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THE ESSENCE OF MORAL JUDGEMENT FROM A KANTIAN PERSPECTIVE:
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A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts
in Liberal Studies

By

Juliana Rose Burgess

School for Summer and Continuing Education
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
February 14, 2000
THE ESSENCE OF MORAL JUDGEMENT FROM A KANTIAN PERSPECTIVE:
TO BE OR NOT TO BE FREE

Juliana Burgess

Mentor: John Reuscher, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Why do human beings endowed with reason and freedom act in destructive
ways that are contrary to reason and logic? This thesis will examine the moral
motivation behind human choice from the perspective of the most influential
philosopher of the eighteenth century, Immanuel Kant, (1724-1804). The goal is to
prove that the moral law empowers one with the strength to overcome compulsive
and destructive behavior rooted in the reckless pursuit of self-interest. Self-interest is
defined in this context as an inordinate desire to seek personal gratification at the
sacrifice of moral principles often at the cost of self-respect, integrity, and even
survival.

Three key texts written by Kant at will serve as the basis of this analysis in the
interest of focus. The works examined are the, Critique of Pure Reason (1781),
Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (1785), and the Critique of Practical
Reason (1788). The paper starts with an analysis of the theory of knowledge posited
in the, Critique of Pure Reason, to illuminate the vital linkage of this complex theory to
his moral ethics. In this context, key elements of Kant's moral theory are analyzed
which is divided into two sections. The first section explores the purpose and
principles of moral metaphysics as set forth in the, Foundations of the Metaphysics of
preamble to the discussion of the, *Critique of Practical Reason*. The later then defines the role of the will, subjective maxims and moral imperatives, the standard of rational conduct, concluding with a discussion of freedom, all of which define the essential factors that comprise moral judgement. The structure of the moral crisis is evaluated last to show precisely how and why people endowed with reason make irrational and destructive judgements.

This analysis determines that Kant's moral theory is the most logical solution for ethical judgement because it is based solely on objective reason aimed at the highest good, for the following important reasons. Since self-interest is eliminated as the basis of moral judgement, reason can properly assess the right course of action. Since moral reason is known a priori, as is transcendental knowledge, it directs the autonomous will to its moral end. However, when one acts contrary to moral reason, it is typically motivated by self-interest. Therefore, when this happens a breakdown in the psyche inevitably occurs that is exceedingly destructive to one's self and others in the long run. While obedience to moral precepts is initially painful, if sustained, one is ultimately gifted with deep feelings of respect for the law and the freedom for which it stands. Moreover, our limited minds are graced with a brief glimpse of the power and glory of God in the process.
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To my mother who shows me the light
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CHAPTER I

THE PRECEPTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Transcendental philosophy, in seeking for its concepts, has the advantage and also the duty of proceeding according to a single principle. For these concepts spring, pure and unmixed, out of the understanding which is an absolute unity; and must therefore be connected with each other according to one concept or idea. Such a connection supplies us with a rule, by which we are enabled to assign its proper place to each pure concept of the understanding, and by which we can determine in an a priori manner their systematic completeness. Otherwise we should be dependent in these matters on our own discretionary judgement or merely on chance.

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

Overview

A preview of Kant’s theory of knowledge profiled in the Critique of Pure Reason is essential as a prerequisite to his moral theory because each is carved from precisely the same stone. Specifically, they are linked by Kant’s hypothesis that knowledge is objectively rooted in the mind *a priori* — defined as knowledge prior to empirical evidence — stimulated by but independent of nature. Against this backdrop, this section briefly analyzes the concepts of space, time and imagination to show that empirical knowledge is just the stimuli that triggers the mind’s consciousness, distinct
from its intellectual function that constructs concepts a priori. Kant’s concept of space is presented first to show how objects are given dimension in the mind by building forms from appearances encountered by the senses. Next, the function of time is discussed to show how single images flash into consciousness is organized into a sequential structure managed by time. The faculty of imagination is then profiled to demonstrate how it associates and reproduces images encountered in space and time into subjective representations (i.e., meaning understood from a personal perspective) via self-consciousness. Understanding then assigns objective meaning to representations by imposing a categorical rule on data empirically derived from experience (a posteriori knowledge); distinct from a priori concepts embedded in the mind that contain universal rules. Thereby, two forms of knowledge are brought to light; empirical knowledge disseminated from nature and experience and “transcendental” knowledge known a priori; the later of which holds the key to this entire analysis.

**Space**

Kant was first and foremost a philosopher of science; consequently his concept of sensory knowledge is built around the role of mathematics. The mind collects data via the senses, or what Kant calls “intuition” and organizes it according to a spacio/temporal structure. Matter is then synthesized into images by imagination. Accordingly, the mind spatially structures objects intuited in space according to laws governed by geometry a priori. Hence, space is a cognitive form and is known a priori, thus when the form of an object is intuited by the senses in space, those dimensions can be calculated according to mathematical principles. The concept of a
triangle demonstrates this point. The appearance of a triangle is encountered in space and the mind synthesizes the dimensions of the triangle into an object with three equal points without benefit of measurement a priori because of its proportions.

Space is nothing but the form of all appearances of outer sense. It is the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us. Since, then, the receptivity of the subject, its capacity to be affected by objects, must necessarily proceed all intuition of these objects, it can readily be understood how the form of all appearances can be given prior to all actual perceptions, . . . (Smith 1929, 71)

Time

Like space, time is a cognitive form and it does not assign meaning to sensory data. Rather, time and space are the vehicles by which the mind is conscious of movement, while it stays stationary. The mind’s awareness of time is analogous to watching a movie in the sense that one sits still and actively observes scene after scene. Consequently, time enables the mind to organize sensory data encountered in space into a unified sequence managed by time. Kant says, “time is a necessary representation that underlies all intuitions” (Smith 1929, 74-75). As a result, everything in the sensible world is subject to time, and more importantly, the mind’s awareness of time. Thus, time and space enable the mind to be self-conscious and each represents a particular form of knowledge even though their respective meanings are not yet understood a point that Kant acknowledges.

Time and space are, therefore, two sources of knowledge from which bodies of a priori synthetic knowledge can be derived. (Pure mathematics is a brilliant example of such knowledge, especially as regards space and its relations.) Time and space, taken together, are the pure forms of all sensible intuition, and so are what make a priori synthetic propositions possible. But these a priori sources of knowledge, being merely conditions of our sensibility, just by this very fact determine their own limits, namely that they apply to
objects only in so far as objects are viewed as appearances, and do not present things as they are in themselves. This is the sole field of their validity; should we pass beyond it, no objective use can be made of them. (Smith 1929, 80)

Again, space and time enable the mind to become aware of its own unique identity a priori. However, what the object actually represents is constructed universally by understanding via imagination. Below it is described how imagination reproduces and associates appearances into pictures synthesized by a priori reason into objective knowledge.

