would be strongly confirmed by the adequacy of the principle would manifest throughout. All the same, I had to forgo this advantage, which in any case would be more flattering to myself than helpful to others. For the convenience of a principle in use and its apparent adequacy do not constitute a secure proof of its correctness. They rather awaken a certain bias against examining and weighing it rigorously and independently of its consequences.

The method I have adopted in this book is, I believe, one which will work best if we proceed analytically from common knowledge to the formulation of its supreme principle and then back again synthetically from an examination of this principle and its origins to the common knowledge in which we find its application. Hence the division turns out to be as follows:

1. Chapter One: Passage from the common rational knowledge of morality to the philosophical.
2. Chapter Two: Transition from popular moral philosophy to a metaphysic of morals.
3. Chapter Three: Final step from a metaphysic of morals to a critique of pure practical reason.

Chapter One. Passage from the Common Rational Knowledge of Morality to the Philosophical

7. [The Unqualified Value of a Good Will]

It is impossible to imagine anything at all in the world, or even beyond it, that can be called good without qualification—except a good will. Intelligence, wit, judgement, and the other mental talents, whatever we may call them, or courage, decisiveness, and perseverance, are, as qualities of temperament, certainly good and desirable in many respects; but they can also be extremely bad and harmful when the will which makes use of these gifts of nature and whose specific quality we refer to as character, is not good. It is exactly the same with gifts of fortune. Power, wealth, honour, even health and that total well-being and contentment with one's condition which we call 'happiness'.

2. Glückseligkeit. 'Happiness', the usual translation, does not entirely capture Kant's meaning, as various passages show. At G 4: 399 Glückseligkeit is described as the satisfaction of all inclinations as a sum, and at G 4: 418, it is said to require 'an absolute whole, a maximum, of well-being in my present and in every future state', clearly not something implied by modern usage of 'happiness'. Glückseligkeit is archaic, and actually meant something like 'blessedness' or 'felicity', a German equivalent of the Latin beatitude. Happiness, in German, at least nowadays, is Glück, Glückseligkeit, Freude, Zufriedenheit. However, 'felicity' is a rare word, 'blessedness' carries religious overtones often inappropriate to Kant's discussion, and 'happiness' fits naturally Kant's attack on 'the principle of one's own happiness'. Where appropriate, 'perfect happiness' is used in this translation.

3. allgemein zweckmässig
Even if it were to happen that, because of some particularly unfortunate fate or the miserly bequest of a stepmotherly nature, this will were completely powerless to carry out its aims; if with even its utmost effort it still accomplished nothing, so that only good will itself remained (not, of course, as a mere wish, but as the summoning of every means in our power), even then it would still, like a jewel, glisten in its own right, as something that has its full worth in itself. Its utility or ineffectuality can neither add to nor subtract from this worth. Utility would be merely, as it were, its setting, enabling us to handle it better in our ordinary dealings or to attract to it the attention of those who are not yet experts, but not why we recommend it to experts and determine its worth.

8. [Good Will, Not Happiness, Is the Natural End of Reason]

Yet there is something so strange in this idea of the absolute worth of a mere will, all utility being left out of account, that, in spite of all the agreement this idea receives even from common reason, the suspicion must arise that perhaps its hidden basis is merely some high-flown fantasy, and that we may have misunderstood the purpose of nature in appointing reason as ruler of our will. Let us therefore examine this idea from this perspective.

In the natural constitution of an organized being—that is, a being properly equipped for life—we take it as a principle that no instrument for any purpose will be found in that being unless it is also the most appropriate and best adapted for that purpose. Now if nature's real purpose for a being possessed of reason and a will were its preservation, its welfare, or in a word its happiness, then nature would have hit on a very bad arrangement if it assigned the creature's reason the job of carrying out this purpose. For all the actions this creature has to perform with this end in view, and the whole rule of its conduct, would have been disclosed to it far more precisely by instinct; and the end in question could have been attained far more surely by instinct than it ever could be by reason. If, in that case, reason had been given to this favoured creature additionally, its service would have been only to contemplate the fortunate constitution of the creature's nature, to admire it, enjoy it, and be grateful to its beneficent Cause. But reason would not have been given in order that this creature would subject its faculty of desire to such feeble and defective guidance or to meddle incompetently with nature's purpose. In a word, nature would have prevented reason from striking out into a practical use and from presuming, with its feeble insights, to think out for itself a plan for happiness and for the means of attaining it. Nature would herself have taken over not only the choice of ends but also that of means, and would with wise foresight have entrusted both to instinct alone.

