, he also presents a variant formulation that is supposed to bring that formulation "closer to intuition" and make it easier to apply. The system of formulas can be summarized as follows:

First formula:

FUL *The Formula of Universal Law*: "Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law" (G 4:421; cf. 4:402);

with its variant,

FLN *The Formula of the Law of Nature*: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature" (G 4:421; cf. 4:436).

Second formula:

FH *The Formula of Humanity as End in Itself*: "So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or that of another, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means" (G 4:429; cf. 4:436).

Third formula:

FA *Formula of Autonomy*: "... the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law" (G 4:431; cf. 4:432) or "Choose only in such a way that the maxims of your choice are also included as universal law in the same volition" (G 4:439; cf. 4:432, 434, 438).

with its variant,

FRE *The Formula of the Realm of Ends*: "Act in accordance with the maxims of a universally legislative member of a merely possible realm of ends" (G 4:439; cf. 4:432, 437, 438).

FUL (and FLN) consider the principle of morality merely from the standpoint of its *form*, FH considers it from the standpoint of the *value* which rationally motivates our obedience to it, and FA (and FRE) consider it from the standpoint of the ground of its *authority*.

The Formula of Universal Law

The earliest characterization of Kantian ethics adopted by his German Idealist followers and critics was that Kantian ethics is "formalistic." The use of this epithet is due largely to the mistaken emphasis Kant's readers place on the first formulation of the moral principle at the expense of the other two formulations, whose aim is precisely to complement and hence remedy any such "formalism." From this first standpoint, however, the principle is what Kant calls a "categorical imperative." Kant's terminology here is derived from the logic of his day, but it can mislead us if we are not careful. An *imperative* is any principle through which a rational agent constrains itself to act on the basis of objective grounds or reasons. An imperative is *hypothetical* if the rational constraint is conditional on the agent's adoption of an optional end, and *categorical* if the constraint is not conditional in this way. As long as some hold that all rationality is "only instrumental," it is controversial whether there are (or could be) any categorical imperatives. Kant's procedure in the *Groundwork* is to assume provisionally that there are, and to inquire, in the Second Section, what their principle would have to be. Then in the Third Section Kant attempts to argue that as rational beings we must in effect presuppose that there are such imperatives, which therefore establishes the validity of the formulas derived provisionally in the Second Section.

To say that an imperative is 'categorical' therefore means, once again, only that its bindingness is not conditional on our pursuit of some end we have set independently of it. If there is a categorical imperative to keep promises, this means only that the rational bindingness on us of keeping promises is not conditional on some further end to be achieved through the keeping of promises (such as the self-interested benefits we derive from being able to make contracts with others). But it does not imply that the obligation to keep promises might not be conditional in other ways – for instance, that this obligation might cease to exist if keeping the promise would somehow violate the dignity of humanity or if we knew that the person promised would release us from the promise

if they knew of the unforeseen situation in which we find ourselves when it comes time to keep it. When we have good and sufficient grounds to make exceptions to a moral rule, this means only that the rule (under those circumstances) no longer binds us categorically (or, indeed, in any other way). Thus whether there are any moral rules at all that hold without exceptions is not decided by accepting Kant's claim that all moral obligations involve categorical imperatives.

Because FUL is supposed to be derived from the very idea of a categorical imperative, it is easy to fall into using the term "the Categorical Imperative" simply to refer to it. But this often leads to the unjustifiable privileging of FUL as the principle definitive of Kant's theory, and the consequent neglect of FH and FA. Kant regards his argument in the Second Section of the *Groundwork* as an exposition of the principle of morality, which passes through three stages and reaches completion only at the end of a course of development. This ought to lead us to think of FUL as the starting point of the process. It is the most abstract, most provisional, and (in that sense) the least adequate of the three formulas. And this thought turns out to be right; for it is FH, not FUL, which is Kant's formula of choice for applying the moral principle in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, and it is FA, not FUL, which is used in his attempt to establish the principle in the Third Section of the *Groundwork* (and also in his somewhat different attempt to achieve the same goal in the *Critique of Practical Reason*). The same thought gets confirmed in another way by Kant's critics when, erroneously privileging FUL and virtually excluding FH and FA from their consideration, they then accuse Kant's theory of being satisfied with an "empty formalism." This charge, however, is an indictment less of Kant's theory than of their own shortsighted reading of the *Groundwork*.