**Imagination**

Now, since every appearance contains a manifold, and since different perceptions therefore occur in the mind separately and singly, a combination of them, such as they cannot have in sense itself, is demanded. There must therefore exist in us an active faculty for the synthesis of this manifold. To this faculty I give the title, imagination.

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*

The imagination is a critical component of knowledge that can also directly affect moral judgement if laced with self-interest. Kant explains that when the mind encounters an appearance, a perception of that particular image is formed in consciousness, similar to a snapshot photo. When imagination is aimed at perception those pictures are "apprehended" and woven by self-consciousness into an image. The imagination then synthesizes those images by association into a unified sequence. However, the image is essentially a subjective mode of association initially. In other words, one's initial perception of an image does not necessarily constitute the same objectivity contained in a priori concepts. Therefore, the "synthesis of the manifold" must first be subjected to a rule assigned by reason in order to achieve the status of a "pure" concept.
A pure imagination, which conditions all a priori knowledge, is thus one of the fundamental faculties of the human soul. By its means we bring the manifold of intuition on the one side, into connection with the condition of the necessary unity of pure apperception on the other. The two extremes, namely sensibility and understanding, must stand in necessary connection with each other through the mediation of this transcendental function of imagination, because otherwise the former, though indeed yielding to appearances, would supply no objects of empirical knowledge, and consequently no experience. Actual experience, which is constituted by apprehension, association (reproduction), and finally recognition of appearances, contains in recognition, the last and highest of these merely empirical elements of experience, certain concepts which render possible the formal unity of experience, and therewith all objective validity (truth) of empirical knowledge. (Smith 1929, 146-147)

In essence, the imagination by association and reproduction amasses two forms of understanding within consciousness – one subjective the other objective. The subjective function of imagination stems from the senses via association generating representations initially informed by personal perspective. As mentioned, subjective representations can at times be misleading if self-interest attaches itself to the picture. Therefore, the reproduction of images subjected to and synthesized by understanding are converted into categorical and universal rules based on a “transcendental” understanding of the subject. Kant again uses a mathematical principle to illustrate this point. The image of a line is first synthesized by imagination; reason then imposes a rule on the image from which the appearance of a line is based (i.e., long and straight) prior to drawing the line. Therefore, Kant strategically achieves the dual objective of justifying mathematical knowledge and confirming the validity of a priori knowledge.
Summary of Knowledge

A priori knowledge – knowledge prior to empirical evidence and a posteriori knowledge – knowledge after empirical evidence is Kant’s method of making the crucial distinction between intuitive and conceptual knowledge. For Kant, the senses are structured by space and time, and thereby, contain the possibility for knowledge. The synthesis of knowledge constructed by understanding however actually enables the mind to be conscious of it’s own unique identity. In his introduction to the, Critique of Practical Reason, Beck sums up the function of theoretical knowledge succinctly.

... reason, which is the faculty of synthesizing knowledge of objects into systems (such as “the realm of nature,” the whole system of phenomena under laws). Reason guides the construction of knowledge in its systematic aspect, by directing our search for the absolute conditions of all contingent conditions, which will support the entire edifice of knowledge. (Beck 1993, x)

Unfortunately, though Kant’s theory of knowledge limits his options as an ethicist because moral necessity cannot be located in the nature of objects outside of consciousness as previously hypothesized by his ancient predecessors, particularly, Aristotle. Thus, Kant’s goal in the, Critique of Practical Reason, is to build a valid foundation for moral necessity inside of consciousness without compromising his scientific principles. Nevertheless, the basic precepts of knowledge posited by Kant in this work are essential as a preface to the moral theory to show that conceptual knowledge is actually contained within the mind prior to empirical evidence. This premise is critically important and cannot be emphasized enough because this theory in conjunction with freedom, are the crux of Kant’s moral theory examined next.
CHAPTER II

THE MORAL LAW: UNIVERSAL RULES OF CONDUCT

... 'metaphysics as science,' the inventory of all our possessions through pure reason, systematically arranged, "a system of a priori knowledge from mere concepts." It has two parts: the metaphysics of nature, consisting of all the a priori concepts of our knowledge of what is, and the metaphysics of morals, comprising all the a priori principles of our knowledge of what is, and the metaphysics of morals, comprising all the a priori principles of what ought to be.

Kant, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals

Overview

The moral law consists of two primary components – freedom characterized by an autonomous will and a priori concepts rooted in reason aimed at the highest conception of good, free of self-interest. The moral law characterized by an autonomous will is Kant's concept of practical reason because it ascribes action based on a conception of the law distinct from nature which functions according to empirical laws. In the, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant establishes the basic principles of moral consciousness in the form of obligatory duty as a moral imperative (i.e., a universal law applicable to all individuals) and freedom as the
condition of directing the “good will” to accord with the law. In the, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant’s objective is to provide a formula for moral consciousness and its constituent freedom. Moreover, Kant wants to illustrate the unity of theoretical and practical reason to show that reason is not in conflict with itself, as suggested by his critics and to maintain the scientific principles set forth in the, *Critique of Pure Reason*. These issues are important to keep in the forefront to set the stage for Kant’s hypothesis that moral decisions can in fact be made based on “pure” practical reason alone rather than human inclination. Beck outlines Kant’s strategy quite nicely in his introduction to the, *Critique of Practical Reason*.

... its main thesis is that though practical reason generally has an impulsive component or drive, which it more or less successfully guides by maxims and rules of experience, it is also possible for one’s reason to guide one’s behavior without any drive springing from variable, subjective impulses directed to the gaining of pleasure. Such reason provides not just long range control of impulses but, as pure practical reason, it can provide the motives and even set the goals of action. The law conceived by reason in this capacity is not an empirical law of nature, not even a law of human nature learned from psychology—no, it is moral law, and the imperative to obey it is a categorical imperative, not hypothetical and contingent upon the actual presence of a given impulse. (Beck 1993, xi)
PART ONE:

FOUNDATIONS OF THE METAPHYSICS OF MORALS

Overview

This section explores the groundwork of morality set forth in the *Foundations*. The difference between the "metaphysics of nature" and "metaphysics of morals" is explained first to mark the distinction between knowledge gained by experience verses ethical knowledge known a priori absent of external influences. The canons of duty and obligation are unveiled to illustrate their necessity and impact on the will via a commandment to obey the law - for the sake of the law out of duty and obligation - regardless of the outcome. The attributes of a "good" will are analyzed to show that a good will is characterized by the nature of willing via its scrupulous obedience, prompted by reason, to the moral law. It is also demonstrated that human volition inherent in psychology and/or pathology is in reality the antithesis of Kant's ethics. Consequently, they are incapable of trumping the power and commitment of the good will's submission to the moral law.