And in fact we do find that the more one devotes one's cultivated reason to the enjoyment of life and happiness, the further away does one get from true contentment. This is why a certain degree of misology, i.e., hatred of reason, arises in many people, including those who have been most tempted by this use of reason, if only they are candid enough to admit it. For, according to their calculation of all the benefits they draw—I will not say from the invention of all the arts of common luxury, but even from the sciences (which in the final analysis seem to them to be only a luxury of the understanding)—they find that instead of gaining in happiness they have in fact only brought more trouble on their heads. They therefore come to envy, rather than despise, more ordinary people, who are closer to being guided by mere natural instinct and who do not let their reason have much influence on conduct. To this extent we must admit that the judgement of those who seek to moderate—and even to reduce below zero—the boasting glorification of benefits that reason is supposed to provide in the way of happiness and contentment with life, is by no means morose or ungrateful for the kindness of the world's ruler. That judgement rather is based on the idea that our existence has another and much worthier purpose, for which, and not for happiness, our reason is properly intended, an end which, therefore, is the supreme condition to which our private ends must for the most part be subordinated.

For since reason is not sufficiently competent to guide the will safely with regard to its objects and the satisfaction of all our needs (which it in part even multiplies)—a goal to which an implanted natural instinct would have led us much
more certainly—and since reason is nevertheless
given to us a practical faculty—that is, as one
which is supposed to influence the will; since,
finally, reason was absolutely necessary for this
purpose, as nature has everywhere distributed her
abilities so as to fit the functions they are to per-
form; reason's true vocation must therefore be to
produce a will which is good in itself, not just good
as a means to some further end. Such a will must
not be the sole and complete good, but it must be
the highest good and the condition of all the rest,
even of all our longing for happiness. In that case
it is entirely compatible with the wisdom of
nature that the cultivation of reason, which is
required for the former unconditional purpose,
may in many ways, at least in this life, restrict the
attainment of the second, conditional purpose—
happiness — and indeed that it can even reduce it
to less than nothing. Nor does nature here violate
its own purpose, for reason, which recognizes as its
highest practical vocation the establishment of a
good will, is capable only of its own peculiar kind
of satisfaction — satisfaction from fulfilling a pur-
pose which reason alone determines, even if this
fulfillment damages the ends of inclination.

9. [The Concept of Duty Includes the
Concept of a Good Will]

We must thus develop the concept of a will
estimable in itself and good apart from any further
aim. This concept is already present in the natural,
healthy mind, which requires not so much instruc-
tion as merely clarification. It is this concept that
always holds the highest place in estimating the total
worth of our actions and it constitutes the condi-
tion of all the rest. Let us then take up the concept
of duty, which includes that of a good will, the lat-
ter however being here under certain subjective
limitations and obstacles. These, so far from hiding a
good will or disguising it, rather bring it out by
contrast and make it shine forth more brightly.

10. [A Good Will Is Manifested When We
Act out of Duty Rather than Inclination;
Only Such Acts Have Moral Worth]

I will here omit all actions already recognized
as opposed to duty, even if they may be useful
from this or that perspective; for about these it
makes no sense even to ask the question whether
they might have been done out of duty since they
are directly opposed to it. I will also set aside
actions that in fact accord with duty, yet for one
has no direct inclination, but which one performs
because impelled to do so by some other inclina-
tion. For in such a case it is easy to decide whether
the action [which accords with duty] was done out
of duty or for some self-interested goal. This dis-
tinction is far more difficult to perceive when the
action accords with duty but the agent has in addi-
tion a direct inclination to do it. For example, it
is certainly in accord with duty that a shopkeeper
should not overcharge an inexperienced cus-
tomer; and, where there is much business, a
prudent merchant refrains from doing this and
maintains a fixed general price for everybody, so
that a child can buy from him just as well as any-
one else. People thus get honest treatment. But this
is not nearly enough to justify our believing that
the shopkeeper acted in this way out of duty or
from principles of honesty; his interests required
him to act as he did. We cannot assume him to
have in addition a direct inclination towards his
customers, leading him, as it were out of love, to
give no one preferential treatment over another
person in the matter of price. Thus the action was
done neither out of duty nor from immediate
inclination, but solely out of self-interest.

