

A12

I-A\7\1

[RD: File 7 contains two related sets of notes, all handwritten, plus a wrapper. The pages of the first set constitute item A12. They are numbered consecutively, 11 in all. Numbers on the left margin refer to page numbers in the text on which BL is taking notes. Where he quotes Kant in Italian, I have substituted a translation, taken from the translation of H.J. Paton, Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).]

[page 1]

E Kant - I fondamenti della *Metaphysica dei Costumi*
Trad. Giacomo Praticone (?) - Ed. Signorelli,
Roma Via Ezio, 19 1926

Scope – to state Kant’s points as theses
to state his arguments
to state their logical interrelation
to state their truth and error.

Preface. Philosophy (Gk) divided into *Physic* [sic], *Ethic*, *Logic*

Logic is purely formal: it is concerned with the intelligible as such. *Physic* and *ethic* arise from the conjunction with the intelligible of two different types of content – *nature* or *liberty*.

2 As there is a metaphysic of nature, so there is a metaphysic of liberty, of *customs*.

3 A metaphysic of customs treats of morality as such, the morality incumbent not merely on man but on all reasonable beings.

Needs to be supplemented by experience, sound judgment, effective motives so that it penetrates to the will.

Concerns only the pure form of obligation.

4 Morality requires more than mere conformity with moral law: it requires that the motive of the conformity be morality.

‘per rispetto alla legge’

Because α morality is otherwise casual, haphazard
 β a confusion of pure morality with empirical rules leads to error and is unphilosophic.

But α supposes hypothesis false - presupposing conformity, must the motive be morality itself.

β is beside the point - to obtain truth or be philosophic is excellent. What has that to do with my motives?

The question of motive is a question of practical execution.

Primum est esse, therefore in first place conformity to law
in second place higher motives.

But practically, the higher the motive, the greater the attention, effort, and thoroughness of one's moral life. On the other hand, it is a very gradual process by which natural spontaneity is overcome and reflective motives dominate all thoughts, words, actions. On Kant's criterion of possible universalization the reflectiveness of 'per rispetto alla legge' is not possible; though this impossibility is empirical.

N.B. There are higher motives than reason.

Pure will: a will determined uniquely by a priori principles apart from any empirical motives.

4 Wolff's idea of will - not 'voluntà ... pura' but 'voluntà ... in generale'

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Part I Passage from common rational consciousness to philosophic consciousness of morals.

9 It is impossible to conceive anything at all in the world, or even out of it, which can be taken as good without qualification, except a good will.

Neither goods of fortune, of body, of mind nor natural qualities are simply good: their being good depends upon conjunction with a good will.

10 Again, the goodness of the good will is immanent: it retains its value whether an external end be attained or not. Failure to attain an external good does not of itself detract from the merit of the effective efforts of will.

11 If the end of man is something to be attained by man [his preservation, his welfare, or in a word his happiness] nature would have erred in making not instinct but reason the means at man's disposal for attaining his end.

cf. Aristotle - world better place if men not free.

12 Therefore, the aim of nature is 'a will which is good, not as a means to some further end, but in itself.'

13 'Such a will need not on this account be the sole and complete good, but it must be the highest good and the condition of all the rest, even of all our demands for happiness.'

B.L. True that the good will is a rigorous criterion while earthly eudaimonism is no criterion at all [cf. Ignatian indifference to all in world and Thomas 'bonum hominis est scdm rationem esse']. But, the Kantian expression says more than this, though his proof leads to no broader conclusion.

The good will is the moral good: but only in the case of the act performed solely out of a sense of duty – per rispetto alla legge – can we be certain of the goodness of the will – can we be certain that a man is not honest merely because honesty is the best policy, etc. cf pp 14,15. – Therefore, the good will is the will that acts solely 'per rispetto alla legge.'

