

Skepticism in Kant's *Groundwork*

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Abstract: This paper offers a new interpretation of Kant's relationship with skepticism in the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. My position differs from commonly held views in the literature in two ways. On the one hand, I argue that Kant's relationship with skepticism is active and systematic (contrary to Hill, Wood, Rawls, Timmermann, and Allison). On the other hand, I argue that the kind of skepticism Kant is interested in does not speak to the philosophical tradition in any straightforward sense (contrary to Forster and Guyer). On my reading, Kant takes up a skeptical method in the *Groundwork* as a way of exposing certain obstacles in our ordinary and philosophical thinking about morality. The central obstacle he is interested in is practical in character, arising from a natural tendency we have to rationalize against the moral law. In attempting to resolve this tendency, I argue, the *Groundwork* turns out to have a profoundly educative task.

The objections that are to be feared lie in ourselves. We must search them out like old but unexpired claims . . .

—Kant (A777/B805).¹

It is astonishing that in a book as ambitious as Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, we do not find the skeptic's traditional question, 'Why be moral?' It is also unfortunate, I believe, since it leaves us without a clear sense of the problem Kant set out to address. As readers we find ourselves asking: What question was Kant interested in, if not the skeptic's? And *who* was he speaking to?

A number of commentators have taken Kant's silence on these matters as evidence that he was uninterested in the sort of concerns that preoccupy ethical and meta-ethical theorizing today. John Rawls, for example, was convinced that Kant did not wish to confront a radical moral skeptic. That was not a problem for him, 'however much it may trouble us' (Rawls 2000: 149). Similarly, Thomas E. Hill Jr. has suggested that Kant's aim in Section III of the *Groundwork* is 'easily obscured' by the fact that his audience was not the sort of skeptic or amoralist we are familiar with. He did not take himself to be responding to those 'who are indifferent to morality and demand that philosophy supply them with a motive to be moral' (Hill 1998: 250). Related comments appear in the work of Allen Wood (1999), Jens Timmermann (2007), and Henry Allison (2011).²

There are a few exceptions to this trend in the scholarship. Michael Forster (2008) and Paul Guyer (2008) have argued that Kant is actively engaged with a variety of skeptics from the tradition—of Humean, Cartesian, and Pyhronnian origin. In Guyer's view, Rawls and Hill are

right to suggest that the project of the *Groundwork* is not to justify the universal and binding demands of morality to someone who alleges no presumption in their favor, but it would be wrong to conclude from this that Kant's argument is not intended as an answer to moral skepticism as Kant understood it. (2008: 26)

According to Guyer, Kant is responding to a number of skeptical opponents in his writings, including the ancient Stoics and Epicureans, as well as Wolff, Baumgarten, Hobbes, Hume, and others (2008: 7).

My intention here is to explore a new position within this debate. While I agree that Kant's aim in the *Groundwork* is anti-skeptical, contrary to Rawls and Hill, I do not want to characterize it in adversarial terms. To borrow Crispin Wright's description, Kant is not trying to defeat 'a real philosophical opponent, the Sceptic, in rational debate' (1991: 89).³ In my view framing Kant's ethics in adversarial terms obscures something fundamental to his approach: his view that the skeptic most worth addressing lies within ourselves. Thus I will argue, contrary to Forster and Guyer, that Kant is not speaking to the philosophical tradition in any straightforward sense.⁴ On my reading Kant uses a skeptical method in the *Groundwork* as a way of exposing certain obstacles in our ordinary and philosophical thinking about morality. The central obstacle he is interested in is practical in character, arising from a natural tendency we have to rationalize against the moral law. In attempting to resolve this tendency, I will argue, the *Groundwork* turns out to have a profoundly educative task.

1. Preliminaries: Kant's Skeptical Method

Kant says little about his plan of organization in the *Groundwork* beyond the procedural distinction he draws between Sections I and II (called 'analytic') and Section III (called 'synthetic'). In the Preface he states: 'I have adopted in this work the method that is, I believe, most suitable if one wants to proceed analytically from common cognition to the determination of its supreme principle, and in turn synthetically from the examination of this principle and its sources back to the common cognition in which we find it used' (G 4:392; cf. G 4:445). After this, Kant presents us with the following outline:

1. *First section*: Transition from common to philosophical moral rational cognition.
2. *Second section*: Transition from popular moral philosophy to metaphysics of morals.
3. *Third section*: Final step from metaphysics of morals to the critique of pure practical reason.

In what follows I will propose that Kant strategically develops a skeptical problem within each section in order to make a shift of frameworks, or 'transition' (*Übergang*), necessary.⁵ This opens up a simple yet effective way for interpreting the *Groundwork's* inner structure and organization.

In Section I, Kant develops a problem in the framework of common human reason (with its pre-reflective understanding of morality) that only a transition to philosophical reason can overcome. In Section II, he develops a problem in the framework of popular moral philosophy (with its empirical, a posteriori method) that only a transition to a metaphysics of morals can overcome. Finally, in Section III, Kant shows that a metaphysics of morals is also limited (with its conceptual, a priori method) in a way that demands a critical examination or 'critique' of our faculty of reason. As we shall see, one advantage to this reading is that it explains what motivates each transition in the book: by invoking possible doubts at the level of our ordinary and philosophical thinking about morality, Kant is able to drive his argument to its final, critical step.

While it may seem speculative to attribute this strategy to Kant, there is textual evidence to support it. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant argues that skeptical claims pose a threat to our philosophical commitments even if they have not been voiced by a real person. Their 'seed', as he puts it, lies in human reason itself (A778/B806). Because of this Kant says it is our responsibility to seek out those claims ourselves, to discover them by using what he calls a 'skeptical method'. The basic idea is that we must take up the position of a skeptic, and if necessary, to think up objections 'which have not yet occurred to any opponent' (A778/B806). In a similar vein, Kant is reported to have said during lecture that as harmful as skepticism is,

the skeptical method is just as useful and purposeful, provided one understands nothing more by this than the way of treating something as uncertain and of bringing it to the highest uncertainty, in the hope of getting on the trail of truth in this way. (LL 9:84)

Of course, Kant does not make this method explicit in the *Groundwork*, but I believe it clarifies his overall approach. For one thing, it explains why he does not name any historical skeptic in the book. Kant himself may be acting the part with the conviction that the skeptic most worth addressing comes from within us. After all, the objections we should fear most lie 'in ourselves' (A777/B805).⁶

2. Skepticism in *Groundwork* I

With this interpretive framework as my guide, I will begin in §2.1 with the initial obstacle facing common reason; and in §2.2 I will show why a transition to philosophical reason overcomes it. Kant only reveals a deeper problem in common reason at the end of Section I: our tendency to 'rationalize' against the moral law. I will outline that tendency in §2.3 and show why it gives us a practical need to seek help in philosophy.

