FREEDOM AND THE FORMALIZATION OF EXPERIENCE:

a Hegelian Critique, a Kantian Answer

By

Joshua Tucker

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Master of Arts in Philosophy, Philosophy Department

Memorial University of Newfoundland

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ABSTRACT

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's critique of Immanuel Kant's formalism is highly informative – it brings to light many aspects of morality and ethical decision-making that had gone entirely unnoticed by Kantians until that point, such as the importance of world history in determining our concepts of right, and that the subsumption of particulars under universals does not typically fall to individuals. Because a determination of moral concepts by history itself seems to contradict Kantian morality (in which we use the categorical imperative to determine whether a formulated maxim conforms with duty or not) by eliminating any genuine choice (as the ways in which we formulate our maxims are themselves historical products rather than free decisions), Kantians have responded to Hegel's critique in part by trying to show that such factors can be accounted for purely within Kantian philosophy. Through examining Hegel's critique of Kant's formalism and Kantian philosophy, this thesis will follow this tradition. I will argue that Hegel's critique must transform how we conceptualize Kant's philosophy, how we should think of his doctrine of freedom in contrast to determinism, and the sense of objectivity that we can secure with his philosophy. I will argue that the best answer to Hegel's critique of Kant's formalism is Kant's own theory of the end of nature and history and that his writings on history are consistent with the rest of his more speculative work.

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Introduction

The concern of this thesis is the extent to which Kant's moral philosophy can be said to account for moral action. Any positive statement is redundant unless some need calls for it; the need, in this case, is with reference to the critique that Kant's moral philosophy is formalistic and provides no sufficient determining basis by which agents might formulate maxims of action that are in accord with notions of objective right – a purely Kantian moral agent formulates their own notion of right and adheres to it – Kant does not move beyond moral subjectivism. Hegel is perhaps the greatest champion of this view and is certainly the most influential. I will explicate and develop Hegel's account of Kant's formalism with direct reference to Kant's writings and then attempt a Kantian defence. This entails analyzing how Kant's writings themselves give rise to the critique of formalism, and through an elaboration of this critique, seeing whether an entirely Kantian response can satisfy this critique's concerns. Hegel's critique is not that Kant's formalism is wrong; it is instead that Kant is formalistic at the expense of a more positive kind of philosophy, such that his system suffers from a systematic incompleteness.

The point that must be reached prior to making a formal Kantian defence is understanding why, in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel says that "the practical principles of Kant's philosophy are confined throughout to this concept [of morality], even rendering the point of view of *ethics* impossible and in fact expressly infringing and destroying it." (Hegel 2018, 63) Later in the same work, Hegel notes that "however essential it may be to emphasize the pure and unconditional self-determination of the will as the root of duty… to cling on to a merely moral point of view without making the transition to the concept of ethics reduces this gain to an *empty formalism*, and moral science to an empty rhetoric of *duty for duty*'*s sake*." (Hegel 2018, 162) This clinging-on-to morality refers to Hegel's treatment of it as a superseded

moment in the life of Spirit – as something with a life of its own, which, however, ultimately leads beyond itself and to a greater self-understanding. For someone to remain with morality, therefore, means stagnating and restlessly wandering back and forth through the moments that are the life of morality without making these moments their own or without understanding their boundedness. The question is, therefore, why Hegel thinks we need to move beyond morality. This question will find its answer both in the movement of morality as he goes through it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and in his explication of ethics itself and his assessment of its interplay with morality. What is most important is to know why the point of view of morality renders the point of view of ethics impossible, and this is to know the partiality of the moral perspective, such as we find in Kant, and to know why it falls short of the true universality it claims.

Once this has been done, I will present my own reading of Kant, along with a slice of the literature that has resulted from this critique, to intensify the issue and show that there is a need for a different kind of Kantian response, one that reaches outside his formal philosophy. I will then go into a deeper explication of Kantian philosophy with a particular focus on some of his lesser-known, non-critical works that demonstrate that Kant has an important place for ethical life and history in his system and that they exist as more than unspoken presuppositions regarding his negative work. He kept his negative and positive philosophy separate for principled reasons; his positive moral philosophy is left open, as this is something that individuals and cultures need to figure out for and amongst themselves. The link between his negative and positive philosophy can be seen in the notion that others are ends in themselves. Because of this, he need (and should) not provide a full doctrine of right, as this is something that moral agents and communities must do for themselves. His teleological account of history provides Kant's notion of an objective good, and this good is formal (though also material) in nature.

Chapter 1. Hegel's Critique of Formalism

1. A First Look at Kant

To begin the examination properly (meaning to show the bounds of the examination properly), the difference between Kant and Hegel can be seen by comparing Hegel's views with the first sentence of the first section of Kant's *Groundwork*: "It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be taken to be good without limitation, except a **good will**." (Kant 2012, 9) In this sentence, we find Kant's placing of the good beyond experience and the phenomenal world in general (which is based on the doctrine of the division between things as they are and as we know them), the importance of abstract willing over consequences, and the essential *emptiness* of the moral law. Because the good is found in the principle of the will and not in objective states of affairs, the will has no standard beyond its own nature with which to guide its legislation of actions and its determination of duties – ends chosen based on inclinations can for Kant have our approval, but never our respect in the proper sense of the term. This leads to the common conceptualization of Kantian duty as being opposed to happiness, or the happiness of the individual and collective as having no moral worth or weight (it is for this reason that Kantian morality is frequently contrasted with Utilitarian morality – because this or that pleasure has no inherent importance, we cannot use it as a justification for using an end in itself as a means). Because of this rejection of happiness as what should determine our duties, morality is seen as divorced from utility. Though happiness is, for Kant, the necessary end of each and every empirical character, it is not the end of rational beings as such, such that we are, according to this schema, divided into phenomenal and noumenal selves which have different interests, with goodness residing in the noumenal in the mere act of the will, leaving to the phenomenal mere indifference.

We find this indifference to the objective state of affairs (towards nature, empirical reality) with regard to morality in the distinction Kant makes in the first section of the *Groundwork* between acting in conformity with duty and conforming to duty based on respect for the moral law. In Kant's example of the shopkeeper who treats customers fairly because of prudence, Kant never makes the claim that the shopkeeper is doing anything wrong in acting out of self-interest but simply maintains that it was not done from duty; (Kant 2012, 13) such an example is something we approve of – we can see that it is to everyone's mutual benefit – but we also can't say that we respect it; it is understandable and prudent, but does not find its motivating ground in a conception of rational beings as ends-in-themselves – one could, under different circumstances, treat people unfairly according to the same determining principle of the will, this principle being self-interest. Acting based on this motive is therefore amoral – it isn't particularly good or bad, and our approval of the action consists in our assessment of its consequences. In the following example Kant offers on the duty to preserve one's life, we find much the same thing. The content, what we do, is not what has moral import but simply our motivation for doing it. The question is, morally, whether we do what we do based on inclinations or a respect for the moral law.

It is at this point that Kant states the universal law formulation: "I ought never to proceed except in such a way *that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*." (Kant 2012, 17) It is here that we see the aspect of Kantian morality which consists in the testing of maxims against the categorical imperative, such that the conformity of our maxims with a certain form is what proves our moral worth, and our moral worth is one with our worthiness to be happy. We will find that this is Kant's proper definition of freedom – we can be motivated to act through the mere form of law-likeness. Without this law-likeness, we are left only with

inclinations, which for Kant would amount to our being entirely empirically determined. The will "will have to be determined by the formal principle of willing as such when an action is done from duty, as every material principle has been taken away from it." (Kant 2012, 16) To choose a duty based upon certain ends would be contradictory to the nature of duty itself, and so actions done from duty necessarily have no object which they are trying to attain. Duties are indeed aimed towards attaining certain states of being, but this is because they are connected in certain ways to moral principles, not because the end is compelling in itself. We follow the dictates of the moral law simply because it is right, and this is the condition of our willing freely. Based upon this first formulation, rightness consists in having a law-like form – acting right means acting upon a maxim that has the form of a universal law.

What we do, then, is check if our maxim can "fit as a principle into a possible universal legislation" (Kant 2012, 18), with possible being the important word, as this shows the characteristic negativity of Kant's philosophy. Kant gives no indication that we would use the CI to derive positive duties from our situation. Instead, each moral agent would formulate a maxim and test it against the standard of a universal law. Anything positive comes solely from us in our particularity, and not from the formal nature of the moral law, which solely limits the acceptability of maxims. In his example of the untruthful promise, we find that the lie cannot be universally willed as it is self-contradictory in nature, "for according to such a law there would actually be no promise at all, since it would be futile to pretend my will to others with regard to my future actions, who would not believe this pretense… my maxim, as soon as it were made a universal law, would have to destroy itself." (Kant 2012, 18) If everyone were to adopt the maxim that, when in a predicament, we may use an untruthful promise as a means to extricate ourselves, no one would accept any proposed promises because they know it to be folly – the

institution of promises can only work if people actually uphold their promises. The maxim works against itself.

This example also shows us what, for Kant, an appropriate formulation of a maxim looks like. While it could be said to be a duty to get ourselves out of the predicaments in which we find ourselves, to will an end is precisely to will the means we believe to be necessary to that end, (Kant 2012, 31) so what we must test is not simply whether we can will the end, but if we can will the means as well. What we are doing to achieve our end therefore must be included in the maxim itself, and this is what we test with the CI. The question is whether we can will the particulars of the ends and means as effects in the world. On the one hand, what is important is simply the principle of the will itself, and on the other hand, we find that we must ultimately will a particular state of affairs in the world. With this, we have looked at Kantian morality enough to explicate Hegel's critique of it.

2. Hegel and Formalism

As Hegel sees it, there are many problems with this way of thinking about morality. The first and most fundamental point is that morality seems to depend upon that which Kant has afforded no moral status – this being particularity, history, and nature in general. Unless the validity of these sources is accounted for philosophically, the notion of us using the categorical imperative to produce objectively correct actions must be abandoned, as almost any action can be affirmed if this is the case; Hegel points out that relying on certain content 'being moral' in order to make the 'supreme principle of morality' work is a systematic failure. To judge the validity of moral judgments, more is needed than a simply formalistic account of the will – there must be an answer as to how we vet content prior to our submitting it to the categorical imperative.

This is connected to another point, which consists in the division of the world into natural and rational, phenomenal and noumenal, and action and will – a dualistic yet lopsided view of the world. As Hegel will go on to show, Kant divides the world up in these ways, but maintains that morality is to be found only in the rational, noumenal act of the will, though this is contradicted by all the content of the act of the will being given by ourselves not insofar as we are rational, but insofar as we are natural beings that have certain needs and desires. When we are producing maxims, we are trying to conceptualize what ought to happen, or what is acceptable in the world, but this worldly good is unaccounted for. For Hegel, we must find the rationality in these drives and be able to see how they produce a rational individual – the divide between the natural and the rational (conceived of as completely different spheres) obscures the source of our valid moral judgments.[1]

This obfuscation of the source of moral judgments applies also to what might be called a Kantian individualism – the idea that it is the isolated moral agent that comes to decide what is right and wrong. The individual produces the maxim from within and then tests it as a universal law. Hegel will argue that the maxim that is produced is itself natural and a result of history and education – that the individual only attains definite notions of right from their ethical community. Their language, their notions of respectful and appropriate behaviour, are all the result of history and their upbringing. The individual did not come up with their own concept of right from scratch but uses what is already there. How, then, can we say that their moral judgments are theirs, that they are responsible for them? It seems more appropriate to say that the important moral judgments have already been made collectively and embodied in practice than to say that

[1] This is not to say that for Hegel a Kantian moral agent would fail to arrive at proper moral judgments. It is rather that they will do so by virtue of that to which they give no consideration at all – they will arrive at their notions of duty in an ultimately dishonest way.

the individual is the author of their actions, given the fact that the content with which the agent formulates their maxims is given from without and is what will determine what happens in the world.

When these points are considered together, we have Hegel's critique of Kant's formalism as such. By dividing the world up as he does, Kant unwittingly makes the necessary and moral dependent upon the contingent and the morally irrelevant, and the Kantian agent struggles in dissatisfaction in this contradiction; we are supposed to act based upon duty and not the inclinations, but the desirability of any end will inevitably refer to these inclinations. Because Kant presents his formalistic moral philosophy in isolation from the richness of life that supports it, Kant's philosophy is fundamentally incomplete and misrepresents the reality of ethical life. By confining morality to the will, the moral individual is not seen in their aspect of historic positivity, and the true source of moral judgments is lost. I will now go into detail on these aspects of Hegel's critique, beginning with Kant's division and valuation of the world.

