

Chapter 9 The Ideas of Morality and Sin

1. God and Afterlife Theories

Chapter 8 has discussed how ideas of morality, virtue, and sin are ideas pertinent to religious concepts of an afterlife. But what are morality *per se*, virtue *per se*, or sin *per se*? Religious notions of these can hardly be regarded as anything else than notions of successful harmonization (morality *per se*, virtue *per se*) or failure to harmonize (sin *per se*) with the supernature of an afterlife. But what is the supernature of an afterlife? People can flatly declare by fiat that *this thing* is a sin or *that thing* is a virtue or *this deed* is moral or *that deed* is immoral, but declaration by fiat doesn't touch the idea of an afterlife except perhaps by means of yet another fiat. And why should anyone think some person X's opinions on these things are true explanations while some other person Y's opinions are not? Should one think so because some anonymous ancient writer *said* person X was directly instructed in these matters by God while person Y has no such authority vouching for his opinions? Such faith is grounded in faith in a *man*, not faith in God. It is a lazy faith that relies on being *told* the answer rather than on *understanding* it. A child under the age of seven years has *belief* in what its parents or caregivers tell it; but belief is not faith.

The Objects of morality, virtue, and sin *per se* are pure noumena and, as such, lie beyond the horizon of possible human experience. Speculations concerning them lead straight to other questions that ensnare us in transcendental antinomies about the supernature of God. No ontology-centered metaphysic can resolve these antinomies. But, since we find ourselves having to deal with them in theology, can these antinomies be resolved even through an epistemology-centered metaphysic if we know only appearances of what we call manifestations of morality, virtue, and sin? I think I'm on safe ground if I say no guarantee of success through this approach is obvious *a priori*. The only way to find out is to try it and see whether or not any success can be attained and to what degree of success we might find it to be attainable.

To appreciate the magnitude of the task confronting us, I think it is important to understand at the outset that what we are seeking to understand is something for which the aesthetic Quality of understanding is *sublime*. The feeling of sublimity is one of the three *modi* of Quality in aesthetical reflective judgment [Wells (2006), chap. 14], [Wells (2009), chap. 8]. Kant explained the cause of the feeling of sublimity in the following way:

To take up a quantum intuitively in imagination, in order to be able to use it as a measure or unit for the estimation of magnitude by means of numbers, involves two acts of this ability: *apprehension* (*apprehensio*) and *concentration* (*comprehensio aesthetica*). Apprehension involves no problem, for it may progress to infinity. But concentration becomes more and more difficult the farther apprehension advances, and it soon reaches its maximum, namely the aesthetically largest basic measure for the evaluation of magnitude. For when apprehension has gone so far that the partial representations of sensible intuition that were first apprehended are already being extinguished in imagination as it advances to apprehension of further ones, then it loses as much on the one side as it gains on the other, and so there is a maximum in concentration that it cannot exceed. [Kant (1790) 5: 251-252]

An intuition is a singular representation in sensibility; it is the "quantum" of which Kant here speaks. The "magnitude" of an intuition is *unity* but, as it turns out, "some unities are bigger than others"¹. The feeling of *Unlust* aesthetical reflective judgment produces when the synthesis in sensibility is unable to concentrate its apprehensions all in one intuition is the aesthetical *momentum* of sublimity. An Object is said to be "sublime" when one cannot grasp it in its entirety in a sensible intuition. Americans have a colloquialism for expressing this: the Object is said to "blow one's mind." Metaphorically, one might say the feeling of sublimity is an alarm bell going off when one's synthesis of understanding is arrested.

¹ One elephant is bigger than one mouse. If you went "Huh?" when you read "some unities are bigger than others," you just experienced a (hopefully momentary) feeling of sublimity. It was one of the more modest examples of this feeling.

There is perhaps no other Object upon which human beings have speculated that is more sublime than God. In the earlier discussion of the theological archetype it was stated that the Idea of God is an Idea of perfection – specifically, an Idea of a highest or absolute perfection. Human beings are functional transcendental perfectionists. We strive for perfection in our mental Self-structuring of our manifolds of rules and our manifolds of concepts. For us, perfection is a process – "making more perfect" – rather than an end state achievable within our lifetimes. If human perfectionism is regarded as a virtue, the virtue is in the striving rather than the accomplishment.

But what about God? If human beings are made in the image of God, does this imply God also *strives* for perfection? If one is to think so, then does this not also imply God is not yet perfect? If so, then would this not mean God is incomplete? That conclusion seems to contradict the Idea of God as an *absolute* perfection. The word "absolute" means "being valid in every respect and without restriction." If God is not perfect, then he is not absolutely perfect – and this contradicts the Idea of the theological archetype. But if God *is* absolutely perfect, then that means he is absolutely complete. And if he is absolutely complete, what purpose could he have for creating humankind? We seem to have here all the ingredients of a transcendental antinomy in regard to the supernature of God².

People have come down on both sides of this thesis-antithesis antinomy throughout history. The gods of the Hellenic Greeks were presented as highly *imperfect* beings given to vanities, vindictiveness, bickering, pettiness, and to lusts and other vices. Zeus' sexual escapades with mortals have been presented often enough in myths and movies that I think it is unnecessary to recapitulate his examples. The life of Herakles (popularly known as Hercules) was, according to Greek myth, made an on-going series of misery and tragedy because the goddess Hera wanted revenge on her husband Zeus (Herakles' father) for his infidelity with Herakles' mortal mother. The Trojan War, again according to Greek myth, was started by vanity and bickering between Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite over which of them was "the fairest" goddess. Paris of Troy judged Aphrodite to be the fairest and, out of jealous vindictiveness, Hera and Athena strove to destroy Troy by aiding Agamemnon's Greeks. It would seem the Greeks had ample reasons to fear and appease their gods but few reasons to love or trust them.

Christianity comes down on the side that God is, always was, and forever will be perfect [cf. Aquinas (1259-64), pp. 135-137]. At the same time, though, it seems to me there is a strange contrariness to be noted in comparing God depicted in the Old Testament ("the Lord of Hosts") with God depicted in the New Testament ("the Heavenly Father"). To give a perhaps overly-brief example from the Book of Job, God allows Satan to kill all Job's children, wipe out all his property, and afflict him with boils. God gives Satan leave to do all this apparently just to prove a point to Satan [Job 1:8-22, 2:3-10]. If ever anyone symbolized the old wisecrack, "no good deed goes unpunished," that person would be Job.

Things do turn out well in the end for Job, of course [Job 42: 10-17], but the same cannot be said for his sons and daughters killed by Satan. The Book of Job declines to comment about Job's sons and daughters, detail any sins they might have committed, or even tell us whether or not their piety matched that of their father; it merely says God gave Job seven more sons and three more daughters to replace them. This leaves me to wonder: what about his original sons and daughters? Was God being just to *them* by giving Satan permission to kill them? It doesn't seem so to me, and it does seem to me "justness" should be considered part of "being perfect." Nor does God explain to Job why he was made to suffer the awful tragedy that befell him; instead he responds to Job's not-unreasonable complaint that he did nothing to deserve what befell him with, "Where were you when I founded the earth?" and follows this with a long list of powers God has that Job does not. The only moral lesson I can see in this recital seems to be "might

² This is, of course, not the first such apparent transcendental antinomy regarding the supernature of God, nor is it the first time this particular one has been raised. For example, the entire "Treatise on God" in part I of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* is devoted to treating the supernature of God [Aquinas (1267-1273)]. He concluded that God is actually perfect rather than becoming perfect. Implicit in his argument was reliance upon divine revelation found in scripture.

makes right." It is a lesson that perhaps befits a lord of hosts but not a heavenly father. "Might" often bestows "ability to do" but that is not the same thing as "right". Only would-be kings think that it is.

In Taoism, God's perfection seems to be a moot point. The Tao "just is what it is." There is no question raised about whether it could be better or worse or anything at all other than "the way it is."

Hinduism, as it is scripted in the Bhagavad-Gita, seems to present Krishna as a perfect being in whom all things are balanced. He tells the warrior Arjuna, son of Kunti, to feel no guilt about fighting in a battle in which either he will be forced to kill his own kinsmen or they will be forced to kill him:

Stand up now, son of Kunti, and resolve to fight. Realize that pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, are all one and the same: then go into battle. Do this and you cannot commit any sin. [Bhagavad-Gita (c. 5th to 2nd cent. BC), pg. 39].