FUL is derived from the mere concept of a categorical imperative in the sense that it tells us simply to obey all "universal laws," that is, practical principles that apply necessarily to all rational beings. In order to make this a bit more informative, Kant includes in FUL a test on *maxims* (subjective practical principles, formulating an agent's policies or intentions), which is supposed to determine which maxims conform to universal laws. FUL says that a maxim violates a universal law if it cannot be willed as a universal law. FLN tries to bring this test closer to intuition by inviting us to imagine a system of nature of whose laws the maxim is one, and asking us whether we can, without contradiction or conflicting volitions, will to be a part of such a system of nature. After deriving FUL and FLN, Kant attempts (I think prematurely and over-anxiously) to illustrate his moral principle by applying these tests to four maxims. The maxims are chosen to be typical of the way an agent might be tempted to violate a duty, and the four duties are selected according to a taxonomy which has not yet been justified – nor have these

duties yet been derived. Kant hopes he can show in each case the conclusion that the maxim violates FLN, thus giving a measure of intuitive appeal to the abstract formulas he has presented. The first maxim, about suicide, violates a perfect duty to oneself. The second maxim, about making false promises to get out of difficulty, violates a perfect duty to others. The third maxim, of letting one's talents rust, violates an imperfect duty to oneself. The fourth maxim, of refusing help to those in need, violates an imperfect duty to others.

Kant's attempts to show that these four maxims violate the universalizability tests proposed in FLN have been an object of endless controversy. Some of the controversies have to do with the fact that the empirical premises Kant uses in the example are open to question, but less edifying controversies have arisen from the obviously mistaken thought that since Kant thinks the moral principle is *a priori*, he cannot be using any empirical premises at all in applying it.

Most of the controversies presuppose that Kant is proposing FUL and FLN as a wholly general test of maxims, or even as a universal decision procedure that is supposed to tell us how to act under any and all circumstances. Critics then devise maxims that are supposed to give an intuitively wrong result. Many of the resulting criticisms involve misunderstandings of FLN, of the universalizability tests, or of crucial conceptions involved in them, such as willing, willing something to be a universal law of nature, and of contradictions in volition. But other proposed counterexamples apparently do not. They show that FLN will not work as a universal moral decision procedure. Kant's self-appointed defenders, however, refuse to acknowledge this point. They seek (as if it were the Holy Grail) for some interpretation of FLN according to which all proposed counterexamples fail because they can be shown to rest on misinterpretations of the universalizability test.

Both the critics and the defenders here are wasting their time, because Kant's own application of the universalizability tests does not have the aim both sides attribute to it. His intention is only to show how certain violations of specific duties (which he makes no attempt to derive from these formulas) can be seen as cases of acting on a maxim one recognizes as opposed to what can be rationally willed as a universal law for all rational beings. The point is not to propose a universal moral decision procedure for all situations, all actions, and all maxims, but only to illustrate how some of the moral duties we already recognize can be viewed as expressing the spirit of the first and most abstract formula Kant has been able to derive from the concept of a categorical imperative. We can see how they express this spirit if we can look at some typical maxims on which people may violate recognized duties, and see how these particular maxims involve making oneself an exception to moral laws we will to be universally followed.

Kant states this point quite explicitly: "If we now attend to ourselves in any transgression of duty, we find that we do not really will that our maxim should become a universal law, since that is impossible for us, but that the opposite of our maxim should instead remain a universal law, only we take the liberty of making an exception to it for ourselves (or for just this once) to the advantage of our inclination" (G 4:424). FUL and FLN are therefore best understood in light of Kant's anthropology and philosophy of history. Their point is to oppose our unsociable propensity to self-conceit, which makes us want to see ourselves and our inclinations as privileged exceptions to laws we think all other rational beings should follow. These two formulas presuppose that we have already identified "the opposite" of our immoral maxim as such a law.

As even Kant's earliest critics were quick to perceive, FUL and FLN by themselves are inadequate to specify what these laws are. The result of dwelling on this point (as if it were something Kant needed to deny), or else of attempting to dispute it (as many Kantians misguidedly do), is only to distract attention from Kant's real aims in this discussion. Even more importantly, it draws attention away from the rest of his derivation of the supreme principle of morality in the rest of the Second Section of the *Groundwork*. For when he discusses these four examples, Kant is not finished formulating his principle. On the contrary, he has only begun. He continues his development by arriving at two other crucial thoughts, which, in addition to the concept of a categorical imperative, are really crucial to his ethical theory, namely, the worth of rational nature as end in itself and autonomy of the will as the ground of moral obligation.

