# From Rationalism to Existentialism

## *The Existentialists and Their Nineteenth-Century Backgrounds*

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ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD PUBLISHERS, INC.
*Lanham • Boulder • New York • Oxford*

# The Nineteenth-Century Backgrounds: Kant, Hegel, and Existentialism

# PART ONE

Kant and Hegel are to the Enlightenment and modern European philosophy as Plato and Aristotle are to Classical Greek philosophy. Like the ancients, both are rationalists—they believe that reason is capable of providing us with absolute ideals. Consequently, both Kant and Hegel are idealists, both in the ethical sense that they defend absolute moral and religious ideals, and in the strict philosophical sense that they argue that reality must ultimately be described in terms of the forms of thought. Superficially, they seem far away from the "irrationalism" of Kierkegaard and the "nihilism" of Nietzsche. However, it is Kant who destroys the traditional arguments in defense of morality and Christianity, and who culminates the Enlightenment ideal of the rational autonomy of the individual. It is Hegel who, despite his celebrated notion of "The Absolute," makes respectable a historical approach to philosophy which makes possible the philosophies of cultural relativity and Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* later that century. From the strength of the attacks on Kant and Hegel by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, it is all too easy to forget that, without the background of the Enlightenment, existentialism would have lost its primary source of philosophical support.

# Immanuel Kant: The Problems of Metaphysics and Morals CHAPTER 1

We begin our study of contemporary existentialism and phenomenology with an examination of a philosophy that is diametrically opposed to the doctrines of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre. Both the antimoral and antireligious attitudes of these more recent thinkers would have horrified Immanuel Kant. The often antirational celebration of Dionysian passions and "existential commitments" would surely have struck the very conservative German philosopher as the antithesis of responsible philosophical activity.

Despite the profound differences between Kant and the existentialists, we shall demonstrate a continuous development from Kant's critical philosophy to Sartre's existentialism. This is not to say that these authors and the figures connecting them are in general philosophical agreement or that they could sensibly be linked in a single school or movement. The conceptual path leading from Kant to Sartre is most akin to a path modeled after the Hegelian dialectic, strewn with warring oppositions each of which play their necessary role in the final results. Kant's philosophy could not be further removed from existentialism in the doctrines it defends, in the view of philosophy it employs, and in the personality of the author whose views it expresses. Yet it is Kant who creates the peculiar perspective and novel philosophical images that spawn the growth of the ambitious systems of philosophy of Fichte and Hegel. It is in reaction to these systems and their conservative outlook that Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Marx initiate radically new conceptions of philosophy. Again, it is Kant, whose faith in Christianity and whose rigid adherence to the Protestant ethic never weakened, who raises the problems concerning the validity and rationality of Christianity and Christian morality on which Nietzsche and Sartre will establish their atheism and antimoral postures. Kant would no doubt find the philosophical styles of the existentialists irresponsible; he would find its doctrines morally reprehensible; and he would very likely consider its proponents madmen rather than thinkers in the tradition established by his own philosophy. However, we shall see that it is Kant who defines the conceptual atmosphere within which the generation of existentialism becomes possible and perhaps even inevitable, where it will develop to become the most influential of contemporary philosophical movements.

By way of introduction to Kant, however, it would be deceptive and offensive to display him merely as a precursor of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre. In fact, there is virtually no indigenous philosophical movement in contemporary Western thought that cannot be traced directly to Kant. Each of the following has its origins in Kantian thought: the analytic or linguistic philosophy currently dominating English and American philosophy, the pragmatism that pervades American thought, and the many varieties of idealism from among which phenomenology and existentialism have developed. In addition to this tremendous influence, Kant holds a very special place in the history of philosophy as the synthesis of the diverse threads of modern philosophy following Descartes. In Kant's philosophy, the conflicts of doctrine and method among the empiricists and rationalists become synthesized into a unified system of thought. In Kant's philosophy, the hardheaded science of the Enlightenment and the traditional values of faith and moral duty of Christianity find them-

selves side by side (if not always comfortably, at least agreeably) after centuries of unyielding antagonism. Even Hegel, who is by no means humble about his own importance in the synthesis of previous Western thought, praises Kant as a giant among intellects, and accords him a place in his history of philosophy equalled only by Plato and Aristotle.

The staggering brilliance of Kant's intellect and the revolutionary effects of his thought is in such marked contrast with his notoriously routine and unexciting life that we shall find it not only possible, but almost necessary to treat Kant the philosopher in isolation from Kant the academic professor. Kant the philosopher set in motion an intellectual upheaval paralleling (and coinciding with) the French revolution in its far-reaching and profound influence on all future thought. Kant the professor is most often characterized by his punctual three o'clock strolls through the neighborhood in which he spent his entire adult life. The German poet Heine tells us that "The history of the life of Immanuel Kant is hard to write, inasmuch as he had neither life nor history, for he lived a mechanically ordered and abstract old bachelor life in a quiet retired street in Königsberg. . . . I do not believe that the great clock of the cathedral there did its daily work more dispassionately and regularly than its compatriot Immanuel Kant."[1]

Kant the philosopher mercilessly destroyed the traditional foundations of Protestant piety and bourgeois morality; the professor faithfully maintained the orthodox belief and rigid ethics in which he had been disciplined as a child. In Kant, we can see that ultimate in philosophical detachment; the revolutionary passion he evidently held for philosophy is completely self-contained. Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Sartre all resigned public posts to avoid any possible restriction on their philosophies. Kant taught for over forty years in the conservative state-controlled University of Königsberg, whose authority he never challenged. The philosophies of the existentialists frequently manifest the agony and frenzy of men for whom the search for a way of life *is* the philosophical enterprise. Kant's philosophical enterprise leaves no room for experiments in lifestyles and psychotherapy, and Kant himself apparently experienced none of the emotional tortue and turmoil that plagued the lives of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. If we compare the passionate and involved "living thoughts" of the existentialists to the almost bizarre divorce of philosophical reflection from the practices of life in Kant, we can understand the popular but misleading image of existentialism as a personal, nonphilosophical revolt against traditional "academic" philosophy. Later we shall see that the existentialists retain a great deal of "academic" philosophy. First, it is our task to show that Kant's writings also are 'alive' and 'relevant', and that his "academic" philosophy shares with existentialism an attempt to provide us with the Socratic wisdom and enlightenment that we have always demanded of philosophy. If we find ourselves unconvinced by his conservative conclusions, at least we shall recognize that those we reject have been given their most able defense.

Despite the passionless and ponderous complexion of his writings, Kant was clearly tormented by perplexities whose scope extended far beyond professional or theoretical interests. His philosophy is depicted as the 'critical' synthesis between two rival schools of philosophy led by the arch-rationalist Leibniz and the superempiricist David Hume. Kant's replies to these authors were but passing notes in a pas sionate and monumental effort to resolve a much more universal and profound dilemma inherited from the Enlightenment. Kant was a man of science, firmly endorsing the universality of the techniques of physical sciences to disclose truth and bitterly attacking all doctrines that could not be defended by an appeal to human reason and experience. Kant was also a devout Christian and a firm believer in the objective validity of Christian morality. In that age of science, the authoritarian foundations of religion and morality were in serious trouble, and it is to their defense that Kant directs his brilliant and laborious philosophical efforts.

Science and religion had confronted each other irreconcilably throughout medieval history, and the problem of their noncompatibility was not new. What distinguished the problem since Descartes was the privileged position of science. Before the Renaissance, science and autonomy of investigation, of action, and of values, were always on the defensive, being forced, if they were to survive, to reconcile themselves with the unyielding authority of the church. Rene Descartes,[2] and Sir Isaac Newton[3] are prototypes of



the turning of the favors of history to science. In 1780, it is the church and its doctrines which are called upon to justify themselves against the equally unyielding demands of scientific rigor. The modern period of philosophy, if we were to characterize it in a single description, is a new set of attitudes towards oneself and authority. One no longer looks to the church for truths and values he cannot grasp for himself. One puts a new confidence in his own powers to reason and observe, and one refuses to allow himself to believe in, to value, or to act upon any principle which cannot pass the most ruthless and rigorous investigation.

It is a mistake to think of Cartesianism as simply a new set of solutions for old problems; it is a new method, but even more, it is a new philosophical *attitude* towards philosophical problems. Similarly, it is a mistake to think of Newton's physics as simply a set of theories of motion and gravitation; it is rather the manifestation of an entirely new kind of perspective for understanding oneself and the world. According to the Newtonian world-view, the universe is no longer *primarily* a manifestation of God (although many scientists —notably Newton himself—spent much of their efforts in an attempt to reconcile Newtonian physics with the orthodox Christian world-view). According to Newton's physics, the universe is a senseless, purposeless attraction and repulsion, collision and rebounding of so many mindless, passive bodies. The world is an all encompassing machine operating according to the natural laws Newton had discovered and given precise formulation. Divine Will has no place in the explanation of the motions of this many-component machine, and, so far as physical science is concerned, the universe is *nothing but* this system of moving bodies. The universe is Godless, deanimated, and purposeless. Man, for all his pretensions, becomes no more than one more body (or aggregation of bodies) obeying Newtonian laws of motion in the same senseless, purposeless fashion as all other bodies.

The laws of motion formulated in simple mathematical terms by Newton became the paradigm of scientific theory, and *every* occurrence, whether it be an apple dropping from a tree, a volcanic eruption, or a young student's defiant act of self-immolation, was to be considered nothing more than the movement of bodies in accordance with these laws. The cornerstone of Newtonian mechanics was the Principle of Universal Causality: every occurrence can be established in a lawlike connection with some sufficient set of antecedent causes. Each of the above occurrences, the youth's act of protest as well as the falling of the apple, could in principle be explained, and predicted beforehand, as the inevitable outcome of certain antecedent conditions of this mechanistic universe.

Yet the philosophical reaction to this man-diminishing world-view was not in the least pessimistic. To the contrary, the movements following Newton's impact, particularly those that made up the movement of thought known as the Enlightenment, took the Newtonian world-view as a cause for unprecedented optimism.

Cultural historians often use the terms "The Enlightenment" and "The Age of Reason" interchangeably to refer to the period between the late seventeenth century and the late eighteenth century in Europe. So characterized, this period would include such diverse thinkers as Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Jonathan Edwards, Thomas Paine, Herbert Spencer, John Locke, Jonathan Swift, William Godwin, the Marquis de Sade, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Turgot and Condorcet, Voltaire, Diderot, D'Holbach, Helvetius, Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and Vico.[4] For our purposes, the Enlightenment is best represented by the French atheistic materialists, Voltaire, Diderot, D'Holbach; the British empiricists, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume; Descartes, who is the central philosophical figure of modern philosophy (which is generally traced to his writings); Goethe, Lessing, and Leibniz in Germany. Since many of these figures are contemporaries, the influences among them are far too complex to be treated here. Common to most of these figures is an unshakable faith in man's abilities to master the traditional problems of science, philosophy, and life, and a strong belief in naturalism and mechanistic explanation (this holds true even of philosophers who would never call themselves materialists and who perhaps even reject Newton's physics, for example, Berkeley and Leibniz).

In spite of the materialism and the specter of mechanism which characterized the Newtonian Universe, there was the promise of complete understanding of this universe and the promise that, following the example of Newton's genius, there was no prob-

lem that could not be solved by the correct application of man's reason using the principles and methods of science. That this understanding might neglect all mention of minds, desires, purposes either of God or of Man, did not seem the least cause for concern to the members of the Enlightenment either in England or on the Continent. Rather, these philosophers embraced the Newtonian outlook without reservation, and set about applying its principles without limitation. Throwing off all appeal to the authority of the church and the past, rejecting all reference to transcendental superempirical or supernatural explanation, these philosophers instigated tremendous optimism in the ability of man to understand and improve himself and his situation by the use of his experience and reason alone.

If the principles and methods of science were universally valid, then there were areas of vital human concern which remained outside the realm of knowledge, particularly questions of *morality* (for Kant, the bourgeois morality of provincial eighteenth-century Germany), questions of *religion* (for Kant, the Protestant [specifically Pietist] doctrines of Christianity), and problems of the ancient field of inquiry generally known as *metaphysics*. Philosophers of the Enlightenment, assuming the methods of science to be unlimited in scope and application, attempted to devise scientifically respectable techniques for establishing the truth of religious assertions and discovering the basic principles of the morally good life. They assumed that fundamental doctrines of religion, the existence of God—a certain kind of God, the existence of miracles, the immortality of man's soul and so forth, if they were intelligible at all, could be established in precisely the same rational manner as Newton had established the laws of motion. Similarly, they assumed that the laws of morality were exactly parallel with the laws of nature, to be discovered in exactly the same manner, by observing human nature and applying reason. In short, the philosophers of the Enlightenment assumed that one could find out about the divinity of Christ or the way to the "good life" in precisely the same manner as Newton had established the law of universal gravitation. Ethics and religion were simply special branches of scientific studies in an intellectual world which took Newtonian physics as its only paradigm.