Curiously, this passage in the Gita and the story of Job *both* seem to imply that what appears to Man to be grievous actually is not so, that "pleasure and pain, gain and loss," etc. "are all one and the same." In Hinduism this is a premise of *karma yoga* ("the way of action") [Narayanan (2005), pp. 63-64]; in the Book of Job, "So Jehovah blessed the last part of Job's life more than the beginning" [Job 42:12] and "Finally Job died after a long and satisfying life" [Job 42:17]. The moral lesson is made explicit in the Gita, left implicit in Job; but from either one can argue that what *seems* like imperfection to us is actually only an *appearance* of imperfection, and that in truth there is no divinely-actual imperfection. Leibniz made precisely this proposition in his 18th century philosophy, which held that we live in "the best of all possible worlds" [Leibniz (1710)]. Leibniz' thesis was later ridiculed and satirized by Voltaire [Voltaire (1759)], but this idea of merely apparent imperfection is going to come up again later.

Returning to the question, "Is God perfect or does he strive to become perfect?" the antinomy arises by presuming the answer must be one or the other of these, i.e., that these propositions are contradictory. This is the same sort of presupposition that stood behind other transcendental antinomies I brought up earlier in this treatise. In this case, the error lies in supposing that *time* can be applied to the idea of God with objective validity. If God strives to become perfect, this is to say God changes over time; if God is, was, and always will be perfect, this is to say God does not change over time. In both cases, the idea of time is being predicated of God's *Existenz*.

Such a premise necessarily *reifies* the idea of time – that is, it makes time an ontological Object. But, as was discussed in chapter 3, this supposition lacks objective validity. Objective time is a mathematical, not a physical, Object – a noumenon of secondary quantity in Slepian's facet B. *Objective* time is not an object of sense; *subjective* time is a pure intuition of inner sense – the function of a mathematical *form* of sensibility by which we understand the phenomenon of sense perception. The pure intuition of subjective time is *understood* as a mathematical order structuring.

Earlier you saw Augustine's argument that "time" was a property of human *Existenz* and not a "thing" that can be predicated of God's *Existenz*. His argument is congruent with the transcendental requirements of Critical metaphysics. Aquinas, on the other hand, again reified objective time and used this reification to draw a distinction between objective "time" and the idea of "eternity." He wrote,

It is manifest that time and eternity are not the same. Some have founded the nature of this difference on the fact that eternity lacks beginning and end, whereas time has a beginning and an end. This, however, is an accidental and not an absolute difference because, granted that time always was and always will be, according to the idea of those who think the movement of the heavens goes on forever, there would yet remain a difference between eternity and time, as Boethius says [Boethius (c. 524), Bk. V], arising from the fact that eternity is simultaneously whole, which cannot be applied to time; for eternity is the measure of a permanent being, while time is the measure of movement. [Aquinas (1267-1273), pg. 43]

Aquinas' argument begs the question by first making the proposition that God is unchanging and then using his immutability to make the argument quoted above. Note that he argues time is part of "nature" – the world of empirical experience – and states that "eternity" is a *fact* of this nature rather than, as it actually is, an idea of a supersensible object of facet B. In this matter, Aquinas followed the philosophy of Aristotle rather than the theology of Augustine. His transcendental error is not particularly shocking or surprising; many modern day physicists make precisely the same transcendental error – on grounds considerably less well thought out – by supposing "time" is an object and "had a beginning." They call this "the Big Bang theory" and some physicists credit the origin of the universe to a miracle by a god of probability (officially called a "vacuum fluctuation" or "quantum fluctuation"). In point of fact, there are more than one big bang theories, but the miraculous one is the one that gets all the publicity [Wells (2006), chap. 24, § 6, pp. 2236-2274]. Dr. James Peebles, a respected big bang expert, points out,

the big bang theory describes how our universe is evolving, not how it began. [Peebles (2001)]

When a scientist resorts to a miracle to explain something, he is no longer practicing science. If he is merely conjecturing, it is called speculation; if he conjectures with excessive enthusiasm, the enthusiastic speculation is properly called 'hogwash.' The miraculous Big Bang theory with its "time had a beginning" conjecture is hogwash [*op. cit.* Wells (2006), pp. 2236-2274].

Kant's transcendental aesthetic of *subjective* time [Wells (2006), chap. 21] is deduced in accordance with a strict requirement that its constructs be necessary for the possibility of human experience. This restricts its *practical* objective validity to the process of sensibility. We understand subjective time in terms of a functional process for the construction of mathematical order structures. This order structuring is found in all concepts of understanding and is constitutive for the structure of the manifold of concepts. This, however, presented another Critical issue because our model of the phenomenon of mind contains in its structure a number of processes that lie *outside* of sensibility, and these processes are not bound to nor determined in accordance with subjective time. For convenience, figure 1 repeats the depiction of mental structure previously given in this treatise. Sensibility contains apprehension and apperception.

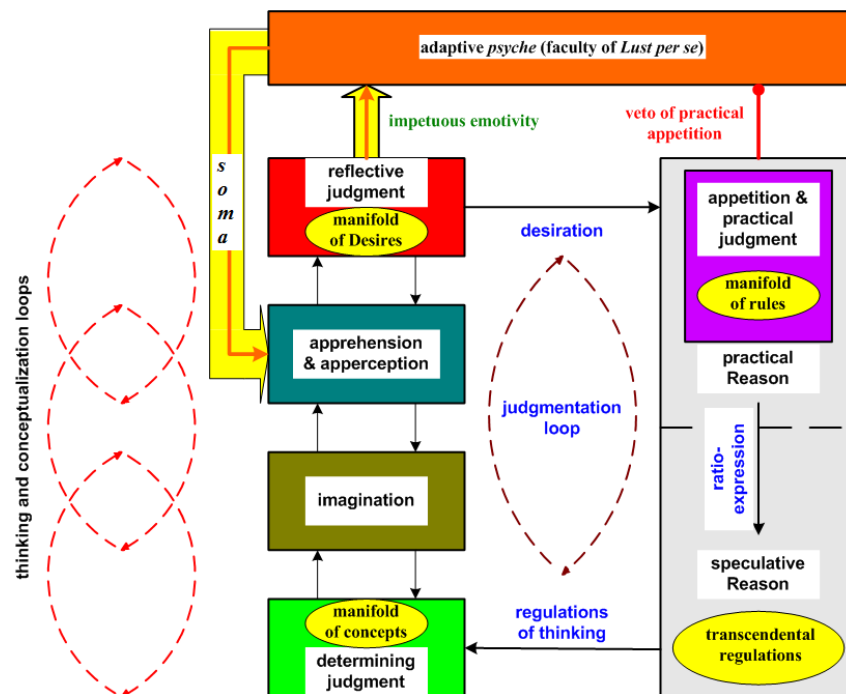


Figure 1: Critical organization of mental structure and functions.

Because all human intuitions and concepts have subjective time as their forms of representation, we are faced with an important logic problem in regard to those parts of figure 1 that lie outside of sensibility. It is this: we cannot *conceptualize* them without including some representation of "time" in their concepts. But this representational "time" is not and cannot be equated with the pure intuition of subjective time. It is for this reason that we find ourselves forced to conceptualize another kind of "time," and this other kind is what is meant by "objective" time. Objective time is *epistemologically* necessary but completely lacks *ontological* significance. It is a pure noumenon which finds its Slepian principal quantity in empirical processes by which "time" is measured by one or another of various kinds of "clocks." Einstein was speaking of objective time when he wrote,

Now we must bear carefully in mind that a mathematical description [of time] has no physical meaning unless we are quite clear as to what we understand by "time." We have to take into account that all our judgments in which time plays a part are always judgments of *simultaneous events*. If, for instance, I say, "That train arrives here at 7 o'clock," I mean something like this: "The pointing of the small hand of my watch to 7 and the arrival of the train are simultaneous events." [Einstein (1905)]

Einstein's example here is a quite simple one. Over the course of the 20th century physics came to encounter a number of difficult and subtle phenomena that required theory to assign some very peculiar meaning interpretations for objective time. For example, physicists came to appreciate the fact that their equations contained nothing that required "time" to be a unidirectional "arrow," and that the equations made just as much sense (mathematically, at least) if time "ran backwards" as they did when time "ran forwards." One of the most famous (and well established) examples of this is found in the theory of quantum electrodynamics (QED theory). According to QED, the antiparticle called a "positron" is understood as "an electron traveling backwards in time" [Feynman (1985), pp. 97-98]. Upon first encounter, this idea strikes many people as absurd; that doesn't change the fact QED theory stands at the pinnacle of science's greatest achievements and passes every test of experimentation to which it has ever been put.