2.1. *Is a Good Will Illusory?*

Section I of the *Groundwork* opens with the well-known claim that a good will is the only thing we can call good ‘without limitation’ (G 4:393). Riches and power are only good when they are possessed by a person with a good will. Happiness—which may seem to be good for everyone who receives it—is only objectively good on the condition that one is worthy of it. Even characteristics like intelligence and a calm disposition lack intrinsic worth, for it is easy to find examples of intelligent people bent on evil designs, or courageous people leading criminal lives (G 4:393).

Without going into the details of this claim, I only want to point out that Kant takes up the standpoint of common reason in the fourth paragraph. He does so in response to a skeptical worry:

There is, however, something so strange in this idea of the absolute worth of a mere will, in the estimation of which no allowance is made for any usefulness, that, despite all the agreement even of common understanding with this idea, a suspicion must yet arise that its covert basis is perhaps mere high-flown fantasy and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature in assigning reason to our will as its governor. (G 4:394–95)

What is strange is not so much the idea that we have a vocation to cultivate a will that is good, but that acting under it might require us to sacrifice our well-being. This is what Kant anticipates the reader will react to. How could it be rational to give up everything we hold dear for the sake of a higher vocation? There is something baffling about this, so much so that Kant says we are likely to suspect the idea of a good will rests on an illusion. The structure of Section I takes shape as a response. ‘We shall’, he asserts, ‘put this idea to the test’ (G 4:395).

This test draws on resources Kant assumes are available to common reason. One is an idea he thinks everyone has about organized life: that each component of a living being is best adapted to its final end (G 4:395). This is a claim about nature’s purposiveness. Kant uses it to show, first, that a rational creature with a hedonic vocation could not be responsible for planning its own happiness. For such a hypothetical creature, nature would have blundered in giving it a rational faculty for seeking the ends of inclination—even, Kant adds, for seeking their best means of fulfillment. Yet a blunder in nature contradicts its purposiveness. On this scenario, then, nature would have been sure to appoint *instinct* the role of governing the creature’s will, and it would have been careful to assign reason a passive function—that is, to self-consciously admire the efficiency of instinct, not to ‘break forth’ into the sphere of action (G 4:395).

Why is reason so ill-suited for the task of happiness? Kant asks us to look at people who have tried to devote themselves to a hedonic vocation. In his view, the ‘more a cultivated reason purposely occupies itself with the enjoyment of life and with happiness, so much the further does a human being get away from true

satisfaction' (G 4:395; modified). This shows that putting our rational faculties into the service of our sensible nature is counterproductive: it can likely have the effect of multiplying the number of our inclinations, driving us further away from our goal. Kant believes this is true even for people who have devoted themselves to so-called 'higher' pleasures: they often end up bringing 'more trouble upon themselves' instead of gaining in happiness. Soon they 'envy rather than despise the more common run of people, who are closer to the guidance of mere natural instinct and do not allow their reason much influence on their behavior' (G 4:396).

After making these observations, Kant shifts subjects. '[R]eason is nevertheless given to *us* as a practical faculty, that is, as one that is to influence the *will*' (G 4:396; first emphasis mine). The shift is easy to miss, however. At G 4:396 Kant is no longer speaking about a hypothetical creature; he is now speaking about a human being. For us, reason does break forth into the sphere of action, and that is enough to show (from the standpoint of common reason) that our vocation cannot merely be to pursue pleasure. It would be inconsistent with the wisdom of nature to assign an active rational capacity to a being destined for happiness. So according to nature's purposiveness, our vocation must be different. As Kant says, 'where nature has everywhere else gone to work purposively in distributing its capacities, the true vocation of reason must be to produce a will that is good, not perhaps *as a means* to other purposes, but *good in itself*, for which reason was absolutely necessary' (G 4:396).

2.2. *The Need for Philosophical Reason*

Aside from any question of how compelling this 'test' is, we might wonder what else remains to be shown in Section I. It seems that common reason has all the resources it needs to justify our higher vocation. The claim of nature's purposiveness, combined with the alleged fact that reason is practical for us, shows that it is consistent to assign unlimited value to a mere will. Why does Kant not think this is enough? Recall that the skeptical worry from G 4:394 is that our vocation may rest on an illusion, that its underlying idea—a will that is good 'without limitation'—may be a product of the imagination. While the test shows the consistency of these claims from the standpoint of common reason, it does not clarify the principle of a good will. This highlights an obstacle in our ordinary moral thinking: we are unable to render the principle of our higher vocation explicit. A 'transition' to philosophical thinking is needed for this.

Kant's claim is more modest than it sounds. The transition in Section I is only meant to clarify what we already know. He says that we have 'to explicate the concept of a will that is to be esteemed in itself and that is good apart from any further purpose, as it already dwells in natural sound understanding' (G 4:397). We need philosophical thinking to do this because it contains the right conceptual tools. Thus Kant's strategy is to analyze how someone with a good will must act when faced with desires coming from his sensible nature. The result is that

we set before ourselves the concept of *duty*, 'which contains that of a good will though under certain subjective limitations and hindrances, which, however, far from concealing it and making it unrecognizable, rather bring it out by contrast and make it shine forth all the more brightly' (G 4:397).

By proceeding in this way Kant is able to show that the principle a good will must act on is the moral law, and that its primary motive must be a feeling of respect for this law. Aware of how abstract this sounds, Kant quickly reminds us that we do not necessarily have a conscious grasp of the moral law in our everyday lives. It is, rather, the implicit normative standard of our judgments, a standard Kant thinks we employ whenever we appraise an action's inner worth. This is why philosophical thinking does not teach us anything we did not already know. '[W]ith this compass in hand', Kant explains, common reason 'knows very well how to distinguish in every case that comes up what is good and what is evil, what is in conformity with duty or contrary to duty' (G 4:404). The transition to philosophical reason in Section I is a transition *within* common reason.⁷

2.3. A 'Natural Dialectic'

But there is a problem here. In our everyday frame of mind we are prone to self-deception. We can easily delude ourselves into thinking *happiness* should have priority over moral claims. As a result, common reason falls into a 'natural dialectic'⁸: it starts to 'rationalize against those strict laws of duty, and to cast doubt upon their validity, or at least their purity and strictness' (G 4:405). This is a different problem than before. By subverting the moral law from a position of authority, we are susceptible to a genuine error of deliberation—that of reversing the priority of moral claims, so that considerations of our happiness retain superiority from a practical point of view. We are susceptible, that is, to an excess of self-love.