The Enlightenment was eclipsed because of its failure to provide acceptable answers or successful techniques in these important areas of religion and morality. As might be expected, religion fared poorly under scientific interrogation. The articles of faith central to the Christian religion had little 'scientific' evidence in their favor, and more often than not flew in the face of well-established scientific principles. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the philosophers of the Enlightenment preached atheism, or at least anti-Christianity. The most vocal and best known of the French philosophers of the Enlightenment, Voltaire, is said to have claimed "I am tired of hearing that twelve men were able to establish Christianity; I should like to prove that one is capable of destroying it." There were those philosophers who considered themselves both empiricists and theists (John Locke, for example) but they usually defended their theism at the expense of their empiricist principles.

However, the problem was not simply that religious and moral principles were not adequately supported by scientific investigation; rather the presuppositions of science often seemed to contradict flatly principles basic to religious and moral thinking and the methods and demands of scientific inquiry seemed to eliminate the possibility of any knowledge in these areas before such investigation was even begun. For example, the Principle of Universal Causality which demands that every event has sufficient 'natural cause' and lies at the very foundation of Newtonian science was in conflict with the most basic postulates of religion and morality. If this principle is accepted, it a priori rules ou the possibility of miracles, of the Creation or divine intervention of any sort. Similarly, acceptance of this principle leads to one of the most pervasive problems in philosophy, the problem of free will. If every occurrence is the natural consequence of some set of antecedent natural conditions, then every human action is presumed to be determined completely by antecedent events. This seems to entail that these actions are determined independently of any motives, intentions, decisions, resolutions, or acts of will of the 'agent'. If this is so, if actions are nothing but events determined by previous events, and these determined by other previous events, then humans do not really 'act' at all, they are



merely bodies moving in accordance with natural laws. As many philosophers before Kant had noticed, this strikes a death blow to the crucial presupposition of moral thinking, that it makes sense to hold a person *responsible* for his actions. Morality depends on a presupposition directly in conflict with the Principle of Universal Causation, that some occurrences (at least some human actions) are not caused by external factors, but are determined by the agent himself.

It is therefore understandable that the ethical systems propounded by the Enlightenment philosophers had little to say of the notion of responsibility, or of the dependent notions of duty and obligation. They rather favored varied forms of utilitarianism,[5] an ethic which seems to make questions of morality reducible to simple calculations based on empirical data. According to utilitarianism, an action is judged to be right or wrong (good or bad) solely on the grounds that it results in good or bad consequences, and these consequences are in turn evaluated on the basis of their pleasure-displeasure, happiness-unhappiness. The consequences of actions, and the amount of pleasure-pain or happiness-unhappiness resulting from these consequences can be empirically determined, and the outcome of various alternative courses of action may then be tabulated and compared. Right action is determined by a simple decision procedure—the calculation of the amount of pleasure/happiness and pain/unhappiness affected by various courses of action.

To the pious and moral middle-class German professor, atheism and amorality were totally unacceptable, even if they were in accord with the unquestionable methods of Newtonian science. Such conclusions convinced Kant, and many others, that religious and moral questions could not be answered by the methods of Newtonian science although Newtonian science was supposed to be unlimited in its scope. The demands of empiricism and the Enlightenment could not be limited to allow the return of the old church dogma along with any more acceptable tenets of Christianity and morality. This led many philosophers, most notably David Hume in Scotland, to doubt that the problems of these disciplines were amenable to resolution at all.

Of course, there were those who challenged the justification of the basic presuppositions of science as well, particularly the Principle of Universal Causation. Leibniz rejected Newton's theory of motion because he could not accept the notion of 'action at a distance' required by Newton's theories of gravitation. Leibniz replaced it with a complex metaphysical theory in which the notion of causality was eliminated in a model of a universe of elements ("monads") in preestablished harmony. Such a universe may still be deterministic, for one can have valid scientific laws (events still occur in a regular, predictable order), but the Principle of Universal Causality is literally false (these events do not *cause* each other). In spite of Kant's Leibnizian professional background (he was a pupil of Leibniz's disciple Christian Wolff), it was the British empiricist David Hume who most profoundly affected him on the subject of causality, one of the germs from which the entire Kantian philosophy grew. It was Hume's discussion of causality that evinced Kant's celebrated comment that "my recollection of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction."[6]

Hume argued that the basic presuppositions of science and therefore of the entire empiricist-minded Enlightenment were quite unjustified. Foremost among these were the Principle of Universal Causality and our assumptions that our ideas in fact correspond to any objects 'external to' our minds, and that the laws we have formulated in accordance with past experience will hold in the future (the "problem of Induction"). Hume argued that none of the philosophically acceptable techniques for justifying knowledge could succeed in establishing these crucial principles as valid. (We shall have more to say of these techniques and Hume's arguments in the following section.) Even Hume did not seriously propose to abandon these principles. The universal validity of scientific method, then the unquestionable starting point not only of all scientific investigation but of Hume's empiricism as well, depended on these principles. If the justification of basic scientific principles was a problem, then Kant presumed it to be a problem for philosophers, not for scientists. The hard earned respectability of modern science was not to be impugned by any philosophical subterfuge.

Kant accepted without question the basic presuppositions and methodology of

Newtonian mechanics, assumed these were unrestricted in scope and application, and charged that no philosophy that either rejected or limited scientific inquiry could be correct. This acceptance of science raised serious paradoxes for a thinker who also accepted the Christian religion and held firm devotion to the notions of duty and moral obligation.

Thus, the overall problem of Kant's philosophy can be expressed in a pair of paradoxical demands:

1. To refute Hume's skepticism with regard to the foundations of science by establishing its basic principles as necesary and universally valid.
2. To limit the pretensions of science to make room for religious faith and moral responsibility.

To satisfy both of these demands, Kant introduced his "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy, a radically new perspective on the nature of human knowledge.[7]

**The *Critique of Pure Reason* and the Problem of Metaphysics**

The stated theme of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to "decide as to the possibility or impossibility of metaphysics in general, and determine its sources, its extent, and its limits."[8] Metaphysics traditionally encompassed a large variety of philosophical doctrines, most of which were concerned with ultimate principles of various fields of human knowledge and belief. Philosophy was embarrassed by an indeterminacy with regard to every metaphysical question, and Kant complains from the beginning that,

*metaphysics has rather to be regarded as a battle-ground quite peculiarly suited for those who desire to exercise themselves in mock combats, and in which no participant has ever yet succeeded in gaining even so much as an inch of territory, not at least in such manner as to secure him in its permanent possession.*[9]

"Metaphysics" has been used to characterize all doctrines which are nonempirical; so used, metaphysics would include all questions of theology, mathematics, logic, and the foundations of science. However, Kant also employs "metaphysics" to apply to a more exclusive set of principles; *These unavoidable problems set by pure reason itself are* God, Freedom, and Immortality. *The science which, with all its preparations, is in its final intention directed solely at their solution is metaphysics.*[10]

There are many other metaphysical problems and their solutions with which Kant has little patience; all of those tedious unresolved questions about the details of theology ("How many angels . . .?"), about superphysics and infinity ("Could the universe be divided. . .?"). With regard to these questions, Kant calls for a philosophical purge, a permanent moratorium on philosophical nonsense. Kant is not the first major philosopher of modern times to raise this demand. David Hume had argued,

*If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask,* Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. *Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.*[11]

Kant agrees with Hume that metaphysical principles cannot be established either by deductive reasoning nor by experimental inquiry, but he finds Hume's harsh conclusion intolerable. Kant sees some metaphysical questions unavoidable, particularly questions about God's existence, the immortality of the human soul, and of man's freedom and responsibility.

*That the human mind will ever give up metaphysical researches is as little to be expected as that we, to avoid inhaling impure air, should prefer to give up breathing altogether.*[12]

Furthermore, Kant saw that Hume's rejection of metaphysics must result in a rejection of natural science and mathematics as well. Hume had seen that science was based upon the same sort of nonfactual, nonlogical propositions which were essential to 'school metaphysics'. Hume does not dare suggest that we commit science and mathematics "to the flames."

The first step for Kant's critical philosophy was the recognition of the inconclusiveness of Hume's dichotomy



("Hume's fork") between "relations of ideas" and "matters of fact". Although it is true that most propositions are either necessarily true but trivial (true by virtue of language or "analytic") or else not trivial (or "synthetic") but then only contingently true and empirical, Kant argues that the sort of proposition which is the key to all philosophy is a peculiar hybrid proposition that is both necessary and nontrivial. These *synthetic* (nontrivial) a priori ('universal and necessary') judgments lie at the foundation of every empirical discipline. Kant includes as synthetic a priori propositions all of the propositions of mathematics and geometry, the foundation principles of natural science (for example, the law of induction, the principle of universal causation), the principle that a man is responsible for his actions, the proposition that God exists, and the proposition that a man should treat his fellow men as ends rather than as means. Previous philosophers (Hume, for instance) had treated these principles either as straightforward "analytic" or trivial truths or as straightforward empirical and therefore experiential judgments. Kant argues: they are neither, and they can be defended and justified neither by appeal to the language in which they are expressed, nor by appeal to experimental confirmation or disconfirmation. Neither the rationalist tool of Pure Reason nor the empiricist appeal to experience could succeed in demonstrating these issues. For example, the doctrine that God is the moving cause of the Universe (both its creator and its sustainer) is not verifiable or refutable by any evidence whatever, for any findings (including alleged miracles, mystical experiences) are compatible with both the doctrine and its denial. Moreover, it is not contradictory to suppose that there is no God or that there is a God of whom the Universe is totally independent. The problem of metaphysics thus becomes the problem of justifying synthetic a priori truths.

Metaphysical propositions are synthetic a priori propositions. Accordingly, the stated metaphysical theme of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is recast as the question, "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" This is not to ask *whether* they are possible, for Kant begins by assuming that the principles of mathematics and the foundation principles of natural science are both true and synthetic a priori, but neither does this question demand a single acceptance or rejection of all synthetic a priori principles. Some of these principles must be defended, but others must be destroyed (not refuted). The problem facing Kant is that,

*In this domain there is actually as yet no standard weight and measure to distinguish sound knowledge from shallow talk.*[13]

**Transcendental Arguments**

Kant believed that he had discovered a method for justifying synthetic a priori principles. These principles could not be established through Reason alone, for they were neither trivial nor could they be derived from other judgments which were not also synthetic and a priori. Neither could they be established through experience, for experience could, at best, establish it as a matter of *fact* that these propositions were true; experience could never show these propositions to be *necessary* (a priori). There was another way to establish these peculiar principles, Kant believed, through a *transcendental argument.* A transcendental argument justifies a judgment by establishing it as a piece of *transcendental knowledge.*[14] Such knowledge is knowledge of the foundations of knowledge itself, a knowledge of those faculties of human consciousness that make possible any knowledge whatever.

*I entitle* transcendental *all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects insofar as this mode of knowledge is to be possible* a priori.[15]

We must be careful to distinguish "transcendental" from "transcendent." Transcendent knowledge is knowledge of the supersensible; Kant denies that any such knowledge is obtainable. Transcendental knowledge, according to Kant, "does not signify something passing beyond all experience, but something that precedes it a priori, but that is intended simply to make knowledge of experience possible."[16]

To say that a transcendental argument shows a synthetic a priori judgment to state a necessary condition for knowledge is *not* to say that it justifies the judgment by demonstrating *some* body of coveted knowledge to rely on it. On this account, for example, commentators have argued the principle that every event has a cause

to be justified because it is a necessary presupposition of all natural science. If this were a transcendental argument, Kant would have failed completely to achieve his ends. The challenge issued by Hume was the justifiability of science in general which in turn depends upon the defense of the principle that every event has a cause. To defend this principle by appeal to its necessity for natural science is viciously circular. This interpretation of a transcendental argument as a demonstration that a principle is necessary to the acceptance of *some* invaluable body of knowledge reduces Kant's entire philosophy to a simple *petitio principii*.