In physics time is regarded, if no longer as an arrow flying in one direction, at least as a "time line." But in the Critical theory of the phenomenon of mind, objective time requires a more radical reformulation. This was brought about because the process of pure Reason stands outside of, and is-not subject to, the conditions of subjective time in sensibility. Kant wrote,

Supposing now one could say Reason has causality with respect to appearance; could Reason's act then be called free even though in its empirical character (the mode of sense) it is all precisely determined and necessary? This [empirical character] is once again determined within the intelligible character (the mode of thinking). We know not the latter but it is indicated through appearances, which properly make known only the mode of sense (empirical character). Now the act, so far as its cause is to be attributed to the mode of thinking, nevertheless does not at all ensue from it according to empirical laws, i.e., such that the conditions of pure Reason *precede*, but on the contrary only such that their effects in the appearance of inner sense precede. Pure Reason, as a merely intelligible capacity, is not subject to the form of time, and hence not subject to the conditions of the time sequence. The causality of Reason in the intelligible character *does not arise* or start working at a certain time in producing an effect. . . . For the condition that lies in Reason is not sensuous and does not itself begin. Accordingly, there takes place here what we did not find in any empirical series: that the *condition* of a successive series of occurrences could itself be empirically unconditioned. For here the condition is *outside* the series of appearances (in the intelligible) and hence not subject to a sensuous condition or to any time determination through any passing cause. [Kant (1787) B: 579-580]

In 1787 Kant did not have available to him many important mathematical tools discovered and developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. His most advanced tools were Newton's calculus, Euclidean geometry, and a few other findings made by mathematicians such as Euler. It is not surprising that he did not develop any refined and detailed exposition of the mathematics of time. Indeed, he never even drew a distinction between subjective and objective time in any of his writings or lectures. The Critical

explanation I have presented to you here – that time is a mathematical order structure for which objective validity is strictly practical objective validity – had to await more advanced mathematical ideas and the formal Critical theory of the phenomenon of mind [Wells (2006), chap. 21].

That work introduced an idea called the idea of *free time* [Wells (2006), chap. 21, pg. 2087]. Free time is a mathematical Object with none but a *practical* role for the exposition of those "blocks" in figure 1 that lie outside of sensibility. Specifically, free time denotes a *logical* ordering of acts of representation by which it is possible for a human being to think of objective time as mathematically reversible as, e.g., is done in QED theory [Wells (2006), chap. 21, pp. 2097-2103]. More generally, the logic of free time is what makes it possible for human beings to construct temporal sequences in subjective time that satisfy the mathematical definition of a special kind of partial order called a *lattice* [Nelson (2003), "partial order"]. The explanation of this is, I think, a little too esoteric to explain here but is given in greater detail in the Wells (2006) citation. To use an example from mathematics, if a person conceptualizes some partial order $a \leq b \leq c$, the construct of free time makes it possible for us to construct a second partial order $c \geq b \geq a$ for the same objects a , b , and c such that these two orderings are compatible with each other. More generally, synthesis outcomes described using free time underlie the formation of what Piaget called "mobile schemes" of sensorimotor actions and, later, reversible logico-mathematical operations [Piaget (1952), pp. 236-247], [Piaget (1953) pp. 23-37].

Free time is not a special process of the phenomenon of mind (like the synthesis in sensibility or the synthesis in determining judgment) but rather is a description of how particular outcomes of reasoning are practically possible in terms of the processes in figure 1. One interesting consequence of free time theory is the finding that *the process of practical Reason affects the synthesis of subjective time* through ratio-expression by speculative Reason. The process of practical Reason is the master regulator of *all* non-autonomic actions, and this includes acts of sense, sensibility, and subjective time determination.

Now, what does free time have to do with questions of God's perfection vs. perfectibility? The antinomy posed above pertains to concepts of God's *Existenz* as a supernatural Entity. But speculations of this sort have no ontological objective validity. Rather, these speculations are various ideas that using free time makes possible for us to *think*. The question itself – is God perfect or is he undergoing constant perfection of himself – is formally undecidable by means of human reasoning. The same is true for the classical antinomies of predestination vs. free will [e.g., Boethius (c. 524), V]. If you think either one thing or its opposite in regard to one of these antinomies, whatever you hold-to-be-true you hold as an act of *faith*. No person can prove your opinion is true; no other person can prove your opinion false.

The fact that questions like these are asked, and opinions argued over, century after century (they are perennial questions) shows us that the answers matter *to individuals*. But do they matter *to humankind as a whole*? Suppose we try the proposition that God, like human beings, *strives for* perfection; to propose this is to necessarily suppose God *at this moment* is not God as he will be *at some future moment*. But this in turn supposes God exists *in time*. But is this time subjective time or some mathematical objective time? If we say it is some subjective time, who is the *subject* whose subjective time this is? You? Me? God? My intuition of subjective time is not your intuition of subjective time; otherwise neither would be *subjective* and to propose that would be to make a proposition contradicting human mental nature. If we say it is God's subjective time this poses no "did God have a beginning" antinomy because, by definition, a divine subjective time could not exist without the divine archetype whose time it is. But what *practical* meaning or significance could this idea have *for us*? Since a divine subjective time is not a human subjective time, the only way for *us* to understand it is by means of some idea of a mathematical objective time that could hold with objective validity *for every human being*. But every idea of objective time requires some kind of measurement operation (some "clock") operating on sensible *events* for which objectively valid understanding by every human being is possible. The only candidate phenomena for which such events could be found are *historical* phenomena. Therefore, for us to posit a divine subjective time is also for us to posit *history* as its manifestation for human understanding. But history is not a *timeline* of causally

connected sequential events; rather, we must regard it as a *timescape* constituted by a multitude of such timelines with events along each one causally connected in series but with events along *different* timelines coexisting according to some *defined convention* of objective time determination.

Historians in fact know this implicitly and use it 'all the time'. Figure 2 illustrates an example of this: the historical European Migration Period over a timescape from the third to the tenth centuries AD. We do not say the timeline of Bede's³ life (7th to 8th century) was *caused by* the timeline of Kubrat's⁴ life nor that Kubrat's life was affected in any way by Bede. But for a period of years defined by the modern calendar, events in Bede's life *co-occurred* with events in Kubrat's life. By convention of language we call figure 2 and depictions like it "timelines" but, as you can see, it is not a "line"; it is an ensemble of lines. "The" timeline in figure 2 is that part of the figure represented by the calendar axis at the bottom of the figure. This calendar line is the 'clock convention' by which timelines in the rest of the figure are united to produce the totality of the depiction. Hopefully you can see that the idea of a "timescape" is really not so strange an idea as it might at first sound. It is "strange" only inasmuch as it goes against the habits of how we speak of such things. The idea of regarding history as a manifestation in human understanding of a divine subjective time is, likewise, "strange" only inasmuch as we don't habitually think about it this way.