On the other hand, it is a duty to preserve
one's life, and every one also has a direct inclina-
tion to do it. But for that reason the often-fearful
care that most people take for their lives has no
intrinsic worth, and the maxim of their action has
no moral merit. They do protect their lives in
conformity with duty, but not out of duty. If, by
contrast, disappointments and hopeless misery
have entirely taken away someone's taste for life;
if that wretched person, strong in soul and more
angered at fate than faint-hearted or cast down,
longs for death and still preserves life without
loving it—not out of inclination or fear but out
of duty—then indeed that person's maxim has
moral worth.

It is a duty to help others where one can, and
besides this many souls are so compassionately
disposed that, without any further motive of van-
ity or self-interest, they find an inner pleasure in
spreading joy around them, taking delight in the
contentment of others, so far as they have brought
it about. Yet I maintain that, however dutiful and kind an action of this sort may be, it still has no genuinely moral worth. It is on a level with other inclinations—for example, the inclination to pursue honour, which if fortunate enough to aim at something generally useful and consistent with duty, something consequently honourable, deserves praise and encouragement but not esteem. For its maxim lacks the moral merit of such actions done not out of inclination but out of duty. Suppose then that the mind of this humanitarian were overwhelmed by sorrows of his own which extinguished all compassion for the fate of others, but that he still had the power to assist others in distress; suppose though that their adversity no longer stirred him, because he is preoccupied with his own; and now imagine that, though no longer moved by any inclination, he nevertheless tears himself out of this deadly apathy and does the action without any inclination, solely out of duty. Then for the first time his action has its genuine moral worth. Furthermore, if nature had put little sympathy into this or that person's heart; if he, though an honest man, were cold in temperament and indifferent to the sufferings of others—perhaps because he has the special gifts of patience and fortitude in his own sufferings and he assumes or even demands the same of others; if such a man (who would in truth not be the worst product of nature) were not exactly fashioned by nature to be a humanitarian, would he not still find in himself a source from which he might give himself a worth far higher than that of a good-natured temperament? Assuredly he would. It is precisely in this that the worth of character begins to show—a moral worth, and incomparably the highest—namely, that he does good, not out of inclination, but out of duty.

To secure one's own happiness is, however, often so constituted that it greatly interferes with some inclinations, and yet we cannot form a precise conception of the satisfaction of all inclinations as a whole, the conception to which we give the name "happiness." Hence it is not surprising that a single inclination, well defined as to what it promises and as to the time at which it can be satisfied, may outweigh a fluctuating idea; so, for example, a man who suffers from gout, may choose to enjoy whatever he likes and put up with what he must—because according to his calculations he has at least not sacrificed the enjoyment of the present moment to some possibly groundless expectations of happiness allegedly attached to health. But even in this case, if the universal inclination to happiness has failed to determine his will, and if good health, at least for him, did not enter into his calculations, what would remain, as in other cases, is a law—the law that he ought to promote his happiness, not out of inclination, but out of duty. And only from this law would his conduct begin to have real moral worth.

It is doubtless in this sense that we should understand too the passages from Scripture in which we are commanded to love our neighbour and even our enemy. For love as inclination cannot be commanded; but kindness done out of duty—although no inclination impels us, and even although natural and unconquerable aversion stands in our way—is practical love, not pathological love. It resides in the will and not in the partiality of feeling, in principles of action and not in melting compassion; and it is this practical love alone that can be commanded.

11. [What Makes Acts out of Duty Morally Worthy Is Not Their Actual Or Intended-Results, but the Underlying Principle on Which They Are Based]

The second proposition is this: The moral worth of an action done out of duty has its moral worth, not in the objective to be reached by that action, but in the maxim in accordance with which the action is decided upon; it depends, therefore, not on actualizing the object of the action, but solely on the principle of volition in accordance with which the action was done, without any regard for objects of the faculty of desire.
It is clear from our previous discussion that the objectives we may have in acting, and also our actions' effects considered as ends and as what motivates our volition, can give to actions no unconditional or moral worth. Where then can this worth be found if not in the willing of the action's hoped for effect? It can be found nowhere but in the principle of the will, irrespective of the ends that can be brought about by such action. For the will stands, so to speak, at the crossroads between its a priori principle, which is formal, and its a posteriori motivation, which is material; and since it must be determined by something, it will have to be determined by the formal principle of volition, since every material principle is ruled out when an action is done out of duty.