Kant's strategy is to show that synthetic a priori principles can be defended as necessarily true if they state the conditions for *any* experience, *any* knowledge, *any* consciousness whatever. To be *conscious*, a being must have experience and must be able to apply concepts to those experiences. For Kant, empirical knowledge is a necessary condition for consciousness, and there can be no consciousness without experience and understanding of experience. This doctrine lies at the very core of Kant's first *Critique;* it is the premise on which the entire *Critique* is founded. The first sentence of the introduction makes this clear;

*There can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience. . . .*[17]

and again, in the conclusion of the same introduction;

*we need only say that there are two stems of human knowledge, namely sensibility and understanding. . . . Through the former, objects are given to us; through the latter, they are thought.*[18]

And later,

*Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding, no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.*[19]

For a being to be conscious at all, to have experience and understanding, certain conditions must obtain. Since these conditions are necessary for there to be any consciousness, and since there is at least one conscious being (myself), the principles that state these conditions *must* be true, that is, they are necessary truths. For Kant, as for Descartes, my own thinking existence is the premise from which all philosophy proceeds.

Synthetic a priori principles do not just state *a* set of conditions which make possible consciousness; they rather state *the only* such conditions. Kant claims not only that he has found a *sufficient* set of conditions for consciousness, but a *necessary* set as well. If these principles only stated sufficient conditions, they would not be necessarily true, for it would always be possible for some creature to be conscious in a different way than we are. Kant is firmly against such relativism. The principles defended in his *Critique* are necessarily true because they state a unique set of conditions necessary for any conscious creature (human or not) whatever.

It is not altogether accurate to say that synthetic a priori principles, if true, *state* or *describe* conditions for consciousness. Kant insists that his transcendental principles are not proven as facts (*de facto*), but rather proven as *rights* or *legal claims* (*de jure*). These principles are therefore not so much descriptions as *rules* about how the world must be;

*The understanding does not derive its laws (a priori) from, but prescribes them to, nature.*[20]

Accordingly, concepts and the Understanding are defined in terms of rules;

*A concept is always, as regards its form, something universal which serves as a rule.*[21]

*We have defined the Understanding in various ways; . . . We may now characterize is as the* faculty of rules.[22]

*The Understanding . . . is itself the lawgiver of nature.*[23]

Since these rules are the *only* possible rules for structuring experience, it makes little difference, for Kant, whether he treats them as rules or as structures of consciousness. Philosophers following Kant, however, notably Fichte and Hegel, will give added importance to the interpretation of concepts as rules. Rules, they will argue, can be changed.



How are synthetic a priori judgments possible? A synthetic a priori judgment can be justified by showing that it is a piece of transcendental knowledge, by showing that it states a necessary condition or rule for there being any consciousness whatever. *The Critique of Pure Reason* is divided into three sections, each investigating the synthetic a priori claims for one field of inquiry. Each field of inquiry corresponds to one of three *faculties* of mind, *Sensibility* (*Sinnlichkeit*), *Understanding* (*Verstand*), and *Reason* (*Vernunft*). The *Transcendental Aesthetic* presents and defends the synthetic a priori principles stating the conditions for sensibility; the *Transcendental Analytic* presents and defends the synthetic a priori principles stating the conditions or rules for the employment of the Understanding; and the *Transcendental Dialectic* presents and gives a critique of the pretensions of Pure Reason to give us knowledge of synthetic a priori principles. Thus, the first two sections of the *Critique* are concerned with the exposition and defense of *the* set of conditions under which experience and knowledge are possible. The *Transcendental Dialectic* serves a different purpose, the separation of transcendental knowledge (which is defended in the first two sections) from transcendental Ideals (which will serve as the basis for the *Critique of Practical Reason* and Kant's moral philosophy). Secondly, the *Transcendental Dialectic* is to explode once and for all time certain illusions to which metaphysical thinking has been victim. The *Dialectic* is to separate proper metaphysics from transcendent nonsense; it is this function that makes the work a "Critique of Pure Reason."

The *Transcendental Aesthetic* gives us the conditions for sensibility, "the capacity for receiving representations through the mode in which we are affected by objects."[24] The possibility of having any experience or "intuition" depends on two "a priori forms of intuition," namely, *space* and *time*. The principles of space and time are captured in the a priori principles of (Euclidean) geometry and arithmetic (respectively).[25] The transcendental proof of the a priori necessity of these principles is the demonstration that they describe the necessary form of any experience. The *Aesthetic* argues that every experience must take place in the same three-dimensional space, in one-dimensional time. The a priori structure of space, the form of which Kant calls "outer sense," requires that every object of intuition must appear in three dimensions (even if it happens to be a one-dimensional line or two-dimensional surface). We can watch a two-dimensional movie in a three-dimensional theater, but we cannot possibly experience a two-dimensional theater. Similarly, the a priori structure of time-consciousness, which Kant calls "inner sense," is the form of every experience. Every experience occurs in time. These two forms of experience pertain not only to 'normal' experiences, but to every possible experience, no matter how aberrant. Kant would insist that 'experiences of time reversal' or experience of the 'collapse of space' are simply *misdescriptions* of experiences which must have temporal and Euclidean form.

In the *Transcendental Analytic,* Kant attempts to discover those a priori principles "without which no object can be thought." The transcendental arguments of the *Analytic* attempt to establish these principles in three steps: first, there is the unfolding of a list—Kant insists that it is an exhaustive list—of the *Concepts* of the pure Understanding or "Categories." Once these concepts have been discovered, it must be shown that they are indeed necessary to the making of any judgment whatever. Finally, a set of a priori principles is derived from the list of categories, and these are proven necessary and universal in the application of concepts to experience.

In the *Prolegomena,* Part II, which corresponds to the *Analytic* of the *Critique,* Kant asks, "How is Pure Science Possible?" The Categories with their corresponding Principles present us with just those foundations of science whose justification Hume had challenged seriously. Most importantly, a set of Principles called "The Analogies of Experience" (based on Categories of "Relation") include the principle that every event has a cause.

The premise of the arguments in the *Analytic* is the fact of human (my) consciousness, specifically, that my consciousness has an essential unity. Kant begins very much like Descartes:

*It must be possible for the 'I Think' to accompany all my representations. . . . All the manifold of intuition has, therefore, a necessary relation to the "I think" in the same subject in which this manifold is found. . . . The unity of this apperception*

*I likewise entitle the* transcendental *unity of self-consciousness, in order to indicate the possibility of* a priori *knowledge arising from it.*[26]

In one sense, this premise might be interpreted to say no more than the analytic principle that "all the contents of my consciousness are *mine*." From this trivial principle, however, Kant forces the interpretation from the unity of consciousness to the unity of the *object;*

*The transcendental unity of apperception is that unity through which all the manifold given in an intuition is united in a concept of the object.*[27]

To perceive an object is not merely to have an experience or a set of experiences: to perceive an object, there must be a combination of different experiences into an 'objective' unity. To use one of Kant's examples, my perception of a house from various perspectives could not be considered perception *of a house* (or of any *object*) if the several experiences constituting this perception were not unified or *synthesized* as various experiences *of* one and the same object. My perception *of the house* is not merely the sum of my experiences (of the house), but my synthesizing these experiences as experiences of a house. Because experiences alone can never give us objects, there can be no perception of objects unless there is a synthesis of the manifold of experience. Moreover, because we never perceive simply, or have experience simply, but always perceive or experience *something,* and because perceiving or experiencing something depends on synthesis, there can be no unsynthesized experiences. (We shall see this same major thesis become the central principle of Edmund Husserl's *Phenomenology,* the philosophy which will give a major impetus to the methodological innovations of the twentieth-century existentialists.)

Because a synthesis cannot be found in experiences themselves, it must be imposed on them by the Understanding. Kant thus agrees with Hume that our experiences themselves never include experience of a necessary connection between experiences, but that these connections are always added by us.

*We cannot represent to ourselves anything as combined in an object which we have not ourselves previously combined.*[28]

Kant, however, radically departs from Hume on the nature of this "combining." Where Hume had argued that this "combination in an object" was merely a *habit* and without justification, Kant insists that such "combinations" are *necessary* by virtue of the very structure of human consciousness. In this difference lies the key to Kant's reply to Humean skepticism.

The pattern of argument we have just sketched occupies the most labyrinthian depths of the *Critique* called the *Transcendental Deduction.* The purpose of this *Deduction* is to show that the categories are indeed necessary in every experience and every judgment. It begins with the simple fact that I am conscious and moves to the unity of perceived objects, arguing that this unity is a condition for all perception and that this unity is *synthetic* and produced by the Understanding. The conclusion of the *Deduction* is that it is impossible for a consciousness not to use concepts, that every experience must be synthesized or "gone through in a certain way, taken up and connected" to conform to the concepts of the Understanding. There can be no unconceptualized experience.

Then, in the *Analytic of Principles,* Kant proceeds to argue that the particular concepts called the categories are necessary for every experience. (The *Transcendental Deduction* has established only that *some* concepts must be employed.) To show that these concepts or categories are a priori necessary for Understanding is also to show that the synthetic a priori principles based on these categories are necessarily true.

The proof of the principle that every event has a cause is based on the argument of the *Transcendental Deduction,* that "experience is possible only through the representation of a necessary connection of perceptions."[29] The *Deduction* argued that synthesis of experience is always "successive" in time. While events in the imagination may be arbitrarily ordered (as when, in a daydream, we reverse cause and effect), an experience which is *given* to us does not allow for arbitrary ordering. In Kant's terms, "the order of appearances is determined by the object."[30] Objectivity



is necessarily *causal,* and an objective order of events is an order of appearances according to a rule. The difference between a "subjective play of my fancy" and an event of which we can have knowledge is that the latter is "determined";

*that is, it presupposes another appearance in time, upon which it follows necessarily, according to a rule.*[31]

If an experience is isolated from all other experiences which can be causally related to it, the distinction between reality and fantasy becomes impossible. Knowledge is gained not from isolated experiences but from causally systematic experiences, "successive according to a rule." Consciousness in general, according to Kant, is possible only because we can make this important distinction, and this, he argues, presupposes the applicability of the categories of Relation to every experience and the necessary truth of the synthetic a priori principle that every event has a cause which precedes it in time.

Both the *Transcendental Deduction* and the arguments for the Principles of the Understanding are convoluted and obscure. Philosophers are still struggling just to expose the logic of these arguments,[32] but the philosophers of Europe have been more influenced by the method and conclusion of Kant's *Critique* than by the intricacies of argument. We have seen enough of this method—the transcendental approach to those conditions or rules necessary to any consciousness—and enough of those conclusions—that certain intuitive forms and certain concepts are necessary to any consciousness—to understand the basis of the revolutionary movement that Kant initiates in European philosophy.

### The Copernican Revolution

We said in our introduction that Kant calls his *Critique* a 'Copernican Revolution' in philosophy; yet so far, it might seem that Kant's original contributions to philosophy, his introduction of new distinctions, the refutation of Hume's skepticism, the introduction of a new argument type and so on are impressive, but hardly the revolutionary uprooting of all past philosophy. However, our discussion of transcendental arguments has already indicated to us the nature of this revolution which begins with Kant's transcendental proofs of how the world we perceive *must* be.

Transcendental arguments do not argue what the world is like, but what it *must* be like because of the rules to which any experience, any knowledge, any consciousness must conform. As soon as Kant claims that any world of which we are conscious must have *this* form, he has not simply added a new metaphysical theory to philosophy, but he has changed the entire character of the philosophical enterprise. To understand this, we must quickly review the theory of knowledge preceding Kant's *Critique.* In spite of great differences between various theories, notably between empiricist and rationalist theories of knowledge, one problem was common to every theory: "How can we know whether our ideas of what the world is like correspond to what the world is *really* like?" Underlying this question was a host of assumptions concerning the nature of human understanding, most importantly, that our ideas if correct, conform to the *real* objects to which they correspond, that we have an immediate awareness of our ideas and experiences but only a mediated awareness of the real objects of the world. Thus, the underlying metaphysics of both rationalist and empiricist theories of knowledge recognize two sorts of entities—mental (ideas, experiences) and physical (real and substantial objects of the world).[33] With this metaphysics comes the problem which, more than any other, has plagued philosophers since Descartes' *Discourse on Method*: "How can I ever know that these two correspond?"