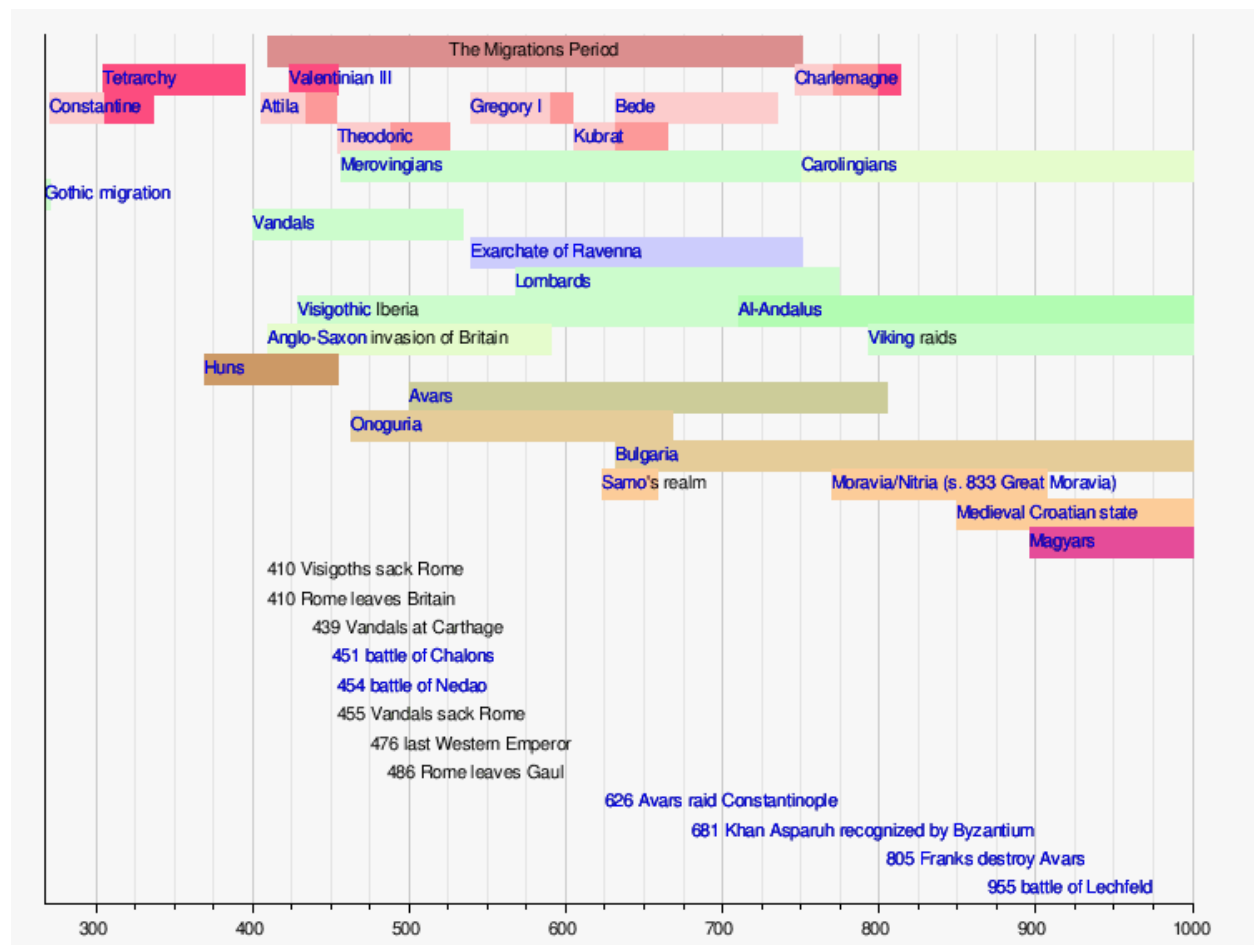


Figure 2: Timescape representation of the European Migration Period.

³ Bede was an English Benedictine monk who lived at the monastery of St. Peter in Northumbria. He is most remembered for his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.

⁴ Kubrat was the ruler of the Onoğundur-Bulgars (a semi-nomadic tribe of warriors) and is credited with establishing the confederation of Old Great Bulgaria.

Now let us consider the opposite thesis and propose God is, was, and always will be perfect (complete in every aspect). This idea, too, supposes God exists *in time* like the *ov* of Parmenides. It follows at once that the same argument just given for the first thesis applies to this one too and with the same consequences for human understanding. The difference in perspective in this case comes from holding the theological archetype to be the original cause of nature and all "it" contains. Divine causality is a notion containing the idea of the spontaneity of God as the original cause of all changes (effects) we encounter in our temporal world. This is as much as to posit God is the prime causal agent of history. Other than that, there is no practical distinction between the antithesis and the thesis, and this practical distinction touches not the question of perfection in regard to God. William James wrote,

There can *be* no difference anywhere that doesn't *make* a difference elsewhere – no difference in abstract truth that doesn't express itself in a difference in concrete fact and in conduct consequent upon that fact, imposed on somebody, somehow, somewhere, and sometime. The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one. [James (1907), pg. 25]

It makes not the slightest difference to the world of appearances if the thesis or the antithesis of God's perfection is true. The only thing that does make a difference is what different people *think* is the "true" proposition; and all such differences are due to the agency of the people who think one or the other. This has nothing whatsoever to do with any *ontological* truth of God's *Existenz*. The transcendental antinomy of God's perfection is not only formally undecidable; *the issue itself is meaningless within the context of human Existenz. The problem of the transcendental antinomy of God's perfection is illusory.*

Consider next: if God created you and put you here, he did so in such a way that you have no possibility of ever being able to be *certain* about the answer to any of the perennial questions so long as you live. You can, at best, find an answer that makes you feel comfortable, reassured, or, in a word, *restores* your equilibrium in the face of events that disturb it. An idea that comforts someone else might be one I find appalling. For example, Dante seems to express satisfaction – or, at least, an acknowledgement of justice – at seeing his enemies and other perpetrators of particular sins undergoing special torments for all of eternity in the various circles of Hell [Dante (c. 1319-21)]. To me an image such as Dante's,

Among this cruel and depressing swarm [of serpents] ran people who were naked, terrified, with no hope of a hole or heliotrope. Their hands were tied behind by serpents; these had thrust their head and tail right through the loins, and then were knotted on the other side. And – there! – a serpent sprang with force at one who stood on our shore, transfixing him just where the neck and shoulders form a knot. No *o* or *i* has ever been transcribed so quickly as that soul caught fire and burned and, as he fell, completely turned to ashes; and when he lay, undone, upon the ground, the dust of him collected by itself and instantly returned to what was [Dante (c. 1319-21), pg. 221],

has no kinship with justice because this sort of eternal punishment far exceeds the crime (thievery in this case). It certainly gives me no comfort or inspires in me any devotion to think that God is an insatiable torturer or a condoner of such. Vindictiveness is an *imperfection* in moral character (a vice) and, for this reason, I regard *Inferno* as a blasphemous work.

But if God created you and put you here in innocence and without the possibility of finding certainty in answers to perennial questions, he also put you here in circumstances where you experience encounters with events for which you feel repugnance and from which you construct maxims we call moral maxims. As Santayana said,

One factor of [the distinction between aesthetic and moral judgments] is that while aesthetic judgments are mainly positive, that is, perceptions of good, moral judgments are mainly and fundamentally negative, or perceptions of evil. . . . The truth is that morality is not mainly concerned with the attainment of pleasure; it is rather concerned, in all its deeper and more authoritative maxims,

with the prevention of suffering. . . . The sad business of life is . . . to escape certain dreadful evils to which our nature exposes us – death, disease, weariness, isolation, and contempt. By the awful authority of these things, which stand like specters behind every moral injunction, conscience in reality speaks [Santayana (1896), pp. 16-17].

We are each born innocent of knowledge of any of these "specters" and also innocent of knowledge of the *Dasein* of beauty and other aesthetic goods. We learn about them – or, more properly, *appearances* of them – by means of life experiences. As we cannot avoid these life lessons, it logically follows that the learning of them is *necessitated* by *living*. Does this not sound like something that has the character of being *purposive*? And because none of us can *choose* to avoid these lessons of life or ignore their expedience for reequilibration under the command of the *categorical* imperative of pure practical Reason, does this not have the character of a purpose *not of our own choosing* but, rather, that of divine purpose?

But, logically, there can be no such purposiveness if death is the end of *you* – not just the end of your temporal *Existenz* but the end of your *Dasein*. If you learn how to read but then never read anything again is there any benefit or any good realized for or by anyone or anything that came from your learning to read? Was there any point to it? Purposiveness in the *learning* of morality and the *learning* of virtue is an illogical notion unless this purposiveness is to be actualized *after* temporal life. While we cannot know with objective validity what *Existenz* in an afterlife will be like, one can find subjective validity for the idea that, whatever such an *Existenz* might be like, lessons of virtue and morality – and those of vice and immorality – appear to be necessary in the *preparation* for an afterlife *in a being possessing free will*. I propose to you, as an article of faith, that one should seek the meaning of life and understanding of an afterlife in terms of the possibility that life *is* such a preparation and, further, a *necessary* preparation for afterlife. Let this article of faith be the basis for afterlife theory. But what is "morality"?

2. The Practicality of Morality

From the practical Standpoint of Critical epistemology, *morality* is understood as *an idea represented in the manifold of concepts having a system of moral laws as its object*. We must, therefore, make it an early objective of our inquiry to clearly understand what is meant by "moral law."

I think I will be on fairly noncontroversial grounds if I suppose you and I can both agree that where the word "moral" appears its general context has something to do with "right vs. wrong" and/or "good vs. evil." This is a very broad context and within it there is plenty of room for people to develop different notions of the meanings of "right vs. wrong" and "good vs. evil." It's probably possible to fill a library exclusively with books about nothing else than "morality" and "ethics." Every human culture from the simplest to the most complex has had its ideas and systems of mores and folkways pertaining to "right vs. wrong" and "good vs. evil." You can take any two of them, study them, and find that no matter how different they are in other ways, there will be a few commonalities in how they regard "right vs. wrong" and/or "good vs. evil"; you will also find a great many differences as well. A third finding you will make is that, almost beyond reasonable doubt, their ideas, mores, and folkways will be ontology-centered, and that individual views tend to primarily fall into one or the other of two broad categories of ontology-centered ethics. Philosophers call these two categories "consequentialism" and "virtue ethics." Within both, you can also find many nuances of detail leading to further subclassifications such as "Epicurean ethics" (a subclassification of consequentialism). Adding to the challenge of this topic, most cultures and even most religions tend to be impure in how they treat morals and ethics. By this I mean a culture or a religion might be predominantly weighted toward, let us say, "virtue" ethics but still contain elements of "consequentialism" woven into the fabric (or vice versa).