A metaphysics of morals is . . . indispensable, not merely because of motives to speculate on the source of the a priori practical principles which lie in our reason, but also because morals themselves remain subject to all kinds of
... corruption so long as the guide and supreme norm for their correct estimation is lacking. For it is not sufficient to that which should be morally good that it conform to the law; it must be done for the sake of the law. Otherwise the conformity is merely contingent and spurious, because, though the unmoral ground may indeed now and then produce lawful actions, more often it brings forth unlawful ones. But the moral law can be found in its purity and genuineness... no where else than in a pure philosophy; therefore, this (i.e., metaphysics) must lead the way, and without it there can be no moral philosophy. (Beck 1959, 6)

*Justification for Moral Metaphysics*

In keeping with his theory of knowledge set forth in the, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant expands and broadens the scope of transcendental philosophy (a priori concepts) to the noble realm of ethics in the *Foundations*. He accomplishes this task by following the Greek method of categorizing philosophy into three distinct but interrelated branches of knowledge: physics, logic and ethics. Natural metaphysics is knowledge of objects (like plants or people) that function according natural laws. Formal logic is a form of understanding derived from experience and thus also empirical in ground. However, moral metaphysics consists solely of transcendental reason and a good will that acts in accordance with moral precepts. Therefore, Kant's ethics is entirely free of empiricism as the basis of moral judgement. Moreover, all individuals inherently understand ethical knowledge on a fundamental level. In other words, ethical knowledge is part and parcel of the human anatomy despite its intangible form. Hence, these key factors necessitate the need and account for why metaphysics is divided into separate categories.

Logic can have no empirical part—a part in which universal and necessary laws of thinking would rest upon grounds taken from experience. For in that case it would not be logic, i.e., a canon for understanding or reason which is valid for all thinking and which must be demonstrated. But on the other
hand, natural and moral philosophy can each have its empirical part. The former must do so, for it must determine the laws of nature as an object of experience, and the latter because it must determine the human will so far as it is affected by nature. The laws of the former are laws according to which everything happens; those of the latter are laws according to which everything should happen, but allow for conditions under which what should happen often does not. (Beck 1959, 4)

While the metaphysics of nature functions according to natural laws understood by experience, moral metaphysics is infinitely more complicated, because it contains both empirical and rational roots. Kant explains that moral ethics must be purified of everything empirical, but the problem is that human beings are creatures of nature. As a result, human instinct often wars with reason for dominance in judgement. If self-interest enters the equation, the distinction between moral reason and subjective desire is even more difficult to discern. Thus, moral metaphysics is necessary to bridge the gap between nature and reason.

... beneficence from duty, when no inclination impels it and even when it is opposed by a natural and unconquerable aversion, is practical love, not pathological love; it resides in the will and not in the propensities of feeling, in principles of action and not in tender sympathy; and it alone can be commanded. (Beck 1959, 16)

With the need for moral metaphysics firmly anchored, Kant then introduces the principles of morality consisting of duty and obligation as building blocks for moral conduct because of their necessity and universality. To demonstrate the truth of these principles, he cites the biblical parable, "Thou shalt not lie" as a primary and telling example. This parable is universal in meaning and applies to all individuals, not just a select few. Therefore, this proves that moral principles are not abstract ideas beyond common understanding — indeed, quite the opposite. Duty and obligation are concepts known to all, even children. An example illuminates Kant's vision of morality
in practice. If circumstances demanded a choice, a responsible mother would gladly
forfeit her life without hesitation to save her child from harm. This choice is not made
for personal gain - there is nothing to gain - the ultimate sacrifice is made, likely
without even the comfort of knowing that the child is saved. This scenario epitomizes
Kant's concept of duty. Kant says that, "reason . . . recognizes its highest practical
vocation in the establishment of a good will [and therefore] is capable of a
contentment of its own kind, i.e., one that springs from the attainment of a purpose
which is determined by reason, even though this injures the ends of inclination" (Beck
1959, 12-13). Therefore, the function of practical reason is to direct the will toward its
moral end particularly when faced with obstacles that seem insurmountable. In
summary, Kant's ethics is the marriage of reason and will at the crossroads of
empiricism and self-interest.

Adherence to moral principles constitutes the true value and worth of an
individual. Indeed, the cultivation of morality is the highest vocation to which one must
aspire, not for personal gratification, but because the intrinsic value of the law itself
fills the soul with deep respect for its sanctity and virtue. The irony of submission to
the law is that one must first experience the angry pangs of self-denial, and often
intensely, before one is gifted spiritually with the joy of freedom. What makes this gift
even more special is that it stems from an intellectual cause rooted in reason,
completely free of external influences. More specifically, submission to moral
principles is done for its own sake, not as a means of chasing after the positive
feelings that result. If this is the case, the spirit of the moral deed is negated at base.
... though respect is a feeling it is not received through any [outer] influence but is self-wrought by a rational concept; thus it differs specifically from all feelings of the former kind which may be referred to as inclination or fear. What I recognize directly as a law for myself I recognize with respect, which means merely the consciousness of the submission of my will to a law without the intervention of other influences on my mind. The direct determination of the will by the law and the consciousness of this determination is respect; thus respect can be regarded as the effect of the law on the subject and not as the cause of the law. Respect is properly the conception of a worth which thwart my self-love. (Beck 1959, 17-18)

The scenario above also sheds light on the notion of respect. Assume that the mother's heroic efforts failed and the child died – while her anguish is undoubtedly great – she fulfilled her moral duty to the child in spite of the dreadful outcome. Her selfless act commands respect regardless of the sad outcome. Imagine the scenario in reverse? Assume the mother to save her self, sacrifices the child's life? Needless to say, the mind fills with utter contempt for such appalling cowardice. Though moral judgement is free of empiricism – the fact remains that the empirical nature of humanity often dominates and wins the war over transcendental, moral reason to the abject shame of us all. Below Kant outlines the key factors that comprise moral judgement and lays the groundwork for the discussion of the will.

[Thus the first proposition of morality is that to have moral worth an action must be done from duty.] The second proposition is: An action performed from duty does not have its moral worth in the purpose which is to be achieved through it but in the maxim by which it is determined. Its moral value, therefore, does not depend on the realization of the object of the action but merely on the principle of volition by which the action is done, without any regard to the objects of the faculty of desire. . . .