The distinction between the actions we effect and the grounds through which we bring them about is characteristic of 'the moral view of the world' as Hegel sees it, in which the subject finds themselves liberated from empirical reality in the thought of the freedom of pure duty – what matters is not what happens or what is but is rather only what must be done. Moral significance is to be found only in the will which acts according to the pure and unmixed representation of duty, and nature or reality is the neutral medium in which the will chooses duty. There is,

> a moral view of the world which consists in the relation between the absoluteness of morality and the absoluteness of Nature. This relation is based, on the one hand, on the complete indifference and independence of Nature towards moral purposes and activity,

> and, on the other hand, on the consciousness of duty alone as the essential fact, and of Nature as completely devoid of independence and essential being. The moral view of the world contains the development of the moments which are present in this relation of such completely conflicting presuppositions. (Hegel 1977, 365-6)

With this said, it must also be noted that what is important is still the performance of the duty itself, which is why the fundamental conflict occurs. The moral law is significant because it can motivate our will without any additional inclinations being necessary – there is nothing particularly meritorious about someone preserving their life because they love their life, but when all such inclinations and pleasures have disappeared, they will still have the choice through the moral law to preserve their life because it is represented as morally necessary.

The next site of conflict is the divide between the moral will and the empirical character. Because duty does not take its guiding thread from the attainment of happiness, the actual attainment of happiness through conscientious action appears as a contradiction and a potential sign that the good was done not out of pure duty but was based on some (perhaps hidden) natural inclination, such that we no longer view the act as a moral one. In the absolute difference between the will and nature our worthiness to be happy (that we in theory have if we act morally) does not of itself occasion happiness and is in theory disconnected from one's happiness altogether. The object of the moral agent, that which the agent seeks to bring about, is other than the agent's own happiness, and so from the divide of the natural and the moral world we also find a divide within the agent themselves insofar as they are both natural and moral, self-interested and duty-oriented. Hegel writes, "[therefore], it finds rather cause for complaint about such a state of incompatibility between itself and existence, and about the injustice which restricts it to having its object merely as a *pure duty*, but refuses to let it see the object and *itself*

realized." (Hegel 1977, 366) However, this does not of itself mean that satisfaction is not achieved on the part of the moral consciousness – this much, for Hegel, is inevitable. Only, instead of remaining as satisfaction, this satisfaction will upset the position the consciousness has taken and cause it to shift. Because we are dependent beings and, in fact, have no other criteria for concrete actions other than our own happiness (which is represented as attainable by means of our inclinations), along with the fact that it is always the individuality who is to perform duty, the determination of the duty is left to the self-consciousness in both its conception and realization, and this realization will be good (for it). "The purpose, which is expressed as *pure duty*, essentially implies this *individual* self-consciousness; *individual conviction* and the knowledge of it constitute an absolute element in morality. This element in the *objectified* purpose, in the *fulfilled* duty, is the *individual* consciousness that beholds itself as realized; in other words, it is enjoyment". (Hegel 1977, 366) In order to do anything, we must necessarily realize ourselves and contend with the particulars latent within the situation, and the realization of duty within a situation is nothing other than our assessment of what should be done and our thoughtful doing of it, the result of which is pleasure or enjoyment. Because the realization of the moral necessarily involves our empirical characters and our notion of what right 'looks like' in this particular situation, how can one then endorse the notion that the natural and the moral are wholly distinct spheres? It seems that the very concept of the *realization* of the moral itself rejects this distinction and posits that nature and morality necessarily have a harmonious relationship – that there can, in fact, be no morality at all if not for action and existence in general. If this existence is vain, what does this make of the morality which attempts to realize states within it?

As Hegel suggests, then, we can see that considering the aspect of action leads to the contradiction of the distinctness of nature and morality, or the indifference of morality towards nature. All of the content of morality is derived from a completely contingent source (the desires of our empirical characters). Though the moral consciousness will act according to principles, that is, with respect for ends in themselves, these ends are themselves contingent and based merely upon the partial understandings of these beings. Our assessment of what our duties are will inevitably come from our characters as well, as was shown in the discussion of the negativity of the moral law. Here we find the distinction of pure duty and derived duties, and the necessity of both. Hegel writes, "for the consciousness of *pure duty*, the determinate or specific duty cannot straightway be sacred; but because a specific duty, on account of the actual 'doing' which is a *specific* action, is likewise *necessary*, its necessity falls outside of that consciousness into another consciousness, which thus mediates or brings together the specific and the pure duty and is the reason why the former also has validity." (Hegel 1977, 370) We see if we can universally will this maxim, but this does not of itself imply that it is the only maxim that we could universally will or that is worthy of universal assent, or that these means are the only means – what this means is that what *will* be done will be what we think, given the situation, is right, not abstractly, but concretely. No good can be done at all without the content being given by our empirical characters and the ends we set and without our interpreting things in a purposeful manner – all we would be left with is respecting others in the abstract, which really means not respecting them at all, but merely remaining within ourselves. If moral *action* is important, then we must also declare that our desires and empirical characters are (morally) important. Our *agency*, our setting goals for ourselves and holding certain states of being and institutions as important is what makes moral action possible.

The goal of the moral enterprise, from Hegel's perspective, could be said to be twofold. It involves this notion of the division between what is and what should be. He writes, "[the] first postulate was the harmony of morality and objective Nature, the final purpose of the *world*; the other, the harmony of morality and the sensuous will, the final purpose of *self-consciousness* as such." (Hegel 1977, 369) If we are not to think of these ends as being in vain, they must be postulated to be possible, but at the same time we must indefinitely defer our pronouncement of their realization in nature – we can never say that nature has *become* moral or that our sensuous will has *become* moral. The possibility of this realization, therefore, is simply a practical postulate that allows us to act. There is "the contradiction of a task which is to remain a task and yet ought to be fulfilled, and the contradiction of a morality which is no longer to be [a moral] *consciousness*, i.e. not actual." (Hegel 1977, 369) The moral consciousness is the consciousness of the disjunction between nature and morality, and so the achievement of the alignment of nature and morality would constitute the elimination of the moral consciousness, duty would not be duty as such. If one's will were to become good, duty, in the form of the ought, would disappear. Though we are to work towards this goal, it is from the beginning acknowledged to be unattainable.

Let us consider the aspect of morality which is concerned with its activity in the world and its aim of realizing goodness in nature. That we must do this is the demand of the moral law; what is commanded is not mere sentiment, but moral action – we ought to do what is right. But it is in the very determination of what is right, which is necessary for moral action, that we see the contingency and 'impurity' latent within morality, and *actual* morality, at that. We find Hegel's critique of Kant's neglect to define right, appropriately, developed more deeply in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Before a deeper discussion of this critique, it should be noted that this

critique applies to Kant insofar *as* he is thought of as formalistic in the sense that he believes the content given by our empirical characters does not play a significant role in the determination of duties, and that what is important is that the maxim referring to this content has a certain form which is expressed as the requirement that it be able to be formulated as a universal law. Basically, if Kant believes that all that matters in formulating one's maxim is that it be able to be expressed in the form of a universal law, and that this guarantees the goodness of the content, he will run into problems that are largely artificial in nature, as the solution to the problem this poses is found in ordinary ethical life.

The barrenness of the CI, while not 'wrong', relies on imported content – the actualities of social life – which are themselves, in this framework, devoid of morality (they are the results of natural processes). Hegel thought that the CI could check to see if our maxims both use and shun certain institutions and are therefore formally incorrect – they cannot be conceived of as duties, for if they were to be willed universally, it would be found that we want to take advantage of something while simultaneously making sure that we won't be able to. But in and of itself, the categorical imperative cannot critique existing institutions (for it has no standard of its own), but merely maxims of action insofar as they refer to these institutions (because a critique of materiality must involve materiality – it must say that something is better, and better for specific reasons, and the CI does not have this capacity). As John McCumber puts it, "[the] emptiness of the moral law is thus problematic [in the context of] systematic philosophy in the Hegelian vein. This, as we have seen must take the form of what Hegel here calls "an immanent theory of duties." It must show that the concrete norms and practices of our society are aids to and expressions of freedom." (McCumber 2014, 166) The critique of Kant's formalism amounts to

the fact that Kant's philosophy doesn't have a means of critiquing what is, as the call for universality is itself contentless – it does not pertain to the world, but only the will.

What must be understood with clarity here is the notion of an immanent theory of duties itself. As McCumber says, it must refer to a way of critiquing what is with reference to the concepts of freedom and autonomy. For Hegel, Kant correctly captured the formal nature of freedom but failed to take up 'higher order' forms of freedom, which we find embodied in ethical practices and concrete ways of life. Certain ethical practices are conducive to freedom because through participating in them we also engage in the purification of our basic drives themselves – we become cultured and less dominated through drives which may exclude communion with others – we find satisfaction in more socially sophisticated ways – we choose ends that are more ethical, or, we learn to see that any given drive within us can have multiple forms of expression, and in this we achieve a certain mastery over them. (McCumber 2014, 119) Through enculturation and social practice, we will tend to select ends that are more universal or social in nature. Kant's system can only grasp our abstract freedom – the fact that we find ourselves obliged by our duties to perform them gives us the capacity to perform them, even contrary to our inclinations. Simply put, Kant correctly states that the ought is the ground of our capacity to will freely, but provides nothing concrete with which we can (and do) positively determine what it is we ought to do – he stops at existing institutions and our will. The CI can provide us duties given certain institutions and presuppositions, but it fails to question these presuppositions appropriately. Hegel writes, "[one] may indeed bring in material *from outside* and thereby arrive at *particular* duties, but it is impossible to make the transition to the determination of particular duties from the above determination of duty as *absence of contradiction*, as *formal correspondence with itself*". (Hegel 2018, 162) While in-and-of itself the categorical imperative

correctly captures the formal aspects that determine whether something can be a duty, in itself it is too empty to say what we ought to do. It requires imported content, but this content itself is nowhere accounted for in Kant's system – and this is why Hegel neatly slots Kant in as exemplifying the stance of 'morality' and empty formalism.

The solution to 'mere morality' is his notion of ethical life, which provides us with concrete practices of right. But for Hegel, the transition has not yet been made to ethical life in Kant's philosophy, because freedom is not yet seen as extending beyond our own person. We have freedom in institutions and specific practices – while Kant exemplifies a noble and sublime view of freedom in which our negative freedom is recognized, it can't account for why our actions aren't essentially random – why do we associate with one content above another, if both of them can be seen as coherent and in agreement with themselves? There is a complete divide in the moral and the pragmatic in Kant – situation and circumstance are *morally random*. Hegel's critique of Kant's formalism and his charge that one cannot arrive at an immanent theory of duties through merely Kantian grounds amounts to the idea that Kantian moral theory cannot account for or has no place for *particularity* or one particularity above another. By isolating freedom to a noumenal act of the will (and, as McCumber points out, having no clear definition of what the will is or where it comes from (McCumber 2014, 148)) and having moral action reside merely in the formation of our maxims, social life and practice are not seen as having moral import, or a necessary place in the determination of duty. The subject determines their own duty, but for Hegel the real problem is that the Kantian moral agent would determine their own duty using their own criteria of right and goodness.

According to this view of Kantian morality, the Kantian agent is not obligated by material institutions but is obliged merely to follow their own sense of right and wrong, meaning that it is

not the duty itself that is important, but the pure duty which we synthetically connect with it. But Kant gives no rules or standards with which we should make such connections, such that it falls to the individual to connect pure duty to a particular act, and though this may be passed off as a rational activity, the content will likely reflect the simple opinions and prejudices of the agent. The categorical imperative, here, is characterized purely negatively. The only test that the CI performs is to see the inherent contradictoriness of our maxim – everything is directed simply by the idiosyncratic will. To move beyond this philosophically, Hegel says, we need a naturalistic understanding of what will is and what it takes for material institutions and specific ends in general to be obligating for us. Without these, we are stuck in a stage of mere formality. It cannot be the whole of a philosophical system, even if it is only a system of ethics, and so while it has validity, we can't "cling on to" it (Hegel 2018, 162).

If taken alone, this vision of Kant's empty formal law would simply be a law of the will, or one's way of seeing things. Though in using the CI, we treat the law (and its verdicts) as objective, it is our subjective use that will determine the outcome. Because we are not furnished a definitive way of describing things by the moral law itself, we can look at existing institutions from any number of directions, and so we can also describe our actions regarding these existing states from any number of directions. Because we are bound simply to the will, we could describe an action that could have many negative effects from its aspect of positivity, like Robin Hood stealing to give to the poor.[2] (Hegel 2018, 172) For Hegel, the appropriate descriptions of things are only furnished by ethical life itself in the forms of norms and laws, and therefore the

[2] Because Kant does not reveal the source of our moral judgments, someone looking at moral decision making from a Kantian perspective will have to fill this gap themselves. Because what matters is the principle of the will over any particular outcome, a Kantian agent may look at their traditions in the light of their contingency, rather than their validity. Without stating the positive place that history has in the determination of duties, the whole matter becomes purely subjective.

institutions and culture in which we are immersed and through which we see. Without ethical life determining the 'morally relevant' (this is not Hegel's language, but it has become relevant in the resulting literature) aspects of actions and maxims prior to our use of the CI, the CI is itself completely up for grabs and gives us the capacity to give ourselves airs of objectivity.