I don't intend to discuss either the consequentialism or the virtue ethics systems in any detail in this treatise because – as a preview of what follows – Critical theory rejects the metaphysics of both in favor of what is called a "deontological" theory of morals and ethics. This hopefully does not surprise you by

now; Critical metaphysics is epistemology-centered whereas consequentialism and virtue ethics systems are ontology-centered. Hence, Critical moral theory is made a "*de-ontological*" theory. The comment I do offer is that the "ways" of consequentialism could be said to follow the slogan "the ends justify the means"; whereas the "ways" of virtue systems could be said to follow the slogan "the means justify the ends," i.e., no end is justified when immoral means are used to attain it. Wells (2006) provides a brief summary of the most prevalent themes of ontology-centered moral theories (chapter 13, §2), and, of course, there is a huge number of other sources that talk about them.

In regard to deontological theories, you can find more than one version here as well. All the ones I've seen either derive directly from Kant's writings or from variations on Kant's themes. The fact that there is more than one version should be taken as a warning flag that perhaps there was something not-correct about Kant's theory. I won't keep you in suspense: there was, and I regard it as an outcome of Kant's theocentric orientation in philosophy. I discuss this in detail elsewhere [Wells (2012), chap. 6] so I won't repeat that analysis here. To briefly encapsulate it, Kant did not take the topics of practical Reason and practical judgment seriously enough – by which I mean he failed to subject them to the same piercing analysis he used for understanding and determining judgment in *Critique of Pure Reason*. This omission made his *Critique of Practical Reason* a bit of a disappointment for me. Kant's treatment enflamed the passions of Santayana, who unloaded on Kant with the following diatribe:

Kant, like Berkeley, had a private mysticism in reserve to raise upon the ruins of science and common sense. Knowledge was to be removed to make way for faith. This task is ambiguous, and the equivocation involved in it is perhaps the deepest of those confusions with which German metaphysics has since struggled, and which have made it waver between the deepest introspection and the dreariest mythology. . . . Had Kant proposed to humble and concentrate into a practical faith *the same natural ideas* which had previously been taken for knowledge, his intention would have been innocent, his conclusions wise, and his analysis free from venom and *arrière-pensée*⁵. . . . Had Kant's criticism amounted simply to such a confession of the tentative, practical, and hypothetical nature of human reason, it would have been wholly acceptable to the wise; and its appeal to faith would have been nothing but an expression of natural vitality and courage . . . Side by side with this reinstatement of reason, however (which was not absent from Kant's system in its critical phase and in its application to science), there lurked in his substitution of faith for knowledge another and sinister intention. He wished to blast as insignificant, because "subjective," the whole structure of human intelligence with all the lessons of experience and all the triumphs of human skill, and to attach absolute validity instead to certain echoes of his rigoristic religious education. . . . The "categorical imperative" was a shadow of the ten commandments; the postulates of practical reason were the minimal tenets of the most abstract Protestantism. These fossils, unaccountably imbedded in the old man's mind, he regarded as the evidence of an inward but supernatural revelation. [Santayana (1905), pp. 94-97]

Santayana goes overboard in his diatribe – especially in the last few sentences quoted above – and invents "intentions" for Kant that, quite frankly, I do not find. But he was correct about Kant not putting in enough work on subjective human nature and on human practical nature. Kant would have – and did – reject "supernatural revelation" but he also committed an error he had warned others not to make in *Critique of Pure Reason* by mistaking the categorical imperative for "the moral law within me."

This was a fault I have previously discussed and dealt with in my earlier works [Wells (2006), chap. 13; Wells (2010), chap. 6; Wells (2012), chaps. 6-7]. For that reason, this treatise will merely summarize key points from those treatments. The first ground for the phenomenon of human moral judgment is the rule structure each person Self-constructs in his manifold of rules in response to re-equilibration dynamics of judgmentation. These dynamics he undertakes in response to disturbances to equilibrium. The manifold of rules sets up what can be called the experience-based *policies* of practical Reason. It is a *value structure* a

⁵ "mental reservation".

human being constructs for himself and, in this context, can be called his *system of practical purposes*. A person's practical conduct is the determined actuality of non-autonomic actions he expresses. In the context of regarding morality as the logic of actions, a person's manifold of rules can be said to contain his Self-constructed personal and private *moral code* [Wells (2010), chap. 6, pg. 205].

However, the manifold of rules contains no knowledge of empirical objects and no feelings of affective perceptions. A practical rule in this manifold is practical know-how for determining some specific action as an act of composition by appetitive power. These rules relate immediately to motoregulatory expression in *psyche*, and the manifold represents sensorimotor action schemes and schemes of ratio-expression for thinking (see figure 1). Practical Reason is a cognitively dark and affectively cold process of *regulating* all a person's non-autonomic acts but *commands* his cognitions and affections.

Understanding your private moral code requires conceptualization and ideation – and these belong not to the manifold of rules but, rather, the manifold of concepts and are *developed* during and as part of a child's development of moral judgment [Wells (2006), chap. 13]. Moral concepts, like other concepts, require cognizance (the act of becoming conscious of an object). A human being's know-how to execute some particular physical expression of an action precedes – often considerably – his ability to describe and understand what it was that he actually just did during that action. This was demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt in a series of very interesting experiments conducted by Piaget and his coworkers [Piaget (1974)]. A human being is unconscious of his practical rules as such but *is* capable of becoming cognizant of them at a later time at a descriptive level. When a person does conceptualize his actions, this act of conceptualization provides that person with an ability to consciously alter those actions because intuitions⁶ contain representations of relationships to motoregulatory expression. Indeed, it is correct to say this ability of alteration is, at root, the primary *practical* role of thinking [Wells (2016)].

Here we encounter an important distinction – and one that Kant seems to have missed – between concept structuring and practical rule structuring in the two manifolds. Both manifolds have the same purely logico-mathematical form, but their effects could hardly be more different. I hesitate to get into too much depth about logico-mathematical details here for fear of losing sight of the forest by too closely examining its trees; but at least *some* minimal exposition of these structures is, I think, needed. Greater detail is found in Wells (2006) chapter 8, Wells (2011), and Wells (2012b) if you desire it.

There are three basic ways by which concepts or rules are combined in their respective manifolds. The simplest of these is a combination of coordination, which merely stands lower representations under higher ones (an act of "under standing"). This basic type of combination is prerequisite for the other two, out of which more complex concepts or rules are synthesized from many simpler ones. Such a complex concept or rule is also a concept or rule; but it is more like a molecule in chemistry, whereas the simplest concepts or rules have a role more like chemical atoms. The two types of more complex combinations are called *polysyllogisms* [Wells (2011)] and *disjunctive inferences* [Wells (2012b)]. For purposes of the present discussion, the polysyllogism is the combination of immediate interest to us here.

A polysyllogism is an act of judgmentation that produces a composite *inference* as a whole which is constituted as a series of ground-to-consequence or condition-to-conditioned. A synthesis proceeding from a consequence or a conditioned and ascending to a higher ground or condition is called a *prosyllogism*. A synthesis proceeding from a ground or condition and descending to a consequence or conditioned is called an *episyllogism*. If the same set of representations are combined by both kinds of inferences, the structure that results is called a *general* polysyllogism. Figure 3 illustrates these ideas. In this figure, a subset of rules (or concepts) within the manifold is singled out for clarity of illustration. You should regard them as also being combined in other ways with other elements of the manifold that are not depicted in the figure. As I think you can appreciate, the manifold itself is a very complicated structure and contains an enormous (but finite) number of elementary rules (or concepts).

⁶ Recall that a concept is a rule for the reproduction of an intuition.

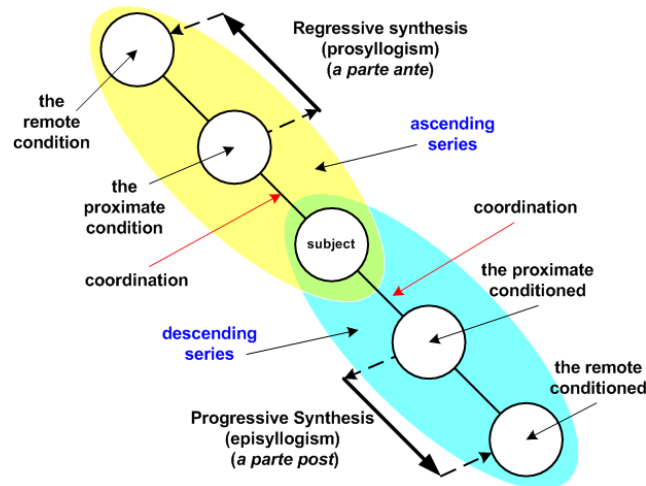


Figure 3: Illustration of rules (or concepts) combined in the manifold to form polysylllogisms. The rule marked 'subject' is the reference point. The yellow oval denotes combination in a prosyllogism. The blue oval denotes combination in an episylogism. A polysylllogism is itself to be regarded as a rule (or concept) in its own right. Individual rules (or concepts) do not "lose their identities" by being combined but do gain specific associations with others with which they are combined *that they do not necessarily have* without the synthesis of judgmentation that produces the polysylllogism combination. Because a polysylllogism is itself a rule (or concept), two polysylllogism not previously combined by inference with each other can be combined in a subsequent polysylllogism, within which these prior polysylllogisms likewise do not "lose their identities." Polysylllogisms (and, likewise, disjunctive inferences) bring to the manifold a representational capacity that far exceeds what is possible from simple *parástase* of rules (or concepts) – a capacity exceeding by many orders of magnitude anything known to computer science. It is one of the things about the phenomenon of mind making *any* person a far superior "knowledge machine" than any computer system that has ever been built. Polysylllogism synthesis is *reasoning*, not understanding.