Humanity as end in itself

Another side of the charge of "formalism" is the complaint that the Kantian conception of a categorical imperative is nonsensical because there could be no conceivable reason or motive for an agent to obey such a principle. Those who bring this charge have seldom even noticed that Kant's derivation of FH directly addresses this objection, by inquiring after the rational motive (*Bewegungsgrund*) for obedience to a categorical imperative (G 4:427). The first result of this inquiry is to establish that such a motive cannot be any desire or object of desire; the second result is to argue that it can only be the objective worth of rational nature regarded as an end in itself (G 4:428). Rational nature is an "end in itself" (or an "objective end") because it is an end we are rationally required to have irrespective of our desires (though Kant holds that when we have this end on rational grounds, this will produce in us various desires, such as love for rational beings, and a desire to benefit them (MS

6:401–402)). Rational nature is also an *existing* (or “self-sufficient”) end, not an “end to be produced” (G 4:437). That is, it is not something we try to bring about, but something already existing, whose worth provides us with the reason for the sake of which we act. The value of rational nature is ultimate, not based on any other value. Kant thinks that the argument that something has this character can take only the form of showing us that insofar as we set ends we regard as having objective value, we already regard the rational nature that set them as having value, and we are committed to regarding the same capacity in others in the same way (G 4:428–429).

Because the worth of rational nature as end in itself is to provide a rational ground for categorical imperatives, it cannot be something whose value depends on contingencies about rational beings (such as the degree to which they exercise their rational capacities). Rather, its value must be whole and unconditional in every rational being, which entails that the worth of all rational beings is equal. Kant calls rational nature (in any possible being) ‘humanity’ insofar as reason is used to set ends of any kind; humanity is distinguished from ‘personality’, which is the rational capacity to be morally accountable. To say that “humanity” is the end in itself is to ascribe worth to all our permissible ends, whether they are enjoined by morality or not.

Kant illustrates FH using the same four examples to which he earlier tried to apply FLN. Few readers have appreciated the fact that the arguments from FH are much more straightforward and transparent than the earlier ones, and they even shed new light on the earlier arguments. Whatever objections one might raise to Kant’s arguments illustrating FH, the claim that Kant’s formula is empty of practical consequences is far less plausible in the case of FH than in the case of FLN. When he turns to the derivation of ethical duties in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant appeals only once to anything like FUL, but well over a dozen times to FH. I submit that the reasons FUL and FLN have been treated as privileged formulations are two, both misguided. The first is simply that Kant presents these formulas first, and critical discussions have dwelt so obsessively (and inconclusively) on them that the resulting issues have served as an obstacle to considering Kant’s overall argument. The second reason is the prejudice that a moral philosopher must be trying to provide us with a universal algorithm, a clever device for generating conclusions about what to do in any and all circumstances by some admirably simple process of reasoning. FH obviously cannot do that, since its application clearly depends on difficult judgments about particular cases, where it is an issue whether we are or are not treating rational nature as it ought to be treated. By contrast, FUL and FLN can be (mis)read as the sort of clever moral algorithms we were looking for. (And then we can further exercise our own cleverness – at the expense of

our comprehension of Kant’s theory in the *Groundwork* – by attacking or defending the algorithms that result from these misreadings.) But let us put all this idle cleverness aside, and return to what Kant is actually doing in the Second Section of the *Groundwork*.

Autonomy and the realm of ends

Once he has derived FH, Kant can put together the thought of a categorical practical law and the thought of the rational will as a ground of value, deriving a new formula, “the idea of the will of every rational being as a will giving universal law” (G 4:431). Although Kant’s followers as well as his critics tend to overemphasize the importance of FUL for his theory, it is hard for anyone to deny that his most revolutionary thought in moral philosophy is the idea that rational autonomy is the ground of morality. In the Second and Third Sections of the *Groundwork*, Kant himself states FA in a variety of ways, and his “universal formulations” of the moral law in the *Groundwork* (G 4:437), the *Critique of Practical Reason* (KpV 5:30), and the *Metaphysics of Morals* (MS 6:225) are all statements of FA (not of FUL, as they are often taken to be).²

As we have already noted, FUL and FLN contain only tests for the *permissibility* of individual maxims. These tests presuppose that there are universal moral laws grounding our duties, but no such law and no determinate positive duty (such as the duty never to commit suicide or positively to help others in need) can ever be derived from them. (The most their universalizability tests permit us to show is, for example, that it is impermissible to commit suicide *on this one specific maxim*.) FA, however, tells us positively that every rational will is actually the legislator of an entire system of such laws, hence that the duties prescribed by these laws are binding on us. FA says of a plurality of maxims that they collectively involve the positive volition that they (again considered collectively) *should actually be* universal laws. The universalizability tests contained in FUL and FLN provide no criterion for deciding which set of maxims, considered collectively, involves such an actual volition. (Nor does Kant ever pretend that the thought experiments involved in the four examples discussed at G 4:421–423 would ever be adequate to determine which maxims belong to this set. From Kant’s procedure in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, the most reasonable surmise is that he thinks FH provides the best criterion for that.)