The abstraction from content simultaneously allows us to ignore our determinacy and to act as if it doesn't have a hold on us – this is the picture of the pure and ahistorical Kantian moral agent (subject). Though we are determined in large part by history, we can *through* this empty notion of the moral law and the CI conceptualize ourselves as essentially ahistorical and determining ourselves through sheer acts of the will and reason (the act of the moral will is noumenal for Kant, after all). We can recognize ourselves as absolute and arbiters of the law, and determine the law according to our whims – we can play with the law in the form of looking at an action now from this, now from that perspective, as it pleases the will. (Hegel 2018, 170) So, while Kant's formalism isn't bad, it is bad insofar as it excludes ethical life from playing its part in the determination of duties and of right in general, and this means collectively forming standards by which we judge ends. Without this ethical aspect, the law would merely be for us to do what we want.

For Hegel, Kant's freedom asserts our right over determinacy, but fails to see the right that determinacy asserts over us. Hegel conceptualizes the positive form of formality within the concept of conscience – that we abstractly know that we ought to do what is right. Hegel writes, "conscience is merely the *formal aspect* of the activity of the will, which, as *this* will, has no distinctive content of its own. But the objective system of these principles and duties and the union of subjective knowledge with this system are present only when the point of view of ethics has been reached." (Hegel 2018, 164) Conscience, in admitting the right of objectivity and the

hold this objectivity has over its sight, realizes that it is an expression of this objectivity, and in this, it has duties which transcend any merely idiosyncratic view – it has formal institutions and states which lay out what its duties are. Of course, the state doesn't determine all duties, but the greater point is that the determination of duty is not simply the job of an isolated subject – it is the worldview of a cultured one.

His concerns, prompted by Kant's refusal to admit content into the moral law, are promptly stated by him here: "the proposition 'Consider whether your maxim can be asserted as a universal principle' would be all very well if we already had determinate principles concerning how to act." (Hegel 2018, 163) This is why an immanent theory of duties is necessary for Kant's own philosophy to make sense – Hegel is essentially warning against reading the *Groundwork* in isolation and thinking that these formal rules are all we need to appropriately derive duties from the categorical imperative, and when seen like this, it becomes a matter of lesser importance whether or not he thought that Kant thought this as well. He was, at the very least, responding to an interpretation of Kant, and this interpretation is one that posits that the content that is involved in the situation in question is irrelevant with regard to the duties that we are to derive from the CI.[3] So, we can say that his critique is structural in nature, but that this structural issue will change the way people perceive and use the CI – an immanent theory of theories is something he thinks Kant needs, and he also thinks that people shouldn't view themselves or think of their duties as ahistorical. The law isn't one that we get to play with, because we are not the sole determinants of our duties. That this is the case in the stage of mere morality, which he attributes

[3] A moral agent will of course be responding to the situation at hand, but one may question whether or not they take many ques from the situation and context themselves. The overall picture is that there is nothing in the Kantian system preventing one from thinking that the determination of right and wrong falls solely upon themselves, that there is no prior state that in part determines what is right and wrong; there is nothing in Kant's system that prevents 'subjectivity from declaring itself absolute'. (Hegel 2018, 170)

to Kant, is made evident when Hegel writes, “every subject [is] immediately accorded the honour of providing the abstract good with a content, or – and this amounts to the same thing – of subsuming a content under a universal.” (Hegel 2018, 173-4) This is Hegel’s broad critique of formalism in Kant. It isn’t simply that we don’t admit empirical content into the CI, but that in the admission of this content, these situations, the CI furnishes us no definitive guide to right; because right action supposedly comes merely from good intentions, the CI can give us no consistency and morality and ethics become completely subjective in nature.

Along the aim of striving for inner moral perfection, this means that moral agents, insofar as they are agents, are inherently characterized by their lack of perfection. The only reason why we are agents at all is because of our finitude, our fundamental need. We are interested in ourselves and our wants, and so while the realization of moral purposes must make its way through our empirical characters, this simultaneously means to the moral consciousness that morality is being perverted in its very coming-to-be. Hegel writes, “the proposition now runs as follows: ‘There is no *moral, perfect, actual* self-consciousness’; and, since the moral sphere is at all, only in so far as it is perfect, for duty is the *pure* unadulterated *intrinsic being* or in-itself, and morality consists only in conformity to this pure in-itself—the second proposition simply runs: ‘There is no moral existence in reality.’” (Hegel 1977, 373) In short, upholding the notion that freedom and morality reside in a noumenal act of the will in which we are motivated by the pure thought of duty leaves us in a situation in which, because the criteria for what constitutes duty in reality is empty and is filled up with empirical factors and notions, the performance of duty itself is tainted by the inclinations and loses its morality. Thought otherwise, freedom resides only in the act of the will, while our action belongs to the series of causal determination in which it was caused by that state immediately prior. But because duty demands of us our action, we are

damned if we do and damned if we don't. When morality is here in the form of action, its essence is posited as elsewhere, in the pure act of the will, but when we consider it from the perspective of the will, it must realize itself in the world. As Hegel puts it, "[the] moral world-view is, therefore, in fact nothing other than the elaboration of this fundamental contradiction in its various aspects. It is, to employ here a Kantian expression where it is most appropriate, a 'whole nest' of thoughtless contradictions." (Hegel 1977, 374) For this moral world view, which Hegel characterizes Kant as participating in, there is, in fact, neither morality in the noumenal nor the phenomenal. It *is* always only where *we are not*.

A key difference here, and an important aspect of Hegel's critique of Kant, is that Hegel does not make the distinction (or rather, refuses to make the distinction) between the natural will and the noumenal or moral will, as Kant does (or if he does, it is as a superseded moment). Because morality is realized only through action, and action consists in the realization of our purposes, the result of fulfilling one's duty will be satisfaction or happiness. The worth to be happy, in realizing moral purpose, and the realization of this happiness, in realizing our purposes, occur in the same moment.

To summarize, Hegel holds that Kant's formalism (as it is exemplified in his dualistic view of the world and its consequences) represents a systematic failure, in that it fails to question (or philosophically verify) the validity of the content we bring into the CI, and because of this, it is also misleading in that it gives the reader a very unbalanced view of the world which sets them at odds with themselves as natural and noumenal beings. Moral action is characterized by its lack of perfection (and hence immorality), despite the fact that the heart of morality lies in the doing of the thing. Because the subsumption of the particular under a universal seems to fall solely to the agent, there is in fact no standard at all for moral action, and moral science falls apart, as

what is really necessary is a natural and material account of the good to stand beside Kant's account of the formal conditions of morality.

My aim is to offer a reading of Kant which shows that this natural account of the will is in Kant and has a necessary relation to his negative and formalistic account of morality. I will begin by diving deeper into Kant's negative writings to demonstrate that there is an explicit call to pay heed to the wills and desires of others, as this is what will ultimately constitute respectful behaviour when considered under the light of the concept of the kingdom of ends. This formal commitment represents an acknowledgement of ethical life as a ground of our duties, though it does not fulfil the requirement of systematic completeness that Hegel calls for. I will show Barbara Herman's attempt to solve this problem from a Kantian perspective, but also why we must go farther and look at Kant's own theory of history alongside his critical philosophy.

Chapter 2. Kantian Philosophy and The Natural

1. Autonomy and Duty in Kantian Philosophy

So far, we have only looked to Kant's first formulation of the principle of morality, in the form of the universal law requirement, and as such, the true moral content of maxims has remained hidden – the universal law test seems only to check whether everyone could think and act a certain way without this state falling apart, whether our maxim could persist as a purposive content. Therefore, it cannot be formulated as a law and cannot be considered to command the will.

But the question arises, why can't it be formulated as a law, if a law consists in its obligation? It seems that it could be made a law (even if only a self-defeating one). Kant's answer is that we aren't capable of willing such a maxim to be a law – it can't be a law because we are the ones who form laws. This has to do with the givenness of the moral law and the other formulations of the CI. Before he states them, however, Kant's concern is how it can be that the moral law applies to all rational beings as such. He writes, "[the] question therefore is this: is it a necessary law *for all rational beings* always to judge their actions according to maxims of which they themselves can will that they serve as universal laws? If it is, then it must (completely a priori) already be bound up with the concept of the will of a rational being as such." (Kant 2012, 39) The concept of a categorical imperative is necessarily connected with the concept of the will of a rational being because the imperative concerns what it is that rational beings can will (it pertains both to the maxim and our relation to the maxim); very much like his speculative work, in the *Groundwork* Kant is looking for the conditions of a possible experience – in this case, the experience of an obligation which can be contrary to our inclinations which are based on self-interest. Our experience is in conformity with our a priori structures of cognition. So the concept

of a categorical imperative (which says what we ought to do in the future) is reflective of the nature of the will of a rational being, as opposed to our merely natural will.

It is Kant's second formulation, the formulation of humanity, which contextualizes what a rational being can will, which is precisely the same as what we can morally will. Because all subjective ends are empirically based and therefore relative in the deepest sense, what is necessary for the law to be an obliging one is an absolute end, though not in the sense of an end that we ought to achieve, but an end that limits all maxims through the requirement of not using this end as a means to a more relative end, an end that has an unconditional worth, and this end is *humanity*, or rational nature. Kant writes, "[Now] I say: a human being and generally rational being *exists* as an end in itself, *not merely as a means* for the discretionary use for this or that will, but must in all its actions, whether directed towards itself or also to other rational beings, always be considered *at the same time as an end*." (Kant 2012, 40) At this point, what is important for Kant is showing the apriority of this statement and concept in general, for otherwise morality would be grounded empirically and, therefore, would be unable to be obligating for the will. The categorical imperative finds its ground (and therefore its condition) in the notion that "*a rational nature exists as an end in itself*." (Kant 2012, 41) Without this, the universal law formulation would be merely prudential and fundamentally unrelated to morality, to what is properly right in and of itself.

This is an area where, as Kant suggests, his philosophy can be seen in its full agreement with common moral understanding. That we each pursue ends we conceive of as part of our total happiness is evidence that we value ourselves, and this same ground (without which we would choose no ends at all) is equally within others. He writes that this "is how a human being by necessity represents his own existence; to that extent it is thus a subjective principle of human

actions. But every other rational being also represents its existence in this way, as a consequence of just the same rational ground that also holds for me; thus it is at the same time an *objective* principle from which, as a supreme practical ground, it must be possible to derive all laws of the will." (Kant 2012, 41) The absolute condition of the worth of humanity is therefore one of the things that provides a more definite direction to the universal law formulation. Indeed, if we presuppose no ultimate end, anything is permitted and can be seen as consistent, such as the effort of humanity to erase humanity from existence. Without it, the first formulation would truly be only tautological and would simply check to see if the maxim (and the natural will) is in contradiction with itself, and would ultimately be nothing more than an imperative of prudence; as Kant will come to argue, the force of the law comes from our absolute worth as rational beings, and it is reason insofar as it is practical – it is the will of our intelligible nature that is objective and is represented by moral laws. Kant writes, "categorical imperatives are possible, because the idea of freedom makes me a member of an intelligible world, in virtue of which, if I were that alone, all my actions *would* always conform with the autonomy of the will, but as at the same time I intuit myself as a member of the world of sense, they *ought* to conform with it". (Kant 2012, 63)

In the examples that follow, Kant shows how the concept of universal willing follows from the grounds of humanity as an end in itself, and he specifically notes how from this concept we can address certain matters of right (what Hegel would consider the realm of ethics or ethical life). He writes, "[the] conflict with the principle of other human beings can be seen more distinctly if one introduces examples of attacks on the freedom and property of others." (Kant 2012, 42) Here, Kant acknowledges that there are forms of freedom that extend beyond the manner of willing and that these forms of freedom are important enough that contradicting them

constitutes using others merely as means and not treating them as ends. He follows this by pointing out that "the natural end that all humans beings have is their own happiness" (Kant 2012, 42), and that because of this, the law will only have 'its full effect' if we also make the ends of others *our* ends.