12. [Duty and Respect for Law]

The third proposition, which follows from the two preceding, I would express in this way: Duty is the necessity of an act done out of respect for the law. While I can certainly have an inclination for an object that results from my proposed action, I can never respect it, precisely because it is nothing but an effect of a will and not its activity. Similarly, I cannot respect any inclination whatsoever, whether it be my own inclination or that of another. At most I can approve of that towards which I feel an inclination, and occasionally I can like the object of somebody else's inclination myself—that is, see it as conducive to my own advantage. But the only thing that could be an object of respect (and thus a commandment) for me is something that is conjoined with my will purely as a ground and never as a consequence, something that does not serve my inclination but overpowers it or at least excludes it entirely from my decision-making—consequently, nothing but the law itself. Now if an action done out of duty is supposed to exclude totally the influence of inclination, and, along with inclination, every object of volition, then nothing remains that could determine the will except objectively the law and subjectively pure respect for this practical law. What is left therefore is the maxim, to obey

this sort of law even when doing so is prejudicial to all my inclinations.


Thus the moral worth of an action depends neither on the result expected from that action nor on any principle of action that has to borrow its motive from this expected result. For all these results (such as one's own pleasurable condition or even the promotion of the happiness of others) could have been brought about by other causes as well. It would not require the will of a rational being to produce them, but it is only in such a will that the highest and unconditional good can be found. That pre-eminent good which we call "moral" consists therefore in nothing but the idea of the law in itself, which certainly is present only in a rational being—so far as that idea, and not an expected result, is the determining ground of the will. And this pre-eminent good is already present in the person who acts in accordance with this idea; we need not await the result of the action in order to find it."

5. Trießfeld
* A maxim is the subjective principle of volition: an objective principle (that is, one which would also serve sub-
jectively as a practical principle for all rational beings if reason had full control over the faculty of desire) is a practical law.

* It might be objected that instead of clearly resolving the question by means of a concept of reason I have tried to take refuge in an obscure feeling, under the cover of the word 'respect' [Achtung]. However, though respect is a feeling, it is not a feeling that we are caused to receive by some (external) influence; rather, it is a feeling that is self-generated by a rational concept, and it is therefore different in kind from feelings of the first sort, all of which can be reduced to inclination or fear. What I recognize directly as a law for myself, I recognize with respect, which means nothing more than the consciousness of my will's submission to the law, without the mediation of any other influences on my mind. The direct determination of the will by the law, and the awareness of that determination, is called 'respect', so we should see respect as the effect of the law on a person rather than as what produces the law. Actually, respect is the thought of something of such worth that it breaches my self-love. It is neither an object of inclination nor an object of fear, though it is somewhat analogous to both. The sole object of respect is the [moral] law—that law which we impose on ourselves and yet recognize as necessary in itself. As a law, we must submit to it without any consulting of self-love; as self-imposed it is nevertheless a consequence of our will. Considered in the first way, it is analogous to
But what kind of law can it be, the idea of which must determine the will, even without considering the expected result, if that will is to be called good absolutely and without qualification? Since I have robbed the will of every inducement that might arise for it from its obeying any particular law, the only thing remaining that could serve the will as a principle is the universal conformity of actions to law as such. That is, I ought never to act in such a way that I could not also will that my maxim should become a universal law. Here it is the mere conformity to law as such (without presupposing any law prescribing particular actions) that serves the will as its principle, and must so serve it if duty is not to be a totally empty delusion and a chimeraical concept. Common human reason, when engaged in making practical judgements, also agrees with this completely and has that principle constantly in view.

14. [Example: The Wrongness of a Lying Promise]

Suppose, for example, the question is this: May I, when in distress, make a promise with the intention not to keep it? Here I easily distinguish the different meanings this question can have, whether it is prudent to make a false promise, or whether it is in accord with duty. The first no doubt can often be the case. Of course I see that [even for prudence] it is not enough just to extricate myself from my present predicament by means of this deception; I need to consider whether this lie might give rise to even greater troubles than those from which I am escaping. Since, for all my supposed cunning, it is not so easy to foresee all the consequences, e.g., the loss of trust may cost me more than all the misfortune I am now trying to avoid. I must consider therefore whether it might be more prudent for me to act on a general maxim and make it a habit to issue a promise only when I intend to keep it. But it is soon clear to me that such a maxim is always based solely on fear of consequences. To tell the truth out of duty is something entirely different from telling the truth out of fear of troublesome consequences; for in the first case the concept of the action already contains a law for me, while in the second case I must first look around to see how I am likely to be affected by the action. For deviating from the principle of duty is quite certainly bad; but deserting my prudential maxim can often be greatly to my advantage, though it is admittedly safer to stick to it. If, on the other hand, I want to find out most quickly but unerringly the answer to a different question—whether a deceitful promise accords with duty—I must ask myself: ‘Would I really be content if my maxim (the maxim of getting out of a difficulty by making a false promise) were to hold as a universal law (one valid both for myself and for others)? And could I really say to myself, ‘Let everyone be allowed to make a false promise if they find themselves in difficulties from which there is otherwise no escape’? I immediately see that I can indeed will the lie, but I cannot will a universal law to lie. For with such a law, there would actually be no promising at all, since it would be futile for me to allege my intentions with regard to some future actions to others who would not believe me, or who, if they did so overhastily, would pay me back in the same coin. Consequently my maxim, as soon as it became a universal law, would necessarily subvert itself.