Kant argues that only autonomy of the rational will can be the ground of moral obligation. If anything external to the rational will were the ground of moral laws, then that would destroy their categorical character, since they could be valid for the will only conditionally on some further volition regarding this external source. (If happiness is the ground of the laws, they are conditional on our willing happiness; if the ground

of moral laws is the will of God, then their obligatoriness is conditional on our love or fear of God.)

The idea of an entire system of moral laws legislated by our will leads Kant to another idea: that of a "realm of ends" – that is, of an ideal community of all rational beings, which form a community because all their ends harmonize into an interconnected system, united and mutually supporting one another as do the organs of a living thing in their healthy functioning. FRE tells us to act according to those principles which would bring about such a system. If FH implies the equal status of all rational beings, FRE implies that morally good conduct aims at eliminating conflict and competition between them, so that each pursues only those ends that can be brought into harmony with the ends of all others.

Establishing the moral law

FA is used both in Kant's deduction of the moral law in the Third Section of the *Groundwork*, and in his alternative account in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (KpV 5:28–33). Both involve the claim that the moral law and freedom of the will reciprocally imply each other (G 4:447, KpV 5:29). This claim rests on Kant's conception of practical freedom as a causality according to self-given (hence normative) laws. To think of myself as free is to think of myself as able to act according to self-legislated principles. Kant has shown in the Second Section that if there is a categorical imperative, then it can be formulated as FA, in other words, as a normative principle self-given by my rational will. Thus if there is a moral law that is valid for me, it is so if and only if I am (in this sense) free. In the *Groundwork*, Kant argues that to regard oneself as making even theoretical judgments is to regard oneself as free, since to judge (even on theoretical matters, such as the freedom of the will) is to see oneself as following logical or epistemic norms. This means it would be self-refuting to judge that one is not free, and to represent oneself as making this judgment on the basis of good reasons. This argument is not a theoretical proof that we are free, but it does show that freedom is a necessary presupposition of any use of reason at all, and this means that any use of reason at all commits one to the validity of the principle of morality as Kant has formulated it in the Second Section of the *Groundwork*.

Notice also that this entire line of argument is wholly independent of Kant's (more controversial) idea that the causality of freedom is incompatible with natural causality, and his inference from this idea that we can presuppose ourselves to be free only by regarding ourselves as members of an unknowable noumenal world (KrV A538–558/B566–586; G 4:450–463, KpV 5:42–57, 95–106). One might agree entirely with Kant's

view that freedom and the moral law are presuppositions of reason while holding, contrary to Kant, that our freedom (in the sense of our capacity to act according to self-given rational norms) is a natural power we have that is consistent with the operation of natural causal laws.

Notice finally that Kant's conception of freedom as noumenal causality is explicitly a non-empirical conception, introduced only to solve a metaphysical problem about how the claim that we are free does not logically contradict the claim that our actions follow laws of natural causality. This conception therefore has no implications whatever for the way human moral agency is to be conceived empirically. It is misunderstood if it is treated as a metaphysical dogma about how our freedom operates. Kant's own principles rule out the possibility of our ever knowing anything about this. Kant's conception of freedom as noumenal causality is not intended to rule in or out any empirical theory about the historicity or empirical conditionedness of the development of human rational capacities or about our use of freedom in experience. If we infer from it that Kant conceives of human freedom as 'ahistorical', or not subject to variations with time and culture, then we not only draw invalid inferences from what Kant holds but we also frequently arrive at conclusions that directly contradict the actual theories of history and empirical anthropology found in Kant's own writings.

III the metaphysical system of duties

Readers of the *Groundwork* tend to emphasize FUL at the expense of Kant's later (hence better developed and more adequate) formulations of the moral law. This leads them to a picture of how Kant thinks the moral law should be applied, a picture that involves formulating maxims and ratiocinating about whether they can be thought or willed as universal laws (or, following FLN, laws of nature). When Kant finally got around to writing the *Metaphysics of Morals* (for which the *Groundwork*, as its name implies, was intended merely to lay the foundation), he provided a very different account of ordinary moral reasoning from the one suggested by this picture.