By beginning from completely a priori grounds in the worth of a rational being as such , Kant immediately begins to 'move out' of the a priori in terms of what constitutes duty through the recognition of the ends that others set for themselves as constituting an important part of their freedom and agency. In isolation, the first formulation is entirely negative and checks only for contradiction within the will itself regardless of 'the validity of' any chosen ends. The second formulation, however, immediately makes the first formulation more substantive through beginning to permit the ends of others as valid (but not unconditional) grounds for obligation. Happiness cannot serve as the ground of obligation, but the attainment of the end of happiness gains weight when it is grounded through the notion of our being ends in ourselves. Morality could be said to be the ultimate condition of the acceptability of the pursuit of happiness, and this condition is that we must treat others as ends in themselves – we must not pursue our ends through destroying the ends of others (though it may be more appropriate to say that we cannot destroy the ends of others in a lawless manner), not simply because if everyone did this nobody would be secure, but because we are all, in fact, equal, and have no right to walk over the ends of others. This notion attains its fulfilment in the third formulation "as the supreme condition of its harmony with universal practical reason, the idea *of the will of every rational being as a universally legislating will*." (Kant 2012, 43) Through this formulation, Kant aims to ground the formula of humanity, or the notion that rational beings are ends in themselves. The moral law is not imposed upon us, but we wield it within ourselves and are legislators of the law – we

formulate specific laws for ourselves based on the concept of the worth of individuals and the universality that is dependent upon it and adhere to them, thus fulfilling our duties.

With each of the formulations, what moral conduct looks like becomes clearer and more definite, and this is achieved through making the meaning of universality (as the ultimate condition of moral conduct) clearer. In all our maxims, we are (or ought to be) universally legislating, legislating both on our behalf and on the behalf of all others. This also pokes a substantial hole in the notion that the Kantian agent is [necessarily] alienated (and is even averse) to his own happiness. Kant writes, "[one] saw the human being bound to laws by his duty, but it did not occur to anyone that he is subject *only to his own* and yet *universal legislation*, and that he is only obliged to act in conformity with his own will which is, however, universally legislating according to its natural end." (Kant 2012, 44-5) As we saw previously, the natural end that we all necessarily have is our own happiness, and we wouldn't bother formulating maxims which aim to affect the natural world if it wasn't. We legislate to ourselves on our own behalf (we are autonomous), and our chosen ends, along with ourselves, are what ultimately constitute universality – we are morally relevant and are the situation with which universally oriented maxims must contend. This is to say that the material reality which we aim to bring about must conform to the conditions prescribed by beings with rational natures – differently put, we could say that reality must conform to the concepts of humanity or rational nature. There is nothing particularly virtuous about ordering pizza on a Friday, but we ought to do what we want to do so long as it is not contradictory with our own self-worth and the universality in which we are immersed – we formulate reasons (understood as motivating grounds) for doing things based on the concept of our self-worth and the worth of others. These reasons we have for acting and the

ends that we adopt in our pursuit of happiness constitute the moral actuality of the world that we need to be responsive to.

Kant connects this principle of autonomy with the concept of a kingdom of ends, in which the ends in themselves and their more contingent ends are conceived of as a whole and in a harmonious relation to each other. In moral life, we are subject to others and others are subject to us – our decisions are always and inherently contextualized by the world in which they have existence. Kant writes, "[morality] thus consists in referring all action to the legislating by which alone a kingdom of ends is possible. This legislation must, however, be found in every rational being itself, and be able to arise from its will, the principle of which is thus: to do no action on a maxim other than in such a way, that it would be consistent with it that it be a universal law, and thus only in such a way *that the will could through its maxim consider itself as at the same time universally legislating.*" (Kant 2012, 46) To will a maxim means to stake a claim – it is to say that this conduct should be accepted by all rational beings, given the context in which it arises. We are subjecting others to our legislation, but in our very legislation we are legislating on behalf of others – the notion that others will (or should) freely accept our legislation is the condition of the universal validity of our maxim, and this is the condition that we impose upon ourselves. Kant writes, "[reason] thus refers every maxim of the will as universally legislating to every other will, and also to every action towards oneself, and it does so not for the sake of any other practical motivating ground or future advantage, but from the idea of the *dignity* of a rational being that obeys no law other than that which at the same time it itself gives." (Kant 2012, 46) A kingdom of ends is possible in theory because we have grounds for respecting each other – the dignity of rational beings consists in our grounding value itself in our choices of ends and our legislation with reference to each other. We each provide the content of the law and the

conditions of what can be – we determine for ourselves what is valuable, what is worth pursuing and what is not.

There are therefore no ends, conceived as desirable states of being, that do not make reference in their very origin to ourselves as lawgiving. Kant writes, "nothing has any worth other than that which the law determines for it. But precisely because of this, the legislation that determines all worth must itself have a dignity, i.e. unconditional, incomparable worth, for which the word *respect* alone makes a befitting expression of the estimation a rational being is to give of it. *Autonomy* is thus the ground of the dignity of a human and of every rational nature." (Kant 2012, 47-8) With the meaning of autonomy (as the supreme principle of morality) now explicated, Kant reaffirms that in moral decision making, the soundest thing to do is to refer to the first formulation, the formulation of the universal law. Very far from being 'empty,' it is completely informed by the other two formulations, which ground its use by showing the limits of what can be rationally willed. The universality formula does not merely check whether a maxim is self-consistent 'in itself' but whether it is consistent with the surrounding world through the condition of our being able to will it. The worth of all ends is contingent upon our positing their worth, and so while in this sense the moral law relies upon 'given' content, we are the ones who give this content in positing the worth of our ends and in positing that it is these ends and not others that are conducive to our attainment of happiness. The content itself is not 'derived' from Reason but is a result of history and the rational and emotional beings living it.

However, we must still recognize the formality of this vision of Kantian morality. For Kant, the inclinations are all aimed towards the end of the happiness of the person who has them – their guiding thread is self-interest – and while we can become cultured, and our inclinations can become sophisticated such that we will take others into account, this consideration of others

would be, because of their origin, simply pragmatic and oriented towards this sole individual. We can always take a moral interest in others, but this would not be thought of as a natural interest – rather, it would be the result of our noumenal (or free) will, which has been motivated by respect for the moral law.[4]

This is because, for Kant, the moral law and therefore the duties we have are characterized by their unconditionality. If morality does not differ in any significant way from our self-interest, as many have suggested, we can't say that any particular duty is a duty, because it is dependent upon partial conceptions of our happiness and the flawed means used to achieve this end, which cannot be formulated as maxims with a law-like structure. The worth of such notions and ends are empirically derived (i.e. conditioned). The question is, why is any good a good? Kant's goal in the groundwork is to secure the foundation of moral science in the form of pure philosophy, and he admits that the application of moral science to human beings would require anthropology (Kant 2012, 26). If moral science is necessarily practical, that is, pertains to what ought and ought not to be done, this means that in common moral cognition we will use our determinate understandings of human nature and social context in order to decide what ought to be done. But each particular understanding or notion of how things are is not in itself necessary – each is contingent – there is, apparently, no moral command that we ought to have any particular conception of a person, place, or thing, but it is necessary that we have some conception of it, or we wouldn't be able to act or think. In the groundwork, Kant offers only the purified form of moral judgment that each individual would fill with their own content. Its goal, therefore, cannot

[4] It should, at this point, be clear that the rational or the noumenal is not in some way *supernatural*. Reason, considered as a faculty, differs from our other faculties in that our happiness or satisfaction is not its end. Our capacity for reason is our capacity to consider others in a manner that is distinct from our trying to get some use out of them. This respect for others is formal (i.e., we don't respect others merely because they are smart or attractive, but merely because they are ends in themselves), but we must use empirical concepts to realize this respect.

be to produce a formula that anyone could use in a particular situation to arrive at the same answer or maxim. Rather, Kant suggests that the universal law formulation is the articulated version of the rule we all already use in common moral judgments using our own conceptions of things. The law is necessary, but all particular interpretations and implementations of that law are in themselves contingent. Because this is the case, we can't attempt to justify our actions using the CI (this action is 'good' because I put it through the CI procedure). If the attempt to produce just maxims is genuine, and we test them using the CI, this says nothing at all of the character of the action, but it does say something about our will. We can say to ourselves that we tried our best and that we tried to hit the mark. But anything more than this, in terms of reasoning about the nature of the goodness of the act itself, necessarily falls outside of pure moral philosophy and formal moral cognition; it would have to be considered according to the actual kingdom of ends that could be said to be existent at the time of the act. The CI is a test of nothing other than the quality of our will. The worth of our actions themselves will ultimately be judged by others in accordance with how they fit into their surrounding world and affect those around them, and this is fundamentally out of our control. The world itself will inform us to a large degree as to the acceptability of certain actions prior to our doing them, but there is never any necessary guarantee that what we do will be perceived as good by others.

This is the fundamental reason why the principle of the will itself is more important than 'discovering' the worth of certain ends – we give the ends their worth, and we can also take that worth away – we can change our minds and come to believe that what we thought was in our interests, is in fact against our interests (and this is a largely empirical matter). At the very bottom, the universality requirement depends in its effectiveness upon our considering ourselves as members and legislators within a kingdom of ends, and our notion of what this kingdom itself

is. With this said, the moral law does remain formal in nature, as our acceptance of the laws is mandated by their form (by what this law 'is an example of') and not their content, despite the fact that the formal requirements heavily vet the content that can be accepted as universally admissible. We are not 'led' to follow the mandates of the law through any rewards we might get through it, but because of the respect we have for it and, therefore, our inner sublimity.

It is true that for Kant, we are absolutely free. Part of the meaning of this freedom is a total liberation from empirical conditions – depending on the circumstances, one can justify even the sacrifice of their life, which is completely contrary to the natural end of happiness – but the positive conditions of moral actions are also crucial. That certain institutions exist gives them a certain weight or plausibility. For example, the institution of promise-making-and-keeping. Making a promise and breaking it effectively denies or inhibits the functioning of this institution, but this is not inherently contradictory, as the inherent validity of promise-making-and-keeping is open to question. But in truth, the truth or validity of this institution is not inherent in it, but is instead exhibited in our use (or choice) of it; promise-making-and-keeping is valid because of its utility. This is not to say that one can break a promise because they perceive it to be in their interests, but rather that we simply would not make and keep promises in the first place if we did not perceive it to be in our interests – the validity of the institution comes from our history with it – we *do* collectively value promise-making-and-keeping. If we think only in terms of the universal law formulation without thinking of the other formulations as informing what we can rationally or morally will, we would be left only with a counsel of prudence (because our maxim would, in theory, contradict itself). But, the second and third formulations bring the moral law closer to intuition, and what we find in them is the true *sociality* of Kant's morality, which consists in giving weight to the contingency of social existence. What our duties are informed by,

and what we ought to respect and keep in mind, is the social actuality in which we are immersed, meaning the ends of others, the material and formal structures and systems that enable these ends. This is because duty concerns action; actions are made necessary only through the reference to ends-in-themselves and their ends, and so moral action must necessarily make reference to (or be aware of) the unity and mutual interrelation of these ends and their ends which allow for the free pursuit of happiness and meaning of these ends. The contingency of nature or empirical reality (of consequences) consists simply in the fact that it is for us, as ends-in-ourselves; all worth in externality is derived from our self-worth and what we make of it. Whether something should or should not exist is not determined simply by the nature of the thing in itself but by its reference to self-organizing ends in themselves and what they make of it, how it enables them to organize themselves and pursue their ends. We must admit, then, that while we don't need to do this or that, the practical necessity of a thing can be determined only by our reference of it to ourselves and our interrelation with others and our determinate concepts of happiness along with the system which we believe can render such concepts, actual and existent. Morality is, then, formal, but formal *in its reference to actuality*. The mere existence of things does not grant them validity, but the fact that an existence is the product of rational activity does grant it validity.

With this, it is clear that Kant's negative moral philosophy necessarily makes reference to the positivity of social life, though at this point, the nature of social life is still unstated, such that Kant can still be accused of a systematic incompleteness. In the coming section I will look at an attempt by Barbara Herman to explain the role that socially mediated moral perceptions have in Kantian philosophy through appealing to the unity of the Moral Law and the Fact of Reason, and show how her attempt affirms, as I have, the connection between Kant's negative philosophy and

social life, though without explaining it in a satisfactory manner, which is what I aim to do in the final section.

2. Moral Salience and The Moral Law

I will begin with an extended version of Hegel's critique and will discuss how a Kantian response tries to solve some of the problems that this critique raises to the surface, particularly as it focuses on the abstraction from content characteristic of Kantian philosophy, and how this abstraction leads, in fact, to what is already always the case for Hegel: that we are cultural agents, and we can be moral agents only insofar as we are already cultural agents or actors. This would leave Kantian morality in a subjective state in which morality is determined by cultural belief – it may stand, given what Kant has written, that we ought to treat others with respect, but what it means to respect others has changed across time – adhering to Kantian moral system alone would result in no consistent concrete practices. Kant's abstraction from content leaves his system open to any content. Our conceptions of things, people, etc., determine how we will act, and these are all cultural and historical determinations.