A **maxim** is a constructed practical rule of actions containing multiple practical rules within it. Maxims are constructs of the process of practical judgment and, as such, are non-cognitive. However, from one's observable actions and affective perceptions a cognitive representation of the appearance of a maxim can be constructed, and this recognition constitutes a representation of the *idea* of the maxim in the manifold of concepts. There is, however, a very important difference between a maxim in the manifold of rules and the idea of that maxim in the manifold of concepts.

During the synthesis of appetite in practical Reason (figure 1), if a maxim is invoked by practical judgment *a person will act upon it*. Specifically, the maxim will produce a veto of maxim-violating acts of impetuous teleological judgment and/or will trigger ratio-expression by practical Reason to initiate a cycle of judgmentation that modifies the states of sensibility and reflective judgment (thereby altering reflective judgments and the manifold of Desires). The latter is the Critical *Realerklärung* of the phenomenon of **motivation** [Wells (2006), chap. 19], [Wells (2009), chap. 10]. The manifold of rules is an individual's experience-based *practical* legislation for his conduct and actions. Maxims are rules directly determining appetites in practical Reason's synthesis of appetite.

An *idea* of a maxim in the manifold of concepts, on the other hand, has no *immediate* connection with appetite (see figure 1). We call the idea of a maxim a "theoretical maxim" in contrast to the practical maxim in the manifold of rules. A theoretical maxim reintroduced into sensibility from determining judgment immediately affects only reflective judgment, and by doing so alters its impetuous expressions. We can say that a practical maxim expresses an "I will *x*" because it is action determining; a theoretical maxim, on the other hand, expresses merely an "I ought to *x*" because it immediately affects only the person's affective perceptions and reflective judgments. Kant recognized the "ought to" nature of maxims, and this means he recognized that maxims can be recognized as ideas; but he failed to distinguish between these and practical rules in the manifold of rules. Theoretical maxims are merely ideas of "right

conduct"; they can in no real connotation be regarded as *laws* because a law is a necessary or necessitated relationship arising from the nature of things – in this case, the human nature of the phenomenon of mind. Thus, what Kant wrote of "the moral law within me" contradicted his own epistemological doctrine. There is no such thing as a natural law that expresses an "ought to." Laws do not *impel*; they *compel*.

At every particular moment in a person's life, there are practical rules in his manifold of rules under which stand lower rules but above which there is no higher rule constructed that conditions it. Such a rule is said to be *practically unconditioned*. A practically unconditioned rule in the manifold of rules, when invoked during the synthesis of appetite, constitutes a *practical imperative* because it is a formula of action ("precept of Reason") regarded as a necessitated determination of practical appetite. It is not, however, a practical *categorical* imperative despite the absence of any higher practical rule that acts as its condition. *All rules in the manifold of rules* are subject to the regulating law called **the** categorical imperative of pure practical Reason. Practical Reason regulates **absolutely** for the achievement and maintenance of mental equilibrium. The *formula* for this regulation is what is called "the categorical imperative" of pure practical Reason. If the invoking of actions formulated by the rule of a practical imperative does not produce the condition of equilibrium required by the categorical imperative, *the maxim of the practical imperative will be accommodated* through action expression-judgmentation cycles in what is called **the synthesis of the motivational dynamic** (figure 4). Therefore, a practical imperative in the manifold of rules *always stands under the condition of the categorical imperative* and is for this reason called a *practically hypothetical imperative*. There is one and only one categorical imperative and it is *the fundamental law* of the process of practical Reason.

At every particular moment in a person's life, there are also concepts in his manifold of concepts that stand under no higher concept which conditions them. These, too, are subject to eventual subordination under conditioning concepts, but until such a subordination happens they are said to be *theoretically unconditioned* concepts. If it is an idea of right conduct, it is called a *theoretically categorical imperative*.

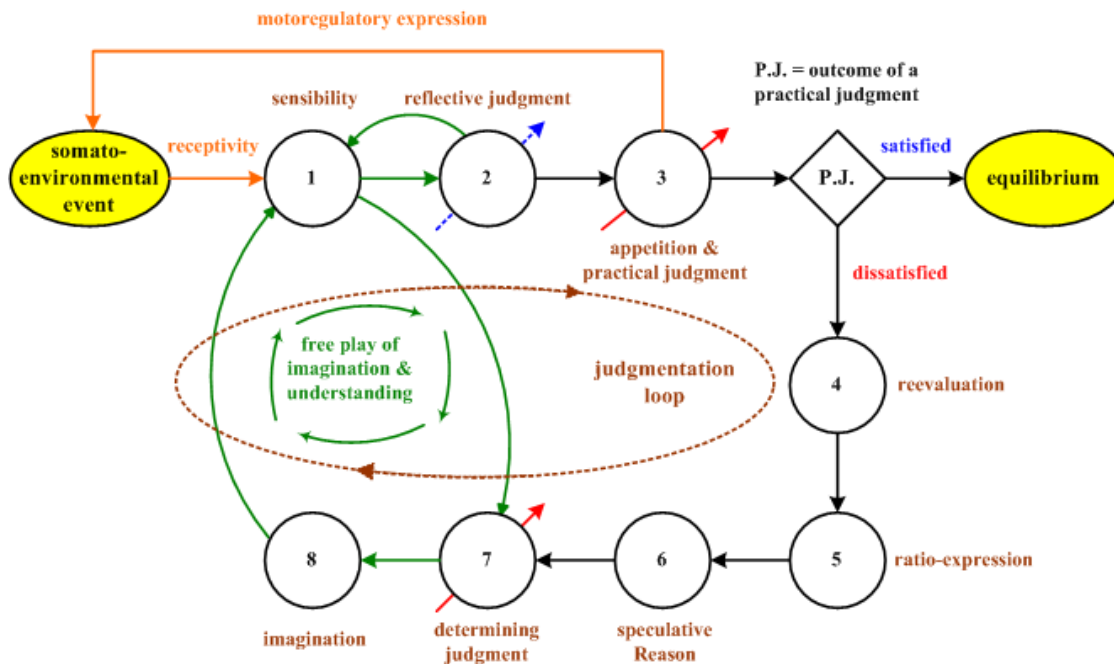


Figure 4: The synthesis flow in the motivational dynamic. Refer to figure 1 for the processes named in this figure.

The arrows penetrating the circles representing reflective judgment, appetite & practical judgment, and determining judgment in this figure denote that the manifolds of Desire, of rules, and of concepts can be altered (accommodated) by adaptations adjudicated by these three processes of judgment.

However, there could hardly be a greater difference between the effects of a theoretically categorical imperative of understanding and a practically hypothetical imperative of practical Reason. For more than two centuries, Kant scholars have been perplexed by the fact that Kant expressed his "categorical imperative" in multiple ways in *Laying the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* [Kant (1785) 4: 421-437] but called it "the fundamental law of pure practical Reason" in *Critique of Practical Reason* [Kant (1788) 5: 30]. One can't have it both ways. Either the categorical imperative is a fundamental law (first principle of the process of Reason) – in which case it can't have multiple expressions – or it is not. The solution to this puzzle becomes clear as soon as one draws the distinction between theoretically categorical imperatives in the manifold of concepts and *the* practical categorical imperative of practical Reason. Almost everywhere Kant speaks of a categorical imperative, he is speaking of an idea of conduct represented as an unconditioned concept in the manifold of concepts; i.e., a theoretically categorical imperative.