Right and ethics

The *Metaphysics of Morals* (*Sitten*) is divided into two main parts: the first is a Doctrine of Right (*Rechtslehre*), the second deals with "ethics" (*Ethik*), which is a Doctrine of Virtue (*Tugendlehre*). Right, which is the basis of the system of *juridical* duties, is concerned only with protecting the external freedom of individuals, and is indifferent to the incentives that lead them to follow its commands. The crucial difference between

ethics and right is that juridical duties may be coercively enforced, whereas ethical duties may not. The duties of *ethics*, concerned with the self-government of rational beings, not only require actions but also have to do with the ends people set and the incentives from which they act. They should be complied with because our reason commands us to constrain ourselves to comply with them. No authority may rightfully force us to comply with them.

Juridical duties

The basis of all juridical duties is the principle of right:

R: Any action is right if it can coexist with everyone's freedom according to a universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law. (MS 6:230; cf. TP 8:289–290)

R bears a superficial verbal similarity to FUL, but the differences between it and all forms of the principle of morality are far more significant than the similarities. R does not directly command us what to do (or not to do). It tells us only what is *right* (*recht*) or externally just. To say that an act is "right" (i.e. externally just) is only to say that, by standards of right, it may not be coercively prevented. "Right" in this sense is not the same as the notion of 'right' used in moral philosophy (where the 'right' is distinguished from the 'good' and philosophers try to figure out which of them is based on the other). Right actions, in the present sense, include only actions which, according to the standard set up by the principle R, should not be coercively prevented, even if they are contrary to moral duty. This purely juridical standard of permissibility is not a moral standard, but is determined by what a system of right (of external justice, as coercively enforced by a legitimate authority) demands in the name of protecting external freedom according to universal law.

R no doubt *suggests* (though it does not directly state) that right, as external freedom according to universal law, is something valuable, and *implies* (though it does not assert) that we ought to confine ourselves to actions that have the property of being 'right'. If we look for Kantian reasons for these implied theses, they are not hard to find. The value that attaches to actions that are externally right is also obviously an expression of the principle of morality, as we can see most easily if we consider FH. Respect for humanity requires granting people the external freedom that is needed for a meaningful use of their capacity to set ends according to reason. That is why Kant says that the "innate right to freedom," which is the sole ground of all our rights, "belongs to every human being by virtue of his humanity" (MS 6:237). For this reason, Kant holds that

we also have an *ethical* duty to limit ourselves to actions that are right (i.e. that comply with our *juridical* duties)

Yet it is crucial to understanding R, and the notion of 'right' defined in it, to be clear that such *ethical* duties are no part of R itself, or of the juridical duties for which R serves as the principle. Both juridical and ethical duties are forms of rational self-constraint, and in this way they both fall under the heading of 'morals' (*Sitten*). But they are two distinct parts of it. Kant places 'right' ahead of 'ethics' in his exposition as if to emphasize that the two parts are distinct, and that duties of right is not merely a subclass of ethical duties, just as R cannot be derived from FA or FH or FUL, or any other formulation of the principle of morality. For juridical duties the incentive may be moral, but it may equally be prudential or (more often) something even more direct and reliable – namely, the immediate fear of what a legal authority will do to us if we violate its commands. An action fulfilling an ethical duty has greater moral merit if it is performed from duty, but the incentive from which we perform a right action makes no difference to its juridical rightness. We will have more to say about 'right', and its difference from 'ethics', in chapter 9.

Ethical duties

The *Metaphysics of Morals* conceives of ordinary moral reasoning as deliberation based on the bearing on one's action of one's various *ethical duties*. The material of one's ethical duty is constituted by "duties of virtue" or "ends that are also duties" (MS 6:382–391). In other words, for Kant, ordinary moral reasoning is fundamentally *teleological* – it is reasoning about what ends we are constrained by morality to pursue, and the priorities among these ends we are required to observe.