Because these determinations are historical and, to a large degree, impersonal, the degree to which we can consider ourselves as moral agents is itself very crippled in its dependence upon its ahistorical conception. As John McCumber puts it in his 1988 paper "Is a Post-Hegelian Ethics Possible?", Hegel sees ethics, considered as the philosophical attempt to provide individuals with the necessary mental structure for moral deliberation, as founded upon a mistake, this mistake being "to believe that human individuals are ever wholly responsible for their actions" (McCumber 1988, 128). The view that we can be wholly responsible for our actions is attributed to Kant. Because we are free, we can initiate a 'causal break' in the form of an action which should be considered not in its empirical causal chain, but as the free result of the activity of this agent's will; what we really consider is not the result, considered as an actuality, but the act of the will that is the 'moral cause' of it. To be determined to action by the

circumstances or history itself therefore seems thoroughly un-Kantian – I will examine this claim more closely later, but for the time being, we can accept this characterization: that for Kant, the possibility of truly being responsible for an action comes from our being able to act 'independently of the circumstances' (broadly construed) which is itself made possible by moral deliberation on the basis of the moral law. Our access to the moral law gives us the capacity to 'think otherwise' than we would simply given our empirical characters with their cultural history (McCumber 1988, 130).

This, then, is where Hegel's attack on the concept of moral agency will occur. It will consist in the notion that our very moral deliberation, our coming to various possibilities of action, is itself historical and, as McCumber will argue, determined by language and society themselves. The deliberation that is supposed to make our act free is itself unfree. The real trouble, however, is that we are guided first and foremost not by ideals and concepts, but by that which *is*, social reality and existence itself. McCumber writes, "[the] design of our public and private buildings, for example, more or less coercively guides our conduct, promoting various sets of actions at the expense of others… It makes no more sense to speak of moral authors as applying them or not applying them than it does to speak of physicists as "applying" the laws of nature at various time[s] and places." (McCumber 1988, 133) What we believe to be possibilities of action are those that are facilitated by us by our environment, language, and history. These could be understood as 'things that people do', ways that people are known to respond to various situations. Some of these will be characterized by their virtuosity and some otherwise, but what is important in this conception of the matter is that they are not conceived by the individual as such but are products of history; the moral deliberation, if there is any, is accomplished through

action across time, not by the individual in the moment. When we treat others with respect, this will be according to a socially accomplished deliberation, not an individual one.

Hence, the responsibility for any act cannot be incontestably laid at the foot of the individual who performed the act but falls rather upon the society and tradition in question. In short, the question is what *sort* of thing it is we believe we are doing, as this is what will determine our moral evaluation of the act itself, and this is not individually determined – but furthermore, if this were to be individually determined, it would much rather be an example of an idiosyncratic or even antisocial determination, such that one would act according merely to their own view of the thing, despite the fact that it will be felt and perceived differently by others.

This characterization of Hegel, while differing in many ways from what has been presented to this point, is ultimately in agreement with it. Though a Kantian may believe that their moral reflection is their own, due to its formality it is open to the materiality of language and our partial conceptions of things. Because our conceptions themselves are not truly our own – indeed, one may say that we belong to them just as much as they belong to us – our use of them in moral deliberation will follow their logic, those things which we connect them with (which, when considered as a totality, will differ little from the concept itself). That one is our mother means that we likely have certain obligations towards them that are seen as simply right, though it was not we ourselves who arrived at them; this was done before us, not through intricate definitions and deductions, but through practice and the contingency of history. We can, in this connection, simply affirm what has come before. Right is a historical determination, and because Kant's formalistic philosophy gives no adequate account of what will constitute proper action, sticking merely to the determination of the will, a Kantian's use of the categorical imperative won't change what they do at all – because they already know right from wrong,

these having been given to them by cultural teaching and practice. We remain agents of our culture or, taking this logic to its end, are cultural nodes rather than agents. While there are, of course, various Hegels that we could draw from, some softer and less deterministic, this form should help convey the importance that Kantians feel of offering a strong defence against these claims – not only is it a denial of Kantianism, but borders on denying a transcendental freedom of the will altogether.

We can see the strength of these claims, not only from the train of thought itself, but from the fact that it has evoked a strong response on the Kantian front. Barbara Herman's 1985 essay "The Practice of Moral Judgment" is a famous example of this. In it, Herman aims to clarify the place that moral rules have in Kant's system, and how they function. This clarification is rendered necessary through the criticism that viewing the world through moral rules will often result in many important details being left out – because rules or laws are necessarily general, the particularity latent within the situation is lost or is considered as irrelevant to the case. Basically, the problem is that all things are themselves many things – they can be described in various ways, much like we see in Hegel's critique of Morality. Because they are to be dealt with with rules or laws, they will be considered only under a narrow conception of what they are, as there being a particular law for every particular situation is contrary to the concept of law in general.[5] Because of this, "there is a need in the Kantian system for some kind of independent moral knowledge" (Herman 1993, 416). Herman points out that in the examples that Kant gives in the *Groundwork*, the agents involved bring their maxims before the CI precisely because they already know that their maxims are questionable to begin with. So, most issues won't be

[5] This is essentially to say that actions can be described in many ways and under their various aspects. We give to certain actions or states certain names, and it is the name itself which connects the action to various kinds of laws. Therefore, it is the naming of the thing, the proclaiming what it is, that precedes our moral deliberation of it in cases.

conceived as moral issues. Patting a dog on the head isn't something that typically requires moral deliberation.

We must (and do) understand that certain actions are more morally significant than others, as otherwise the maxim we produce to be tested by the CI will likely contain an irrelevant description. Herman writes, "judgment is possible only when the material to be judged is presented in a manner that fits the form of judgment. Moral judgment is not the first step in moral deliberation." (Herman 1993, 417) Moral situations typically occur not because we want to do a bad thing, such that our question will never be "is it okay to steal from this person?" but will include our reason or justification for pursuing this action which would, under the view of moral rules or laws, be considered as stealing. So, the question becomes, "is it okay to steal bread from this shop if I have a starving child at home and I have no money and apparently no means of getting any?" This is all a part of regular Kantian morality, but Herman is pointing out something that Hegel also points out – that there is a sort of moral knowledge prior to the use of the CI, which the CI requires. Our normal use of moral judgment contains this moral knowledge, but it isn't thought of as Kantian in nature, or as being accounted for in Kantian philosophy.

Herman calls this knowledge of moral signifiers "rules of moral salience". (Herman 1993, 418) As a general rule, inflicting damage on other peoples' bodies is viewed as morally significant, and we learn this rule through moral education and experience; not only are we told that it is wrong, but we have felt pain ourselves and know that it is something we would, in general, like to avoid. Hurting others is wrong, though we can still conceptualize exceptions to this rule, and this is the sort of situation that we would formulate a maxim about and bring before the CI. Because inflicting damage on the bodies of others is morally significant, if our proposed action will cause this damage, we will understand that it is something that ought to be

questioned. Herman writes, "[rules of moral salience] are not learned as bits of information about the world, nor as rules of guidance to use when engaged in particular sorts of activities (moral ones). The rules of moral salience constitute the structure of moral sensitivity." (Herman 1993, 419) This is to say that we learn that certain types of actions, or actions which produce certain results, regardless of whatever other effects they have, should have their moral acceptability questioned. We have a worldview and a notion of what is normally right and wrong. This is why we don't have morally irrelevant maxims – because we are educated and have a history that allows us to perceive the moral relevance of certain actions. While we can see that this satisfies the Hegelian critique of an isolated subject seeing things how they want, there is still the question of the place these rules of moral salience have within Kantian philosophy itself. In what way is this approach distinctly Kantian?

So far, Herman has pointed out that, however much we believe that we ought to help those in distress, we will be unable to do so insofar as we do not perceive that they are in distress. Some people may be sensitive to more complex forms of distress, while others will perceive it only when there is an overt look of agitation or discomfort. What is important, therefore, is not only having sound moral principles to follow but a honed sense of moral sensitivity, and honing this sensitivity takes on the form of a duty for a Kantian moral agent, though this is typically a part of regular moral development; we ought to know, at the very least, what is typically considered to be hurtful, demeaning, disrespectful, etc. But what this means is simply that we take on "the moral understanding that in part defines a "moral community."" (Herman 1993, 425) What, then, becomes of the objectivity that we typically associate with morality, particularly in a Kantian sense? Herman's suggestion is that not all practices a culture teaches could be considered moral, but only those that concern the sorts of actions we have been

considering, like deception and hurting others. But on the fundamental problem which seems to follow from the introduction of rules of moral salience, the seeming demand for an ultimate set of 'RMS' for the objectivity of morality, Herman sees this as highly unlikely (Herman 1993, 425). So how is it that Herman proposes to remain objective? The answer is that, though RMS are necessarily prior to our use of the CI, they are not prior to the moral law and find their origin in the moral law in a non-accidental way.

What Kant calls the "Fact of Reason" is the consciousness of our freedom, of the requirement that we will in conformity to the moral law. As Herman puts it, we know that we "are capable of having and acting from a conception of the good." (Herman 1993, 427) Not only are we capable of this, but we know that we ought to formulate a conception of the good to begin with. The question remains, however, how this conception is to relate to the moral law itself, or how our conceptions are "constrained by the Moral Law." (Herman 1993, 428) The categorical imperative, the supreme principle of morality, is expressed by Kant in various ways. What Herman finds important here is the conception that comes along with it of considering oneself as a moral agent amongst others, and the necessary focus on freedom that is included in this. We make claims on others to accept our behaviour, and they make these same claims on us. We therefore ought not to treat each other in certain ways. In other words, our conception of each rational nature as an end-in-itself is what makes RMS themselves salient, or morally relevant. They are morally significant because of what we inherently are. RMS would then provide intuitive guidance on certain issues that demand more or less precise definitions. Herman writes, "[RMS] must therefore instruct agents on (at least) three sorts of issues before questions of permissibility can be taken to a procedure of judgment. (1) Who is a moral agent or end-in-

himself? … (2) What are the conditions of agency for ends-in-themselves? … (3) What are the marks of reasonable claims and restraints?" (Herman 1993, 428-9)

Generating RMS, at this point, still has no solution. Rather, we understand that it is always necessary to do so, and also that we already have some in place. As there is no solution, this falls, in part, to history. It becomes "a *practical* task for a community of moral agents." (Herman 1993, 429) That is, each community which imparts moral knowledge through education will have to form conceptions of personhood, of rights, etc. So far, what saves this from an absolute cultural relativism is that one can refer back to the fundamental conceptions given in the Moral Law to criticize existent RMS. If we accept that people are ends-in-themselves, and yet certain RMS allow us to perceive only the suffering of some as morally significant, we have grounds in the Moral Law itself to criticize and revise this view. This is, of course, still problematic – not all issues with RMS will be quickly seen on the basis of the moral law but will have to be figured out in time (this is particularly important when one considers that RMS in a way define what we see, what we do and do not notice). Insufficiencies will ultimately be *felt* and expressed.

But because RMS are, at any given time, flawed, this means that these flaws will enter the CI and result in the representation of certain duties which would not be the case if we had superior RMS. While we have a solution to the notion that RMS are independent of the Moral Law entirely, we do not have a solution to the notion that we will nonetheless be performing acts which are 'objectively' contrary to duty, and indeed, doing so necessarily. This is a key notion and will be taken up more later, but for the time being we can continue to look at Herman's line of thinking. The notion that everyone in history has acted contrary to duty because they had faulty RMS is an appalling idea that should sit well with nobody (because it destroys the concept

of duty itself); one would sooner reject the idea of morality itself than accept such a proposition. We therefore must consider things in a nuanced way, as not being bound by a strict binary of right/wrong. Herman writes, "[to] take seriously the possibility that actions whose maxims have defective RMS may pass through the CI procedure is to claim room in a Kantian system for the idea that not all ways of failing to act as morality requires (in a strict sense) are morally equivalent." (Herman 1993, 431) For example, lying is wrong, but saying that which you believe to be true but is not true is wrong in a derivative manner – it isn't something that you are morally culpable for (unless it is something you 'should have known'). It is an accident of history for which no one in particular is responsible. This is fundamentally an appeal to finitude and ignorance – we acted in this way because we didn't know any better.