Unfortunately, Kant is not clear how this excess arises. At first it appears that the source of our propensity to rationalize against the moral law is borne from the desires we have as sensible beings; but on closer inspection this does not hold up. To see why, consider what Kant says:

The human being feels within himself a powerful counterweight to all the commands of duty, which reason represents to him as so deserving of the highest respect—the counterweight of his needs and inclinations, the entire satisfaction of which he sums up under the name happiness. (G 4:405)

This last sentence ends with an important qualification. Kant is not speaking of our needs and inclinations taken individually, but of the conception we have of their total satisfaction. Later, in Section II, Kant will define happiness as an 'ideal' of one day having our wants and wishes fulfilled (G 4:418). The ideal is 'empty', however, because it does not specify in advance what will make us satisfied; we

still need experience to figure out how to bring our inclinations into harmony with each other.

This is a small yet significant point of clarification. It shows that the dialectic of common reason does not lie between the moral law and the inclinations. Our inclinations, taken individually, do not present us with an end. Instead, the dialectic arises between the two ends we have as beings who are both rational and sensible—namely, between morality and our own happiness. They are set in opposition, in Kant's view, because the demands of morality do not promise anything to our desires. Viewed from the perspective of common reason, then, the strict laws of duty seem to insult us, to show 'disregard and contempt' for the interest we have in our well-being (G 4:405). It is only natural, then, that we will try to defend this interest by striking back, i.e., by stripping moral laws of their very authority.

3. Skepticism in *Groundwork* II

In Section II Kant calls on philosophy for a second time. Before, we needed tools of philosophical analysis to clarify the principle guiding our everyday view of a good will's worth. This was more or less a theoretical need. But having identified a natural dialectic in our ordinary thinking, Kant now argues we need philosophy on practical grounds. We need help in resolving our tendency to rationalize against the moral law. As we shall see, the question framing Section II is what kind of philosophical method is fit for this task, and here Kant criticizes 'popular moral philosophy' because it plays into the hands of skepticism.⁹ In §3.1, I will discuss the character of this skepticism in more detail; then, in §3.2, I will show how Kant uses the threat it poses to advocate his own, less popular alternative.

3.1. *Two Skeptics*

In the opening pages of Section II Kant introduces two unnamed skeptics.¹⁰ The first does not deny the truth or correctness of the moral law. Kant tells us his doubts concern human nature: in his view, we are unable to live up to the moral law's commands, and so he is skeptical about our motivational capacities. Kant describes this philosopher as speaking with 'deep regret' that human nature is 'noble enough to take as its precept an idea so worthy of respect but at the same time is too weak to follow it' (G 4:406). It is not that he thinks the moral law is impure (for example, that duty is mixed up with self-interest), but that we are imperfect and so incapable of regarding duty as our incentive. The thought that troubles him is not that moral principles lack validity, but that we lack the capacity to be successfully moved by them.

Kant's second skeptic raises a different concern. Rather than express 'deep regret' over the moral weakness of our will, he harbors a malicious wish to

'ridicule all morality as a mere phantom of a human imagination [*Hirngespinnst*] overstepping itself through self-conceit' (G 4:407).¹¹ In his eyes the evidence we have of people's conduct is decisive: we frequently meet individuals who use the appearance of morality to hide their selfish motives. From this, the second skeptic concludes that there is nothing behind the appearance, no objective ground from which the claims of duty can bind us. The everyday experience of moral obligation, he argues, is not a product of reason: it is an 'illusion' of the imagination.¹²

Despite their differences, Kant's point is that each skeptic commits the same error. Both rest their doubts on experience. For the first skeptic, it is the evidence of our weakness of will—the fact that we seem incapable of regarding duty as an incentive—that questions our ability to live up to the moral law's commands. For the second skeptic, it is the evidence of our selfishness—the fact that we often disguise our motives under the mask of virtue—that questions moral objectivity itself. In Section II Kant uses a method of exaggeration to undermine these concerns. First, he admits we cannot know for certain whether our actions have a moral motive or a motive drawn from self-love. It may be the case that our actions are but effects of the 'dear self', 'which is always turning up' (G 4:407). But Kant's point is that it would be wrong to draw any conclusions from this. The fact that we cannot find examples of our moral strength of will does not support the inference that we lack the *capacity* for such strength. Nor does the fact that people more often than not use morality for their selfish purposes support the inference that morality is entirely *subjective*. By exaggerating their worries, Kant's aim is to uncover the fallacy these philosophers share in common: the fallacy of thinking that what we cannot perceive must not exist.

Kant thinks we can learn a general lesson from this. The general lesson is that we cannot settle questions about morality on the basis of experience. Observations of people's behavior cannot determine what we are motivationally capable of, nor do they give us purchase on normative claims about how we should act (for example, that we should only attend to the 'interests of the inclinations', G 4:406). Admittedly, when we look out into the world we see that people—including ourselves—often act selfishly. We need not be cynical in making such reports.¹³ Yet the important point is this. If we cannot know whether our actions proceed from a moral motive or a motive of self-love—and if empirical evidence cannot distinguish between the two—then we cannot know *from experience* whether we have the capacity to act from duty. So if we try to counter the skeptic by offering examples of allegedly good conduct, we will in turn commit the same mistake the skeptic has made. We will develop our stance, which may purport to be anti-skeptical, on the assumption that we can settle moral questions from an empirical point of view. And that would draw us back into the very problem we wished to escape.