Although Kant remained very much a dualist, speaking continuously of "inner" and "outer" experiences, of "subjectivity" and "objectivity," and of the "world-as-it-appears" and "world-as-it-is-in-itself," he succeeds in undermining the dualism on which is founded traditional metaphysics and consequent problems of knowledge. Rather than speak of the conformity of our knowledge to objects, he insists that we speak instead of the necessary conformity of objects to our knowledge. In order to be known, an object has to obey our rules. This is not merely a radical change in perspective, now taking the knower as primary rather than the known; it is a complete change in the very formulation of the problems of knowledge. Kant would no longer ask whether it is true that

the world as we know it conforms to the world as it *really* is. Because the world as we perceive it in accordance with the a priori principles of the *Critique* is the *only* world we can know or about which we can intelligibly talk. The world as it *really* is, if by that is meant a world independent of and possibly different from the world we know, cannot be our concern. For us, there *can* only be the world we know, and this world is not passively constituted by our experiences, but actively regulated by our understanding.

In place of the traditional dichotomy between ideas of the world and the real world, Kant substitutes a new dichotomy, between objects as-they-appear-to-us, which he calls *phenomena*, and things as they are 'in-themselves', which he calls *noumena*. Although the two dichotomies appear superficially similar, their differences are profound. First, for Kant, the only sense to be given to the notion of the *real* world is the sense of the world *as phenomenon*. The question of how we can know that our ideas correspond to the *real* world cannot then arise, for the world we perceive *is* the *real* world. Secondly, the question of what the world is like independently of our experiences of it is, for Kant, unintelligible. Because the only world of which we can conceive is the world as it conforms to the principles of the *Critique*, there is no intelligibility, for us, in the suggestion that the world-as-noumenon might have some different form, for example, exist in nine-dimensional space, or have no causal relations. The world-as-noumenon either conforms to the world as phenomenon, in which case we may address our inquiries to the phenomenal world, or else it is different, in which case the very notion of 'noumenon' becomes incomprehensible to us. *Noumenon*, in Kant's terms, is strictly a "*limiting* concept"; we can have no knowedge of noumena. Thus, the Kantian 'Copernican' revolution eliminates the old problems and the threat of skepticism which dominated previous philosophy. Because the only sense to be given to the notion, "the *real world*," is the sense of the world as phenomenon, skepticism regarding the existence of objects (in general) makes no sense. (It is from this principle that the entire movement called 'Phenomenology' will take its departure.) For the same reasons, idealism, the position that only consciousness exists (which threatened Descartes and was openly endorsed by Berkeley) makes no sense either (Kant argues this in a separate chapter of the *Critique*).[34]

The Copernican revolution can be characterized in a slightly different way, using a set of terms which were often used by Kant and became the center of attention in the post-Kantian philosophies. The traditional idea-of-the-world/real-world distinction had often been cast as a distinction between a *subjective* world and the *objective* world. The former consists of the contents of one's own consciousness, the latter consists of objects. The traditional problem of knowledge could then be restated as, "How can I ever obtain knowledge of the objective world, that is, obtain objective knowledge?"

Kant attacks this query by destroying the grounds on which the question is based. Since we cannot have knowledge of objects independent of any possible experience, we cannot *in that sense* have knowledge of an objective world, that is, "objective knowledge." On the other hand, if "subjective knowledge" means knowledge taken from our own experience, there can be no other sort of knowledge we could have. Thus Kant maintains that the traditional subjective-objective distinction, because it rests upon the same inadequate metaphysical dichotomy as the idea-world distinction, must be given up.

Yet, Kant does want to say that we can have objective knowledge, and he sometimes even describes the *Analytic* as a proof that we can have objective knowledge, that is, knowledge of objects. However, Kant's sense of "objective" clearly cannot be the sense in which earlier theorists had taken it, for "objective" in their sense makes objective knowledge (that is, knowledge of objects apart from our experiences of them) impossible. Kant's distinction between subjective and objective is consequently characterized not in terms of mere idea and *real* object, but is rather in terms of *private* vs. *public*, the necessity and universality of objective knowledge.[35] According to Kant, "objective" refers to the possibility of knowledge by every consciousness, while "subjective" refers to experiences had by only individual consciousness. Objective knowledge is knowledge of a public world, a world that must be identical for every consciousness. Knowledge of objects is not a "true" correspondence of our beliefs with transcendent objects; knowledge of objects is recognition of a synthesis of experiences that we have produced.

*We must not seek the universal laws of nature in nature . . . but conversely must seek nature, as to its universal conformity to law, in the conditions of possibility of experience. . . .*[36]



We have discussed the *Critique* as an exposition of the necessary conditions for consciousness and the *Analytic* specifically as the exposition of the necessary conditions for knowledge. Knowledge, for Kant, can only be knowledge of an objective (phenomenal) world, a world of objects. And a world of objects is a world which is constituted such that these objects must be substantial. To use a phrase that Kant favors in the *Prolegomena*, the concepts of the understanding are the rules for *consciousness in general*. It makes no sense to suppose that our knowledge could be knowledge of a private world, one whose objects were hidden from any other consciousness. Knowledge is necessarily *public*, and necessarily objective. The publicity of objects, while not argued by Kant as one of his famous categories, is a necessary condition for knowledge.

If the world of which we are conscious is necessarily objective and public, it must be the case that all philosophical theories which suppose that the objects in question are nothing other than mere "ideas" or "mental entities" are seriously confused. Accordingly, all the versions of "idealism" which assert such a thesis must be distinguished from what Kant calls his "transcendental idealism" and rejected as philosophically absurd. For the transcendental idealist, (Kant, and, we shall see later, Husserl), the world is not my idea: the world is the phenomenon which must exist independently of my idea of it.

**The Transcendental Ego**

Among the necessary conditions for there to be experience or knowledge is the existence of a self which has experiences and synthesizes these experiences according to the categories. Kant sometimes restates the premise of the deduction, the unity of consciousness, as the existence of self-consciousness.

This seems clear, and even trivial at first, but a moment's reflection dislodges deep and disturbing problems in this notion of self-consciousness. What is this *self*? For Kant, it is an individual, personal subject of experiences which busies itself unifying experience according to its understanding; but what is this subject? A mind? A spirit? A person?

The problem of the *self* can be raised in this way: Are we speaking of the same subject ("I") in each of the following: "I am falling." "I am bleeding." "I am president of my class." "I am thinking." "I am running." "I am hallucinating." "I am signing a contract." "I am dead." Thinking unphilosophically, it seems, of course, that we are speaking of the same subject. Is the "I" that is bleeding the same "I" that does the thinking, or the same "I" that runs? The "I" that bleeds is an organism's living *body*, while the "I" that thinks seems to be my mind, which is more or less independent from the state of my body. The "I" that runs seems to be a curious partnership between my body and my mind. It would seem, therefore, that one can discern three different "I's" or selves in these three examples: a body-self, a mental-self, and a self of action. In addition, of course, one might isolate a social self (president of the class) or a responsible self (upholding a contract) or a purely physical self (I am falling). As soon as we begin to see that the identification of selves is not simply the recognition of persons (John, Mary, Sam), but the recognition of persons as a . . . , the question of the nature of the *self* becomes immensely complicated. Then, when we ask which of these selves is the *real* self, the locus of self-identity, the confusion of the question is equalled only by the importance of answering it. Restricting our interest to Kant, we must ask what is the self which is the subject of experiences and which imposes the conditions for understanding upon these experiences?

In the *Transcendental Deduction*, Kant distinguishes the *transcendental ego* from the *empirical ego* and maintains that only the transcendental ego has these a priori relations with experience. The empirical ego, on the other hand, is the ego or egos of the sciences. The empirical ego is a person's physical body, personality, and all those aspects of a person about which we may formulate empirical laws. Thus, we may generalize in biology about the physiological mechanisms of a person's body, or in psychology we may test his intelligence, or his tolerance for pain, or his tendency to become angry. In each case,

the knowledge we receive about the person is strictly empirical. The knowledge we have of the transcendental ego is strictly a priori—it consists solely of necessary laws. In Kant's terms, the transcendental ego is a merely *formal* ego; all the knowledge we have of it is a priori and independent of the characteristics of any particular persons. It is this formal ego about which Kant is talking throughout the *Analytic*. To understand the significance of this ego, it is again necessary to review some of the philosophy preceding Kant.

The question of self-identity confronting Kant has its historical roots in the philosophy of Descartes, who, like Kant, took self-consciousness to be the cornerstone of his philosophy. Descartes' "I think, therefore I am" was meant to be the single, indubitable, and self-evident proposition on which his entire theory of knowledge was constructed. Descartes also posed the question as to the nature of this "I" and methodically rejected interpretations of this self as a physical body, as an organism, or as a person. The "I think" proved the existence only of a *thinker*, not a person or a body. The "I" of the "I think" must therefore be a *thinking substance*. In accordance with his methodological doubt, Descartes argued that it would be possible to doubt the existence of his body, but not that he was in fact thinking.

However, even this limited inference from thought to thinker was called into question. Why must a thought require a thinker? Perhaps, there are just thoughts. This line of skepticism with regard to self-identity was brought to its conclusion, predictably, by David Hume, who argued:

*There are some philosophers who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our* self; *that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. . . . Unluckily, all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience which is pleaded for them nor have we any idea of* self *after the manner it is here explained. For, from what impression could this idea be derived? . . . If any impression gives rise to the idea of the self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist in that manner. . . .*

*But farther, what must become of all our particular perceptions upon this hypothesis? All these are different and distinguishable and separate from each other, and may be separately considered and may exist separately, and have no need of anything to support their existence. . . . I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.*[37]

Kant's transcendental twist to this argument can be anticipated by bringing to mind his general mode of reply to Hume's problems. Hume claims that there is no justification for our supposed knowledge of ourselves because we have no experience corresponding to this supposed knowledge. Kant has claimed that one can justify knowledge not only by demonstrating its origin *in* experience, but by demonstrating that it is a *basis* for experience. The self, for Kant, is not to be considered an object for experience, but is to be postulated as one of the necessary conditions for any experience. In the *Deduction*, Kant argues that it makes no sense to speak of an experience *simpliciter*, for every experience is an experience of a consciousness which organizes and unifies experience into a whole. If there were not this unification, according to Kant, there could be no knowledge and no experience. Unification presupposes a principle of unification, and this is the ego. In reply to Hume, therefore, Kant answers that the self is not to be found among the contents of experience but is to be transcendentally found among the conditions for experience. The ego lies 'behind' all our experiences; it is what has these experiences.

Thus far, Kant's reply has been notably Cartesian: our knowledge of the self is derivative of the presence of thought. Descartes then concluded that this self is a *thinking substance*, and here Kant becomes very unCartesian. According to his *Critique*, the self is a *condition* of experience, but as such a condition, it transcends any possible experience. If this self is to be considered as an object in any sense, it must be considered a *noumenal* object. As a noumenon, the self cannot be subject to the categories, which are applicable only to objects of possible experience. Since one of these categories is *substance*, the self cannot be a substance, and all doctrines depending on such a notion, such as the traditional doctrine of the *soul*, must be based upon the fallacious treatment of a noumenal object as phenomenal (Kant's source of concern in the *Dialectic*). Because the transcendental ego is beyond the bounds of possible experience, we can have no knowledge whatsoever about it, but because it lies at the very foundations of the possibility of consciousness, we cannot help but know *of* it. Knowing *that it is* is all that we can know of the ego. This initially seems to have implausible consequences, for it appears that we can speak of self-knowledge as well as knowledge of other selves. For Kant, however, all such discussion is about the *empirical* ego, which is the only self which can be known. The empirical ego is the transcendental ego *as it appears to me*, that is, as phenomenon, and thus it can be conceived of under the categories. The transcendental ego, however, which Kant occasionally refers to as the "self-in-itself" can be the subject of only one piece of knowledge, namely, that it exists.

Kant answers the question of self-identity with a complicated theory of two selves, one of which is the subject of the phenomenal world, the other of which is an object in this world. The complication of this dual self theory is both one of the outstanding contributions and one of the fatally weak doctrines of Kant's philosophy as a whole. It endangers the whole of his moral philosophy and generates problems for other philosophers for the remainder of the nineteenth century.