Now, as I said earlier, anything tagged with the adjective "moral" refers to some idea of "right vs. wrong" or "good vs. evil." For practical purposes we can subsume the former under the latter and speak strictly about things which are "good" and things which are "evil." But what do "good" and "evil" mean *practically* in Critical epistemology? Kant provides us with a *Realerklärung* for each term in *Critique of Practical Reason* [Kant (1788) 5: 58]. **Good**, deontologically, is the Object of practical Reason by which an object, called an objective good, is represented as *a necessary object of appetitive power*. Good is a practical representation of the power of Reason and refers to the choice to effect or maintain the actuality of an object of representation in judgment. The notion of good is contained in the act of practical determination of appetitive power (as a means) according to a practical maxim and not in the outcome of the action as an object. **Evil** is the Object of practical Reason by which an object is represented a negative and necessary object of appetitive power. Evil is a practical representation of the power of Reason and refers to the choice to effect or maintain the *non*-actuality of an object of representation in judgment. The notion of evil is contained in the act of practical determination of appetitive power (as a means) according to a practical maxim and not in the outcome of the action as an object.

I think I would not be too glib to say that, like beauty, "good (or evil) is in the mind of the beholder." Kant was correct in a limited way to posit the *Dasein* of a "moral law within me" because every person makes practical judgments of appetition of necessary Objects of appetition (good) and necessary Objects of appetitive detestation (evil). On the other hand, Kant erred by presuming these Objects are *the same for every person* and therefore there was some universal noumenon of "the moral law within me" holding true for every human being. This latter idea of his is a transcendental illusion, and this is how his moral theory is flawed. To one person, a particular painting is "a work of fine art"; to another it is "pornography." To one person, a particular attorney is "a good lawyer"; to another this same attorney is a "crooked shyster."

Now, in this treatise we are trying to understand how we might learn about the notions of "morality" and "morals" as things we can hold-to-be-true-and-binding as noumenal *universal* Objects. This goal is formed out of a necessity for understanding the notion of "humanity" in the contexts of divine purpose and afterlife. Kant's error provides us with a sobering example of how easily we can go astray in drawing conclusions about these noumena as Objects. But, equally, if God created you and put you here with some expectation of your Self-development leading you to make yourself "a good person," it logically follows that *it must be possible* for you to learn and achieve this end. The theological question therefore is: by what natural means of human *Existenz* can such a possibility *be made actual* through a process of Self-perfection?

We need a starting point for this inquiry, and here it seems as fecund a starting point as any to define or at least describe what is meant by the term "moral law." What is the practical *Realerklärung* of "moral law"? It is in general an idea in the manifold of concepts of a tenet that is held-to-be a theoretically-categorical imperative of an *individual's* private moral code. How do people come to *construct* such ideas? Here we find one great developmental phenomenon that seems to be universal in *form* if not in

specific *matters*. Kant wrote,

When I think of my *hypothetical* imperative in general I do not know beforehand what it will contain; I do not know this until the condition is given to me. But when I think of my *categorical* imperative I know immediately what it contains. For here the imperative contains, besides the law, only the necessity that the maxim be in conformity with this law, but the law contains no condition to which it would be limited so that nothing is left with which the maxim of the act is to conform but the remaining universality of the law in general; and this conformity alone the imperative properly represents as necessary. [Kant (1785) 4: 420-421]

There is one great class of events and circumstances all human beings experience in one way or another in which generalizable schemes of conduct come to be learned. We call this the phenomenon of **socialization**. Socialization is the process a person goes through, primarily in childhood and young adulthood, by which he learns his Society's mores and folkways, the terms and conditions of its social contract, and agrees to more or less abide by them. Of all the environmental factors motivating educational Self-development, phenomena of socialization appear to be closely pertinent to the idea of afterlife as the community of humanity introduced in chapter 8. But, at the same time, phenomena of socialization are also seen to contribute to developments in individuals most closely pertinent to its opposition.

Upon what basis do I make these statements? What does the idea of "humanity" mean? and what is its relationship to phenomena of socialization and to phenomena of moral judgments? After all, this entire chapter is predicated upon needing further explanation of the idea of regarding life as an apprenticeship for afterlife, and for exploring the idea of regarding afterlife in terms of a community of humanity. So far it has barely scratched the surface of this inquiry and this exploration will not be concluded by the end of this chapter. This is because we have not yet sufficiently explored the meanings of the *terms* being used in developing the thesis. What is socialization? What is humanity? What has the former to do with the latter? and how do notions of morality connect them? We need a context for understanding these questions, and that context logically begins with the phenomenon of socialization.

3. Socialization and Humanity

When individuals join together to form Societies, commonly agreed to conventions of customs, manners, and proprieties – expectations for civil behavior grounded in notions of reciprocal Duties and Obligations – are moral customs *regarded as* moral laws. When such conventions are further held to be or are associated with religious grounds, people the world over tend to elevate these conventions to the status of divine commandments. When this happens, practical utility in such things as, for example, a dietary law prohibiting the eating of pork – the utility of which really lies in preventing trichinosis – tends to be forgotten and the law tends to be followed out of moral realism alone.

Social conventions provide a necessary glue holding Societies together. Most of these conventions are usually left unwritten and individuals learn about them through that process we are calling socialization. A minority of them become formalized in writing and compose the Society's code of statute law. A larger number of them become so broadly habitual that precedents set by adherence to them makes up what is known as the Society's body of common law⁷. In some Societies – for example, the BaMbuti Pygmies of the Congo – the conventions are entirely informal and unwritten but this does not mean they are any less powerful in the social force they exert upon the Society's members. In general, any agreement between individuals pertaining to their peaceful and mutually beneficial association with each other is called a **social compact**. A specific social compact entered into by all members of an association by which each member pledges himself to specific terms under a specific condition is called a **social contract** [Wells (2012)]. Socialization can be regarded as a process of *learning* about the social contract of one's Society.

⁷ *Black's Law Dictionary* defines "common law" as "the body of law derived from judicial decisions rather than from statutes or constitutions."

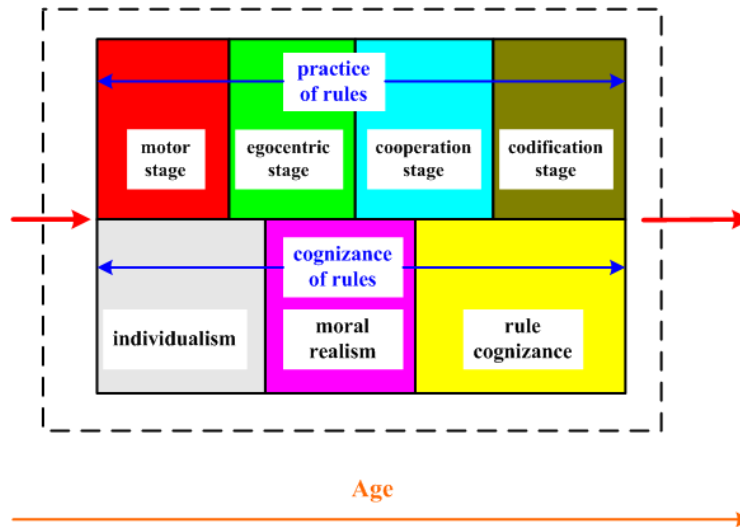


Figure 5: Developmental stages of moral judgment.

Socialization, strictly speaking, begins in childhood with what is called the child's "upbringing" by its parents or caregivers. But socialization in the context of discovering the *Dasein* of social compacts begins when the child is in the cooperation stage in its development of moral judgment (figure 5). The greater part of this development happens under entirely accidental circumstances of children's social intercourse with one another. Many adults seem to take it for granted that family and church play the primary role in this development – and, indeed, both usually have an important role in it – but the fact is that educational Self-development of socialization maxims during childhood goes on unseen and largely unsupervised by adults because *most* of this education pertinent to developing what *adults* recognize as true moral judgment really happens during child-to-child interactions. I think I am not-incorrect in saying that most – perhaps almost all – adults either do not remember their own lives during their childhood or simply dismiss this period in their lives as having little or no bearing on adult life. Humorist Bill Bryson touched upon a sage bit of wisdom when he wrote,

One of the great myths of life is that childhood passes quickly. In fact, because time moves more slowly in Kid World – five times more slowly in a classroom on a hot afternoon, eight times more slowly on any car journey of more than five miles . . . and so slowly during the last week before birth-days, Christmases, and summer vacation as to be functionally immeasurable – it goes on for decades when measured in adult terms. It is adult life that is over in a twinkling. [Bryson (2006), pg. 29]

What Bryson calls "Kid World" is echoed in recently popularized comments about "getting in touch with your inner child."