What is at stake in the beginning of Section II is a question of proper philosophical procedure. As we read further, we see that Kant's criticism is aimed not so much at skepticism but at a moral theory that subscribes to an empirical method. This is what Kant calls 'popular moral philosophy', a theory

based on a 'disgusting hodgepodge of patchwork observations', some drawn from reason, others from experience (G 4:409). Since popular philosophy assumes we can gain insight into virtue by observing others and finding examples of good conduct, it is left defenseless against those who wish to cast doubt upon our higher vocation. Once again Kant's point is that experience cannot be our testing ground for morality and virtue. As he puts it elsewhere,

Whoever would draw the concepts of virtue from experience, whoever would make what can at best serve as an example for imperfect illustration into a model from which to derive knowledge (as many have actually done), would make of virtue an ambiguous non-entity, changeable with time and circumstances, useless for any sort of rule. (A315/B371; modified)

No wonder, then, that popular philosophy fails to secure a foundation for morality. Once we see this, Kant thinks, it is clear why we need an alternative method, even one that risks unpopularity.¹⁴

3.2. *The Need for a Metaphysics of Morals*

Kant's solution is simple: If an empirical method fails to secure a foundation for morality, then we must see if we can do better by taking up a different method—a method of rational reflection. In taking up this alternative, we must give up the idea that morality can be derived from some special feature of human nature. As Kant explains, 'duty is to be practical unconditional necessity of action and it must therefore hold for all rational beings (to which alone an imperative can apply at all) and *only because of this* be also a law for all human wills' (G 4:425). Kant announces this new method under the title 'metaphysics of morals', which he also calls 'pure practical philosophy' (G 4:410).

A metaphysics of morals does nothing more than conceptual analysis. This is the sense in which it is 'merely analytic'. As Kant puts it, 'we leave it undecided whether what is called duty is not as such an empty concept' (G 4:421)—yet what emerges is unexpected. First, when we think of a practical imperative that abstracts from any interest or inclination, we are led to the formula of universal law: 'Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law' (G 4:421). Second, when we ask what end is objectively valid for all rational beings, we see that it can only be 'humanity' *qua* rational nature, since only rational nature has a 'dignity' that sets it apart from things with contingent value. According to Kant, this yields the formula of humanity: 'So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means' (G 4:429).

Kant now argues that the first and second formulas combine to yield a third. Quickly put, his claim is that when we think of a being adopting humanity as its end, we have the idea of a being legislating itself by reason. That is, we have

the idea of a being acting autonomously, free of any interest or inclination. So by reflecting on the concept of a rational will in general, a metaphysics of morals leads us to the formula of autonomy: '[So act] that the maxims of your choice are also included as universal law in the same volition' (G 4:440; cf., 4:431).¹⁵ Without discussing the details of these connections, we can at least appreciate what Kant is trying to achieve in Section II. Conceptual analysis shows that what the moral law demands of us is 'neither more nor less than just this autonomy' (G 4:440). Had we kept to a popular method of investigation, we would never have been able to grasp this.

Despite Kant's frequent reminders that his method in the first two sections of the *Groundwork* is merely analytic, his closing statement in Section II still comes as a shock. He tells us it is possible at this stage of the argument that the concept of duty may be empty, that morality may be a 'figment of the imagination' (G 4:445). But why is this still a possibility? And why is Kant telling us this now? It may help to remember that Kant thinks we leave ourselves exposed to skepticism if we develop the concept of duty from experience (G 4:407). The problem with popular philosophy is not only that it leaves us with a 'patchwork' of half-rationalized principles, but that its method consists of observing others and finding examples of virtuous conduct. As a result, popular philosophy is left defenseless against those who wish to denounce morality as an illusion, since experience teaches us that people often act from selfish motives. By adopting a rational method of investigation, we have seen that Kant rejects the assumption the two skeptics from Section II share in common, i.e., that what we cannot perceive must not exist. And this suggests Kant's closing remarks are addressed to a new audience. As he says, 'whoever holds morality to be something and not a chimerical idea without any truth must also admit the principle of morality brought forward' (G 4:445).¹⁶

My conjecture is that the new audience consists of 'whoever' has, with Kant, made the transition to a metaphysics of morals. If this is right, his comment about the possible illusoriness of duty serves only as a reminder that a metaphysics of morals is limited. Once again, we can see Kant using a skeptical method to show why a shift of frameworks, or 'transition' (*Übergang*), is necessary. As a procedure, a metaphysics of morals avoids the pitfalls of popular philosophy—it uncovers conceptual links between our common-sense notions of duty and autonomy of will—but within its framework we cannot decide whether those links are justified. By the end of Section II, it remains to be seen whether the principle of a rational will *in general*, expressed by the moral law, is also a principle binding for beings *like us*. For Kant, a special kind of justification is required to show this, what he now calls a 'deduction'.

4. The Deduction of the Categories

Kant spent years laboring on a deduction of the categories, which he says cost him the 'most effort' in the first *Critique* (Axiv). Unfortunately, Kant left us few

clues for understanding the path he took to arrive at his deduction in Section III of the *Groundwork*. Given the complexities in each text, it would be unfeasible to compare the two in any detail. Nevertheless, an outline of Kant's deduction of the categories will shed light on aspects of *Groundwork* III we might otherwise miss. As we shall see, both texts share a two-step structure of proof. In §4.1 I will begin by clarifying the juridical significance of the term 'deduction'. Then, in §4.2, I will show how Kant uses a skeptical threat to motivate his own 'transcendental deduction' of the categories.

4.1. The Question of Legitimacy

Right away we are likely to put the term 'deduction' in the context of modern logic, where it is said we can 'deduce' a conclusion from a valid set of premises. But Kant's use of the term comes from the older discourse of Romano-canon law. One striking instance of this discourse occurs at the beginning of the 'Deduction' chapter where Kant compares his strategy of argument to a juridical procedure:

Jurists, when they speak of entitlements and claims, distinguish in a legal manner between the questions about what is lawful (*quid juris*) and that which concerns the fact (*quid facti*), and since they demand proof of both, they call the first, that which is to establish the entitlement or the legal claim a **deduction**. (A84/B116)¹⁷

The task of a legal deduction is to vindicate a disputed claim by providing an account of its rightful acquisition. For Kant, pure concepts of the understanding or 'categories' provoke suspicion of their legitimacy because they make claims of epistemic necessity. For example, the category of cause-and-effect says that one event must, under relevant conditions, follow from another. Accordingly it says: 'Under relevant conditions water *must* freeze when the temperature drops to zero°C', and this goes far beyond a claim of prediction, that the water will *probably* freeze at this temperature. What is at issue is not whether we cognize necessity in the categories—for in fact we do—but whether our cognition has an objective ground. A 'transcendental deduction' in Kant's sense must show this.

The difficulty is that the categories are not acquired through sense experience. The mere fact that we use pure concepts like cause-and-effect does not weigh in favor of their legitimacy. Who is to say they are objectively necessary? Kant observes that terms like fortune and fate 'circulate with almost universal indulgence', yet nobody can provide 'clear legal ground for an entitlement to their use either from experience or from reason' (A85/B117). So without a deduction we could not tell whether the categories have entered our mind surreptitiously, say, through custom or habit. The worry is urgent because if the basis of the categories turns out to be 'merely subjective', we will be forced to abandon the idea that they serve as conditions of possible experience. And that would entail giving up the project of the first *Critique*.