### The *Dialectic*

In our introduction, we indicated that Kant distinguished the synthetic a priori principles of mathematics, natural science, and metaphysics, devoting a section of the *Critique* to each. We then ignored the *Transcendental Dialectic* which deals with the principles of metaphysics, and similarly neglected the third mental faculty, Reason, of which we said only that it, with the understanding, manipulates concepts. In spite of Kant's obvious fascination with parallel triadic structures, the *Dialectic* is very much out of step with the first two sections of the *Critique*. Kant began with the promise that he would give us the conditions for any possible experience and knowledge. In the *Dialectic*, he instead promises the critical destruction of false ideas, and the exposition of a "Logic of Illusion."

Reason, the third faculty, manipulates concepts, but unlike the understanding, it does not apply these concepts to experience. In his characterization,[38] Kant tells us that the concepts of reason unify the understanding in the same way that the concepts of the understanding unify experience. Consequently, the *logical* employment of reason "endeavors to reduce the varied and manifold knowledge of the understanding to the smallest number of principles and thereby achieve in it the highest possible unity."[39] However, there is also the possibility of a set of a priori concepts and principles of Pure Reason, and Kant tells us that philosophers have long employed such a set of concepts and principles in metaphysics. The concepts of Pure Reason he calls the *Transcendental Ideas;*[40] the principles derived from these Ideas he calls *Dialectical Inferences*, of which there are three sets: *Paralogisms*, *Antinomies*, and *Ideals*. These names hardly share the grandeur of the names of the principles of the understanding. A *paralogism* is a piece of (unconsciously) fallacious reasoning. *Antinomies* are equally valid but contradictory arguments, which contribute to what Kant calls the "euthanasia" of pure reason.[41]

The concepts of Reason are independent of any possible experience, and moreover, unlike the concepts of the pure understanding, they are not necessary for there to be experience. The transcendental ideas are thus necessarily *transcendent*, going beyond any possible experience. The objects posited by these concepts are also transcendent; they are objects of no possible experience.

In the earlier discussion of the *Critique*, we emphasized that knowledge can arise only with the application of concepts to experience. Because the concepts of Reason are independent of any possible experience and thus apply only to objects of no possible experience (noumena), Reason, unlike Sensibility and Understanding, cannot give us knowledge. Metaphysics, the system of principles of pure reason, must, therefore, only *appear* to give us knowledge. Indeed, Kant argues, metaphysical principles are comprehensible to us only because their concepts are parasitic on the concepts of the understanding (for example, we understand "time has a begin-

ning" or "the soul is inside the brain" only because we have an understanding of events having beginnings in time and objects being inside of other objects). Metaphysics, however, is illusory because, in spite of this apparent understanding, its principles misuse concepts by extending them beyond the realm of possible experience.

The fact that Reason cannot give us knowledge is not sufficient reason for doing away with metaphysics, however, for we have a "natural disposition" towards metaphysical thinking. The demand of Reason is the unification of the understanding, that is, the synthesis of all knowledge. Because our knowledge is dependent upon the limitations of our experience and understanding, our knowledge is necessarily incomplete and conditional. Thus, there has always been the urging of reason to find *absolute* principles which are impervious to doubt. Metaphysics is the futile attempt to supply this demand of reason for completeness and certainty, the attempt to push our knowledge beyond any limitation. Even though these attempts are futile, they serve an important, even necessary purpose; they provide a goal for knowledge without which we would be constantly threatened by disillusionment and agnosticism. The principles of Pure Reason will never give us knowledge, yet they will always be indispensable to knowledge.

The discipline of metaphysics needed little defense among the philosophers of the eighteenth century, so the bulk of the *Dialectic* is concerned with the demonstration of the illusory nature of traditional metaphysics and specific metaphysical theses and their proofs. Kant separated these theses into three classes: those principles maintaining the "absolute unity of the conscious subject" (the *soul*), those principles maintaining the "absolute unity of all phenomena" (the *world*), and those principles concerned with an "Ultimate Being" (*God*). Of the many principles of Pure Reason, only three constitute the central concern of metaphysics:

> *Metaphysics has for the real object of its investigation three ideas only; God, Freedom, and Immortality; . . . Everything else treated by that science is a means only in order to establish those ideas and their reality.*[42]

In his study of the metaphysical principles regarding the Soul (the "psychological ideas"), Kant discusses the possibility of an essential "I" going beyond the contingencies of human existence. He begins by renewing the argument of the *Deduction* concerning the "possibility of the 'I think' accompanying all our experiences." However, this self (the *transcendental ego*), as the transcendental unity of apperception, cannot be an *object* of any possible experience; it is always "behind" experience. Because this ego is not a possible object of experience, it cannot be known under the categories, and cannot even be spoken of as a *something,* for it would be a something without any possible properties. Because the ego of the "I think" is transcendental, we can argue that it *is* by virtue of its necessity for any experience or knowledge; but because it also transcends any possible experience, and therefore is a *noumenal ego,* there is nothing more that we can know about it. The traditional doctrine of the soul cannot give us any knowledge.

Similarly, Kant argues that all previous attempts to prove the existence of God, who is also a noumenal being, must arrive at their conclusion through fallacious reasoning. He offers us brilliant refutations of the traditional ontological, teleological and cosmological proofs for the existence of God,[43] and goes on to argue that no argument by pure reason can succeed in producing a valid proof of His existence. Yet Kant is quite clear that this failure is not a justification for atheism or even religious agnosticism, for the existence of God as a transcendental *ideal* can be proven in other ways (which Kant attempts in the second *Critique*).

It is in his discussion of the "cosmological ideas," however, that Kant demonstrates the most remarkable consequences of the illusory use of pure reason. In a series of principles which he calls the *Antinomies,* Kant shows that metaphysics not only provides theses which cannot be justified in the traditional way, but produces theses whose antitheses can be defended equally well by valid arguments from equally compelling premises. There are four pairs of antinomies, each pair generated by the misapplication of one set of categories beyond the boundaries of experience. For example:

> *I Thesis: the world has a beginning in time and space. Antithesis: the world has no beginning in time and space.*
>
> *II Thesis: everything consists of ultimately simple elements. Antithesis: everything is composite; there are no simple elements.*[44]

There is no need for us to discuss the arguments Kant provides for these; it will suffice to note that Kant believed all four arguments to be valid. However, he also maintained that the fact that contradictory conclusions could be derived validly proved that both pairs of antinomies are founded on a self-contradictory concept which is essential to Reason itself—the treatment of noumena as if they could be objects of knowledge.

The later antinomies are of more direct interest to us, for they shall lead us into the second *Critique:*

> *III Thesis: there are in the world causes through freedom (in human action). Antithesis: there is no freedom, but only natural causes.*
>
> *IV Thesis: there is a necessary being. Antithesis: no being is necessary.*[45]

These antinomies, according to Kant, are also proven validly, but are quite different from the 'mathematical' antinomies in not being contradictory after all. Rather, the antithesis of each pair is valid of phenomena; the thesis of each pair is valid of noumena. In other words, freedom of action and the existence of God cannot be proven on a phenomenal level as we have already seen, but now Kant gives us the surprising conclusion that as noumena, they can yet be proven.

This surprising promise that the transcendent principles concerning God, Freedom, and the Immortality of the Soul can be justified is not given full proof until the second *Critique.* What is important for an understanding of the first *Critique* is that Kant has no desire to eliminate metaphysics, contrary to some of his own misleading statements, but takes at least these three metaphysical principles as central concerns of his entire philosophy. In the first *Critique,* he is anxious to show that these principles cannot be justified by an appeal to pure reason, and they cannot be taken as knowledge because they are necessarily divorced from experience; but one of the purposes of this *Critique* is to save these principles from the universal validity of science and its methods; and it does by taking these principles as central doctrines of *morality,* as *postulates of practical reason.*

> *Metaphysics does not require these ideas for the sake of natural science, but in order to go beyond nature.*[46]



**Morality and Metaphysics**

Although the *Critique of Pure Reason* begins by announcing its defense of the three key metaphysical theses of God, Freedom, and Immortality, the first *Critique* nowhere attempts to justify these principles. Quite to the contrary: the *Transcendental Dialectic,* which is concerned with metaphysical problems, consists of demonstrations that the methods by which these principles have been defended cannot possibly succeed. Kant does maintain a parallel between his defense of the a priori principles of mathematics and natural science and the a priori principles of metaphysics, but he does not do so until his second *Critique.* There, although he maintains the claims from the *Dialectic* that metaphysical principles cannot give us knowledge, he argues with the same transcendental method of the first *Critique,* the *necessity* and *universality* of the above three metaphysical principles. However, because these principles do not concern any possible experience, and because, unlike the principles of the *Aesthetic* and the *Analytic,* they do not state the conditions for any experience, they cannot be shown to be a priori *knowledge.* Rather, these are shown to be necessary *postulates* of *practical reason,* that is, statements of the conditions for the application of reason not to the understanding or to supersensible objects but to the 'determination of the will' in right *action.* Practical reason, as opposed to pure or theoretical reason, is concerned not with what is true but with what is right, and the synthetic a priori principles of practical reason are not necessary truths, but statements of the necessities of *duty* and *obligation. The Critique of Practical Reason,*[47] therefore, begins not with a concern for the scope and limits of human knowledge, but with a concern for the a priori rational demands of human action, with a *metaphysics of morals.*

The postulates of practical reason, God, Freedom, and Immortality, are defended by the demonstration that they lie at the basis of any morality, or, what for Kant is the same, for any *rational* action. Such principles are not construed as knowledge, but rather are necessary as articles of faith;

their necessity is a moral necessity. Thus, belief in God, in immortality, or in the autonomy of human action is independent of any possible evidence, for they bear no possible relationship to any experience whatever. Yet Kant refuses to take the step that most often follows such a characterization of faith as independent of evidence; namely, he does not go on to claim that articles of faith are *irrational* or at least nonrational and therefore to be grasped subjectively or emotionally. Reason is still intimately involved in the acceptance of these postulates, for they are necessary for rational action. Although there is a sharp cleavage between the principles of the first *Critique* and the postulates of the *Critique of Practical Reason,* Kant intends to establish these a priori principles of morality and religion with as much certainty and necessity as he has already established the Principle of Universal Causation. The second *Critique* may be considered as a parallel to the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Analytic,* but instead of taking human consciousness as the given, it is human *moral consciousness* with which we begin. Where Kant has asked, "How is experience possible?" he now asks "How is morality possible?" Where the first *Critique* repeatedly insisted that all knowledge be grounded in experience, the second *Critique* is equally insistent that all morality be grounded in reason. Just as the first *Critique* gave us the conditions for any possible knowledge, the second *Critique* and its companion *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*[48] give us a transcendental exposition of those principles which are the conditions of any possible morality.

A philosophical investigation of morality promises two important results; first, there is always vital need for the formulation of a supreme and unshakable principle of all morality which may serve as an absolute criterion in all moral decisions. Secondly, from what has been said before, we may expect to find a rational justification for the morality-conditioning postulates of God, Freedom, and Immortality.

To serve both of these interests, Kant begins with an analysis of morality, and with an analysis of moral judgments as they are actually made in Protestant bourgeosie German society. The validity of these judgments, in general, Kant takes as a tentative assumption, although it is not at all clear that Kant in fact ever goes on to question this assumption itself. He claims that his investigation of morality proceeds in two steps, first by a regressive argument to the conditions necessary *if* ordinary moral judgments are to be valid, and then by a progressive argument to show that these conditions actually obtain. However, it is in his attempt to provide progressive arguments establishing the objective validity of (Protestant bourgeosie) morality that Kant's moral philosophy is notably inferior to analogous attempts in the first *Critique.* He does provide us with a penetrating analysis of the nature of morality, and his arguments for the moral necessity of the postulates, particularly the postulate of Freedom, are brilliant even when they fail. However, it remains unclear throughout his ethical writings how Kant thinks he has justified morality itself. Rather, the ethics argues only that certain principles must be true *if* our morality is objectively valid and that among these are the postulates of God, Freedom, and Immortality.

The distinctive mark of Kant's ethics is its emphasis on *reason* and its subsequent diminution in the importance of inclination, desire, the search for pleasure, self-love, satisfaction, happiness, and the appeal to any sort of conscience or moral sense. The British moral philosophers before him (notably Hume and Hutcheson) had based their entire ethics on appeal to some form of sense; but ethics thus conceived, Kant argues, makes our moral principles merely conditional on the sentiments and inclinations of the individual, whereas it is the very nature of morality that it applies equally to every man, regardless of his personal inclinations or situation. *Duty,* the central concept of morality, is indifferent to situation and to personal inclination. Furthermore, inclination only *advises* us how to act: reason *commands.* Therefore, the principles of morality cannot be derived from subjective principles of individual interest ("maxims"), but must be derived directly from the disinterested, universally-binding dictates of reason ("laws"). The principles of morality are invariant and, because they are derived from the very nature of (practical) reason itself, they are binding on every rational creature.