Thus in the *Groundwork's* four examples, what tells us most about moral reasoning as Kant's theory presents it is not the formulation of maxims or the use of a universalizability test, but instead the taxonomy of duties through which Kant organizes the examples. The basic division is between duties toward oneself and duties toward others. Within duties toward oneself, Kant distinguishes perfect duties (those requiring specific actions or omissions, allowing for no latitude in the interests of inclination so that failure to perform them is blameworthy) from imperfect duties (where one is required to set an end, but there is latitude regarding which actions one takes toward the end, and such actions are meritorious). Perfect duties to oneself are further divided into duties toward oneself as an animal being and as a moral being (MS 6:421–442). Imperfect duties toward oneself are divided into duties to seek natural perfection (to cultivate one's powers) and duties to seek moral perfection (purity of motivation and virtue) (MS 6:444–447). Duties toward others are subdivided into duties of love (which correspond to imperfect duties)

and duties of respect (which correspond to perfect duties) (MS 6:448). Duties of love are further subdivided (MS 6:452), as are the vices of hatred opposing these duties (MS 6:458–461). Regarding duties of respect, there is a subdivision only of the vices that oppose them (MS 6:465). *Metaphysical* duties of virtue are distinguished from duties arising out of particular conditions of people or our relations to them. Kant holds that there are many important duties of the latter sort, but their detail falls outside a ‘metaphysics’ of morals, which deals only with the application of the supreme principle of morality to human nature in general (MS 6:468–474).

In the *Groundwork*, Kant tries (I think unsuccessfully) to relate the distinction between perfect and imperfect duties on two kinds of universalizability test involved in FLN (G 4:423–424). But he never claims that the distinction itself could be grounded on FUL, nor does he ever even try to relate FUL or FLN to the more basic distinction between duties – between duties to oneself and duties to others. Both distinctions, however, are quite easily explicated in terms of FH (cf. G 4:429–430).

A duty *d* is a duty toward (*gegen*) *S* if and only if *S* is a rational being and the requirement to comply with *d* is grounded on the requirement to respect humanity in the person of *S*. A duty is wide or imperfect (or, if toward others, a duty of love) if the action promotes a duty of virtue (an end it is a duty to set); an act is required by a strict or perfect duty (or a duty of respect to others) if the failure to perform it would amount to a failure to set this obligatory end at all, or a failure to respect humanity as an end in someone’s person. An act violates a perfect duty (or duty of respect) if it sets an end contrary to one of the ends it is our duty to set, or if it shows disrespect toward humanity in someone’s person (as by using the person as a mere means). Thus Kant’s own moral theory (as he actually presents it in the *Metaphysics of Morals*) is much better understood in terms of FH than FUL or FLN. Corollary: attempts to construct a ‘Kantian’ moral theory using some interpretation of FUL as a universal test on maxims, whatever their degree of success or failure as philosophical enterprises, seriously misrepresent the actual theory Kant himself provides us.

Ends that are duties

Imperfect or wide duties should guide us in setting the ends of life. Not all ends need be duties or contrary to duty (some ends are merely permissible), but morally good people will include duties of virtue among the central ends that give their lives meaning. Kantian morality thus leaves a great deal of latitude in determining which ends to set and how much to do toward each end. The pursuit of our ends, once they have been decided upon, is constrained only by juridical duties, perfect duties to

ourselves and duties of respect to others. (In this respect, Kant’s theory contrasts sharply with the terrifying rigorism of Fichte, who allows no actions to be merely permissible: every possible act is either obligatory or forbidden.³)

In Kant’s theory, the fundamental moral law is a categorical imperative, that is, a principle binding on us irrespective of any ends we may have that are independent of the principle. But as Kant interprets the fundamental moral principle, one of the main things it does is command us to set certain ends. (The ends are not presupposed by the principle as its ground, but rather they are grounded on it.) These ends, based on the categorical imperative, are exceedingly important to the structure of Kantian morality. For Kant, in fact, *all ethical duties whatever are grounded on ends*. In that sense, Kant’s theory of ethical duties is entirely *teleological*, not at all *deontological* (at least if that term refers to duties that are binding on us irrespective of any end we may have set).

My own perfection and the happiness of others

There are two kinds of ends that it is our duty to have: our own perfection and the happiness of others (MS 6:385). Kant’s clearest argument that we are morally required to have these ends is probably found in his discussion of the third and fourth examples he considers in the *Groundwork*, when he considers these examples in relation to FH. (FUL and FLN can never be used to show that we have any positive duties, or the duty to set any positive ends. The most it can show is that we may not adopt maxims refusing on principle to set such ends or maxims adopting contrary ends. But the imperative to treat ourselves and others as ends in themselves might require us to set certain ends regarding ourselves and others.) To treat myself as an end, I must in general honor and promote my rational capacities to set ends and develop the skills useful in furthering these ends. To treat others as ends, I must honor their rational capacities to set ends, and I do this by promoting some of the ends they set, the collective name for which is their ‘happiness’.