The third principle, as a consequence of the two preceding, I would express as follows: Duty is the necessity of an action executed from respect for the law. I can certainly have an inclination to the object as an effect of the proposed action, but I can never have respect for it precisely because it is a mere effect and not an activity of a will. . . . (Beck 1959, 16)
Principles and Components of a Good Will

In the, Foundations, Kant asserts that the fundamental purpose of this work is to, "investigate the ideas and principles of a possible pure will and not the actions and conditions of the human volition as such, which are for the most part drawn from psychology" (Beck 1959, 7). While a priori reason plays the primary role in directing the will to its moral end, reason alone is not adequate to ensure moral action. To direct the will in this fashion requires that the nature of the will itself be good. A pure will - wills action in accordance with the moral law for the sake of the law - out of duty and respect. Human inclination in all forms is absolutely abolished as the basis of moral judgement, regardless of potential negative consequences. Hence, the nature of the willing characterizes its purity. It follows, therefore, that the will in accord with the moral law is inherently good without qualification and its value without equal.

Nothing in the world—indeed nothing even beyond [393] the world—can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a good will . . . the good will seems to constitute the indispensable condition even of worthiness to be happy. (Beck 1959, 9)

Again, if self-interest governs willing, even if it complies with the law exactly, the will is not pure. What Kant is saying is that there is a fundamental difference between executing action for the sake of duty verses executing action aimed at a desired end. One can ardently wish to do the right thing, but the truth of the conviction is actually revealed by the action taken. If the motivation behind an action does not conform to the law for its own sake, in truth, it is meaningless. Only a will inextricably bound by duty to the law is good in essence and spirit. Consequently, for Kant, pathology and
psychology are neither pertinent nor relevant to his moral ethics. This is because they are empirical in ground based on social and environmental factors that affect human behavior. While they certainly contain value as a means of assessing particular aspects of human conduct, their empirical ground negates their substantive contribution to Kant’s ethics at base. Kant says that,

... reason issues inexorable commands without promising anything to the inclinations. It disregards, as it were, and holds in contempt those claims which are so impetuous and yet so plausible, and which will not allow themselves to be abolished by any command. From this a natural dialectic arises, i.e., a propensity to argue against the stern laws of duty and their validity, or at least to place their purity and strictness in doubt and, where possible, to make them more accordant with our wishes and inclinations. This is equivalent to corrupting them in their very foundations and destroying their dignity—a thing which even common practical reason cannot ultimately call good. (Beck 1959, 21)

This again confirms why metaphysics is separated into categories and also elucidates Kant’s reason for writing the Foundations originally. While reason legislates the will making judgements based on moral necessity by silencing the screaming protests of human instinct - humanity is neither diminished nor dishonored by this fact — simply disciplined. Kant clearly acknowledges the difficulty of sustaining moral reason at war with instinct and the pain that is associated with it. He also forewarns that moral action does not necessarily guarantee favorable results. Yet, he softens the blow with the reassurance that compliance with the law in the long run instills a powerful sense of freedom and respect in the soul for the holiness of the law that cannot be rivaled externally. Anyone who has successfully withdrawn from an addiction can positively verify the truth of this conviction and the great liberation that Kant eloquently describes. Kant himself summarizes the essence of the Foundations
best. The following analysis of the, *Critique of Practical Reason*, will enhance these principles even more profoundly.

Can I will that my maxim become a universal law? If not, it must be rejected, not because of any disadvantage accruing to myself or even to others, but because it cannot enter as a principle into a possible universal legislation, and reason extorts from me an immediate respect for such legislation. I do not as yet discern on what it is grounded (a question the philosopher may investigate), but I at least understand that it is an estimation of the worth which far outweighs all the worth of whatever is recommended by the inclinations, and that the necessity of my actions from pure respect for the practical law constitutes duty. To duty every other motive must give place, because duty is the condition of a will good in itself, whose worth transcends everything. (Beck 1959, 19-20)
CHAPTER II

PART TWO

CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON

Duty! Thou sublime and mighty name that dost embrace nothing charming or insinuating but requirest submission and yet seekest not to move the will by threatening ought that would arouse natural aversion or terror, but only holdest forth a law which of itself finds entrance into the mind and yet gains reluctant reverence (though not always obedience)—a law before which all inclinations are mute even though they secretly work against it: what origin is worthy of thee, and where is the root of thy noble descent which proudly rejects all kinship with the inclinations and from which to be descended is the indispensable condition of the only worth which men alone can give themselves.

Kant, Critique of Practical Reason

Overview

The, Critique of Practical Reason, refines the principles introduced in the, Critique of Pure Reason and the Foundations, linking each work methodologically and cohesively. In the, Critique of Pure Reason, Kant establishes that reason assigns meaning to reality via the synthesis of space, time, and imagination, each of which, are different forms of understanding derived from the senses and experience. However, these forms are assigned actual meaning by reason contained in the mind.
prior to empirical evidence. Therefore, Kant asserts that knowledge consists of two
independent forms – sensory understanding and conceptual knowledge assigned by
a priori reason's objective assessment of the necessity and universality of a concept.
Yet, as mentioned, he backs himself into a corner as an ethicist because moral
necessity cannot be located in the nature of objects without splintering the scientific
claims also set forth in this work. To rectify the problem, Kant wrote the, *Foundations*,
and divided metaphysics into separate categories in the same manner that
experiential and conceptual knowledge is divided in the first *Critique*. As a result of
this strategy, he both preserves his scientific principles and validates the necessity for
the division of metaphysics via the precepts of duty and will as dual legislatures of
moral action - triggered by but absent of empiricism - as the basis of moral choice. In
the, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant constructs a formula for moral necessity also
rooted in a priori reason that is both universal and practical, thus synchronizing all
three works with the same approach. Kant's reminder that a priori reason synthesizes
meaning from unconditioned “causality” accomplishes this by nature. This assertion
then substantiates the additional claim that moral principles are a practical faculty of
reason, also independent of the causal nature of science. Consequently, moral
principles are known a priori in precisely the same form as mathematical principles.
Last, and most important, freedom and will as dual legislatures of moral action
impelled by the intrinsic need to preserve rational freedom, are the essence of the
work.
First, nothing in appearances is explained by the concept of freedom, but there the mechanism of nature must be the only clue. Second, there is the antinomy of pure reason which arises when reason aspires to the unconditioned in a causal series and which involves it in inconceivabilities on both sides, since at least mechanism has a use in the explanation of appearances, while no one would dare introduce freedom into science had not the moral law and, with it, practical reason come and forced this concept upon us. (Beck 1993, 30)
PRACTICAL REASON DEFINED