The moral customs (*Sittlichkeit*) of a Society are passed down from one generation to the next through the experiences of socialization children acquire. They are comprised of behavioral norms exhibited habitually by the greater majority of its members. Violations of these norms are met with reprobation by most people in that Society. They have a regulating – or, at least, a restraining – effect on people's behaviors within their Society. But, although they are "something" in this regard, moral customs are not "things" in any ontological sense and, in particular, are not part of human nature *per se*. They are peculiar institutions of Societies deriving their force from practical necessitations. As Mill put it,

All that makes existence valuable to anyone depends on the enforcement of restraints upon the actions of other people. Some rules of conduct, therefore, must be imposed, by law in the first place and by opinions on many things which are not fit subjects for the operation of law. What these rules should be is the principal question in human affairs; . . . No two ages, and scarcely any two countries, have

decided it alike; and the decision of one age or country is a wonder to another. Yet the people of any given age and country no more suspect any difficulty in it than if it were a subject on which mankind has always been agreed. The rules which obtain among them appear to them self-evident and self-justifying. This all but universal illusion is one of the examples of the magical influence of custom, which is not only, as the proverb says, a second nature, but is continually mistaken for the first. The effect of custom in preventing any misgiving respecting the rules of conduct which mankind impose on one another is all the more complete because the subject is one on which it is not generally considered necessary that reasons should be given [Mill (1859), pp. 4-5].

Mistaking custom for human nature is moral realism in action. A Society's moral customs set up its *de facto* and extra-legal understanding of "good manners." As Montesquieu wrote,

Manners and customs are those habits which are not established by legislators, either because they were not able or were not willing to establish them. There is this difference between laws and manners: that the laws are most adapted to regulate the actions of the subject, and manners to regulate the actions of the man. There is this difference between manners and customs: that the former principally relate to the inner conduct, the latter to the exterior. These things have sometimes been confounded. [Montesquieu (1748), pg. 300]

It is always an error leading to transcendental illusion to *reify* the moral. Kant's theocentric orientation and his European ethnocentricity led him to make precisely this error when he reified "the moral law within me." We see this in his writings as far back as the early 1770s and he seems to never have changed this view of his in any essential way. He wrote (circa 1772-75), that "humanity is holy" [Kant (1764-1800) 19: 165] and, likewise, that "the moral law is holy" [Kant (1788) 5:87]. He quite often referred to "humanity" but – somewhat uncharacteristic of his usual habits – never offered any *Realerklärung* or definition of what his term "humanity" meant. From numerous *en passant* remarks he made (and, especially, in his often repeated phrase "the dignity of one's humanity"), it is not farfetched to think that he was trying, in some way, to link human nature to God. Indeed, Kant's moral theory exhibits what can be called a "moral triangle" that is in most respects strikingly similar to Christianity's moral triangle. The two are compared side by side in figure 6. Although Kant never lets us pin him down on this, it is not-unreasonable to think that Kant regarded his universal "moral law" as something like the essence of God found in Man. Indeed, he seems to have been trying very hard to explicate something very much like this in his unfinished *Opus Postumum* [Kant (1804)]. Kant *was* aware that socialization ("culture") is central to how people look at morals and ethics. This treatise will not repeat his reification error.

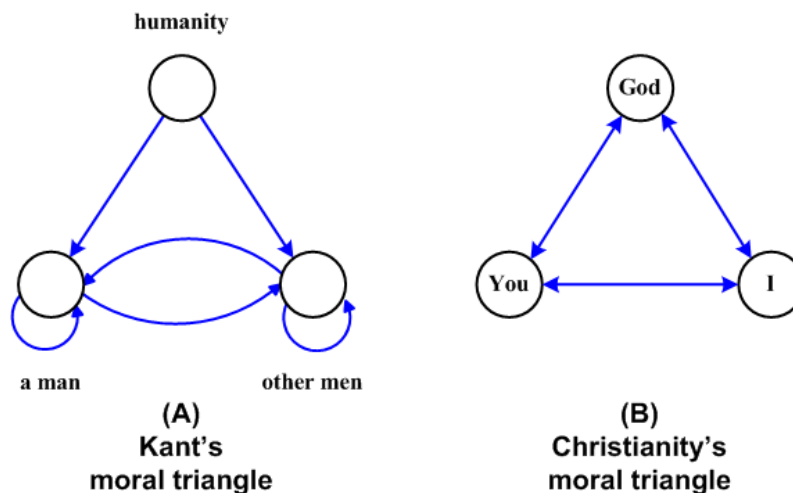


Figure 6: Comparison of Kant's moral triangle with Christianity's moral triangle.

Although Kant did not explicitly tell us what he understood by the term "humanity," numerous remarks he made in passing⁸ leave little room to doubt that he used the term to mean more or less the same thing we find in modern English dictionary definitions, i.e.: (1) the peculiar nature of man by which he is distinguished from other beings; (2) mankind collectively; (3) the fact or quality of being humane; the kind of feelings, dispositions, and sympathies of man; kindness; benevolence [Webster (1962)]. In his phrase, "the dignity of one's humanity," he seems to use "dignity" in its dictionary connotations of worthiness and degree of worth. As for the fact or quality of being humane, he tells us,

Humaneness is to take part in the fate of other men; inhumaneness is when we take no part in the fate of others. [Kant (1784-85) 27: 419]

There is no doubt Kant connected his idea of humanity with his view of religion. This comes through very clearly throughout Kant (1793). Furthermore, it is clear that he viewed humanity in terms of moral conduct. He tells us,

The living faith in the prototype of humanity satisfying to God . . . is related, *in itself*, to a moral Idea of reason so far as this serves for us not only as rule of conduct but as mainspring⁹ as well [Kant (1793) 6: 119].

We do not need to reify the concept of "a moral Idea of reason" – turning it into "the moral law within me" – in order to find practical objective validity for this concept. An Idea is a regulative principle of Reason, and "a moral Idea of reason" therefore refers to a practically hypothetical imperative in your manifold of rules. From this and Kant's numerous *en passant* remarks, we can readily come to a Critical *Realerklärung* for the idea of humanity: ***Humanity is mutual sympathetic participation by a community of people subsisting in unselfish active commitment to a social compact.*** This practical real-explanation is not contrary to Kant's moral triangle depicted in figure 6 other than inasmuch as it converts "humanity" in that figure from a reified concept of a universal "moral law" innate in all human beings into a concept of a norm for regulating one's conduct in accordance with an article of Critical faith in a divine purpose.

Philosophers generally agree, more or less, that "deontological ethics" is ethics based on the notion of Duty (as opposed to ethical systems based on consequentialism or virtue ethics). They also agree Kant was the originator of deontological ethics and that his is still the leading system of it [Blackburn (1996)]. This is not contrary to the deontology I am presenting in this treatise. Two things, however, are important to note. First, to say that Critical deontological ethics is based *only* on notions of Duty is incomplete. Duties are represented in the manifold of concepts and, as I argued earlier, the manifold of concepts is not the ultimate determiner of human actions. That role belongs exclusively to appetite and the manifold of rules. This means there is something in human nature more primary than and superior to concepts of Duties, and this deeper factor is that upon which phenomena of socialized morality is truly based. This deeper determiner is called Obligation (*Verbindlichkeit*). What Obligation is, and how it differs from Duty (*Pflicht*) is a topic of our next chapter.

This treatise does not propose to re-do Kant's moral theory wholesale. Once we get down to the more concise details of Duties and Obligations, we find that the "spirit" and reasoning of Kant's theory is really not fundamentally altered in terms of *principles* (although many of his specific examples of Duties are altered). What I seek to do in this treatise is merely to reorient the theory, turning it away from Kant's theocentric orientation and his reification of "the moral law within me" and realigning it with the fundamental hypothesis of Critical theory (the "Copernican hypothesis" [Kant (1787) B: xvi]).

⁸ Kant (1785) 4: 428-30, 434; Kant (1788) 5: 76-77; Kant (1793) 6: 61, 119, 154fn; Kant (1773-79) 15: 521; Kant (1784-85) 27: 349, 419, 462; Kant (1793-94) 27: 592.

⁹ Kant uses the word "mainspring" (*Triebfeder*) to mean "a representation that serves as a condition for a *causatum* of spontaneous activity." It is a "motive" in the connotation of "something that makes us go." His connotations for this term carry more weight than merely the idea of an "incentive."

Doing so means clearly connecting the idea of morality with possible human experience. This is why the aforementioned ideas of moral customs and social contracts are pertinent to Critical theology. It is likewise so for the case of the idea of "virtue." What, though, of the idea of "sin"? Outside of religious doctrines, the term "sin" does not often appear in discussions about morality and virtue. Philosophers more or less agree that the term "sin" is a moral category – that is, a classification label denoting "that which is immoral" – going beyond that of simple wrongdoing by its implications of evil, depravity, and lack of restraints upon conduct [Blackburn (1996)]. At some abstract level, this understanding of the term is vaguely acceptable. However, it is not adequate for Critical theology because if life is likened to an education preparing you for afterlife, how something is morally judged to either be or not be "sinful" requires much more detailed understanding of deontological morality. Armed with such a more detailed understanding, we will find that the idea of "sin" is the idea of that which is not merely contrary to but *contradicts* the Critical idea of humanity. Let us, then, proceed to the topic of deontological ethics.

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