4.2. A Dualism of the Faculties

Kant wants to impress upon the reader why undertaking a justification of the categories is necessary. 'The reader', he explains, 'must be convinced of the unavoidable necessity of such a transcendental deduction' (A88/B121). Lacking conviction on this point, he says, the reader 'would otherwise proceed blindly, and after much wandering around would still have to return to the ignorance from which he had begun' (A88/B121). In order to prevent this, Kant appeals to a skeptical thought in order to push his argument in the right direction. Tellingly, he labels this move a 'transition' in the title of §14: 'Transition [*Übergang*] to the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories'.

The skeptical thought Kant appeals to concerns the coordination of our faculties. He says the unity of appearances may not be a product of categories like cause-and-effect, so that what is given to us in sensibility may not relate to the functions of the understanding. The skeptical worry, in other words, is of a potential *dualism* of the faculties:

[A]pppearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity, and everything would then lie in such confusion, e.g., in the succession of appearances nothing would offer itself that would furnish a rule of synthesis and thus correspond to the concept of cause and effect, so that this concept would therefore be entirely empty, nugatory, and without significance. Appearances would nonetheless offer objects to our intuition, for intuition by no means requires functions of thinking. (A90/B123)

Kant says the reader may wish to escape the difficulties of a deduction and try, instead, to establish the validity of the categories by appealing to examples drawn from experience. Taking the empirical path he might think we can derive causal necessity from the regularity of appearances, e.g., from phenomena like the constant rising of the sun. But Kant quickly points out that experience can only support inductive generalizations (that B will *probably* follow A), not claims of necessity (that B *must* follow A). At this crossroads the alternatives are clear: Pure concepts 'must either be grounded in the understanding completely *a priori* or else be entirely surrendered as a mere fantasy of the brain [*Hirngespinnst*]' (A91/B123). There is no choice, in Kant's view, but to take the more difficult path of a transcendental deduction.

Kant is perhaps guilty for obscuring the path, since he rewrote the 'Deduction' chapter in the 1787 edition of the first *Critique*. One point commentators agree upon is that the proof-structure of the 1787 version is organized around two steps, although the nature of those steps is a topic of much controversy. While we need not resolve the matter here, one interpretive strategy I find helpful is to distinguish the two steps in terms of their justificatory scope.¹⁸ On this reading, the first step of the transcendental deduction is to show that the categories are necessary for a domain of sensible intuition in general. A second

step is necessary, however, because the domain of human intuition is unique: it is characterized by space and time. Here, we need to know if the categories extend this far.

In summary, the worry Kant uses to motivate his transcendental deduction in the first *Critique* is a threat of faculty dualism. According to this threat, we might not be entitled to say that an effect, *B*, necessarily follows a cause, *A*, only that we must represent 'A-B' together, 'which is precisely what the skeptic wishes most, for then all of our insight through the supposed objective validity of our judgments is nothing but sheer illusion' (B168). Accordingly, the categories might only be rules for thinking objects in general, as thinking does not require sensory data, but they would not be applicable to 'whatever' we perceive, i.e., to objects given to us in space and time. So in addition to a first step that would show the validity of the categories for a manifold of intuition in general, Kant must take a second step, one that would show the validity of the categories for a *human* manifold in particular.

5. Skepticism in *Groundwork* III

It may not be obvious how any of this relates to Section III of the *Groundwork*, beyond the fact that Kant speaks of a 'deduction' in each text. But we are now in a better position to see how the argument of Section III develops. In §5.2, I will explain why Kant thinks we need a 'critique' of our faculty of reason; then, in §5.3, I will show how he employs a two-step proof-structure in Section III similar to the transcendental deduction discussed above. Before going into this, however, let me review the discussion so far.

5.1. A Review

We have seen that in Section II of the *Groundwork* Kant is troubled by an approach to morality that leaves itself exposed to skepticism: the approach of popular moral philosophy. This is a significant turning point in his argument. Kant has just shown in Section I that common reason is susceptible to a 'natural dialectic' which requires it to seek help in philosophy.¹⁹ If common reason turns to popular philosophy for a clarification of its moral commitments, it would likely become more entangled in self-obscurity.

Does Kant think bad philosophy can enter the dialectic of common reason? The naturalness of the dialectic suggests that in our everyday frame of mind we do not need the help of empirical theories to justify placing our interest in happiness above the moral law. At the same time, we could readily do this by turning to the reductive explanations such theories endorse: explanations that render our experience of moral obligation merely subjective, in effect making the 'necessity' of the moral law contingent. If we could convince ourselves that categorical imperatives are really hypothetical, we could justify suspending them

in situations where we would like to act out of self-love. So even if empirical theories of morality have an origin outside our natural dialectic, they could still be re-appropriated under the guise of respectable philosophical accounts—accounts that would serve to back up the rationalizations Kant thinks we are prone to make when faced with the strict requirements of duty.

This idea is worth repeating, because it is easy to forget that one of Kant's central tasks in the *Groundwork* is to *rescue* common reason from its self-obscurity.²⁰ As we have seen, the practical need for philosophy only becomes apparent at the end of Section I when we discover we have a tendency to rationalize against the moral law. That is why Kant says we are compelled to 'seek help' in philosophy—not by 'some need of speculation', he adds, 'but on practical grounds themselves', so that we may escape the conflict that inevitably arises between morality and our own happiness (G 4:405). This is also part of Kant's argument leading to the final section of the *Groundwork*. For in the Preface he says that the dialectic we suffer in our ordinary thinking will only find 'rest' in a 'complete critique of our reason' (G 4:405). This is part of the 'final step' Kant thinks we need to take in Section III.²¹

5.2. *The Need for a Critique*

What does this step involve? Early in the *Groundwork* Kant leaves us with a hint. At the end of Section I he says the need of common reason to seek help in philosophy is similar to the need we have in matters of speculation. Here Kant is alluding to the 'Transcendental Dialectic' from the first *Critique*, where he shows that we suffer from a tendency to 'overstep' the proper bounds of human cognition in seeking objects of knowledge. We fall into a 'chaos of uncertainty' in laying claim to objects outside any relation to sense experience (to 'God', for example). In the *Groundwork*, however, Kant implies that common reason suffers from the opposite problem:

Yet we cannot consider without admiration how great an advantage the practical faculty of appraising has over the theoretical in common human understanding. In the latter, if common reason ventures to depart from laws of experience and perceptions of the senses it falls into sheer incomprehensibilities and self-contradictions, at least into a chaos of uncertainty, obscurity, and instability. But in practical matters, it is just when common understanding excludes all sensible incentives from practical laws that its faculty of appraising first begins to show itself to advantage. (G 4:404)

In matters of knowledge, our speculative use of reason becomes 'dialectical' when we overstep the sensible conditions that make human cognition possible. By contrast, in matters of deliberation our practical use of reason displays its authority when we ignore sensuous incentives—for then we can judge an action's worth in terms of its lawful form, stripped from any consideration of

self-interest. This means, to bring out the reverse point, that we fall into a 'chaos of uncertainty, obscurity, and instability' when we let sensible incentives *encroach* upon our practical reason. That is when our self-love becomes excessive and when we begin to 'quibble' with the demands of morality.

