

We begin with a good statement of the basic ideas of Kant's moral philosophy (which they take mostly from the *Groundwork*) by Robert Johnson and Adam Cureton in their SEP article on "Kant's Moral Philosophy" (at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/> )

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) argued that the supreme principle of morality is a principle of practical rationality that he dubbed the "Categorical Imperative" (CI). Kant characterized the CI as an objective, rationally necessary and unconditional principle that we must follow despite any natural desires we may have to the contrary. All specific moral requirements, according to Kant, are justified by this principle, which means that all immoral actions are irrational because they violate the CI. . . . Kant agreed with many of his predecessors that an analysis of practical reason reveals the requirement that rational agents must conform to instrumental principles. Yet he also argued that conformity to the CI (a non-instrumental principle), and hence to moral requirements themselves, can nevertheless be shown to be essential to rational agency. This argument was based on his striking doctrine that a rational will must be regarded as autonomous, or free, in the sense of being the author of the law that binds it. The fundamental principle of morality — the CI — is none other than the law of an autonomous will. Thus, at the heart of Kant's moral philosophy is a conception of reason whose reach in practical affairs goes well beyond that of a Humean 'slave' to the passions. Moreover, it is the presence of this self-governing reason in each person that Kant thought offered decisive grounds for viewing each as possessed of equal worth and deserving of equal respect. . . .

The most basic aim of moral philosophy, and so also of the *Groundwork*, is, in Kant's view, to "seek out" the foundational principle of a "metaphysics of morals," which Kant understands as a system of a priori moral principles that apply the CI to human persons in all times and cultures.

Looking back for the connection with Kant's CPR, we can also use this nice statement by Johnson & Cureton, which for us can function as a review (though put in helpfully different words):

Kant's analysis of the common moral concepts of "duty" and "good will" led him to believe that we are free and autonomous as long as morality, itself, is not an illusion. Yet in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant also tried to show that every event has a cause. Kant recognized that there seems to be a deep tension between these two claims: If causal determinism is true then, it seems, we cannot have the kind of freedom that morality presupposes, which is "a kind of causality" that "can be active, independently of alien causes *determining* it" (G 4:446).

Kant thought that the only way to resolve this apparent conflict is to distinguish between *phenomena*, which is what we know through experience, and *noumena*, which we can consistently think but not know through experience. Our knowledge and understanding of the empirical world, Kant argued, can only arise within the limits of our perceptual and cognitive powers. We should not assume, however, that we know all that may be true about "things in themselves," although we lack the "intellectual intuition" that would be needed to learn about such things.

These distinctions, according to Kant, allow us to resolve the "antinomy" about free will by interpreting the "thesis" that free will is possible as about noumena and the "antithesis" that every event has a cause as about phenomena. Morality thus presupposes that agents, in an incomprehensible "intelligible world," are able to make things happen by their own free choices in a "sensible world" in which causal determinism is true.

Many of Kant's commentators, who are skeptical about these apparently exorbitant metaphysical claims, have attempted to make sense of his discussions of the intelligible and sensible worlds in less metaphysically demanding ways. . .

In the CPR, Kant was out to defend "God, freedom, and immortality" (Intro: at B7.3) at least as thinkable, but the middle item seems (I guess fittingly) most central.

---

Various formulations of CI: top of p. 4 of Darwall's handout

The first (Universal Law) seems to be Kant's go-to formulation for most purposes. The function of the other formulations and their relation to UL is intimated at 437.1=42.2. Issues of vagueness and clear applicability to particular situations arise

Perfect and imperfect duties and Kant's examples (at pp. 30-32 [421-423])

Kant on the Moral Worth of actions depending on their not just being aligned with duty, but on their being done *from* duty.

---

Warren Quinn, last paragraphs of "Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Double Effect" (Philosophy & Public Affairs 18 (1989): 334-351) and of "Actions, Intentions, and Consequences: The Doctrine of Doing and Allowing" (*Philosophical Review* 98 (1989): pp. 287-312):

The Doctrine of Double Effect thus gives each person some veto power over a certain kind of attempt to make the world a better place at his expense. This would be absurd if the entire point of morality were to maximize overall happiness or welfare. But that is not its entire point. An equally urgent basic task is to define the forms of respect that we owe to one another, and the resulting limits that we may not presume to exceed. The doctrine embodies our sense that certain forms of forced strategic subordination are especially inappropriate among free and equal agents.

The rationale [for the Doctrine of Doing and Allowing] that I have proposed is anticonsequentialist not only in its assignment of priority to negative rights, but also, and more fundamentally, in its conception of the basic social function of morality. For consequentialism, it seems fair to say, the chief point of morality is to make things go better overall—to increase average or total welfare within the human community. But on the view presented here, an equally basic and urgent moral task is to define our proper powers and immunities with respect to one another, to specify the mutual authority and respect that are the basic terms of voluntary human association. The doctrine we have been discussing addresses this task directly. And this is why it is far more than a casuistical curiosity. Whether we ultimately agree with it or not, we should recognize that, in giving each person substantial authority over what can rightly be done to him, the doctrine conveys an important and attractive idea of what it is to be a citizen rather than a subject in the moral world.