Why do I not have a duty to promote the perfection of others and my own happiness? I have no direct duty to promote my own happiness because the concept of duty involves moral constraint, and prudential reason, quite apart from morality, constrains me to pursue my happiness. But where imprudence expresses disrespect for myself or unhappiness is likely to impair my capacity to follow principles of morality, I do have an indirect duty to promote my own happiness. What counts as the perfection of another depends on that other’s choices of what ends to adopt. I cannot adopt ends for another, and have no right to constrain others to follow ends I have chosen for them. So I can have no direct duty to promote their perfection, as distinct from my duty to promote the

happiness of which their perfection, which they have adopted as an end, is a part. In other words, my duties regarding others must respect their right to choose for themselves what ends they will adopt and therefore what counts for them as their perfection. Kant's point could, therefore, be put this way: I *do* have a duty to promote my own happiness, but only insofar as my happiness falls under the heading of my perfection; and I *do* have a duty to promote the perfection of others, but only insofar as it falls under the heading of their happiness.

The general formula for ethical duties is that an action is a perfect ethical duty if omitting it means refusing to set a morally required end, or setting an end contrary to a morally required one. The analogous perfect ethical duties not to behave with contempt toward others, to defame, mock, or ridicule them, would be based on the claim that such behavior involves an end contrary to morally required ends (MS 6:463–468). Kant's theory of ethical duties is teleological, but it conceives of our pursuit of obligatory ends in a less restricted way than most consequentialist theories do. Standard devices of prudential rationality, such as summing and averaging, maximizing and satisficing, do not apply directly to our moral reasoning about the ends that ground ethical duties. My duty to promote the happiness of others is *not* a duty to *maximize* the collective happiness of others. It leaves me with quite a bit of latitude to decide whose happiness to promote, and which parts of their happiness to promote. My duty to promote my own perfection is not a duty to achieve any specific level of overall perfection, much less a duty to make myself as perfect as I can possibly be. Kant's theory leaves it up to me to decide which talents to develop and how far to develop them. Kant's theory gives us no reason even to reproach a person for being less virtuous or morally perfect than they might have been.

All duties of virtue are, in their concept, wide, imperfect, and meritorious duties (MS 6:390–391). I behave meritoriously insofar as I act to promote an end falling under the concept of the required ends. But I deserve no blame for failing to promote the end on any given occasion, and *a fortiori* no blame for not promoting it maximally. In general, it is up to me to decide whose happiness to promote, and to what degree. Ethics allows me latitude or “play-room” (*Spielraum*) in deciding such matters (MS 6:390). Thus moral agents themselves, as free agents, and not the theory of moral principles or duties, are responsible for the design of their individual life plans.

Because the ends morality requires us to adopt are general *kinds* of ends and not specific ends, and because the requirement is to set ends of those kinds rather than to maximize any kind of good, a Kantian theory of duties does not threaten to be inhumanly demanding on us, as consequentialist or utilitarian theories of moral duty threaten to be. This point has seldom been appreciated, probably because attention has been

distracted from it by some of Kant's infamously extreme opinions about certain duties, such as the duty not to lie. But it is very questionable whether Kant's convictions about specific topics really follow from his ethical theory. In my opinion, Kant's theory, if it is correctly understood, seems more vulnerable to the charge that it is too lax than to the charge that it is too strict. The chief means Kant has for rebutting the charge is to appeal to specific contexts of action, or to specific institutional relationships in which we stand to others, to render our duties to them stricter and more precise. Kant's chief idealist followers, Fichte and Hegel, correctly took this route, by relating ethical duties to a rational social order and to the roles individuals are supposed to play in it.

Ethics as virtue

The title of Kant's system of ethical duties is the “Doctrine of Virtue.” His name for the obligatory ends of pure practical reason is “duties of virtue.” In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant describes “virtue” as “a naturally acquired faculty of a non-holy will” (KpV 5:33), or, more specifically, as “the moral disposition in the struggle” (*im Kampfe*) (KpV 5:84). In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, virtue is characterized as “the moral strength of a human being's will in fulfilling his duty” (MS 6:405; cf. 6:394). “Moral strength” is an “aptitude” (*Fertigkeit*, *habitus*) in acting and “a subjective perfection of the power of choice” (MS 6:407). Obligatory ends are called “duties of virtue” because virtue is required to adopt and pursue them. There is only a single fundamental *disposition* of virtue, but because the ends which it is our duty to have are many, there are many different virtues (MS 6:383, 410). I can have one virtue and lack another if my commitment is strong to one obligatory end but weak to another.