In Kant's own terms, maxims and resolutions of the will (decisions to act) are of two sorts. Some principles command us to act in certain ways on the condition that



we desire certain results. For example, "If you wish to enter politics, then move to a city where no one knows you." This command is binding only on someone who already wishes to enter politics; it has no force on one who is disinterested. Such a command or principle is called a *hypothetical imperative.* It holds only for those agents who have the special interests cited (or implied) in the set of conditions stated. *Moral* principles, on the other hand, do not apply only to a limited special interest group, but apply unconditionally to all men. They are *categorical imperatives* because they admit of no exceptions. One ought to do his duty no matter who he is, where he is, what he wants to do, or what he feels like doing. The very nature of morality is such that its principles are *universal laws,* binding on all rational creatures by virtue of the nature of reason alone.

For those philosophers (Hume and Hutcheson) who based morality on a moral sense, or on a pleasure principle or principle of selfishness (Hobbes), or on the motives of satisfaction or happiness (Aristotle and philosophers of the Enlightenment), all moral principles were no more than hypothetical imperatives since the rightness of certain actions had to be decided on the basis of whether they would give this particular man pleasure, or this particular man happiness. In Kant's ethics, however, *right* is totally independent of individual peculiarities, and moreover, independent of personal pleasure, satisfaction, and happiness. A man will often find his duty to be painful, unsatisfying, and contrary to his personal happiness. Yet, this in no way diminishes his obligation. To act morally is to disregard personal interest and act solely *for the sake of duty.* An action is morally good, therefore, if it is performed for the sake of duty alone[49] and a person has a morally good character or has *moral worth* if he acts not from inclination but from duty.

Here is an insight of immense importance which too few philosophers before or after Kant have appreciated. Kant claims that the justification of morality lies in the fact that its principles are embodied in the very nature of reason and not that its principles lead to personal pleasure or happiness. In stressing this point, Kant sometimes speaks (especially in *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*) as if morality and personal inclination are naturally opposed to each other. The importance of Kant's insistence on the independence of morality from personal interest is evident as soon as we analyze previous attempts to justify the obligatoriness of moral principles. In reply to the question "Why should I be moral?" a great many of Kant's predecessors attempted to show that it is ultimately in one's self-interest to be moral. If, as Kant claims again and again, one's interests are sometimes, or even often, at odds with one's duty, then it is futile to argue that doing one's duty is in his interest, for the very nature of the problem is that one's duty and one's interests conflict. Thus, the defense of morality which can be restated, "act counter to your own interests because it is in your own interests" is clearly unsatisfactory. (However, we will see that Kant will do some serious backsliding on precisely this important point.)

As much as Kant insists on the separation of morality and happiness, it is necessary that we do not accept the popular but unwarranted interpretation that Kant took any act motivated by inclination or personal happiness to be wrong or immoral. To the contrary, Kant insists that it is only natural and right that a man should seek his own happiness, and furthermore, that it is only reasonable to expect that a virtuous man will have happiness accompany his moral goodness. Although Kant sometimes gives the impression that personal motives for personal happiness detract from the moral worth of an action, this assuredly is not his intention; if it were the case that the only truly good acts were those done from duty and *opposed* to all inclination, the only good act would be the act of a wholly miserable man. Kant explicitly rejects this interpretation,[50] most importantly, because he sees that it would exclude a truly good man from his notion of moral worth. A philanthropist, for example, gets personal satisfaction and even joy from helping others, and surely he is to be credited with having moral worth in spite of his personal enjoyment. In the most extreme example, those men whom Kant calls "holy," who act *only* from the motive of duty and no other, are surely the most morally worthy of men, and no less so because they receive great personal satisfaction and happiness from their acts of duty. In fact, Kant tells us that a goodwill is an "indispensable condition for our very worthiness to be happy."[51] Therefore,

Kant's position would be best interpreted as not thinking happiness, pleasure, satisfaction, or any inclinations to be themselves either morally good or morally degrading but rather construing these as simply *irrelevant* to morality. The moral worth of an action is to be decided simply by appeal to whether it was done for the sake of duty, not whether or not the agent achieved, or intended to achieve pleasure or happiness thereby. It is in his attempt to emphasize the irrelevance of inclination to moral worth that he tends to leave us with the impression that inclination detracts from moral worth, but in fact, inclination is simply devoid of moral worth and detracts only insofar as it *replaces* the motive of duty. Later, in his discussion of the *Summum Bonum,*[52] Kant goes yet further and claims that it is unthinkable that a man could act for the sake of duty without the expectation that happiness will follow.[53]

Kant's insistence upon morality as duty for duty's sake leads us to a unique kind of *moral* consideration. Because an action done from duty has its moral worth solely in its having been done for the sake of duty, neither the actual results of that action, nor even the results foreseen in that action are relevant to its moral worth. Because the actual results of action are due to contingencies beyond the person's knowledge and control, these cannot be used in judging either the morality of the action or the moral worth of the agent. This is not to say that an act cannot be judged as 'fortunate' or 'disastrous', but that these judgments are in no way *moral* judgments. In Kant's own terms, the only thing that can be conceived of as good without qualification is a *goodwill.* A person may be morally good even if the consequences of his actions are generally disastrous (if he has good intentions and acts solely for the sake of duty). One is reminded of Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin who is just such a morally perfect person in spite of his consistent ruination of those around him by virtue of his goodness.

Because only a "goodwill" makes for moral worth, Kant continuously warns us against confusing acting *in conformity with duty* with acting *for the sake of duty.* A man who *happens* to perform good acts for personal reasons is not morally worthy, and his acts are not morally good no matter how exactly they conform to our expectations of what the moral course of action would be. But neither is a goodwill merely "good intentions" without underlying principles. An act of kindness which is done without regard to principle does not manifest a goodwill. A goodwill must determine action *for the sake of duty,* and because duty means *for the sake of law,* moral goodness and worth depend on action *on principle.* Morality depends solely on action directed to the satisfaction of a moral principle; what other motives or considerations might guide our actions, what our expectations of the results might be, and what actually follows our action is not of *moral* concern.

The central task of the investigation of morality must be, therefore, to discover and formulate those moral principles which are objectively valid and binding for all rational creatures, action for the sake of which is the sole consideration in determination of moral worth.

These moral principles, or categorical imperatives, can be summarized in the single consideration that principles of morality are invariant and apply equally to each and every moral agent. This consideration gives us *the* Categorical Imperative, the supreme moral principle from which all other moral principles, or specific categorical imperatives, are derivative. The first formulation of this categorical imperative is a restatement of the demand for universality in morals:

*Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.*[54]

and alternatively:

*Act as if the maxim of your action were through your will to become a universal law of nature.*[55]

Because this imperative is a *formal* condition for morality, it does not claim merely that you should act only in those cases when universalization does not lead to disadvantage to myself or even to others, but rather Kant claims that the universalization of the wrong principles leads to *inconsistency,* not merely to disaster. This is an important point in Kant, for if he were arguing only that the test of a moral principle is the consequences of universalization, then the categorical imperative would



be merely a "material" and therefore hypothetical imperative telling us what to do *if* we wish to avoid disaster. Because he is arguing that the categorical imperative is nonconditional and derivative of reason alone, a violation of this principle must constitute a violation of reason itself.

However, it is not at all clear what Kant intends by the notion of "inconsistency," and his examples only make the issue more difficult: suppose a man finds himself in a position of needing to borrow money, which he knows he will never be capable of paying back. He is in desperate need, but knows that he will not get the loan unless he falsely promises to return the money within a certain period of time. He thus faces the dilemma of deciding whether it is right for him to borrow money when he needs it by falsely promising to repay the loan. To find out whether such an action is morally right, he applies the categorical imperative and universalizes the maxim that one may make false promises under certain conditions of need. Then,

*I see straight away that this maxim can never rank as a universal law of nature and be self-consistent, but must necessarily contradict itself. For the universality of a law that everyone believing himself to be in need can make any promise he pleases with the intention not to keep it would make promising, and the very purpose of promising itself impossible, since no one would believe he was being promised anything, but would laugh at utterances of this kind as empty shams.*[56]

Notice that the 'inconsistency' Kant speaks of here is not strictly speaking a logical inconsistency, for there is no breach of logic in the supposition that the institution of promise-making should become meaningless. Rather, Kant seems to have in mind that the universalization of the maxim condoning promise-breaking would result in the destruction of the very institution which allows for the making and breaking of promises. The 'inconsistency', then, is the "self-defeating" consequences of an act which, if universally performed, would destroy the very possibility of anyone's performing that act.

Similarly, Kant replies to the question of the morality of committing suicide by telling us that we should ask whether a principle condoning suicide could (consistently) become a universal law of nature. However,

*it is then seen at once that a system of nature by whose law the very same feeling whose function is to stimulate the furtherance of life should actually destroy life would contradict itself. . .*[57]

Here again, the notion of "inconsistency" (or 'contradiction') is not a strictly logical notion. Rather, it is the 'inconsistency' of a universalized maxim destroying the very basis of the possibility of the relevant action, in this case, the existence of life which is necessary for anyone to commit suicide.

Although Kant's notion of "inconsistency" is obscure, his purpose in insisting that immoral principles when universalized lead to inconsistency is sufficiently clear. The fault in such universalizations must be a *formal* fault because the categorical imperative must be derivative of a priori reason alone. Otherwise Kant's central claim, that morality is a function of reason and not of personal inclinations (requiring appeal to specific cases), must be a failure.

Kant gives us two further formulations of *the* categorical imperative, which are claimed to be restatements of the same consideration summarized in the first formulation. Most importantly, he tells us that we should

*Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.*[58]

If I treat another person as a means to my personal ends, I am placing myself in a privileged position, one which I cannot use in universal legislation. To use another person is to fail to treat him as an independent rational judge, either because of some deception or use of force on my part. From this formulation, Kant introduces his Utopian ideal of a *Kingdom of Ends,* a community of rational beings in which each person is an autonomous moral legislator and judge. Because each member of this community treats himself and every other as an exact equal, individual legislation leads to a single set of principles, allowing for total harmony in which there can be

none of the usual human tragedy of conflict of personal interests. Because each man acts out of duty for the universal law, there can be no conflict of interests simply because each man's interest is at one with the interests of all.

### Freedom—The First Principle of Practical Reason

In the above analysis of morality, Kant has unfolded for us the (analytically) necessary conditions for there to be morality, namely, that moral right and moral worth are concerned with a goodwill and not with results or inclinations, and that moral principles must be 'objective' or universally applicable without exception (as summarized in the *Categorical Imperative*). However, it is possible that morality is an illusion, if for example, men are never capable of acting from reason but are always the slaves of their inclinations. There can only be morality if it is possible for men to act morally, and this possibility can come about only if men can act according to reason, that is, for the sake of duty and not simply as determined by personal inclination.

The first condition of morality must, therefore, be man's possibility of acting either in accordance with or against his moral obligations. If a man cannot possibly perform an act of duty because he is the helpless pawn of his 'passions', or, in the language of the twentieth century, if he is fully determined by unconscious forces beyond his control, then it does not even make sense to claim that he has an obligation to perform that act. For example, under no circumstances can a blind man have an obligation to read, nor a cripple have an obligation to run. Kant's famous catch phrase, " 'ought' implies 'can'," tells us that there can be no obligation unless there is the possibility of fulfilling that obligation. On the other hand, it makes no sense to speak of obligation in cases in which a man cannot help but perform some action. For example, it would be absurd to speak of a man's obligation to obey the law of gravity, for he could not possibly do otherwise.

Suppose that there were *always* a sufficient set of conditions such that a man could never help but do exactly as he does. We might never know this set of conditions, which would include such diverse determinants as early childhood, neurological conditions, certain unconscious motives and beliefs; but *if* there were such a set, we could never meaningfully speak of obligation, or duty, or responsibility, or morality, for these presuppose a man's freedom to do or not to do those actions which are commanded by the dictates of reason.