The, *Critique of Practical Reason*, embellishes a number of important ideas introduced in the, *Foundations*, like the concepts of will, duty and freedom, and thereby, provides a blueprint from which to assess moral judgement. This section analyzes these points in detail. The role of the will is examined to show why it is endowed with autonomy by revisiting the theory of knowledge outlined earlier in the first *Critique*. This demonstrates once again that Kant’s ethics hinges on this hypothesis because moral knowledge is known a priori in precisely the same form. This premise also substantiates the claim that moral principles contain the same objective necessity and universality as does transcendental knowledge. Ought is then defined to show how this small synonym actually serves as the supreme governing principle of the will by authoritatively linking moral necessity and freedom. The distinction between subjective maxims and moral imperatives are defined next to mark their differences and to demonstrate why subjective maxims do not denote conformity to universal rules, as do imperatives. Finally, the positive and negative aspects of freedom governed by an autonomous will are examined to illuminate their impact on the individual.
The Will Empowered

... Now, as no determining ground of the will except [29] the universal legislative form [of its maxim] can serve as a law for it, such a will must be conceived as wholly independent of the natural law of appearances in their mutual relations, i.e., the law of causality. Such independence is called freedom in the strictest, i.e., transcendental, sense. Therefore, a will to which only the law-giving form of the maxim can serve as a law is a free will.

Kant, Critique of Practical Reason

In the first Critique it was explained that the form of appearances encountered in nature via the senses via an act of cognition stimulates the mind's drive to make sense of reality. Intellect and reason, both of which are independent faculties of mind, assign meaning to appearances a priori by synthesizing them into concepts transformed into universal and categorical rules derived from reason and necessity. How this relates to the will is affirmed by Kant's claim that the will too is an independent faculty of mind - free of sensuous influence - and thus also intrinsically free. Therefore, since the will is an independent faculty of mind and a priori reason is the ground for its determination, it acts according to the form of universal principles ascribed by reason free of self-interest. Thus, the will is not only free, but also endowed with the power of choice. Therefore, the will is chief administrator of moral conduct.

... It is therefore the moral law, of which we become immediately conscious as soon as we construct maxims for the will, which first presents itself to us; and, since reason exhibits it as a ground of determination which is completely independent of and not to be outweighed by any sensuous condition, it is the moral law which leads directly to the concept of freedom.

But, how is the consciousness of that moral law possible? We can come to know pure practical laws in the same way we know pure theoretical principles, by attending to the necessity with which reason prescribes them to us and to the elimination from them of all empirical conditions, which reason
alone directs. The concept of pure will arises from the former, as the
consciousness of pure understanding from the later. . . . (Beck 1993, 29)

Now that the freedom and autonomy of the will is established via the principles
presented in the first Critique the same concepts are applied in the present work. In
the first Critique recall again that Kant established that appearances (or causality) are
empirically conditioned but independently synthesized a priori by the mind. Using the
same methodology, he asserts that moral principles are had in the same conceptual
form as knowledge. Likewise, it is activated by subjective causes but assessed
independently a priori by objective reason based on necessity. Accordingly, as the
mind is driven to preserve its rational freedom, the will is driven to preserve its moral
freedom. Thus, the autonomous will legislates behavior to accord with the form of
moral principles embedded in reason guided by the supreme maxim of ought, the
significance of which is detailed below.

. . . a free will must find its ground of determination in the law, but
independently of the material of the law. But besides the later there is nothing
in the law except the legislative form. Therefore, the legislative form, in so far
as it is contained in the maxim, is the only thing which can constitute a
determining ground of the [free] will. (Beck 1993, 29)

Ought – How it Works

Simply stated, ought determines the necessity and value of a choice based on
freedom. Again, ought is the supreme condition of all maxims that impels the will to
act according to the form of the law contained in a priori reason. Consequently, this
little word authoritatively directs the will toward its moral end. Specifically, ought
remarkably projects the value and necessity of a choice by reflecting the purity and
sanctity of the law before us in the face of our human imperfections. As a result, one
is compelled to obey the law out of profound respect for its value and nobility and to preserve the freedom that it represents. Ought as a universal principle only endorses judgements that are based on the necessity with which reason prescribes them. This is done by determining what one ought to do verses what one wants to do or could do in a given situation. Kant clarifies how ought works in practice and illustrates how the will is authoritatively guided by this principle.

... choice involves a wish arising from subjective causes, and consequently such a choice often opposes pure objective grounds of determination. Such a will is therefore in need of the moral constraint of the resistance offered by practical reason, which may be called an inner but intellectual compulsion. In the supremely self-sufficing intelligence choice is correctly thought of as incapable of having any maxim that could not at the same time be objectively a law, and the concept of holiness, which is applied to it for this reason, elevates it not indeed above practical laws but above all practically restrictive laws, and thus above obligation and duty. This holiness of will is, however, a practical idea which must necessarily serve as a model which all finite rational beings must strive toward even though they cannot reach it. The pure moral law, which is itself for this reason called holy, constantly and rightly holds it before their eyes. The utmost that finite practical reason can accomplish is to make sure of the unending progress of its maxims toward this model and of the constancy of the finite rational being in making continuous progress. This is a virtue, [33] and as a naturally acquired faculty, it can never be perfect, because assurance in such a case never becomes apodiclic certainly, and as a mere pretense is very dangerous. (Beck 1993, 33)

An example demonstrates the function of ought in practice when confronted with human weakness. Assume that one is consumed by lust for one to whom he or she is not married with the knowledge that acting on the desire will result in imminent and painful death? Needless to say, most rational individuals would reject the impulse outright! Obviously, the reason for abandoning the inclination is clearly not altruistic. However, the form of ought has authoritatively commanded the will to redirect the
desire to accord with the law based on the necessity of preserving freedom (and, in this case, existential freedom!). Kant explains below.

A practical law which I acknowledge as such must qualify for being universal law; this is an identical and therefore a self-evident proposition. Now, if I say that my will is subject to a practical law, I cannot put forward my inclination (in this case my avarice) as fit to be a determining ground of a universal practical law. It is so far from being worthy of giving universal laws [28] that in the form of universal law if must destroy itself. (Beck 1993, 27)

Ought has negatively impacted freedom in this scenario, but also positively endowed one with freedom. According to Kant, "The relation of such a will to this law is one of dependence under the name of, "obligation" (Beck 1993, 32). Therefore, the conception of ought serves as the governing principle of the will confirmed by one's recognition of it as such. This rule demands that one must, "... act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as the principle giving universal law" (Beck 1993, 30). Kant describes how this form of a priori understanding inevitably collides with subjective principles but explains how the two can co-exist if the objective form of the law is recognized and observed.