Kant holds that we have a duty to cultivate feelings and inclinations that harmonize with duty and to acquire a temperament suitable to morality (MS 6:457). But he does not equate *virtue* with success in fulfilling that duty (MS 6:409). Virtue is needed precisely to the extent that good conduct is hard for us, since it consists in the strength we need to perform a difficult task. A person might have a temperament so happily constituted that their feelings and desires make duty easy and pleasant to do. Such a temperament is not virtue, but only makes virtue less often necessary. The person may still be virtuous too, but virtue is a quality of *character* (of the active strength of rational maxims), not of temperament (of the feelings and desires we passively experience).

This conception of virtue follows naturally from Kant's theory of human nature. For according to this theory, in society our inclinations, as expressions of competitive self-conceit, are inevitably a counterweight to the moral law, which requires strength to overcome it.

the theory of taste

Therefore, there can be no reliable fulfillment of duty without (some degree of) virtue. The theory of ethical duties is called a 'Doctrine of Virtue' only because human nature is such that virtue is the fundamental presupposition of all reliable ethical conduct. In the civilized condition, where our feelings and desires are corrupted by social competition and self-conceit, it would be not only dangerous, but blamably irresponsible, to rely (as Hutcheson and Hume would have us do) solely on non-rational feelings and empirical desires as the motives for morally good conduct.

further reading

- Marcia W. Baron, *Kantian Ethics (Almost) Without Apology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- David Cummiskey, *Kantian Consequentialism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Paul Guyer, *Kant on Freedom, Law and Happiness*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- (ed.), *Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: Critical Essays*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998.
- Barbara Herman, *The Practice of Moral Judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Thomas Hill, Jr., *Dignity and Practical Reason*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Christine M. Korsgaard, *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Robert B. Louden, *Kant's Impure Ethics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Allen W. Wood, *Kant's Ethical Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- (ed. and tr.), *Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, with essays by J. B. Schneewind, Marcia Baron, Shelly Kagan, and Allen Wood*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

notes

- 1 However, it remains puzzling to me how Kant could have said what he did in his infamous essay on the right to lie, given some other things he says about the duty to tell the truth, when it applies and when it doesn't. See chapter 9, note 2. Few who express condescension or horror at Kant's famously inflexible views about lying even seem to be aware of this puzzle.
- 2 With regard to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, this point has been noted by both H. J. Paton, *The Categorical Imperative* (New York: Harper & Row, 1949), p. 130, and Lewis White Beck, *Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 122 and note 23.
- 3 See Fichte, *System of Ethics, Fichtes Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), 4:156, 204, 264.

I why a third 'critique'?

The *Critique of Pure Reason* was foundational for the philosophical contributions that make Kant's work memorable for us. The *Critique of Practical Reason* was an outgrowth of Kant's work on a second edition of this foundational work, and also of his attempts to clarify the foundations of practical philosophy as he had presented them in the *Groundwork*. It is harder to say why Kant wrote the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, which, he says, brings his entire critical enterprise to an end (KU 5:170). His fundamental and clearly avowed purpose was to bridge what he perceived to be a yawning gulf between the treatments of theoretical and practical reason in his philosophy, and thereby to unify his philosophical system. But exactly what his solution to this problem is supposed to be, or even what the problem itself is supposed to be, are matters of deep dispute among Kant scholars down to the present day. In a study of this kind, I will avoid stating any opinion on these questions. For any account I might give would be unavoidably controversial, and there would be no space here to explain or defend it. (Perhaps I can be certain of drawing criticism from all sides, however, if I offer the modest suggestion that from the standpoint of Kant's enduring philosophical legacy, the dark issues surrounding the unity of the Kantian system may all be of less interest than devoted Kant scholars usually take them to be.)

Apart from this fundamental (if obscure) purpose, however, Kant's aim in his third and final *Critique* was also to address two topics that were of great philosophical importance in his time, and to rein in some of the things that were said about them that he thought violated the critical strictures his philosophy had put in place. The first such topic was taste, its proper standards, and the implications of our experience of beauty for metaphysics and morality. These were subjects with which much eighteenth-century thought had been creatively occupied. The second topic was natural teleology, its function in natural science, and its implications for both morality and religious belief. The mechanistic