This sets things right in a particularly important way, though we are still not without certain difficulties. This view relies (justifiably) upon the importance of the principle of willing itself in Kantian philosophy. We are not only capable of forming conceptions of the good and allowing it to limit our pursuits, as Herman characterized the fact of reason previously, but this is what we do, and so when we look back on history, we don't have the right to say that those who came before us, who had different notions of personhood and acceptable expressions of individuality, etc., were immoral, for in the same breath we condemn also ourselves, though we may say that they were wrong (this supposes, of course, that they acted out of their flawed representations of the good). With this said, we can of course condemn the behaviour of those who lived in the past, but it is much more fruitful to think of how we would have thought and acted had we been born in those times. As Herman puts it, "[from] the position of greater knowledge we can say what maxim a better informed agent should have adopted. But as omniscience is not a condition of agency, there need be no moral fault where things are not as

they might have been." (Herman 1993, 431-2) That this must be the case follows from our finitude, and it is the true recognition of our finitude, I would say, that is a distinctive feature of Kantian philosophy in general. The question is always the ways in which we are limited, and how the knowledge of these limits should change both the ways we consider ourselves and how we should act. Often, when we read of an objective morality, and the objectivity of the moral law, the practical necessity to perform certain duties, we do so in an un-Kantian way – meaning, we think of objectivity in the sense that was thought prior to Kant's Copernican Revolution.

This can be seen in the expectation that the CI itself, through its formal procedure, produce a total uniformity of judgments when judging certain topics, or that we can use it (and it alone) to resolve certain moral conflicts; that we can say, because we 'applied' the CI to a certain moral problem, that *this* is the one and only solution, and that anyone through history was wrong to arrive at anything different, since they have the same fundamental capacities as we do now. This is thoroughly un-Kantian, as I will show. What we can know, and understand the necessity of, is the principle of the good will itself, and not the infinite variety of ways that this may be expressed. The question is, why we use the categorical imperative as a *procedure* at all. I am not saying that it is wrong to do so, but the question is: are we using it to determine whether something is right or wrong *in itself*, or are we using it to determine whether the principle of our willing is corrupt or not? Are we using it to judge others, or are we using it to make a moral decision ourselves? Because the motive is relevant to our judgment, what gains importance is understanding the terms and understandings of others, rather than deciding simply whether we disagree with their act or not. Herman writes, "for human beings and communities, with their different projects and imperfect understanding, moral theory (of a Kantian sort) must tolerate some degree of difference in moral judgment. What the theory requires of all agents is objective

willing: agents' maxims should conform to the principle of the CI (that is, they should act from the motive of duty), and their maxims must satisfy the CI procedure (that is, they must not be contrary to duty)." (Herman 1993, 432) Deciding whether someone is good or bad is not a function of practical reason – it doesn't have anything (directly) to do with what we should do. The closest thing to this is making a judgment as to the criminality of another, and this involves the action that we should take against them. We test our own maxims with the categorical imperative, and in fact, that is all it is fit to judge; and this is because its 'results' are relative to the description of the intended action that goes into it. We can certainly see an action someone does, describe it in our own words as a maxim, and then judge that we would not be acting out of a good will were we to do it, but we can't say for certain that this is what happened for the actor. Even using the CI itself supposes at least a degree of moral sincerity – of trying to see whether our action is in accord with the moral law. What is important in this conception is that morality is a striving, and not a frozen ideal to conform to. The objectivity expressed in it is an objectivity of willing, though it should be noted that it is not impossible to work towards agreement on the basis on the fundamental conceptions given in the moral law – that we can use the conception of others as ends-in-themselves who organize their own lives as a reason to criticize conceptions of personhood which unjustly give some rights and others none – we can criticize those who don't recognize and live up to the true call for universality in this conception.

With this said, the potential role of RMS within Kantian philosophy isn't quite clear. Though Herman has suggested that they have their source in the moral law, they are themselves still not *critical* – they remain partial, historical determinations. While Kant does not explicitly mention anything quite like RMS, Herman suggests that hints of them can be seen in "the way Kant sets out his examples, in the use he makes of ordinary moral consciousness in the

Groundwork, and in a plausible interpretation of the practical import of the Fact of Reason." (Herman 1993, 435-6) I believe this is true. In the example of making an untruthful promise, the agent in question conceptualizes their maxim in precisely those terms: making an untruthful promise. This means that they know that making a promise puts a certain moral pressure on oneself and that making one intending to break it is morally salient. This implies that the agent understands that people expect the promises they receive from others to be fulfilled and that not doing this is a violation of their rights and dignity. Not only does a lying promise fall short of the universal law requirement by defeating itself across time, but it also fails the second and third formulations, which thoroughly inform the first. In short, the examples given by Kant show Kant's knowledge of the fact that moral situations arise in culture where agents have a shared understanding of actions and terms. However, it was possibly too obvious for him to point out. Because the morality of an act follows from the principle of the will itself, it will always follow also from the understanding of the agent, and from communities of shared understanding. The notion of lying itself is a notion of volition; that we have the word means that we have already distinguished between telling someone something that is incorrect versus telling someone such a thing intentionally, and we also acknowledge in the very concept that it is in the intention that the wrong truly lies. This also means we recognize the hold others have over us – that we are conscious of the Moral Law as such.

Let's briefly look back to Hegel's critique of Kant. One of his major points is that, unless you have a thoroughly developed (and philosophically secured) system of right, the task of subsuming particulars under universals, saying what things are, falls to the individual – unless we have a reason to say that the determination of things *should* be a social matter, people can call their actions and their maxims what they want, they can point to the 'aspect of positivity' of their

action. This is, in large part, a criticism of a particular ahistorical conception of the person as a rational agent. When morality is confined to the intent, and the definition of the actions and terms is open and not systematically defined, any semblance of objectivity has vanished; people can merely say what they want. The requirement that a maxim fit as a possible universal law is completely beholden to the vision of the individual.

Herman's solution of RMS largely answers this charge – our understanding will be, always in part, the understanding of the community. We understand that certain actions are morally salient, that they require attention, and this means that we have a shared understanding of what an action is. But this hasn't properly dealt with the deeper level of Hegel's critique, that we are cultural agents, and that the viewpoint of Morality itself is artificial. While there is some connection here between our being cultural agents and the moral law itself, this connection is not terribly clear – what is really being said at this point is that if we don't concede that the use of the CI presupposes a cultural background, Kantian morality won't be able to float at all. That we consider ourselves as 'moral agents' is for Hegel first and foremost a cultural determination, and our form of moral deliberation is itself culturally and historically determined. Because the definition and meaning of terms is in fact culturally determined, what we get out of the CI will simply be a historical determination rather than a 'moral' one. There is still a conceptual gap separating history and morality.

Herman does, of course, connect RMS with Kant's moral philosophy – she doesn't simply say that we must assume them. This consisted in the notion that RMS are derived from (or have their origin in) the Moral Law as such. There are then grounds for criticism of cultural terms based on the fundamental conception of persons as ends-in-themselves. But ultimately, at least according to McCumber's view of Hegel's critique, the process of judging whether or not

this is in fact happening will be determined by the language such judgment takes place in. What rights are, what it means to do something at the expense of another group, and even how we would think of proving this, are all themselves cultural determinations. While I think this view is slightly extreme, it is also hard to argue against, and Herman's conception of RMS as grounded in the Moral Law doesn't seem to have the tools to deal with this.

This discussion has also gone around another aspect of Hegel's critique of Kant – the tension in Kantian morality between willing the good and doing the good. In one moment, we think of doing good in the world, and in another, we consider our moral or internal perfection – our acting according to a good will. That acting simply out of a good will does not guarantee the goodness of acts is largely what we have been considering. But to appreciate the critique to the utmost, we must say that it is this conceptualization of the highest good in the world that is problematic, because such a good is not given in the form of a determinate concept by the fact of reason – attempts towards this are guided by specific notions of goodness, but because we all do not share the same conceptions, we will continue to violate each other. For Hegel, therefore, the task of determining the highest good falls to history.

Chapter 3. A Kantian Theory of History and Moral Progress

The solution to thinking of this coherently in a Kantian manner is counter-intuitive in nature. It involves holding on to the goal of realizing the highest good and connecting this realization with acting out of a good will, according to Kantian principles – of deriving a way to conceptualize the highest good from the formulations Kant gives of the Categorical Imperative – this much is not counter-intuitive, but the process through which it takes place, is, especially for typical Kantian thought. The solution consists in an appeal to Kant's notion that we must simultaneously consider our acts as free and caused[6], and through this to Kant's notion of cosmopolitanism and world peace. Moving towards this (or rather, behaving in such a way as to facilitate it) in a principled way is what will constitute acting out of a good will. For this to be coherently argued, it must also be argued, based on what has been said, that one of the highest moral imperatives is to reach agreement with others as to the meaning of terms, to stick to our agreements regarding these terms, and to hold ourselves as obliged towards others under laws formulated with these shared terms. Kantian morality, and acting out of a good will, is first and foremost a commitment to communication with others. This commitment is not simply abstract – it demands that we communicate with the end of sharing definitions and arranging a state of affairs in which we can coexist, pursue our ends, and increase our enlightenment.

Part of Hegel's intention in his critique of Kant and formalism was to show that such formalistic systems become unwittingly beholden to the content which they believe themselves to be free from, along with ignoring their own historical inheritance. In the case of Kant's

[6] Such as we see in the *Groundwork* from 4:451-3, for example. We can consider ourselves empirically (as we appear to our senses and are hence determined according to causality) or as the underlying (unseen) activity generating these appearances (as existing 'prior to' the application of the law of causality). It is not simply that we are 'free' or 'unfree' – we have reasons to consider ourselves as caused and causing, but because morality pertains to the principle of the *will* itself, we can think of ourselves as moral only insofar as we think of ourselves as free.

morality, in completely abstracting from the inclinations, we are still inevitably guided by them, and our actions are exhibited in the light of their contingency and amorality – moral actions are exceedingly rare and possibly non-existent, as the morality of an action is characterized by the purity of its motive. We are left in a state of constant dissatisfaction, despite the fact that the content of our actions hasn't actually changed – what we believe to be right and wrong, good ends and bad, are largely cultural determinations and our thinking about them involves the application of language which has a nature largely of its own. Any vision of Kant's categorical imperative as a tool we use to arrive at an 'objectively correct' action, merely through its capacity as a maxim to be formulated as a universal law, must be left aside, as it is completely incapable of surviving Hegel's critique. I have so far attempted to show that abstraction from the situation in the formulation of maxims is inappropriate, except insofar as abstraction is necessary for us to think the situation at all (insofar as language is abstraction). It is the *formalization* of the situation, or the representation of the situation that we give to ourselves, that contains the moral content or the relevant factors of the situation. But this formalization is precisely a cultural knowing, a seeing the world in a certain light. That we must necessarily refer to the ends of others and even to their ways of thinking makes this not simply morally contingent, but necessary.

While the particular contents of cultural belief are not held in importance in Kantian morality, the existence of this content as such is necessary (this is partly what Herman has argued). What I attempted to show in my closer reading of Kant and discussion of Herman is that, based on Kant's negative moral philosophy, we have transcendentally grounded reasons for paying attention to and holding as morally significant, the particularity of the conceptions of others and their general self-determination, and that this will in large part inform what it means

to act out of a good will. But does this mean that taking Kantian morality to its limits means falling into a moral subjectivism and holding that certain ends aren't better than others, that some forms of relating aren't better than others – in short, that (worldly) goodness consists in what we currently believe to be in our best interests? I do not think that this necessarily follows from what has been put forth. Kant's call to universality does not mean that we should think and act in terms of universally exhibiting the beliefs of our culture, just as autonomy does not consist in the uninhibited exercise of our particular nature. Here, the language is rather important. It is not as if our particular nature is more ours than our universal (rational) nature is – our particular nature is what we (contingently) have, and our universal nature is our birthright. What is often missed is that this division is a division in language and thought; we can act with reference merely to ourselves and what will satisfy our desires or with reference to each other, and Kant is saying that this capacity to act socially, out of genuine interest in each other, is rational, and we can distinguish it from our capacity to act merely out of self-interest.[7] Both capacities are fully our own, but our interest in our particular ends is isolated to our person. In contrast, our interest in others is something that we all have in common, and it can allow us to bridge the gaps in the idiosyncrasies of our individual ends. Because the moral law demands that we treat others as ends in themselves, we have the freedom and power to defer our own gratification if it is at the expense of others.

Just as we have our particular ends, so our culture will value (not in thought necessarily, but in practice) particular ends, particular social arrangements and states of being. And just as our ends can conflict with the ends of others and violate them, so can our cultural determinations

[7] When Kant says that we have a respect for the moral law, we should think of it in this light. If there were a person who always acted under the conception of others as ends in themselves, we would respect and love this person – we couldn't help but to admire them. We also know, in our consciousness of the Moral Law, that we are capable of being the same way. Our ability to govern ourselves in this way gives us self-respect and validates our worth.

and our assertion of cultural and political right violate the right of other peoples. Individuals can have a universality of disposition – we can always think in terms of the impact our actions will have upon others, and we can attempt to think of this impact from their perspective. This is what will constitute the freedom of our thought. Kantian morality posits the right of the individual to determine their own life, and with this knowledge, the individual exercises their morality in their limiting themselves on behalf of others. We attempt to come into agreeable relations with each other, such that each can have what they want. In assuming cultural identities, we fit into a system with those around us, and we cohere with them.