The thing is strange enough and has no parallel in the remainder of practical knowledge. For the a priori thought of the possibility of giving universal law, which is thus merely problematic, is unconditionally commanded as a law without borrowing anything from experience or from any external will. It is, however, not a prescription according to which an act should occur in order to make a desired effect possible, for such a rule is always physically conditioned; it is, on the contrary, a rule which determines the will a priori only with respect to the form of its maxims. Therefore, it is at least not impossible to conceive of a law that alone serves the purpose of the subjective form of principles and yet is a ground of determination by virtue of the objective form of the law in general. . . (Beck 1993, 31)
Subjective Maxims

Subjective maxims and moral imperatives parallel in theory because they both serve as determining grounds for the will, but the similarity ends there. A subjective maxim is determined by one’s personal perception of reality (see imagination above). Another example helps to shed light on this point. If one eats fish every Friday without fail out of religious conviction and firmly declines an offer for a succulent fillet mignon dinner instead, the choice has value. However, it does not necessarily mean that others share the same view or attribute the same value to the choice. Therefore, subjective maxims are simply the recognition that a choice makes sense to one’s self. However, subjective principles do not denote conformity to universal rules because they often differ among individuals. Consequently, they do not authoritatively represent universal principles that can be practically applied to all in similar circumstances. Indeed, subjective maxims fall more appropriately into the realms of pathology and psychology. Kant humorously explains why.

... For the wills of all do not have one and the same object, but each person has his own (his own welfare), which, to be sure, can accidentally agree with the purposes of others who are pursuing their own, though this agreement is far from sufficing for a law because the occasional exceptions which one is permitted to make are endless and cannot be definitely comprehended in a universal rule. In this way a harmony may result resembling that depicted in a certain satirical poem as existing between a married couple bent on going to ruin .... (Beck 1993, 27-28)

Regardless of the potential difficulty associated with subjective maxims, Kant understands and clearly appreciates the value of differing perceptions. Subjective maxims enable one to honor personal beliefs while still maintaining the integrity of universal principles that apply to all. Nevertheless, it must also be made abundantly
clear that subjective principles can severely jeopardize freedom (and life) if this form of self-interest impinges on the rights or well being of others as demonstrated above. Thus, moral imperatives informed by ought are absolutely necessary as a means of restraining impulsive desires by redirecting the will toward its moral end to preserve freedom. In addition, because ought authoritatively determines the necessity and value of a choice, one can easily distinguish it from subjective principles.

**Moral Imperatives**

Moral imperatives resemble subjective maxims in theory, but not in practice. A moral imperative consists of three essential elements: authority, universality and moral motivation. To be authoritative an imperative must be based on a priori reason’s transcendental understanding of goodness in its purest and most elevated form. In turn, this knowledge is then authoritatively converted into categorical and universal imperatives applicable to all in comparable circumstances. The motivation behind imperatives is simply respect for and commitment to uphold the law for its own sake. Imperatives are unique because they are not swayed by potential outcomes posited by speculative reason, reminiscent of the idea of duty in the *Foundations*. However, Kant expands the idea in this work significantly. He resolves the conflict of speculative reason by declaring that it simply assesses the causal nature of appearances, but it does not expand knowledge by providing further insight conceptually into true meaning. In contrast, practical reason innately contains knowledge that directs the will to act in accordance with the highest conception of good ascribed by reason. Thereby, Kant again sustains the validity of his
mathematical postulates and neatly integrates ethics into the picture as an independent faculty of reason, remarkably without detracting from either. Kant clarifies his strategy below and cleverly links it with the principle of ought.

Pure geometry has postulates as practical propositions, which, however, containing nothing more than the presupposition that one can do something and that, when some result is needed, one should do it; these are the only propositions of pure geometry that deal with an existing thing. They are thus practical rules under a problematic condition of the will. Here, however, the rule says: One ought absolutely to act in a certain way. The practical rule is therefore unconditional and thus is thought of a priori as a categorically practical proposition. The practical rule, which is thus here a law, absolutely and directly determines the will objectively, for pure reason, practical in itself, is here directly law-giving. The will is thought of as independent of empirical conditions and consequently as pure will, determined by the mere form of law, and this ground of determination is regarded as the supreme condition of all maxims. (Beck 1993, 30-31)

The Negative and Positive Aspects of Freedom

The negative and positive aspects of freedom (touched on briefly earlier) illuminates how and why freedom legislated by an autonomous will is the bedrock of Kant's ethics. At the risk of being redundant, it is important to re-emphasize once again that empiricism is abolished as the basis of moral legislation. This is done for critically important reasons confirmed by the following arguments. First, human beings are driven by instinct much like our animal counterparts, but unlike animals, humans possess the extraordinary faculty of reason. Thus, empirical phenomena along with its causes and effects are conceptualized independently a priori by transcendental reason, but this faculty is also located in the finite nature of an individual. Consequently, since intelligence is rooted in the finite nature of human beings, instinct and reason war for dominance. To rectify this issue, Kant separates
the two faculties and endows the mind with the leading role of assessing reality without the burden of empirical influences to shadow judgement. Otherwise, humans quite naturally will pursue their own interests to the detriment of moral principles and sometimes their own.

The sole principle of morality consists in independence from all material of the law (i.e., a desired object) and in the accompanying determination of choice by the mere form of giving universal law which a maxim must be capable of having. That independence, however, is freedom in the negative sense, while this intrinsic legislation of pure and thus practical reason is freedom in the positive sense. Therefore, the moral law expresses nothing else than the autonomy of pure practical reason, i.e., freedom. The autonomy or freedom is itself the formal condition of all maxims, under which alone they can all agree with the supreme practical law. If, therefore, the material of volition which cannot be other than an object of desire which is connected to the law, comes into the practical law as a condition of its possibility, there results heteronomy of choice, or dependence on natural laws in following some impulse or inclination; it is heteronomy because the will does not give itself the law but only directions for a reasonable obedience to pathological laws. The maxim, however, which for this reason can never contain in itself the form of prescribing universal law, not only produces no obligation but is itself opposed to the principle of pure practical reason and thus also to the moral disposition, even though the action which comes from it may conform to the law. (Beck 1993, 33-34)

If one manipulates circumstances to gain personal advantage, the boundaries of moral reason are grievously violated. However, the authoritative form of ought complimented by an autonomous will actually restricts excessive desires for personal gratification. The feelings of intense pain that inevitably result is the undeniable cost extracted for compliance with the law via strict self-discipline. This represents the negative aspect of freedom. On the other hand, if one respects the law enough to responsibly endure the pain and discomfort of rigorous self-discipline and upholds the law, one is gifted with freedom in its positive aspect. The positive form of freedom is hard to explain. It is an irony because the level of pain experienced is equally
proportionate to the level of freedom experienced. Freedom in this form transcends everything! It is liberating; it is cleansing; it is rejuvenating. Indeed, no form of external gratification – no matter how enticing or attractive – can rival its power and glory. One cannot touch it or see it, but one can feel it flood the soul with light. It inspires deep and lasting respect in the mind and soul for the law and its sanctity and "holiness." It simply has no equal. Kant says it best.