All of this goes to show why the *Groundwork* needs a final shift of frameworks. If we can show that our faculty of reason has a pure use, separate from its empirical use, then we can see that the only principle legislative for our will is autonomy—that of being a law to ourselves—which is equivalent to morality. A critical examination of this sort would show that our tendency to rationalize against the moral law is without basis: it occurs when we allow what is only a part of ourselves—namely, our sensibility—to act as if it constituted ourselves as a whole. If successful, then, Kant's critique would vindicate the idea of our higher vocation first expressed in Section I, ultimately showing that we have not 'misunderstood the purpose of nature in assigning reason to our will as its governor' (G 4:394–95). It goes without saying that a method of conceptual analysis is unable to take us this far.

5.3. *The Deduction of Section III*

Although Kant leaves us in the dark here, we can begin to understand his strategy better by looking at the title of subsection four: 'How is a Categorical Imperative Possible?' An even more revealing piece of evidence comes a few paragraphs later where Kant draws a parallel to the transcendental deduction of the categories. After summarizing the argument, he adds: 'this is roughly like the way in which concepts of the understanding, which by themselves signify nothing but lawful form in general, are added to intuitions of the world of sense and thereby make possible synthetic propositions a priori on which all cognition of a nature rests' (G 4:454).

If we take Kant at his word, the parallel of a transcendental deduction in Section III is to be found in his answer to the question of how a moral 'ought' is possible. And this makes sense, considering that our cognition of an 'ought' expressed in the moral law provokes the same sort of suspicion raised by the epistemic 'must' in the categories. In both cases we are faced with claims marked by necessity, and the question is whether these claims have an objective basis. A 'deduction' of the categorical imperative would then explain the peculiar character of morality, the fact that we recognize its claims as 'binding' or 'constraining' us.²²

Now, as with the argument from the first *Critique*, the deduction of Section III is organized around two steps. The first step introduces different but compatible ways we can view ourselves as agents. On the one hand, when I view myself from the standpoint of an observer, in the third person, I see that my actions are part of the same 'space of causes'²³ that I take up when I explain events in the natural world. My actions are the product of forces beyond my control. On the other hand, when I view myself as an agent, in the *first person*, I presuppose a

different space: a 'space of reasons' unaffected by natural influences, including the influences of my sensibility (G 4:452).²⁴ I recognize that I am, not only acted upon, but active myself.

Kant uses this distinction to show, first, that when I view myself exclusively from the standpoint of agency, participating in a space of reasons, I cannot derive a principle of action from my inclinations as a sensible being. I am now considering myself 'outside' of the space of causes to which my inclinations belong. So the only principle I can derive is that of being a law to myself, and that is the principle of autonomy. As a participant in the space of reasons, then, I see that a principle of being a law to myself is valid for me without the mediation of my inclinations: in this sense, it is the only principle of my will *qua* will, the only principle *I give wholly to myself*.

Of course, this does not yet show how the moral law is binding for us. The two-standpoint distinction says that when we regard ourselves as agents we presuppose a space undetermined by sensibility, a space of reasons which Kant speaks of, somewhat obscurely, in terms of an 'intelligible world' (G 4:451). Here it follows that practical reason is *more* than an empirically conditioned faculty. At least we have no reason to suspect that our will might be covertly determined by sensible incentives alone, for we distance ourselves from this space of explanation when we view ourselves from the standpoint of agency.

At this point, however, a reader might object that the moral law is valid for rational beings, and so for ourselves considered only as participants in the space of reasons. Yet this leaves open the question of whether the moral law applies to beings like us, who *are* affected by sensibility (G 4:450; cf., G 4:453). Just as step one from the transcendental deduction leaves open the question of whether the categories are valid in their application to our particular manifold of intuition—as it is characterized by space and time—the first step of Section III leaves open the question of whether the moral law is binding for human agents, as we are characterized by sensibility.²⁵ What this shows, as before, is that a second step is necessary.

Kant's answer—which comprises one of the most difficult parts of the *Groundwork*—turns on the two-standpoint distinction outlined above, but his task now is to show how these standpoints *relate* to each other. He first acknowledges that we are not only members of the space of reasons; we are also beings with inclinations, and so we are also part of the space of causes (G 4:454). However, the point we need to keep in mind is that we do not only belong to the space of causes. We know this from the first step: we are affected by sensible incentives, but not determined by them (cf., G 4:412). Kant's second step turns on this very point. Even when I act on my inclinations I must participate in making my choices; I must exercise my freedom by taking my inclinations as reasons for acting.

This brings us to the key premise of Kant's deduction. The idea I have of my will from the space of reasons *grounds* the conception I have of my will from the space of causes. When I take my inclinations as reasons for acting I exercise my power of choice, and that presupposes the idea of my will considered purely as

a will. The principle of autonomy appears to me as a normative demand, then, because it presents *to me* the idea of *my same will* yet unaffected by sensibility, i.e., the idea of my will *qua* will (G 4:454). This is why the moral 'ought' comes from my own 'will' as a member of the intelligible world: I experience it as an 'ought' only because I must view myself 'at the same time' as part of the world of sense (G 4:455). What Kant's deduction shows, then, is that my cognition of necessity in the categorical imperative has an objective basis after all. Rather than a figment of my imagination, the moral ought expresses my own pure will (G 4:454).²⁶

6. Closing Remarks

Looking back, we can see why nothing Kant says at the end of the *Groundwork* would satisfy a person looking for a motive to be moral. The argument of Section III takes up a different question altogether. As Hill points out, Kant is not speaking to those 'who are indifferent to morality and demand that philosophy supply them with a motive to be moral' (1998: 250). And to this extent Hill and others are right: Kant is not trying to 'refute' a radical skeptic or amoralist. His aim is to resolve the dialectic we are all prone to succumb to by showing that morality is the principle of our will as a whole, considered in itself, whereas happiness only applies to a part of our will, considered in relation to sensibility.