However, Kantian morality does not demand of us that we act as good members of our community – this is contained within Kant's demand but does not encompass it – the demand is rather, very simply, that we treat others as such as ends in themselves, and as was covered, our treating them as ends in themselves means our making explicit reference to their autonomy and their determination of their own lives. This means not making the simple reference to what we believe is right for them, but listening to their beliefs as to what constitutes lives that they want to live, how they think they should be treated, and how they want their social order to be arranged, and this necessarily includes what it is they think certain actions should be considered as 'examples of'. While we can disagree about whether these practices are good or not, unless we can demonstrate that they infringe upon the dignity of humanity as such, which consists in its choosing of ends, this would in itself provide us with no ground for contradicting their actions. But this belief, the belief that rational beings possess first and foremost the right to determine their own lives, can itself become a cultural determination, though for Kant it has always been grounded in the concept of a rational will, and it would find this transformation in the form of concrete laws. The belief that people can and should determine their own lives with minimal

necessary interference may be called the result and wellspring of a culture of freedom – a culture which reflects our epistemic reality and the contingency of our empirical judgments. This is Kant's true answer to the question of the highest objective good, and it consists in a material reflection of the nature of the highest subjective good – the good will.

The answer to the charge that Kantian morality leads to a sort of cultural relativism if we admit that we take the content of our legislation from our particular cultural beliefs is that Kantian morality and the principle of autonomy directly leads to a Kantian cosmopolitanism – the belief that we should conceptualize ourselves as part of a kingdom of ends, not merely within our locality, but amongst rational beings as such. We are citizens of the state, to be sure, but we are also world citizens; we hold certain responsibilities regarding all other rational beings. There is then the imperative to choose a form of government which is reflective of freedom as such – a form of government which unites various people and yet preserves their differences in views and chosen ends. The ultimate good in the world is thought of as freedom itself, and our commitment to each other is the commitment to the freedom of all, rather than the simple imposition of cultural norms on our interactions with others. Kant makes the claim, then, that we have within us the ground for a universal culture or the blueprint for realizing a roughly ideal way of interacting with each other.

Kant begins his *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent* (1784) with the following line: "Whatever concept one may form of *freedom of the will* in a metaphysical context, its *appearance*, human actions, like all other natural events, are certainly determined in conformity with universal natural laws." (Kant 1983, 29) In evoking freedom of the will, Kant necessarily makes reference to morality – this is the deliberation and action of a moral agent in keeping with the CI. In acting morally, we represent the world as a place where moral purpose

can be realized as a natural effect with us as the cause. There is a demand to think of ourselves as simultaneously free and causally determined, as noumenal beings and phenomenal beings. On the one hand we will consider ourselves as being (able to be) determined solely by representations of reason, and on the other we can consider our actions as the results of various natural laws – Kant writes, "the free wills of men seem to have so great an influence on marriage, the births consequent to it, and death, it appears that they are not subject to any rule by which one can in advance determine their number; and yet the annual charts that large countries make of them show that they occur in conformity with natural laws" (Kant 1983, 29). In our individual use of freedom, in pursuing our ends and following moral dictates, we are certainly not justified in thinking that we are not guided in this by greater forces. Kant's aim in this essay is to explicate the natural end that freedom is directed towards, or with which it would be found to perfectly coincide. In considering free acts as natural phenomena, one can speculate, though not with certainty, as to the end this type of phenomenon is directed toward, or toward which they tend. The end of free acts is the same as the end of rational beings as such, who are the only possible authors of such acts.

Beginning with his first thesis in the essay, Kant argues that the capacities of natural beings all develop in accordance with their ends and that this development will be completed, should things follow their normal course. For animals, as opposed to rational creatures, all of their capacities can be fully developed within their lifetime, but rational creatures, with their vocation being moral in nature, require for this end the development of their reason, but Kant sees this as a goal of the species, as opposed to the individual, due to the role education and the generational advancement of knowledge have for us. Successive generations make developments in the appropriate use of reason and leave it always to the next to further this development. (Kant

1983, 30) History is the history of the development of our capacity for reason, and therefore, morality. Unlike animals, who develop their capacities thoughtlessly, we have to develop these capacities effortfully, and they will be uniquely our own: "[nature] seems here to have willed that if man should ever work himself up from the grossest barbarity to the highest level of sophistication, to inner perfection in his way of thinking and thereby to happiness (as far as it is possible on earth), he alone would have the entire credit for it and would have only himself to thank; it is as if she aimed more at his rational *self-esteem* than at his well-being." (Kant 1983, 31) History consists of generations attempting to set the succeeding generations up for greater success and prosperity, and this always consists in raising their potential for action and thought. The drive behind this development is war and discord amongst individuals and nations.

We are driven through natural conditions to enter into society with each other – we are social creatures – and yet we also always want things to go our way, even to the detriment of others – we possess an *unsocial sociability*. (Kant 1983, 31-2) When two people desire a single object, they compete for it. Though we live near other people, we could say that we keep them at a distance from influencing our wills. It is precisely this state of competition, this need to earn the respect of others, to drag admiration out of them and secure a place in society, that overcomes our "tendency towards laziness". (Kant 1983, 32) We develop trades and hone our capacities, and so take "the first true steps from barbarism to culture… and through progressive enlightenment [man] begins to establish a way of thinking that can in time transform the crude natural capacity for moral discrimination into definite practical principles and thus transform a *pathologically* enforced agreement into a society and, finally, into a *moral* whole." (Kant 1983, 32) Without these, we would simply live peacefully and blindly – there would be no reason to develop our capacities. In two sentences, Kant affirms the compatibility of the amoral and the

moral[8]: “thanks be to nature for the incompatibility, for the distasteful, competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess and also to rule. Without them, all of humanity’s excellent natural capacities would have lain eternally dormant.” (Kant 1983, 32) We are driven together by need, but we are also thrown into discord with each other, and so we must figure out more sophisticated modes of social being. This comes in the form of the history of various civil constitutions, states which are run by laws. Though our mutual antagonism is a driving force behind development, in its lawless incarnation, it is also a hindering force – how many bright souls have lost their lives because of petty conflicts or have been placed in stations where their natural talents won’t be nurtured, etc.?

Nature therefore compels us, because its aim is the development of our natural capacities, to achieve a civil society in which its members have rights and protected freedoms and which allows us to channel a “thoroughgoing antagonism” (Kant 1983, 33), such that the freest state would also contain the most antagonism within itself, and in which its members would engage in legally bounded competition and maximally develop their capacities. Kant calls this civil society and state of freedom “the supreme task nature has set for the human species” (Kant 1983, 33). But just as one cannot develop their capacities in isolation (as this development is, in fact, forced upon us through the demands of others), one would not be able to achieve a truly civil state in isolation from other states. We enter into a civil state under laws because of our competitive nature, the fact that we push against the boundaries of others. Kant views the state, in classical idealist fashion, as analogous to the individual, and so the formed state will exercise its freedom over and against other states and peoples. Because all states do this, they engage in conflict with each other and develop their capacities further, which means, almost paradoxically, increasing

[8] We must note that this compatibility is not an equation.

the *culture* of the citizenry – Kant notes that a country with a weak citizenry, or a country that does not allow the same amount of freedoms and therefore antagonisms as others, will begin to feel the effects of this inadequacy in its conflicts with other, more realized states (Kant 1983, 37). The same drive that results in us seeking civil constitution amongst ourselves eventually makes nations, considered as individualities, enter into a "federation of peoples" (Kant 1983, 34) in which each member has guaranteed rights, precisely as people living amongst one another come to mutually subject themselves to common laws for their preservation and flourishing.

This represents the objective end that nature has set out for us, and it is also plainly clear that it is an end that we are driven to for natural, but also moral, reasons. The result of this cosmopolitan state in which nations protect the rights of the individuals within it and in which the federation of nations protects the rights of nations against each other, is the flourishing of individuals to pursue their ends without fear of oppression by others. We can see that this cosmopolitan state consists in regulating the relations of its members amongst each other, and not exactly with extensive positive legislation. Just as individuals must be left room to determine their own lives, so it must be with each people. This vision of cosmopolitanism that Kant presents as the objective end of our natural being (which is a combination of selfishness and more properly free acts) which is aimed towards in the *Universal History* essay is also clearly the same state of affairs that he advocates for in his essay *To Perpetual Peace* (1795), in which we found a federation of republics which mutually assure the safety (and rights) of all. The state in which human reason can be most fully developed, and the moral goal of a state of perpetual peace where the autonomy of individuals is not violated, are one and the same, but at the same time, it seems that for the one to realize itself, so its other must realize itself as well. The

objective conditions will foster our subjectivity, and the higher state of enlightenment we reach will show itself in objectivity.

In *To Perpetual Peace*, Kant states that republicanism, which he defines as "that political principle whereby executive power (the government) is separated from legislative power" (Kant 1983, 114) has a purity of origin, "a purity whose source is the pure concept of right". (Kant 1983, 113) For Kant, right necessarily concerns our relations to each other, and the degree to which we can coerce others to act in certain ways. In our reference to right, we try to determine how the freedom of one can coincide with the freedom of another. Right is inherently concerned with the existence of freedom, and therefore a doctrine of right is one which necessarily makes reference to the concept of freedom as its guiding thread, for it is concerned only with forms of relations amongst people(s) that are in accord with freedom. "Right is therefore the sum of conditions under which the choice of one can be united with the choice of another in accordance with a universal law of freedom." (Kant 2017, 27) As republicanism follows from the pure concept of right, we may say that its law, its entire basis, is the concept of freedom in and of itself. In Kant's philosophy, nothing particular is elevated to a high status (because of the ultimate contingency we associate with existence), but it may be said that republicanism as a political principle is worthy of a certain degree of respect in Kantian philosophy due to the purported purity of its origin.

This means, however, that we *ought*, given the principles of Kant's philosophy and the concept of freedom itself, aim to effect this end of perpetual peace, which itself means that we ought to realize this federation of republics, whose desirability is not derived from the desirability of any set of particular laws that would be held in one or another, but because of the form of republicanism itself and its abstract but material focus on freedom. Kant's moral

philosophy can, in some respects, be viewed as a subjectivist one or one that leads to subjectivism in application, largely because of the problems of description and cultural relevance based on particular concepts of happiness, but we must say in spite of this that Kant's moral philosophy is indeed an objectivist one, though this objectivity may *seem* like a subjectivity. Freedom is absolutely elevated above any particular state of affairs, but particular states which found their constitution on the pure concept of right, which is concerned with the practical existence of freedom, are to be thought of as superior to states which are not, because they necessarily make reference to the concept of human beings as ends-in-themselves. Kant's moral philosophy, with its concern with freedom, ends up prescribing a rather particular state of affairs – a federation of republics which mutually secure their freedom, with each republic being concerned with the freedom of its citizenry. This state of freedom is, however, simultaneously one which is most conducive to a diversity of appearances – it means people, and peoples, can live how they want. As he puts it in the *Universal History* essay, as our species continues along the path (destiny) nature has set out for it, nations will come to increasingly value the freedom of their citizens, as it will be revealed that this freedom is what makes these nations strong to begin with, and so "restrictions on personal activities will be increasingly abolished and general freedom of religion will be granted". (Kant 1983, 37) Roughly speaking, the only thing that isn't acceptable is the infringement upon the dignity and rights of others, which of course would come to include property and ownership laws, etc. Laws of right as such.

All particular laws in a just state would have to trace their lineage to the concept of freedom and to the concept of rational beings as ends-in-themselves, as autonomous agents; freedom itself becomes the universal standard of validity. In our freedom we will pursue our happiness and will through experience learn both councils of prudence and what it is we, as

individuals, want to do and what will make us happy. For this, there can be no a priori guide, and as moral decision-making consists in the sheer *formal reference* to the ends and self-determinations of ourselves, others, and the systems which allow these ends to exist, it will inevitably make reference to happiness, and particular conceptions of happiness, at that. This much, however, falls outside of pure philosophy; we can have no apodictic certainty that a certain life doctrine will lead to desirable results, and so we are not morally required to follow it – it isn't *necessary*. Yet, we are still ultimately obliged to act in accordance with our understanding of things, such that if we think something will lead to our happiness and it does not contradict the freedom of others, we should attempt to realize this end.