... once we renounce our self-conceit and respect has established its practical influence, we cannot ever satisfy ourselves in contemplating the majesty of this law, and the soul believes itself to be elevated in proportion as it sees the holy law as elevated over it and its frail nature. (Beck 1993, 81)

In the next chapter, the structure of the moral crisis is examined to show how the mind breaks down when these sacred principles along with freedom are arrogantly discarded in reckless pursuit of self-interest.
CHAPTER III

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MORAL CRISIS:
TO BE OR NOT TO BE FREE

Respect is so far from being a feeling of pleasure that one only reluctantly gives way to it when it is respect for a man. We seek to discover something in him that will lighten the burden of it for us, some fault in him to compensate us for the humiliation which we suffer from such an example. The dead themselves are not immune from this criticism, especially when their example appears inimitable. Even the moral law itself in its solemn majesty is exposed to this endeavor to keep one's self from yielding respect to it. Can it be thought that there is any reason why we like to degrade it to the level of our familiar inclination and why we take so much trouble to make it the chosen precept of our well-understood interest, other than the fact that we want to be free of the awesome respect which so severely shows us our own unworthiness? Nevertheless, there is on the other hand so little displeasure in it that, when once we renounce our self-conceit and respect has established its practical influence, we cannot ever satisfy ourselves in contemplating the majesty of this law, and the soul believes itself to be elevated in proportion as it sees the holy law as elevated over it and its frail nature.

Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*

Overview

Now that the basic precepts of knowledge identified in the, *Critique of Pure Reason*, along with the precepts of morality law outlined in the, *Foundations* and in the analysis of the, *Critique of Practical Reason*, the purpose of this examination in origin culminates in this chapter. The goal is to put each piece of the puzzle together.
coherently to positively confirm the initial claim that Kant's moral ethics does empower one with the strength to conquer destructive impulses if the principles therein are diligently and practically applied to the free will. To accomplish this task however it is necessary to show what happens to the mind and soul of an individual who does not. This truth is harshly revealed by Kant's accurate assessment of the moral crisis.

The Structure of the Moral Crisis

From the discussion thus far it is obvious that the essence of Kant's entire philosophy is grounded in a priori, objective reason contained in the mind, free of empiricism. While this proposition has already been reiterated repeatedly, it is worth mention yet again to keep it in the forefront since every aspect of Kant's philosophy is derived from it and his ethics could not exist without it. Consequently, the fall of objective reason caused by the destructive interference of subjective maxims rooted in pure self-interest constitutes the dangerous and insidious nature of the moral crisis. Specifically, it is disclosed how subjective principles cloaked in the form of morality catalyzed by imagination attempt to deceive and dominate the will with illusions of primacy. This is followed by an explanation of precisely what inevitably happens to the mind and soul as a result. In so doing, it is also revealed how this form of literally deceit robs one of respect for self and for others and in the end invoking feelings of extreme humiliation and self-contempt. In the process, however, it is also confirmed that adherence to moral principles while initially painful and difficult to manage in the long run are far less agonizing than living with the mental torture of the alternative!
More importantly, it is proven that adherence to the moral law ultimately results in respect for the law because of its inherent virtue and for one's self because of their submission to it.

The negative effect on feeling (unpleasantness) is, like all influence on feeling and every feeling itself, pathological. As the effect of the consciousness of the moral law, and consequently in relation to an intelligible cause, i.e., to the subject of the pure practical reason as the supreme legislator, this feeling of a rational subject affected with inclinations is called humiliation (intellectual contempt). But in relation to its positive ground, the law, it is at the same time respect for the law; for this law there is no feeling, but, as it removes a resistance, this dislodgment of an obstacle is, in the judgement of reason, equally esteemed as a positive assistance to its causality. Therefore, this feeling can also be called a feeling of respect for the moral law; on both grounds, it can be called a moral feeling. (Beck 1993, 78)

The Fall of Reason

It was established in the, Critique of Pure Reason, that the mind is endowed with the extraordinary faculty of reason and by nature is driven to make sense. It was also suggested that the act of making sense, through an act of cognition, enables the mind to be conscious of it's own unique identity and its freedom. Therefore, human beings cherish freedom above all because the intellect via reason provides objective insight into actual meanings, unaffected by empirical conditions. As mentioned, this results in profound feelings of respect within the mind (and soul) for its freedom and what it represents. However, a breakdown occurs when compulsive desires based on the empirical nature of self-interest conflict with the equally powerful drive to be free. Therefore, this exposes a problem that has not been fully addressed. If conceptual knowledge is had a priori, then how is it possible for subjective maxims to mask themselves as moral imperatives? The answer is imagination. Remember that
imagination has both subjective and objective aspects. The subjective form of imagination is derived from the senses and thus reproduces images informed by a personal perspective before actually synthesized objectively by understanding and converted into universal rules necessitated by reason. Consequently, self-interest can easily mask itself as an imperative and trick one into believing that the assessment of an appearance is authoritatively accurate with astonishing and forceful conviction. Kant explains why.

... our nature as sensuous beings so characterized that the material of the faculty of desire (objects of the inclination, whether of hope or fear) first presses upon us; and we find our pathologically determinable self, although by its maxims it is wholly incapable of giving universal laws, striving to give its pretensions priority and to make them acceptable as first and original claims, just as if our pathologically determined self were our entire self. This propensity to make the subjective motives of one's choice into an objective motive of the will in general can be called self-love; when it makes itself legislative and an unconditional practical principle, it can be called self-conceit. The moral law, which alone is truly, i.e., in every respect, objective, completely excludes the influence of self-love from the highest practical principle and forever checks self-conceit, which decrees the subjective conditions of self-love as laws. If anything checks our self-conceit in our own judgement, it humiliates. Therefore, the moral law inevitably humbles every man when he compares the sensuous propensity of his nature with the law. (Beck 1993, 77-78)

Recall the goal of moral reason is to practically apply the precept of ought to the will because it authoritatively determines the value and necessity of a choice by mirroring the sanctity of the law before us. From this recognition, one is then empowered with the ability to redirect the will toward its moral end in the interest of preserving freedom. However, the moral crisis stems from and is complicated by the fact that these delusions are not only driven by instinct, but also compounded by emotion. However, emotions are not subject to reason. Consequently, reason has no direct means of asserting it's practical influence over our tenuous emotions. Herein,
lies the crux of the problem. Imagination and emotion are again at war with reason for dominance. This combined with the insidious nature of "self-conceit" or arrogantia (distinct from "self-love" or solipsismus) presents a dangerous threat to objective reason. In fact, this form of arrogance has lead to unspeakable human devastation individually and collectively, which unfortunately cannot be described in depth here in the interest of focus. However, several examples identify some of the most publicized forms of arrogance, which include religious persecution, domestic violence, child abuse, racism, and homicide. Obviously, there are countless more not mentioned. Nonetheless, these issues painfully illustrate the destructive and abusive nature of arrogantia quite explicitly. Furthermore, they also depict the fundamental nature of the moral crisis in the public domain as prior examples have depicted in the private realm. If reason does not legislate moral conduct the typical result of subjective desires are, at best chaotic, and at worst, cruel, vicious and debilitating! Fortunately, Kant provides an alternative though it is not without a price.