Thus I need no far-reaching acuteness to know what I have to do in order that my volition can be morally good. Inexperienced in the ways of the world and incapable of anticipating all its actual events, I ask myself only: ‘Can you will that your maxim become a universal law?’ If not, that maxim must be repudiated, and not because of any impending disadvantage to you or even to others, but because it cannot fit as a principle into a possible universal legislation, and reason forces me to offer my immediate respect to such legislation. As yet I have no insight into the grounds of that respect (something the philosopher may investigate), but I do at least understand this much: it is the appreciation of something whose worth far exceeds all the worth of anything favoured by inclination. I understand too that the necessity that I act out of pure respect for the
practical law is what constitutes duty. To duty every other motive must give way, because it is the condition of a will good in itself, whose worth transcends all else.

15. [The General Competence of Ordinary Human Reason and Judgement]

Considering the moral knowledge of common human reason we have thus arrived at its principle, a principle it admitted does not think about abstractly in such a universal formulation; but which it really does always have in view and employs as the standard in its judging. It would be easy to show here how common human reason, with this compass in hand, knows very well how to distinguish what is good or evil, consistent or inconsistent with duty, in all cases that present themselves. Without attempting to teach it anything new, one merely has to make reason attend, as Socrates did, to its own principle. Therefore neither science nor philosophy is needed in order for us to know what one has to do to be honest and good, and even to be wise and virtuous. This is something that we could have suspected from the start: that knowledge of what it is incumbent upon everyone to do, and so also to know, would be attainable by everyone, even the most ordinary human being. Here we cannot help but be impressed when we notice the great advantage that the power of practical judgement has over theoretical judgement, in the minds of ordinary people. In theoretical judgements, if common reason dares to go beyond the laws of experience and the perceptions of the senses, it falls into sheer inconceivabilities and self-contradictions, or at least into a chaos of uncertainty, obscurity, and vacillation. On the practical side, however, the power of judgement first begins to look its best when the ordinary mind excludes all sensuous motives from its practical laws. The ordinary mind then becomes even subtle—perhaps vexing itself with its conscience or with other claims regarding what is to be called “right”, or trying to determine honestly for its own instruction the worth of various actions. But what is most important, the common understanding has, in the latter case, as good a chance of hitting the mark as any philosopher has. Indeed its chances are almost better than a philosopher’s, since the latter’s judgement has no principle different from that of ordinary intelligence, and a philosopher’s judgement may easily be confused by a mass of strange and irrelevant considerations and caused to turn from the right path. Would it not be wise therefore to accept the judgement of common reason in moral matters, or to bring in philosophy at most to make the system of morals more complete and comprehensible and to present its rules in formulations more convenient to use (especially in disputation)—but not to lead the common human understanding away from its happy simplicity in matters of action and set it on a new path of inquiry and instruction?

16. [Why Moral Philosophy Is Needed]

A wonderful thing about innocence—but also something very bad—is that it cannot defend itself very well and is easily led astray. For this reason even wisdom—which otherwise is more a matter of acting than knowing—also needs science, not in order to learn from it, but in order to gain access and durability for what it prescribes. Human beings feel within themselves a powerful counterweight opposed to all the commandments of duty, which reason portrays as so worthy of esteem: the counterweight of needs and inclinations, whose total satisfaction people sum up under the name ‘happiness’. But reason, without promising anything to inclination, dictates its pre-scriptions relentlessly, thus treating with neglect and contempt those blustering and seemingly legitimate claims (which refuse to be suppressed by any commandment). From this there arises a natural dialectic—that is, a tendency to quibble with these strict laws of duty, to cast doubt on their validity or at least on their purity and strictness, and, if possible, to make them conform better to our wishes and inclinations. This means corrupting their very foundations and destroying their dignity—a result that even common practical reason cannot ultimately endorse.