What is important when we are thinking of various understandings of the world, and of individual understandings in particular, is that we are not completely isolated from each other. The light of the enlightenment does not consist in developing one's way of thinking and thinking for oneself if we think of this in the sense of being headstrong. Much like we should not think of wisdom as mere cleverness, enlightenment does not consist in discovering the theoretical limits of one's cognitions, but also in realizing the source of moral worth, and realizing that this is within all people – there can be no enlightenment without the spread of mutual love and respect amongst humanity, with love consisting in "the free integration of the will of another into one's maxims" (Kant 1983, 101). In this connection, we can say that thinking for oneself will include listening to the views of others and integrating them into a greater view of the world that is one's own. For otherwise, thinking freely would, almost necessarily, be an immoral affair; it would mean acting on a merely idiosyncratic view of the world – I'll respect you in the way I think you should be respected, and according to my view of the world. Because we live with others, and our moral legislation will necessarily include them and their self-determination, we cannot be

content with simply ‘agreeing to disagree’ with them, or of knowing that we have different fundamental conceptions of our rights and the rights of others and doing nothing about it; there is a need to be ‘playing the same game’ as those around us, as our all acting according to different rules will inevitably lead to conflicts between us. Our fundamental moral commitment, therefore, can never be to any particular creed or view of the world, but is only ever to each other, and this is what is truly great in the formalism of Kant. We always decide how best to live, and we do this with reference to each other; this also means that the right thing to do can never be perfectly charted in advance – what matters most is the principle of our wills – the question is simply whether we legislate with regard only for ourselves, or if we do so also on behalf of and with respect to others.

It should here be stated that explicitly working towards world peace, conceived of as peace between and within nations, is not going to be the marker of moral worth for most individuals. But the essence of this objective end consists in taking the idea of the kingdom of ends to the highest possible level – a state of integration in which all existent rational beings can pursue the ends they wish and, in general, freely increase their enlightenment. But one can facilitate in oneself a general attitude of acceptance that does not contradict the existence of this state, and which would facilitate its existence on a smaller scale. It is worthwhile thinking of this in terms of what Kant believes Christianity to affect in individuals. Kant writes, “it is the liberal state of mind—as distant from the slave’s as from the anarchist’s mentality—that Christianity expects its doctrine to affect, for by its doctrine it hopes to win the hearts of men, as it has already enlightened their understandings with its representation of the law of their duty.” (Kant 1983, 102) While world peace and a roughly cosmopolitan state is represented as an objective end, it entails practices of respect, and the realization of this respect will be diverse. In other

words, rather than a uniformity of materiality and social institutions, it is rather a uniformity of disposition that is called for. People will always respond to the world in a way that corresponds to their understanding of what the world is, but the moral imperative is to always consider the ends of others that are involved with our possible legislation. Morality is therefore not based upon any particular state of affairs, but is a manner in which we deal with particularity and the particularity of others: this manner is that of liberality or acceptance.

In one sense, what matters is that we act from the representation of duty, but what is also important is that this representation make explicit reference to the wills of others and the agreements that we form to govern our lives. There is at once a focus on the transcendence one finds in the purity of the motivation to act from the representation of duty (such as we find in his pure philosophy), and also on the immanence of the situation and the particularity of the wills involved (such as we find in the second and third formulations of the CI and in his notion that the development of human reason is a historical process). Kant's notion is that if we reflect on the source of duty itself, we will be led time and time again to certain forms of personal and social organization which focus on freedom. Because we have an innate yet free interest in morality, history, while it can be said to be determined according to natural laws, can equally be said to be the history of the realization of a material and institutional freedom which is itself the product of our freedom; our natural desires have always been in communication with our more properly rational desires.

Because history is at once given to us and is our own product, our use of a fundamentally historical understanding in moral deliberation is not contrary to our freedom and ability to judge moral matters, but is absolutely essential to, and is in fact identical with it; history, seen in a Kantian light, is the history of the autonomy of humanity itself, both in that it is driven by the

striving of individuals and in that its ultimate end is the formal and legal objectification of this freedom in a united federation of peoples who mutually guarantee the freedom of all. Examining Kant's political writings in tandem with his negative philosophy reveals that there is a definite place in Kant's philosophy for history and our natural inclinations, and that this place is truly positive – Kant explicitly states that without the natural inclinations, the realization of our reason and freedom would be impossible.

This freedom may be best understood as a freedom of conception – what we are free to do is formulate things in ways that feel appropriate to us and to the standards for approval that we have adopted, rather than trying to prove the apriority of our empirical concepts – and this is what Kant's pure and formal philosophy aims to critique. What we can know necessarily, for Kant, is nothing other than our forms of knowing and perception themselves, rather than any particulars. The discovery and conceptualization of empirical reality is something that happens across time and is necessarily open to revision; while the principles of morality, for Kant, are set, the ways in which we apply them to empirical reality will ultimately depend on our empirical concepts – whether this or that action 'is' respectful or disrespectful, legal or illegal, etc. This is why we must assert that freedom of thought and speech are cardinal values for any coherent Kantian morality; for it is not our ancestors who should determine our lives, just as it is not our right to determine how those in the future see the world and the various relations in it. We must always dare to think (and act) for ourselves. Kant writes, "[one] age cannot bind itself, and thus conspire, to place a succeeding one in a condition whereby it would be impossible for the later age to expand its knowledge (particularly where it is so very important), to rid itself of errors, and generally to increase its enlightenment. That would be a crime against human nature, whose essential destiny lies precisely in such progress; subsequent generations are thus completely

justified in dismissing such agreements as unauthorized and criminal." (Kant 1983, 43-4) While we can inherit certain laws from those who came before, the determination of the moral law is always in our hands, or in other words, the only law that is fit to govern our lives is the one that we ourselves *create*, or actively affirm; the Moral Law is the law of autonomy. As I have previously shown, autonomy is bounded by the concept of rational nature in general, such that one cannot rationally will just any state of affairs. The Moral Law is therefore in one sense imposed upon us (by our very nature), and in another sense created by us.

The problem I have brought up in this thesis concerns an apparent lack of objectivity in the Moral Law which we find in the space between these two senses. The sense in which the law has a grasp on us by virtue of our nature concerns the principle of our willing itself – being good consists in willing the good. The critique that was raised states that our very conceptions of goodness are cultural and linguistic products – the contents of good-willing will vary across time, and what you perceive as a good act will likely be considered to be otherwise at a later time, such that there is now no question of doing good, as all that exist are particular conceptions of it; though Kant says that the categorical imperative (and the universal law formulation in particular) can be used to test our maxims, the results that come out as to the acceptability of the maxim depends upon the way in which we formulate our maxim and understand the actions and factors involved in realizing it, all of which are historical determinations. The Moral Law as it is created or instantiated by us is instead the simple acting out of cultural identity. Kantian morality then appears to solely focus (in reality) on morality as a principle of willing itself – acting with an intention to do good for the sake of the good and of others – and leaves questions of right and wrong actions to history.

My answer to this is that there is a sense in which this is true, but there is also an answer that we can find for it in Kantian philosophy, and this is Kant's notion of historical progress, and in the critical place that Kant's (pure) philosophy has in it. To see this answer, we must not turn away from the critique but accept it; the answer comes from Kant's notion that our acts must be considered both as free and determined acts and in his concept of cultural progress. We may say that the terms we use and the understanding we have are cultural determinations, but we must also say that we have a free and moral interest in honing and perfecting our understanding of the world and the various moral situations that can arise in it. On a more personal level, we see a rough solution in the form of the kingdom of ends, through which we can posit that the goal is not simply to 'see things properly', but to come to know the views and ends of those around us and to negotiate with them until everyone involved is more or less satisfied – having the ultimate terms is much less realistic than understanding the terms of those around us. On a greater scale, Kant sees a similar sort of thing happening; there is always the need to cohere with one's surroundings. The objective end that nature has for humanity is the perfection of its reason, and this can only happen under ideal conditions where our efforts are not being stunted by unnecessary and oppressive laws and through violence and wars. The same force which drives people to surrender their lawless freedom to common laws and states will drive states to subsume themselves under common laws similarly, until wars cease, and a positive freedom is had around the world.

When we place a sufficient emphasis on freedom as such *necessarily* making reference to the wills of others, we have found our answer; without the notion that our descriptive language can make reference to, and itself define, what is moral, our having autonomy (being free) has no substantial meaning. That the terms used are our own is essential. Our claims as such have equal

weight, and so deciding which standards we should use to make judgments on certain matters becomes in many ways more of a political and social question than a philosophical one – if the critique I have covered has shown anything, it is that pure philosophy cannot answer these questions. This is instead the *practice* of positive moral philosophy, not to be charted in advance, but to be decided in the present – our coming to define things in satisfactory ways always both precedes and is preceded by acts of moral judgment – Kant's positive and negative philosophy mirror each other.

What is important, then, is that we enter into *legal* relations with each other – that we come to agree with each other about what certain terms mean, what certain actions represent, and how to respond to certain situations. This radically simplifies things; if an action is wrong not in itself, but in its context, then most of what we would consider to be moral problems would be covered under laws, and if it is not a legal issue, they will likely be covered under general norms surrounding the institution in question, due to the fact that the (reasonable) expectations that others have of us do in fact bear upon us and what we should do – it is not illegal to cheat on your spouse, but doing so would violate their expectations (as most people enter into relationships with exclusivity in mind) and the institution of marriage as such (which we do not participate in because it is 'good-in-itself', but because it is 'good-for-us'). For Kant, there are fundamental moral reasons why we should enter into civil society with each other, and there are then certain responsibilities we have because of this formal unity itself, rather than because this or that political or social organization has features that we approve of, just as we shouldn't treat others in certain ways simply because we like or dislike them.

This is why Kant's theory of history is particularly important for retaining any objectivity with regard to moral action – because we are, for formal reasons, bound to the various states in

which we find ourselves, we are also bound to their partiality. But because the essential destiny of the human race is to develop its faculty of reason, and therefore at any point in history we will ultimately be found to be lacking in rationality to some degree, it is indeed true that we cannot be fully responsible for our actions – only the principle of our will. But insofar as flawed attempts at moral action are the foundation of better attempts in the future and help clarify aspects of situations which had till that point eluded us, we have reason to say that, although they weren't perfect, it would be wrong to say that we should want to take them back; the fundamentally free and moral act is the attempt to create just laws (and formulate principles) and modes of being which respect the freedom and autonomy of all.

We can, therefore, find purely from Kantian philosophy an answer to the problem of idiosyncratic interpretations of events and actions and the problem this, in turn, poses for any possible objectivity in moral judgments. The problem, as posed by Hegel, was that if our means of judging our maxims are purely formal, we can in fact do whatever it is we want, because there is no prior guideline telling us how we ought to describe things; if this is all there is to moral judgment, we could say that any action is good or bad, because of the necessary multifariousness of all phenomena. In reality, we do not judge simply formally, but according to cultural norms and laws. This is exemplified in ethical life as such and comes from one's culture and place in society, but Hegel didn't see this as being acknowledged and having a proper place in Kant's philosophy – ethical life seemed to exist only as an unspoken presupposition. Some, such as Herman, have suggested that Kant's moral philosophy would not be able to function without cultural norms informing us prior to any use of the categorical imperative, but that these norms are in some sense called for by the Moral Law as such and can be critiqued by making continual reference to the formal Moral Law, such that we can still have more or less objective judgments

about good and bad practices. I have attempted to show that what is essential to Kantian morality is the reference to the wills of others, as opposed to trying to figure out for ourselves whether certain actions are in themselves right and wrong; we have moral reasons to try and see things in a shared light. Because actions are to be seen as both free and determined acts, it is wrong to see our cultural determination as contradicting our freedom; rather, coming to particular cultural answers to certain questions is part of a historical process which is driven by freedom of the will just as it enables us to will freely; autonomy means nothing if not that we should determine for ourselves how we ought to live, and this means that there is no objective standard that can be given *a priori* with which all people throughout history ought to conform. We need to decide on our own standards and take responsibility for them. As the enlightenment of each age increases, so will our moral judgments become clearer. History is to be seen simultaneously as being the result of hidden empirical laws governing the human animal, and also as the direct product of freedom of the will.

This is precisely what Kant is hinting at in his theory of history and cosmopolitanism. Free acts, 'of their own accord', further the ends that nature has set, with the primary end being the development of the reason of the human race. Along with the development of our reason, our forms of social organization will also develop, allowing us to enter into free relations and controlled conflict with each other. Kant argues that this is a natural process, but also a free one. As our thoughts and political systems come to be characterized by a respect for individuals and entities to determine their own lives and aims, the seeming need to try to classify and determine what is right and wrong for all time, disappears, for we can, and should, only determine this for ourselves.

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