The essential point in all determination of the will through the moral law is this: as a free will, and thus not only without co-operating with sensuous impulses but even rejecting all of them and checking all inclinations so far as they could be antagonistic to the law, it is determined merely by the law. Thus far, the effect of the moral law as a drive is only negative, and as such this drive can be known a priori. For all inclination and every sensuous impulse is based on feeling, and the [73] negative effect on feeling (through the check on the inclinations) is itself a feeling. Consequently, we can see a priori that the moral law as a ground of determination of the will, by thwarting all our inclinations, must produce a feeling which can be called pain. . . Pure practical reason merely checks selfishness, for selfishness, natural and active in us even prior to the moral law, is restricted by the law to agreement with the law; when this is done, selfishness is called rational self-love. But it strikes self-conceit down, since all claims of self-esteem which precede conformity to the moral law are null and void. For the certainty of a disposition which agrees with this law is the first condition of any worth of the person . . . and any presumption [to worth] prior to this is false and opposed to the law. Now the propensity to self-esteem,
so long as it rests only on the sensuous, is one of the inclinations which the moral law checks. Therefore, the moral law strikes down self-conceit. (Beck 1993, 76)

The Moral Crisis Revealed

In light of the discussion thus far it is obvious that the mind breaks down as a result of its clash with imagination and emotion. As reported, the mind is driven by its innate need by nature to make sense of reality objectively. Therefore, when reason is threatened by subjective desires cloaked in the form of morality actually rooted in self-interest further compounded with emotion, the internal chaos experienced in the mind is quite devastating indeed. Again, this is because reason has no direct means of asserting its practical influence over volatile emotion. Consequently, the mind helplessly watches as its precious freedom slips slowly away. Subjective maxims in this form, therefore, grievously violate human freedom because instinct and emotion attempt to convince us of their objective truth. Yet, a priori reason by its very nature knows it is a lie. The mind will not be deceived no matter how authoritatively subjective principles try to present themselves as maxims of the will. Regardless, reason is still held prisoner until the objective truth of the matter is honestly recognized. The mental torment that inevitably results destroy all peace until reason is rightfully restored. The mind cannot and live with this form of self-deception. Anyone who has deceived one's self in this manner will positively confirm the truth of this conviction – assuming one is brave enough to admit it. This is why when one encounters a person that exemplifies moral conduct, clearly not present in self; he or she is appropriately humbled. In Kant's words,
In men all good is defective, but the law made visible in an example always humbles my pride, since the man whom I see before me provides me with a standard by clearly appearing to me in a more favorable light in spite of his imperfections, which, though perhaps always with him, are not so well known to me as are my own. Respect is a tribute we cannot refuse to pay to merit whether we will it or not; we can indeed outwardly withhold it, but we cannot help feeling it inwardly. (Beck 1993, 80)

The way to relieve the mind and soul from the bondage of self-deception is to submit to the law of moral reason, regardless of the pain or the outcome. In the long term, it is exceedingly more kind to self and to others. This is why Kant says, "... act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as the principle giving universal law" (Kant 1993, 30). In sum, Kant believes that all human beings are ends in themselves and must be treated as such regardless of our differences. He says that,

Man is certainly unholy enough, but humanity in his person must be holy to him. Everything in creation which he wishes and over which he has power can be used merely as a means; only man, and with him, every rational creature, is an end in himself. He is the subject of the moral law which is holy, because the autonomy of his freedom. Because of the latter, every will, even the private will of each person directed to himself, is restricted to the condition of agreement with the autonomy of the rational being, namely, that it should be directed to no purpose which would not be possible by a law which could issue from the will of the subject who is the passive recipient of action. This condition thus requires that the person never be used as a means except when he is at the same time treated as an end. (Beck 1993, 91)

**Final Thoughts**

A priori reason is the reigning principle of Kant's philosophy demonstrated specifically by the concepts revealed in each of the works analyzed. The, *Critique of Pure Reason*, marks the fundamental difference between experiential understanding verses the objective form of a priori conceptual knowledge. The *Foundations* divides
metaphysics into categories using the same method to show that moral ethics stems directly from a priori reason via the obligatory nature of duty, distinct from the causal nature of science. The, *Critique of Practical Reason*, provides a blueprint from which to assess moral judgement characterized by the authoritative function of ought which directs the will towards its moral end. Throughout, Kant insists that empirical considerations and self-interest in particular must be abolished as the basis of moral judgement. This is, of course, because external factors hinder the human capacity to reason objectively and thus is a direct threat to freedom. To affirm the certainty of this fact the moral crisis exposes how divergence from the moral law as the basis of judgement is catalyzed by self-interest in the form of self-conceit and arrogance. The nature of self-conceit and arrogance is illustrated by a number of alarming but telling examples provided throughout the analysis. The internal structure of the moral crisis then portrays how the mind is held as an unwilling captive to subjective delusions reproduced by imagination compounded by volatile emotion. Throughout, Kant offers a solution via adherence to the form of moral ethics outlined below.

*The Solution*

The moral law inspires deep respect stemming from an intellectual cause that compels one to honor its edicts — but how does this actually work in practice? The answer is ought. If each individual adheres to this straightforward principle when making moral judgements many of the terrible ills that befall humanity, individually and collectively, will simply not occur. On a practical level this means that each day one must, to the best of their ability, objectively assess each decision based on
practical reason and eliminate self-interest from the equation. Yes, this takes an enormous amount of self-discipline and it is not always done perfectly but the level of respect and joy that stems from doing the right thing is priceless even though it does not feel that way initially. However, since emotions are not subject to reason they are simply not fit to objectively judge the merit and value of our choices. Aside from that, there is another benefit besides the inherent joy of being free that is equally important and just as powerful, but will not be elaborated on in detail. However, it must be introduced to sway any arguments to the contrary of these sacred principles and to entice one into agreement with this perspective and Kant's. Our finite and limited human minds and souls are provided with a brief glimpse of the power and glory of God each time the moral law is upheld which uplifts the soul and elevates the mind to a sacred realm beyond human reason. But, that's another story.
REFERENCE LIST