In this way common human reason is driven, not by any cognitive need (which never touches it so long as it is content to be mere sound reason), but on practical grounds, driven to leave its own sphere and take a step into the field of practical philosophy. There it seeks instruction and precise direction as to the source of its own principle and
about the correct function of this principle in contrast with maxims based on need and inclination. It ventures into philosophy so as to escape from the perplexity caused by conflicting claims and so as to avoid the risk of losing all genuine moral principles through the obscurity into which it easily falls. Thus, just as happens in its theoretical use, a dialectic arises unnoticed when practical common reason is cultivated, and it is forced to seek help in philosophy. As with the theoretical use of reason, the conflict will be resolved only by a thorough critical examination of our reason.

Chapter Two. Transition from Popular Moral Philosophy to a Metaphysics of Morals

17. [The Need for A Priori Method in Ethics]

Although we have drawn our previous concept of duty from the common use of our practical reason, this by no means implies that we have treated it as a concept derived from experience. On the contrary, if we pay attention to our experience of what human beings do and fail to do, we encounter frequent complaints that one cannot in fact point to any sure examples of the disposition to act out of pure duty. Thus we hear the charge that, although many things may be done that are in accord with what duty commands, it still remains doubtful whether those actions are really done out of duty, and doubtful therefore whether they have moral worth. That is why there have always been philosophers who absolutely deny the reality of this disposition in human conduct and ascribed everything we do to more or less refined self-love. But those philosophers have not denied the correctness of the concept of morality. Rather, they have spoken with sincere regret of the frailty and corruption of human nature, noble enough to take as its rule an idea so worthy of respect, but at the same time too weak to follow it, so that reason, which should serve as the law-giver to human nature, is used only to serve the interests of our inclinations, either singly or, at most, to maximize their compatibility. It is in fact absolutely impossible to identify by experience, with complete certainty, a single case in which the maxim of an action—an action that accords with duty—was based exclusively on moral reasons and the thought of one’s duty. There are cases when the most searching self-examination comes up with nothing but duty as the moral reason that could have been strong enough to move us to this or that good action or to some great sacrifice. But we cannot conclude from this with certainty that the real determining cause of our will was not some secret impulse of self-love, disguising itself as that Idea of duty. So we like to flatter ourselves with the false claim to a nobler motive but in fact we can never, even with the most rigorous self-examination, completely uncover our hidden motivations. For when moral worth is the issue, what counts is not the actions which one sees, but their inner principles, which one does not see.

Furthermore, there is no better way to serve the interests of those who mock all morality as a mere phantom of the brain, an illusion with which, out of vanity, the human imagination puffs itself up, than to concede that concepts of duty must be drawn solely from experience (as people find it only too easy to believe about all other concepts). For by conceding this we prepare an assured victory for those scoffers. Out of charity I am willing to grant that most of our actions are in accord with duty, but if we look more closely at the devising and striving that lies behind them, then everywhere we run into the dear self which is always there; and it is this and not the strict command of duty (which would often require self-denial that underlies our intentions) one need not be an enemy of virtue but only a dispassionate observer who does not immediately confuse even the liveliest wish for goodness with its reality, to become doubtful at certain moments whether any genuine virtue can really be found in the world. (Such doubts occur particularly as one grows older and experience renders one’s power of judgement and observation shrewder and more discerning.) And at that point only one thing can protect us against a complete

6. moralischen Gründen
7. Bewährungsgemäße
8. Triebfeder
laws and an incompletely good will can be represented as the determining of a rational being’s will by principles that are indeed principles of reason, but principles to which this will by its own nature is not necessarily obedient.

The idea of an objective principle, in so far as it constrains a will, is called a commandment\(^\text{16}\) (or reason), and the formulation of this commandment is called an Imperative.