For this reason we should not look to Section III for an answer to the skeptic's traditional question, 'Why be moral?' If the skeptic is asking how morality will further one of his given desires, then he is begging the whole issue at stake. He is treating morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives, placing his own interests and inclinations in first rank. That is not to say Kant's attitude to skepticism is entirely dismissive in the *Groundwork*. The results of Section III must speak, at least indirectly, to those who wish to ridicule morality as a figment of the imagination. Like any ordinary person who engages in rationalization, the skeptics Kant considers in Section II would display a genuine practical error if they asserted their happiness above the moral law. By doing so they would be lost in the same self-obscurity Kant says common reason finds itself.

So in the end I believe we can turn the skeptics' words against themselves. If anyone has succumbed to a 'delusion', as they claim, it is not the moralist, but the skeptic himself, insofar as he has presumed that sensibility constitutes our whole self, and happiness our highest end. This is the sense in which our need for philosophy is, as Kant says, practical in nature. Skeptical claims are troubling, not because they attack our deepest moral intuitions, but because they resonate with unspoken doubts we feel within ourselves. I have suggested we read Kant's *Groundwork* as a method for invoking such doubts in order to expose, and overcome, the limits in our ordinary and philosophical thinking about morality. It seems that an actual skeptic stands in need of this help, no less than anyone else. Our doubts need to be, not refuted, but educated.²⁷

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NOTES

¹ I will refer to the 1781 [A] and 1787 [B] editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For all other texts, I will cite in the order of volume and page number from the Academy Edition of Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1902–). Unless marked as 'modified', all translations will come from *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992–). 'G' = *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (trans. M. Gregor); 'KpV' = *Critique of Practical Reason* (trans. M. Gregor); 'LL' = *Lectures on Logic* (trans. M. J. Young). 'VNAEF' = *Proclamation of the Imminent Conclusion of a Treaty of Perpetual Peace in Philosophy* (trans. P. Heath).

² Wood: 'Kant's deduction of the supreme principle of morality admittedly does not address (or even appear to take seriously) some of the more extreme forms of skepticism about value which have dominated twentieth-century meta-ethics' (1999: 381, note 30). Timmermann: 'Kant does not take the traditional amoralist's question of why we should be moral at all seriously . . . Moreover, it is doubtful whether anyone would be in a position to persuade a radical amoralist' (2007: 130, note 21). Allison: '[Kant's] interlocutor is not the familiar skeptical amoralist in search of reasons for obeying the dictates of morality when they clash with self-interest' (2011: 309–10).

³ As Wright makes clear: 'There are no such real opponents. That generations of philosophers have felt impelled to grapple with skeptical arguments is not attributable to a courtesy due to an historically distinguished sponsorship but to the fact that these arguments are paradoxes: seemingly valid derivations from seemingly well supported premisses of utterly unacceptable consequences' (1991: 89).

⁴ This makes my position closer to Guyer's earlier view (2000). There are also resonances between my account and James Conant's (2004), although exploring those resonances is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁵ There is little discussion of the *Groundwork's* organization in the secondary literature. One exception is Guyer (2007a) who offers a concise overview of the transition-structure in his commentary on the *Groundwork*. As Guyer points out, one might be tempted to read 'transition' (*Übergang*) in the sense of 'lead to', which suggests a continuous unfolding from one stage to another (2007: 34–35). This gives the impression that the stage of common reason in Section I will gradually lead to a metaphysics of morals in Section II, and so on. On the contrary, to make a 'transition' for Kant means something more like 'to overcome', indicating the presence of a limit or obstacle. Other commentators who reflect on the meaning of 'transition' include Dieter Schönecker (1997), who focuses on the transition in Section I, and Onora O'Neill (1989), who focuses on the transition in Section III. However, neither explain what *unifies* the transition-structure of the *Groundwork* as a whole.

⁶ As Kant puts it: 'External quiet is only illusory. The seed of the attacks [from skepticism], which lies in the nature of human reason, must be extirpated; but how can

we extirpate it if we do not give it freedom, indeed even nourishment, to send out shoots, so that we can discover it and afterwards eradicate it at its root?' (A778/B806).

⁷ I agree with Henry Allison's (2011) observation that the transition of *Groundwork* I is unique. While the transitions of Sections II and III involve the 'replacement of one philosophical standpoint by another (popular moral philosophy by metaphysics of morals) and one level of philosophical discourse by another (a metaphysics of morals by a critique of pure practical reason)', Section I resembles what Allison calls 'a movement in place'. That is to say, 'its argument consists in a clarification or making explicit of what is supposedly implicit in a shared, pre-philosophical, understanding of morality' (2011: 71).

⁸ 'Dialectic' has a pejorative meaning in Kant's writings, referring to a tempting but ultimately erroneous way of thinking. Presumably the dialectic mentioned in the *Groundwork* is 'natural' because it refers to an error all of us are prone to make in matters of deliberation. It is a 'dialectic' in the sense of a back-and-forth exchange—as we shall see, a constant 'quibbling' with morality—that without 'critique' will never find rest.

⁹ In Kant's view, popular moral philosophy suffers from a mixed method: 'now the special determination of human nature (but occasionally the idea of a rational nature as such along with it), now perfection, now happiness, here moral feeling, there fear of God, a bit of this and also a bit of that in a marvelous mixture' (G 4:410). Quite a few late eighteenth-century philosophers fall under this description. Johan van der Zande lists Sulzer, Iselin, Mendelssohn, and Herder, among others (1995: 423). Interestingly, one figure van der Zande does not list is the young Kant himself, who in his early work attempted to draw moral conclusions by 'observing' ways in which sentiments of beauty and sublimity arise in human life. Thanks to Kristin Gjesdal for helpful discussion of this issue.

¹⁰ The first skeptic I will be speaking of represents the group of 'philosophers' Kant says have always 'denied the reality of this disposition in human actions [i.e., to act from duty] and ascribed everything to more or less refined self-love' (G 4:406). The second skeptic represents 'the wishes of those who ridicule all morality as the mere phantom of a human imagination overstepping itself through self-conceit' (G 4:407). What this shows, I believe, is that the two skeptics from Section II of the *Groundwork* do not voice problems specific to any traditional school of thought. Rather, they are general problems that arise naturally in the course of speculating about the nature of morality. As we shall see, Kant introduces them in order to expose the shortcomings of popular moral philosophy, the rival to his own metaphysics of morals.