But, the good will is the will that is in conformity with the dictate of reason. It is good, whether we can know its goodness or not. Kant confuses the experimental method of isolation with moral precept. The question whether a motive is right or wrong is a moral question and an empirical question: it has nothing to do with a metaphysic of customs. On the other hand 'per rispetto alla legge' is the fundamental motive – the premise to all others – and the only motive that can be considered in a pure ethic. Any other motive involves either the empirical or a theory of the empirical. Catholic doctrine makes God the motive but God is a pure intelligible – it supports this motive with others but this is the practical question. cf p 3.

---> N.B. The Kantian contention is that the good act performed out of inclination is not formally a moral act. As a theoretical position, this is unassailable: it defines *morality*, *moral goodness*.

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Duty – (1) done out of duty not by inclination

16 (2) Moral worth is measured by moral principle of action and not by the end to be attained. cf p 18.

17 Otherwise, we are moved by empirical and so not by duty.

(3) Duty is the necessity of performing an action ‘per rispetto alla legge.’

Hence, since no object can move the will to a moral act but only the moral law as such, it follows that the will must prescind entirely from the empirical: practically, the maxim: of obeying this law even to the detriment of all my inclinations.

19 What is the moral law as something distinct from the result of action and the morality of such a result?

‘I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law. Bare conformity to universal law as such is what serves the will as its principle ...’

Truth of this is that universality is an aspect of the intelligible as such. The moral law is an intelligible; all intelligibles as such are universal; ergo, the moral law is a universal.

Verification: is lying permissible. If it ever is, it always is. But it cannot always be. Ergo.

Objection: Therefore, as a general rule lying is not permissible. But do not circumstances alter cases, put a new intelligibility in things?

Is it not sufficient to universalize the complete case: whenever circumstances are such, lying is permissible.

Similarly, for onanism.

Kant is right, but why?

You have to appeal to an intrinsic significance of sexual functions or speech that is found in every case and under all circumstances makes onanism or lying

unreasonable. Kant tries to make out that his [page 4] empty category has a content. It has not.

p 22. ... the counterweight of his needs and inclinations, whose total satisfaction he grasps under the name of 'happiness'

... a natural dialectic – that is, a disposition to quibble with these strict laws of duty to throw light on their validity or at least on their purity and strictness ...

Part II. Passage from popular moral philosophy to a metaphysic of customs

25ss. Duty a pure a priori and not a matter of experience (not even example p 27)

Certainly, the moral law is not a posteriori purely and simply. But it has no content at all, only the norm of universality and the like, unless the empirical element is introduced. There has to be an understanding of the function of potencies for there to be a moral law with a content. cf. note p 19

[RD: The example to which B.L. refers is: 'Even the Holy One of the gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before we can recognize him to be such.']

28 ... we require no skill to make ourselves intelligible to the multitude once we renounce all profundity of thought ...

30 In place of this, a mixed moral philosophy, compounded of impulses from feeling and inclination and at the same time of rational concepts, must make the mind waver between motives which can be brought under no single principle and which can guide us only by mere accident to the good, but very often also to the evil.

Kant errs not in rigorously confining the moral good to the dictate of reason but in too narrowly interpreting the dictate of reason. He does this in two [sic] ways

1 Intellect understands experience, and so morality depends on experience as upon a specifying matter. The content of the moral law is intrinsically specified by experience and not entirely determined by the pure norms of intelligibility.

There is synthesis in the content; not merely universality in the form.

2 God is the pure intelligible.

3 Supernatural motives depend upon the Transcendence of this Intelligible.

[Ed: An arrow is drawn from the word, Kant, above, to the following:]

e.g. p 30 ‘... all moral concepts have their seat and origin in reason completely a priori ...’

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p. 32 ‘... the will is nothing but practical reason.’ cf. Nicom. VI, 2, 6--1139b4; X,7,1--1177a13

[Ed.: The Aristotelian texts read: ‘... choice is either desiderative reason or ratiocinative desire, and such an origin of action is a man.’

And: ‘... it is reasonable that [happiness] should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us.’]