22. [Types of Imperative]

All imperatives are expressed by a ‘must’\(^\text{17}\). Thereby they mark a constraint, that is to say, the relation of an objective law of reason to a will that in its subjective constitution is not necessarily determined by this law. Imperatives say that something would be good to do or to leave undone; but they say this to a will that does not always do something simply because it has been informed that it is a good thing to do. Practical good however is something that determines the will by means of what reason presents to it, and therefore not by means of subjective causes but objectively—that is, by reasons\(^\text{18}\) that are valid for every rational being as such. The practical good is distinguished from the pleasant, which influences the will solely through the medium of sensation as a result of purely subjective causes, effective only for the senses of this person or that, not as a principle of reason valid for everyone.\(^\text{19}\)

A perfectly good will would thus be just as much subject to objective laws (laws of the Good), but it could not for that reason be thought to be constrained\(^\text{19}\) to act lawfully, since by its own subjective constitution, it can be moved only by the concept of the Good. Hence no imperatives hold for the divine will or, more generally, for a holy will. The “must”\(^\text{20}\) is here out of place, because the “willing”\(^\text{21}\) is already of itself necessarily in agreement with the law. For this reason imperatives are only formulas for expressing the relation of objective laws of willing in general to the subjective imperfection of the will of this or that rational being—for example, the human will.

All imperatives command either hypothetically or categorically. Hypothetical imperatives declare a possible action to be practically necessary as a means to the attainment of something else that one wants (or that one may want). A categorical imperative would be one that represented an action as itself objectively necessary, without regard to any further end.

Since every practical law present a possible action as good and therefore as necessary for a subject whose actions are determined by reason, all imperatives are therefore formulæ for determining an action which is necessary according to the principle of a will in some way good. If the action would be good only as a means to something else, the imperative is hypothetical; if the action is thought of as good in itself and therefore as necessary for a will which of itself conforms to reason as its principle, then the imperative is categorical.

An imperative therefore states which of my possible actions would be good. The imperative formulates a practical rule for a will that does not perform an action immediately just because that action is good, partly because the subject does not always know that a good action is good, partly

\(^\text{16}\) Gebot
\(^\text{17}\) Sollen, an ‘ought’
\(^\text{18}\) Gründe

The dependence of the faculty of desire on sensations is called an inclination, and thus an inclination always indicates a need. The dependence of a contingently determinable will on principles of reason is called an interest. Hence an interest is found only where there is a dependent will which of itself is not always in accord with reason; to God’s will we cannot ascribe any interest. But even the human will can take an interest in something without therefore acting out of interest. The first expression signifies practical interest in the action; the second signifies pathological interest in the object of the action. [Ed. note: pathological = a feeling one is caused or made to have by something outside one’s own will.] The first indicates only dependence of the will on principles of reason in themselves; the second its dependence on principles of reason at the service of inclination—that is to say, where reason merely sup-
because, even if he did know this, his maxims might still be contrary to the objective principles of practical reason.

A hypothetical imperative thus says only that an action is good for some purpose or other, either possible or actual. In the first case it is a problematical practical principle; in the second case an assertoric practical principle. A categorical imperative, which declares an action to be objectively necessary of itself without reference to any purpose—that is, even without any further end—ranks as an apodictic practical principle.

What is possible only through the powers of some rational being can also be thought of as a possible purpose of some will. Consequently, if we think of principles of action as stating what is necessary in order to achieve some possible purpose, there are in fact infinitely many principles of action. All sciences have a practical part consisting of projects, which suppose that some end is possible for us, and imperatives, which tell us how that end is to be reached. These imperatives can in general be called imperatives of skill. Here there is no question at all as to whether the end is reasonable and good, but only about what one would have to do to attain it. The prescriptions required by a doctor in order to cure a patient and those that a poisoner needs in order to bring about certain death are of equal value so far as each will accomplish its purpose perfectly. Since young people do not know what ends may occur to them in the course of life, parents try to make their children learn many kinds of things. They try carefully to teach skill in the use of means to various desired ends, not knowing with certainty which possible end may in the future become an actual goal adopted by their pupil. Their anxiety in this matter is so great that they commonly neglect to form and correct their children’s judgements about the worth of things that they might possibly adopt as ends.

There is, however, one end that we may presuppose as actual in all rational beings (so far as they are dependent beings to whom imperatives apply); and thus there is one aim which they not only might have, but which we can assume with certainty that they all do have by a necessity of nature and that aim is perfect happiness.22 The hypothetical imperative which affirms the practical necessity of an action as a means to the promotion of perfect happiness is an assertoric imperative. We must not characterize it as necessary merely for some uncertain, merely possible purpose, but as necessary for a purpose that we can presuppose a priori and with certainty to be present in everyone because it belongs to the essence of human beings. Now we can call skill in the choice of the means to one’s own greatest well-being “prudence” in the narrowest sense of the word. So the imperative concerning the choice of means to one’s own happiness—that is, the precept of prudence—still remains hypothetical; the action is commanded not absolutely but only as a means to a further end.