According to Kant's first *Critique,* there must be just such a set of sufficient causal conditions for every act a man performs. Because man is a being in the phenomenal world, and because the principle of universal causation must apply to all beings in this world, a man and all of his actions must be considered fully determined by the laws of nature. As such, the most 'free' or 'voluntary' actions are just as much the necessary outcome of some set of natural and 'involuntary' causes as those actions which we now consider wholly involuntary and determined (for example, those 'actions' due to sudden brain disturbances). If all actions are fully determined, then there cannot possibly be morality, for moral principles cannot be binding on creatures who have not the freedom to do or not to do what these moral principles command.

However, the first *Critique* has left open for us the possibility of considering man outside of the natural order of things. In addition to the standpoint which takes man as a natural object, as an empirical ego, the *Transcendental Deduction* introduced to us a perspective of man as transcendental ego, as a self lying 'behind' the natural order of phenomenal objects. As a transcendent(al) self, beyond the possibility of any experience whatever, this being is noumenal. As Kant tells us in the *Deduction,* the transcendent(al) self is the self as it is *in-itself:* the empirical ego is the self as it *appears* to itself, that is, as phenomenon. As noumenon, however, the transcendent(al) or noumenal ego is not subject to the conditions of knowledge disclosed in the first *Critique;* specifically, it is not subject to the category of causality. Therefore, the Principle of Universal Causation does not apply to it. As a noumenal self, man is outside the natural world, and his actions need not be fully determined by antecedent causes. In this way, Kant's distinction between empirical and transcendental ego begins to blossom into one of the most intriguing and possibly most obscure doctrines of modern philosophy. This distinction allows Kant to maintain *both* that man is understandable as a



natural object, that is, as an object for scientific study, and that man is free from causal determination and therefore responsible for his actions and bound by the moral law. If coherent, this doctrine of the *"two-standpoints"* (man as natural object and man as moral agent) may succeed in resolving the very deepest underlying problem of Kant's entire philosophy, namely the defense of the universal validity of science as well as the objective validity of morality.

In the *Transcendental Dialectic,* Kant has already argued that the antinomy of causality[59] demonstrates the a priori truth of both the principle of universal causation (as demonstrated in the *Analytic*) and the possibility of "freedom as a cause" of action. In the *Dialectic,* Kant indicates that causality applies only to phenomena while freedom applies to noumena. The proof of freedom, however, does not occur until the second *Critique,* where, for the first time, Kant attempts to prove something about noumenal objects. Kant still insists that principles concerning noumena cannot give us *knowledge* and that pure or theoretical reason has nothing to say of transcendent objects. He does attempt to provide substantial truths about noumena in this one case, and it will be argued that, in doing so, he lays the basis for the undermining of his entire philosophy:

> *The idea of freedom is the only concept of the supersensible which . . . proves its objective reality in nature.*[60]

Kant's argument for the postulate of freedom, although in some ways the subversion of his entire philosophy, is also the one attempt he makes to justify the original 'tentative' assumption of his entire ethics, namely the objective validity of our (that is, Protestant bourgeois German) ordinary moral judgments. Kant recognizes that any attempt to justify the postulate of freedom by appeal to morality would be circular (since freedom is a necessary condition of morality). In order to defend the postulate of freedom, therefore, Kant reintroduces the noumenal or transcendent world, which hitherto has been a mere *limiting* concept about which we could intelligibly say nothing. Now, in order to defend freedom, Kant attempts to show that man as moral agent is a *noumenal* being and thereby free of causal determination. Freedom from the laws of nature is not a sufficient condition for rationality, of course. Kant insists that freedom *from* causal laws is only a *limiting* or *negative* freedom. However, man is free also in a *positive* sense, free *to* think and act in conformity with the moral law. Thus, considerations about human freedom and concern for rationality and the moral law are never far apart. Sometimes, in both the second *Critique* and in *Foundations,* Kant tells us that "freedom is the moral law" and a "lawless free will would be contradictory."[61]

The noumenal ego, according to Kant, is the "I Will" (as the transcendental ego was characterized as the "I Think"). The "pure activity" of this "I Will" is Reason in its practical employment. As a noumenal being, man is a willing, rational, free creature.[62] 'Will', 'rationality', and 'freedom' are intimately related in the characterization of man as agent;

> *Will is a kind of causality belonging to living things so far as they are rational.*[63]

> Freedom *would then be the property this causality has of being able to work independently of* determination *by alien causes . . .*[64]

> Freedom Must be Presupposed as a Property of the Will of All Rational Beings.[65]

Thus, freedom is not simply a postulate of morality, but a necessary precondition for rationality. However, Kant often allows himself to move from this position to the considerably weaker stand that rationality presupposes only the *Idea* of freedom;

> *Now I assert that every being who cannot act except under the* idea *of freedom is by this alone—from a practical point of view—really free.*[66]

Thus we shall find that Kant's defense of the postulate of freedom wavers between the defense of metaphysical freedom, which asserts outright that human actions are not determined because the Will is not determined except by itself, and a defense of a much weaker thesis—that acting rationally (morally) presupposes that the agent *suppose* that he is free. The former claim runs head-on into the Principle of Universal Causation which has been argued to be a priori true in the first *Critique;* the second claim allows that the

*Idea* of freedom which a rational agent must suppose may nevertheless be false, and this claim does not, therefore, conflict with the Principle of Universal Causation.

In Kant's practical philosophy, the dichotomy between noumena and phenomena becomes greatly pronounced. In the *Critique of Pure Reason,* "noumenon" is a 'limiting' concept; in the *Critique of Practical Reason,* Kant maintains that we *must* suppose there to be noumena;

*behind appearances we must admit and assume something else which is not appearance—namely things in themselves —although since we can never be acquainted with these, but only with the way in which they affect us, we must resign ourselves to the fact that we can never get any nearer to them and can never know what they are in themselves. This must yield us a distinction, however rough, between the sensible* world *and the* intelligible world, *the first of which can vary a great deal according to the differences in sensibility in sundry observers, while the second, which is its ground, always remains the same.*[67]

How far removed from the hardheaded 'Critique' in Kant's epistemology is this? The earlier distinction between the world-in-itself and the world-as-we-know-it now becomes a dichotomy of two different worlds. Of course, much of the expression of this "two-world" view is metaphorical, but the metaphor is so pervasive that we are hard put to separate metaphor from philosophical theory;

*as regards mere perception and the capacity for perceiving sensations he must count himself as belonging to the sensible world, but as regards whatever there may be in him of pure activity (whatever comes into consciousness . . . immediately) he must count himself as belonging to the intelligible world.*[68]

Of course, these two worlds are closely related, for human actions are not simply acts of Will (in the intelligible world), but are also, and result in, movements of one's body and movements and changes in the world (that is, the sensible world). We are tempted to say, of course, that these two worlds are not merely *related,* but are *identical.* Unfortunately, this identification cannot be made for Kant. If the worlds were identical, the laws valid for one would also be valid for the other. Since the absence of causality in the intelligible world is the purpose of the "two-worlds" view, Kant would most certainly not accept such an identification.

Kant sees this problem, but his insistence on the "two standpoints" forbids him from resolving it:

*Reason must . . . suppose that no contradiction is to be found between freedom and natural necessity ascribed to the very same human actions; for it can abandon the concept of nature as little as it can abandon that of freedom.*[69]

Is there no contradiction?

*. . . while freedom is only an* idea *of reason whose objective reality is questionable, nature is* a concept of the understanding, *which proves, and must necessarily prove, its reality in examples from experience.*[70]

Kant is evidently uncomfortable with this 'antinomy', and constantly tends to weaken his defense of freedom to a defense of the need for a (perhaps false) *Idea* of freedom.

*The concept of the intelligible world is thus only* a point of view *which reason finds itself constrained to adopt outside appearances* in order to conceive itself as practical.[71]

and, more obscurely he argues the *Idea* of freedom, although necessary, to be unintelligible:

*Thus the Idea of freedom can never admit of full comprehension, or indeed of insight, since it can never by any analogy have an example falling under it. . . . Nothing is left but* defense . . .[72]

The confusion over the nature of *Freedom* causes Kant to have similar concern over his related notions of "Reason" and "Practicality (Will)." He maintains, for example, that "all human reason is totally incapable of explaining this" [how reason can be practical][73] and finds himself unable to understand "how freedom itself is possible as causality of the will."[74] As a result, Kant finds himself ultimately dumbfounded by his entire ethics:



*And thus, while we do not comprehend the practical unconditioned necessity of the moral imperative, we do comprehend its incomprehensibility.*[75]

All that becomes clear is the necessity of the postulate of freedom for rationality and morality. However, it never becomes clear to what extent real freedom is demanded (an actual breakdown of the Principle of Universal Causality) or to what extent a man must simply *suppose* himself to be free in order to consider himself as a responsible moral agent.

In order to establish the postulate of freedom, in either the strong or the weaker sense, Kant must avoid any support from morality itself, and he must likewise avoid any appeal to a notion of rationality that already assumes the objective validity of morality. Since the objective validity of morality itself presupposes the postulate of freedom, the problem of the second *Critique* is to avoid the vicious circle of defending freedom in terms of morality and morality in terms of freedom. Kant again sees this problem, and the introduction of the two-world view is an attempt to defend the postulate of freedom apart from any reference to morality:

*The suspicion which we raised above is now removed—namely that there might be hidden a circle in our inference from freedom to autonomy and from autonomy to the moral law; that in effect we had presumed the idea of freedom only because of the moral law in order subsequently to infer the moral law in its turn from freedom. . . . We now see that when we think of ourselves as free, we transfer ourselves into the intelligible world as members and recognize the autonomy of the will together with its consequences—morality. Whereas when we think ourselves under obligation, we look upon ourselves as belonging to the sensible world and yet to the intelligible world at the same time.*[76]

The last sentence of the quotation indicates to us once more that the relationship between the sensible and intelligible worlds remains a very serious problem, but it is not clear how the two-worlds view can solve the problem of circularity which here concerns Kant. Introduction of the intelligible world to defend freedom and escape the circle seems to be a failure from the outset, since the notion of the 'intelligible world' is introduced as a product of Reason and, more specifically, of practical reason. Similarly, in the *Critique of Practical Reason,*[77] it again looks as if Kant assumes rationality (and the moral law) in order to prove the postulate of freedom. Thus, Kant's overall attempt to prove the reality of human freedom of action runs aground on several counts. First, it is not clear that Kant ever escapes the vicious circle of arguing from rationality to freedom to rationality, and, if he does not escape this circle, he has succeeded in proving only that *if* morality is objectively valid, then the postulate of freedom must be true. Secondly, Kant's radical claim that man must be considered differently as an object of nature and as agent (a claim to be considered by every author we shall study) is coupled with his equally radical but more problematic claim that man is a 'member' of two different 'worlds'—a sensible (phenomenal) world and an intelligible (noumenal) world. Given what Kant has argued in the first *Critique,* namely, that we cannot know the noumenal world, is not the notion of 'membership in the noumenal world' incoherent? Furthermore, is the identification of man as agent with man in the intelligible world necessary for Kant's purposes? Is it not possible to interpret freedom of action within a phenomenal framework? Future authors, notably Hegel and Sartre, shall attempt to do so. Thirdly, Kant supposes that the two standpoints are *independent,* and that it is possible that the Principle of Universal Causation is true universally in the sensible world, and false or meaningless in the intelligible world. If it is a priori true that every event has a sufficient cause, then in what sense could a man's action be undetermined? It would seem that we must either give up the Principle of Universal Causation or give up our belief in human freedom of action. Or, if we return to the "two-world" or "two-standpoints" view, then we must clarify the distinction between these two worlds in such a way that we can make sense of the fact that an action seems to span both worlds at once. The choice is not a pleasant one; either we maintain belief in two contradictory but equally necessary theses, or we invoke the obscure if not incomprehensible notion of "two worlds" to save both theses and avoid contradiction. Or, we may take the route along which Kant sometimes directs himself and weaken the postulate of freedom

to the need to *think* of oneself as free in order to consider oneself as a responsible agent. If it is only a need to think one is free, and not be free, and if there are independent grounds for thinking one is never in fact free (the Principle of Universal Causality tells us this), then the idea of freedom is only a *delusion* of freedom: the incomprehensibility of which Kant complains is that sort of incomprehensibility which results from the attempt to prove a false doctrine true at any cost.

**God and Immortality**

In Kant's proof of the postulates of God and immortality, there is no doubt but that the objective validity of morality is accepted as given. These proofs, which together constitute a demonstration of the necessity of the Christian faith, prove only what must be accepted *if* we are to be bound to the moral law. There is no attempt whatever to establish the postulates of God and immortality independently of their necessity for morality. On the contrary, Kant insists throughout all three *Critiques* that there is no legitimate possibility of doing so.