‘... the will is then a power to choose only that which reason independently of inclination recognizes to be practically necessary, that is, to be good. But if reason solely by itself is not sufficient to determine the will; if the will is exposed also to subjective conditions (certain impulses) which do not always harmonize with the objective ones; if, in a word, the will is not in itself completely in accord with reason (as actually happens in the case of men); then actions which are recognized to be objectively necessary are subjectively contingent, and the determining of such a will in accordance with objective laws is necessitation. That is to say, the relation of objective laws to a will not good through and through is conceived as one in which the will of a rational being, although it is determined by principles of reason, does not necessarily follow these principles in virtue of its own nature.’

‘The conception of an objective principle so far as this principle is necessitating for a will is called a command (of reason), and the formula of this command is called an Imperative.’

i.e. Imperative is ‘dictate of right reason in the general concrete.’

33 Imperative implies possibility of evil act: human liberty in se is not a *perfectio pura* but it contains imperfection.

Imperatives are hypothetical or categorical.

Hypothetical regard means to an end that need not be desired; end possible or actual (real).

Categorical are simply imperatives, no matter what we desire or wish or will.

The categorical imperative follows from the nature of the will.

Appetitus rationalis sequens formam intellectus.

inclinatio naturalis sequens formam intellectus

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Hypothetical imperative

α Problematic: end possible – practical science – mechanical arts

35 β Assertive: end actual (real) – happiness, as a matter of fact this end exists in all men.

Categorical imperative is apodictic (34) ‘ ... not with the matter of the action and its presumed results, but with its form and with the principle from which it follows; and

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36 what is essentially good in the action consists in the mental disposition, let the consequences be what they may.’

1 rules of skill – hypothetical re possible

2 counsels of prudence – hypothetical re actual

3 precepts of morality – categorical and intellectually absolute.

---> hypothetical ... commands a means: possible etc re end

1 technical 2 pragmatic [i.e. for well-being] 3 moral

N.B. Person who desires heaven as his happiness will with consistency desire sin in this life and a death-bed repentance. The preacher’s argument that you have a higher place in heaven if no sin, that you cannot be certain of a death-bed repentance, etc., is not always effective. Again, confessor’s fear to say this is only a venial sin, because that will be taken as tantamount to a general license to commit the sin as often as you wish.

Again, what is happiness?

p. 38 Perfect arguments against any attempt to define happiness in concrete – not riches, learning, long life, health.

‘Thus we cannot act on determinate principles in order to be happy, but only on empirical counsels, for example, of diet, frugality, politeness, reserve, and so on ...

Therefore, no commands but only counsels

Therefore, ‘... the problem of determining certainly and universally what action will promote the happiness of a rational being is completely insoluble.’

‘happiness is an Ideal, not of reason, but of imagination.’

Yes, that is Kant’s sense of happiness, but it can be an ideal of reason – i.e. attaining the end of creation. Men strive; therefore, there is something to be striven for; there is a meaning to Action; that meaning is the specified moral law.

p.39 No a posteriori proof of categorical imperative, because we are unable to know with certainty that any act was ever performed simply ‘per rispetto alla legge.’

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p.41 Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

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

N.B. The introduction of ‘natura’ involves the empirical to the extent that the existence of natures is implied. We are no longer dealing with the pure form. Hence Kant is able to test ‘maxims’ by asking could the maxim represent a law of nature. Now to presuppose a nature is to presuppose a being that has in itself a given intelligibility and Kant’s law becomes simply a test of whether or not in a particular case we have stated the natural law or not. I.e., Kant presupposes the existence of a natural law.

This is evident from the instances Kant gives pp. 42, 43. The transition is from the pure intelligible {legge universale} to the applied intelligible {legge universale della natura}.

But on p. 41 Kant says he is merely testing whether his norm of morality is a premise to the applied moral law. It is not such a premise but only a test.

p.44 ‘whose derivation from the single principle cited above leaps to the eye’

45 ‘... we only take the liberty of making an exception to it for ourselves (or even just for this once) to the advantage of our inclination ...’

Contradiction between one thing as universal law and another as the exception in my favour.

Contradiction between will as potency and will as determinant of person, i.e. inhibitor of phantasmal flux.