Finally, there is one imperative which commands a certain line of conduct directly, without assuming or being conditional on any further goal to be reached by that conduct. This imperative is categorical. It is concerned not with the material of the action and its anticipated result, but with its form and with the principle from which the action itself results. And what is essentially good in the action consists in the [agent’s] disposition, whatever the result may be. This imperative may be called the imperative of morality.

Vocation in accordance with these three kinds of principles is also sharply distinguished by the dissimilarity in how they constrain the will. To make this dissimilarity obvious, I think we would name them most appropriately if we called them rules of skill, counsels of prudence, or commandments (laws) of morality, respectively. For only law carries with it the concept of necessity, an unconditional and objective and therefore universally valid necessity; and commandments are laws that must be obeyed, even against inclination. Counsels do indeed involve necessity, but a necessity valid

22. Glückseligkeit. On the various meanings of this word, see footnote 2 in Ch. One. In this translation, ‘perfect happiness’ is the usual rendering.

23. Geümmung

The word ‘prudence’ (Klugheit) is used in two senses; in one sense it can be called ‘worldly wisdom’ (Weltklugheit); in a second sense, ‘personal wisdom’ (Privatklugheit). The first is a person’s skill in influencing others in order to use them for his own ends. The second is the ability to combine all of these ends to his own lasting advantage. The latter is properly that to which the value of the former can still be traced; and if a person is prudent in the first sense, but not in the second, we might better say that he is clever and astute, but on the whole imprudent.
only under a subjective and contingent condition—namely, depending on whether this or that human being counts this or that as essential to his happiness. As against this, a categorical imperative is limited by no condition and can actually be called a commandment in the strict sense, being absolutely, although practically, necessary. We could also call imperatives of the first kind technical (concerned with art), imperatives of the second kind pragmatic (concerned with well-being), and imperatives of the third kind moral (concerned with free conduct as such—that is, with morals).

23. [How Are Hypothetical Imperatives Possible?]

The question now arises ‘How are all these imperatives possible?’ This question does not ask how an action commanded by the imperative can be performed, but merely how we can understand the constraining of the will, which imperatives express in setting us a task. How an imperative of skill is possible requires no special discussion. Whoever wills the end also wills (so far as reason has decisive influence on his actions) the means which are indispensably necessary and in his power. This proposition is analytic as far as willings is concerned. For when I will an object as an effect of my action I already conceive of my causality as an acting cause—that is, the use of means is included in the concept of the end; and the imperative merely extracts the concept of actions necessary to this end from the concept of willing an end. (Of course synthetic propositions are required in determining the means to a proposed end, but these propositions are concerned, not with the ground, the act of will, but with how to actualize the object.) Mathematics teaches and certain by synthetic propositions alone, that in order to bisect a line according to a reliable principle, I must make two intersecting arcs from each of its extremities. But if I know that the foresaid effect can be produced only by such an action, then the proposition ‘If I fully will the effect, I must also will the action required to produce it’ is analytic. For it is one and the same thing to think of something as an effect that is in a certain way possible through me and to think of myself as acting in this same way.

If it were only that easy to provide a definite concept of perfect happiness the imperatives of prudence would coincide entirely with those of skill and would be equally analytic. For then it could be said in this case as in the former case, ‘Whoever wills the end, also (necessarily, according to reason) wills the sole means which are in his power.’ Unfortunately, however, the concept of perfect happiness is such a vague concept that although everyone wants it, they can never say definitely and self-consistently what it really is that they wish and will. The reason for this is that all the elements that belong to the concept of happiness are empirical—that is, they must be borrowed from experience; but the idea of perfect happiness requires an absolute whole, a maximum, of well-being in my present and in every future state. Now it is impossible for even the most insightful and most capable but finite being to form here a definite concept of what he really wants. Is it riches that he wants? How much anxiety, envy, and intrigue might he not bring on his own head in this way! Is it knowledge and insight? This might just give him an eye even sharper in seeing evils at present hidden from him and yet unavoidable, making those evils all the more frightful, or it might add a load of still further needs which already give him trouble enough. Is it long life? Who will guarantee that it would not be a life of long misery? Is it at least health? How often has not physical infirmity kept someone from excesses into which perfect health would have let him fall—and so on. In short, he has no principle by which he is able to decide with complete certainty what would make him truly happy, since for this he