¹¹ In German, a '*Hirngespinnst*' means a 'phantasm', 'fantasy' or 'figment of the imagination'. In Kant's technical language, a '*Hirngespinnst*' refers to a concept empty of content.

¹² In the second *Critique*, Kant says that some people (not necessarily philosophers) have a tendency to search out a hidden self-interested motive for every moral action, with the idea that 'human virtue might in the end be held a mere phantom [*Hirngespinnst*], and so all striving toward it would be deprecated as vain affectation and delusive self-conceit' (KpV 5:154).

¹³ 'One need not be an enemy of virtue', Kant writes, 'but only a cool observer, who does not take the liveliest wish for the good straightaway as its reality, to become doubtful at certain moments (especially with increasing years, when experience has made one's judgment partly more shrewd and partly more acute in observation) whether any true virtue is to be found in the world' (G 4:407). The idea that sharpening one's judgment makes one prone to skepticism is also a theme found in the first *Critique*. There Kant

speaks of the 'childhood' of pure reason as a kind of self-certain *dogmatism* that comes to be questioned, presumably in reason's 'adolescence', but that still requires *criticism* to reach 'mature and adult power' (A761/B789).

¹⁴ To be sure, Kant thinks that 'descending to popular concepts is certainly very commendable, provided the ascent to the principles of pure reason has first taken place and has been carried through to complete satisfaction' (G 4:409).

¹⁵ I have removed the italics from the original versions of each formula.

¹⁶ Even though the first skeptic does not deny the truth of morality—he only questions our motivational capacities—I do not think Kant is speaking to him at the end of Section II. This is because he thinks we can settle moral issues from an empirical point of view, and Kant has rejected this assumption in taking up a metaphysics of morals. Thanks to Leah Ware for helpful discussion of this issue.

¹⁷ For example, my claim to an estate would be justified by a document (such as a will) identifying me as the estate's legal inheritor. In a series of influential papers Dieter Henrich (1975, 1989) has argued that the juridical model gives us insight into the structure of Kant's transcendental deduction.

¹⁸ This interpretation has been defended forcefully by Allison (2004).

¹⁹ In a later essay Kant claims that a philosopher is responsible for prescribing the right philosophy in the same way that a doctor is responsible for prescribing the right medicine. '[P]hilosophy must also act (therapeutically) as a medicine (*materia medica*), for the use of which we need dispensaries and doctors (though the latter are alone entitled to *prescribe* such use); in which connection the authorities must be vigilant to see that it is qualified physicians who profess to *advise what philosophy should be studied*, and not mere amateurs, who thereby practice quackery in an art of which they know not the first elements' (VNAEF 8:414). Turning to the *Groundwork*, we may suppose the *popular* philosopher does not know the 'first elements' of moral theory.

²⁰ In addition to Guyer (2000), the idea that the *Groundwork's* task is educative is voiced by Philonenko (2008: 13–4), but only in passing.

²¹ Kant takes up the problem of a 'dialectic' once more in the second *Critique*. Yet we should be attentive to the fact that the 'dialectic' of the second *Critique* is of *pure* practical reason (cf., KpV 5:107). That would set it apart, as a philosophical problem, from the 'dialectic' of the *Groundwork*, which arises for *empirically conditioned* practical reason. See Klemme (2010) for further discussion. I am grateful to an anonymous *EJP* reviewer for raising this point.

²² I am following Schönecker (2006), Timmermann (2007), and Stern (2010) in framing the deduction of *Groundwork* III as an argument, not for the validity of the moral law, but for its bindingness as a categorical imperative. Guyer has recently expressed resistance to this interpretation (2007b; 2009). In his view, the bindingness problem only concerns the 'imperative character of the fundamental principle of morality for us', yet this, he concludes, is 'a statement of a consequence of the deduction rather than the attempted deduction itself' (2009: 181, note 7). Although I am unable to back up this suggestion, there is evidence that Kant's deduction of the categorical imperative in subsection four presupposes a previous deduction of freedom in subsection three. This evidence would make my view of the *Groundwork's* proof-structure compatible with Guyer's. The remaining question—which I will leave open here—is whether Guyer is right to interpret the initial deduction of freedom in strongly metaphysical terms. I am grateful to an anonymous *EJP* reviewer for pressing me to clarify this.

²³ The distinction between a 'space of reasons' and a 'space of causes' comes from Wilfred Sellars. Allison connects it explicitly to the two-standpoint distinction in his

commentary on the *Groundwork* (2011: 308, note 21). For the purposes of this section, I find the language of 'spaces' or 'standpoints' more helpful than 'worlds', although by this I am not committing myself to a metaphysically neutral reading of Kant's transcendental idealism.

²⁴ As Kant writes: 'One resource, however, still remains to us, namely to inquire whether we do not take a *different standpoint* when by means of freedom we think ourselves as causes efficient a priori than when we represent ourselves in terms of our actions as effects that we see before our eyes' (G 4:450; my emphasis).

²⁵ The question of parallelism in Kant's deductions is intriguing yet difficult to settle. All I am committed to here is parallelism between (a) a general step (the validity of the categories for a manifold of intuition in general/the validity of the moral law for a rational being in general) and (b) a specific step (the validity of the categories for a human manifold of intuition/the validity of the categorical imperative for a human will). Guyer has attempted to draw a more elaborate set of connections ranging from Kant's derivation of the categorical imperative in Section II of the *Groundwork* to his system of duties in the *Metaphysics of Morals*. For details, see Guyer (2007b); for a critical reply, see Allison (2007).

²⁶ I regard G 4:454 as the crucial passage of Kant's deduction of the categorical imperative. Right before drawing an analogy to the transcendental deduction of the categories, he writes: 'the idea of freedom makes me a member of an intelligible world and consequently, if I were only this, all my actions would always be in conformity with the autonomy of the will; but since at the same time [*zugleich*] I intuit myself as a member of the world of sense, they *ought* to be in conformity with it; and this *categorical* ought represents a synthetic proposition a priori, since to my will affected by sensible desires there is added the idea of the same will but belonging to the world of the understanding—a will pure and practical of itself' (G 4:454).

²⁷ I would like to thank Karl Ameriks, Paul Franks, Kristin Gjesdal, Jamie Hebbeler, Arthur Ripstein, Krista Thomason, Sergio Tenenbaum, Leah Ware, and an anonymous *EJP* reviewer for giving me helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

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