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46 ‘But we are still not so far advanced as to prove a priori that there actually is an imperative of this kind –’

It follows from the a posteriori account of the idea of morality.

48 ‘what serves the will as a subjective ground of its self-determination is an end.’

Distinguish: end to be attained by action
motive of action – intelligible as law of action
impulse to action – mere desire

If the end is immediate, i.e. obedience to law, then the action is moral and based on categorical imperative. If the end is not immediate but attained by something else done first, action is amoral and based on hypothetical imperative.

p.49 Hence man and every rational creature exists as an end in se and never merely as a means.

For, the action has an end in itself (conformity to law) and since the end of the action is in itself, therefore the end of man acting is in himself.

Kant seems to lack precision. From his premise it only follows that ‘man acting’ has within himself {i.e. not in empirical order or outside the act as such} the end of the action. This does not involve that man is never simply a means but that no human act is never [sic] simply a means. It does not exclude the hierarchy

that makes the human act a means to God, since God's will is precisely the goodness of the human act as a means to His eternal glory.

This consideration of 'man acting' as an end in himself is but a partial understanding of the datum: it does not belong to the pure practical reason; the partial understanding by its incompleteness leads to confusion and probably error – certainly to a lack of perspective.

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50 '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.'

... 'rational nature exists as an end in itself.'

The end of action is in the action itself; as much in that of others as in the case of my own. Reason seeks this absolute value indifferently for all, though there is a natural order (charity vs. self and those at hand, piety vs. relatives, etc.)

The criterion is valid as an understanding of human life: living is giving – above all, it is giving the moral good. Hence, the supreme 'giving' is St. Paul's 'estote imitatores mei sicut et ego Xti' for this giving is giving the spark that leaps from one soul to another and directs all thought and all effort to the eternal by its whole-hearted disregard of the world, the flesh, the devil.

52 'the idea of the will of every rational being as a will which makes law' [Ed.: Kant says 'universal law', BL omits 'universal' (did the Italian?)]

54 autonomy of will: it is a law in itself

heteronomy of will: it is moved by an interest and the act is a means to the end.

true but *simpliste* and so easily leads to false conclusions.

56 What has a value has an equivalent; 'if it is exalted above all price and so admits of no equivalent, then it has a dignity.'

58 'Autonomy is therefore the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature.'

61 'Regno dei fini' a world parallel to 'regno della natura'

But nature operates blindly according to law; morality consists in constituting and executing the law

'reverence for a mere Idea should function as an inflexible precept for the will'

'otherwise he would have to be regarded as subject only to the law of nature – the law of his own needs'

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64 Heteronomy of will: 'I ought to do something because I will something else'

Autonomy of will: 'I ought to will thus or thus, although I have not willed something else'

Difference: if the reason of the 'ought' is a 'willing,' 'desiring,' the question returns: why ought I will? desire? Eventually, there must be simply an 'ought' or there is no 'ought' at all but merely desire with consequent 'oughts' that are purely hypothetical. The simple 'ought,' the ultimate 'ought,' has to be an 'a priori' of Reason and has to be pure Reason and in no way empirical.

However, the autonomy of the will is very relative. The will constitutes no law whatever: reason constitutes the law and will executes it; more, it is not human reason but absolute Reason that constitutes the law; human reason is merely the 'praeco.' Kant's narrowed field of consideration and his disjunction autonomy vs. heteronomy tend to make the truth of the matter (submission to God's law) appear false.

On the other hand, avoid error of saying that there can be no obligation apart from a natural theology. There is not a true or complete theory of obligation apart from God, Concedo. There is no datum of obligation which, understood, proves the existence of God, Nego.

Finally: 'I ought to act in this way, no matter what I wish' is simply the refusal to explain. The 'perche' [because] is not the reason why I do the thing but the explanation of why I ought to.

68 Kant again insists that he is not demonstrating the actuality of the categorical imperative: his point is, the common notion of morality as an absolute implies necessarily a categorical imperative.

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III Passage from a Metaphysic of Morals to a Critique of Pure Practical Reason

[Ed.: the notes stop here.]