Kant's treatment of God as a postulate of practical and not pure reason marks a major departure from other philosophers who had attempted to link morality and religion. Judeo-Christian theology had long been made the basis for morality, and God had been cited as the source of moral values, as their justification and as their enforcer. (For example, St. Augustine's *City of God* is such a defense of God as the source of moral values. More obviously, the Old Testament is an elaborate assertion of this claim.) In other words, morality had its basis in religion, and morality could thus be justified by appeal to religion, which had its justification in the truths of Pure Reason. With Kant, however, we find the dependency of morality upon religion turned on its head; morality is supported by appeal to reason alone, while religion, for its support, requires an appeal to morality. This is not to say, of course, that Kant would allow that we could keep morality and dispense with religion. Even if we ignore Kant's personal religious temperament, it is evident that to interpret belief in God as a postulate of practical reason is to retain the traditional theological doctrine that without God, there can be no morality. Morality still requires belief in God as its presupposition, but the proof of God can only proceed by beginning with morality. God is necessary for morality, but, apart from moral considerations, God is without philosophical importance. Thus, in spite of Kant's personal piety, it is already evident how his philosophy will contribute to the rapid diminution of the philosophical importance of religion which, after a brilliant but desperate attempt at salvation by Hegel, will end in the irrationalism of Kierkegaard and the vicious atheism of Nietzsche.

Kant's justification of the postulates of God and immortality can be separated into two very different sets of arguments. The first of these, the best known and historically most important, are formulated in the last two *Critiques* and in his increasingly recognized *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone.* Central to his arguments is the notion of the *'Summum Bonum'*, with which we shall be concerned in this section. However, there are convincing reasons for supposing that this notion of *Summum Bonum* makes Kant's ethics inconsistent, and Kant, in recognition of this, dispensed with it in his very last writings[78] and attempted to justify his religious beliefs without appeal to a *Summum Bonum.* However, we shall not pay much attention to these later writings, not because they are unimportant, but simply because they had little effect on the later writers with whom we shall be concerned.

Although action in accordance with the moral law is the crux of Kant's ethics, he does appreciate, as we have already noted, that happiness plays a necessary role in the ideally good life. Although a life of duty may be morally good, a life of duty which has more than its due share of misery could hardly be called a good life. In most earlier moral philosophies, the connection of happiness and the good life was never considered problematic, for happiness was nearly always recognized as a necessary component of the good life, or even as the good life itself. Where virtue was also necessary for the good life, it was usually subsumed under happiness (and virtue and duties were analyzed in terms of the happiness they procured). For Aristotle, for example, it was inconceivable that a virtuous man not be happy, for happiness (*eudaimonia*) was defined as "activity of the soul in accordance with virtue."[79] For Kant however, there is a problem. By insisting that happiness and the search for



happiness are irrelevant to morality, he seems forced to concede that a man has an unconditional obligation to do his duty even if it turns out that his duty brings him nothing but disaster and misery.

Kant does not accept this consequence of his ethics, but rather agrees with the classical picture of the good life as consisting of both virtue and happiness. The *Summum Bonum,* the highest good for man, is the rational ideal in which virtue and happiness always go hand in hand:

*In the* Summum Bonum *which is practical for us, i.e., one which is to be made real by our will, virtue and happiness are thought of as necessarily combined, so that the one cannot be assumed by a practical reason without the other belonging to it.*[80]

Kant recognizes the problem of incorporating happiness into his conception of the good life, and refers to the problem of doing so as the "antinomy of practical reason." Namely, how can the *Summum Bonum* necessarily include happiness if action for the sake of happiness is devoid of moral worth?

*If, therefore, the* Summum Bonum *is impossible according to practical rules, then the moral law which commands that it be furthered must be fantastic, directed to empty imaginary ends, and consequently inherently false.*[81]

If the *Summum Bonum* requires virtue, which is action for the sake of duty alone, but also requires happiness, it seems therefore that action for the *Summum Bonum* is impossible, for it requires acting both for happiness and without the expectation of happiness.

However, it would seem that the most primitive observation of our world demonstrates that virtue and happiness are not commensurate, and Kant expresses amazement that so many philosophers have argued so:

*It must appear strange that philosophers of both ancient and modern times have been able to find happiness in very just proportion to virtue in this life.*[82]

Kant, however, sees no reason to suppose that this world should reward virtue with happiness, but rather, because man as moral agent is not of the sensible world, the *Summum Bonum* need not be of this world either.

Expectation of immediate reward for virtuous action is the most serious threat to morality, for if men believe that their doing good does not make them happier, they will abandon their duty for immediate happiness. Therefore, if morality is to be binding upon men, belief in the *Summum Bonum* must be maintained as well. This can be done, claims Kant, by adopting the postulates of God and immortality, for if we believe in a God who is himself a moral (that is, rational) being and is also the ground or ultimate cause of the universe, then we can easily justify our belief in the harmony between the moral and the natural order. If we believe in an afterlife, then we can justify our belief in the just distribution of happiness, though not in this life. God and immortality are thus necessary for the *Summum Bonum*, which is in turn necessary for morality. The postulates of God and immortality are therefore necessary as conditions for morality.

At this juncture, it is convenient to mention a philosophical disposition which runs through all three of Kant's *Critiques,* the disposition to interpret phenomena *teleologically,* as if they have an ultimate purpose. The notion of "teleology", which appears in the *Dialectic,* is implied throughout the discussion of the *Summum Bonum* and lies at the very core of Kant's aesthetic theory, but it does not receive sustained attention until the second half of the *Critique of Judgment.* In that discussion, Kant claims that we have a natural tendency to look for purposive explanations, even though the Principle of Universal Causation tells us that mechanistic or causal explanations are always available. Kant himself manifests this tendency quite often. For example, he argues that the existence of *reason* in man is sufficient to prove that its purpose and therefore the purpose of man cannot be to achieve happiness[83] simply because man already has an 'organ', namely *instinct,* which has this purpose. In his discussion of the *Summum Bonum,* the notion of a teleological universe is central, for it is only because the universe has an ultimate direction (the direction of God) that we may expect that the amoral natural world and the rational world of ideals and values will coincide. Because we may believe that the world, as noumenon, is teleological, we

may therefore act for the sake of duty with the full expectation that our good deeds will be ultimately rewarded by happiness.

However, once we have established that the only justification of religious belief is its necessity for morality, the exact content of our religion is still in question. Because the objects of religious devotion are noumenal, and therefore not objects of any possible knowledge, we are only entitled to attribute to these objects those properties which are necessary for morality. Such morally justifiable beliefs Kant calls "natural," because they can be derived from (practical) reason alone; a religion consisting only of natural beliefs is a natural religion. Against this, most religions are based on dogma derived solely from authority; such a religion is said to be "statutory" or "learned."[64] Of those beliefs of a natural religion, Kant has thus far mentioned two, belief in God and belief in immortality. There are many conceptions of God, and a great many appendages to belief in God which the Christian faith had also accepted. A major task of a critique of religion must be to separate those beliefs which are natural from those which are merely learned. However, Kant cannot be judged to have performed very satisfactorily in this respect, and his few arguments are not nearly adequate to support the huge amount of traditional Christian theology that he accepts as natural.

With regard to the nature of God, Kant is quite specific but hardly threatening to orthodox Christian thought. Because a God which supports morality must be capable of understanding both the natural and the moral law, He must be intelligent, but since He is supreme, Kant stipulates that He must be *omniscient.* Since He must be capable of acting in accordance with the moral law, He must be powerful, but since He is supreme, *omnipotent.* Since the moral law and its obeyance must be eternal, He must be eternal, and since the moral law is binding at all times, He must be *omnipresent.* In short, Kant almost routinely characterizes the traditional Christian God without any serious attempt to question the legitimacy of this conception of God, and uncritically announces Christianity in its entirety as the one religion which successfully fulfills the demands of morality:

*The doctrine of Christianity, even when not regarded as a religious doctrine, gives at this point a concept of the* Summum Bonum *(the Kingdom of God) which is alone sufficient to the strictest demand of practical reason.*[65]

Kant's discussion of the postulate of immortality occupies only a few pages demonstrating the necessity of the postulate for the *Summum Bonum.* Although several previous discussions allow us to confidently fill in Kant's views on the possibility of immortality, it is not at all evident that his theory could be made coherent. In the *Transcendental Deduction,* we have already been introduced to the notion of a transcendental or limiting ego which lies beyond the scope of the categories. Because one of the categories is substance, this limiting ego cannot be a substance. It is on this ground that Kant rejects the traditional doctrine of the soul as substance (the "paralogism of psychology" in the *Dialectic*). However, as noumenon, the self is timeless. Not being an object of experience, it need not conform to the temporal a priori form of experience. Immortality of the soul is thus comprehensible for Kant because the self as noumenon is timeless (just as God as noumenon is beyond space and time). However, beyond this general outline, Kant's doctrine of immortality is most likely incoherent. The immortal soul needed for the postulate of morality would have to be capable of being happy, and of continuing to exist as precisely the same person who in life has earned this happiness. However, the transcendental ego, as we have discussed it so far, is not the ego which has a *personality,* which is a property of the empirical or phenomenal ego. Yet the phenomenal ego, because it is subject to the a priori forms of experience and the categories, cannot be what survives the death of the body. Unfortunately, Kant spends no time discussing these problems, and his postulate of immortality remains a hopelessly obscure but necessary corollary of his postulation of Christianity as necessary for morality.

In basing his entire justification of religion on the notion of the *Summum Bonum,* Kant opens his ethics to very serious objections. Because his analysis of morality demands that only action in accordance with and solely for the sake of the moral law has moral worth, he is committed to excluding actions done for happiness as morally worthy. Yet the notion of the *Summum Bonum* commits Kant to the incompatible doctrine that a man is bound to the moral law only insofar as he has the expectation of happiness as a consequence of his good acts. Kant makes several attempts to render these two theses compatible; for example, by insisting that the necessity of accepting the *Summum Bonum* is only a *subjective* necessity,[66] and by insisting that the causation of happiness by virtue is not 'phenomenal causation', but "indirect, mediated by an intelligible Author of nature."[67] Kant ultimately gives up the notion of the *Summum Bonum* altogether and replaces it with a notion of the moral law itself as Divine and the moral experience itself as a bit of revelation of the Divine.

In his ethical writings, Kant promises that he will establish the validity of morality, and thus show us why the moral law is binding on all men. In fact, at the very best, he does no more than show us that, *if* we are free (which he may or may not have proved), and *if* we accept his other postulates of God and immortality, and *if* we accept his analysis of morality (as universality as stated in the categorical imperative), *then* we will accept the obligation to be moral. If, however, one refuses to accept any of these conditions, then the question, "Why should I be moral?" remains without an answer. For example, suppose someone refused to accept the categorical imperative, but did acknowledge that the categorical imperative is presupposed in all our ordinary moral judgments and then claimed that this is not in itself a proof that we should continue to take these judgments as binding. If we question the legitimacy of morality to make categorical demands of us, what reply has Kant given? Those principles which Kant identifies as "categorical" or moral have surely not been given the unshakable a priori justification promised by Kant.

Whatever failings might be found in Kant's philosophy, they are the failings of a unique genius who dared a brilliant deflection from contemporary rationalist and Enlightenment thought, but yet refused to join forces with Rousseau and the Romantics on whose behalf he was continuously warring. With the Romantics, Kant was willing to transcend the demands of science and to reject the abstractions of pure reason to enter the realms of action and faith. Also with the Romantics, Kant emphasized above all respect for the human individual as an end in himself. However, unlike the Romantics, Kant never left the embraces of reason, and, as a result, his emphasis on the individual never led to the Romantic disrespect for universal law and rigorous *rational* morality. Yet, even though Kant held his rationalism as central to every aspect of his philosophy, his rationalistic doctrines were a major step into the Romantic-inspired ideology of the nineteenth century and the 'nihilist' doctrines of the twentieth-century existentialists. His attempt to justify Christianity as a set of rational beliefs is the point of departure for both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, who not only deny Christianity its claims to rationality, but deny the whole of morality its claim to a priori validity as well. Similarly, it is Kant's Copernican revolution which makes possible the phenomenology of Husserl, which, in the hands of Heidegger and Sartre, once again undermines the foundations of traditional knowledge of good and evil.



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