

Kant's Ethics and Kantian Ethics

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Lecture 6. *Groundwork* Section III contd.

Reminder: 'A free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same'. 'One and the same': identity; an analytic connection between free will and morality; dependence; biconditional? 'Under moral laws': obedient to, or bound by? Could there be a will that is *not* holy, but *is* free?

Acting '*under the idea of freedom*'. Possibilities: (i) freedom as phenomenology of the practical stance; (ii) freedom as presupposition of practical deliberation. *Caveats:* freedom is not a concept of experience, indeed experience apparently contradicts the supposition of freedom (4: 455). Moreover it is not so much *practicality* that presupposes freedom, as *rationality*, if even theoretical reason presupposes freedom (4: 448). So try (iii) freedom as presupposition of *rationality*. Any exercise of reason presupposes freedom as autonomy, even theoretical reason: the alternative would be for an agent to attribute the determination of judgement not to *his reason*, but to impulse. It wouldn't then be *reason*; and it wouldn't then be *his*. So freedom is presupposed even in the exercise of ordinary theoretical judgement.

The difference between presupposing freedom 'in a practical sense', and arguing for it in theoretical metaphysics.

What is freedom? *Self-rule*, autonomy (4: 448); *capacity to do otherwise* (implicit at 4: 455). 'All human beings think of themselves as having free will. From this come all judgments upon actions as being such that *they ought to have been done even though they were not done*.'

1. A rational will must act under the idea of freedom, for otherwise the rational being's will is not its own [cannot be regarded as its own].
2. Any will that must act under the idea of freedom is really free 'in a practical respect' [must regard itself as really free].
3. So a rational will is really free [must regard itself as really free] 'in a practical respect' (from 1-2).

Freedom and theoretical reason. Does theoretical reason require freedom? If so, there is something not just illegitimate but practically self-refuting about the denial of freedom. Cf. Kant's response to Schulz, who allegedly endorsed a 'universal fatalism, which...turns all human conduct into a mere puppet show and thereby does away altogether with the concept of obligation':

‘Although he would not himself admit it, [Schulz] has assumed in the depths of his soul that understanding is able to determine his judgment in accordance with objective grounds that are always valid and he is not subject to the mechanism of merely subjective determining causes, which could subsequently change; hence he always admits freedom to think, without which there is no reason. (Review of 1783, Ak 8: 14, cited in Wood, *Kant’s Ethical Thought*, 177).’

Compare this to (a) to Moore’s paradox: e.g. ‘It’s raining but I don’t believe it’s raining’; cf. ‘I’m not free, but I believe I’m free’ (b) to the transcendental arguments of the *First Critique*: e.g. The Second Analogy: even the sceptic about causality presupposes causality, since causality is a condition of the possibility of experience, even experience of events, which the sceptic allows; cf. even the sceptic about freedom presupposes freedom, since freedom is a condition of the possibility of rational judgement, which the sceptic allows.

4: 450. *Apparent Problem 1: Circularity*. We are free, therefore we are under moral laws; we are under moral laws, therefore we are free. But that is not what Kant has apparently argued. To say that freedom is presupposed by the practical standpoint is not to affirm that the moral law *is* valid, and *implies* freedom, and then arguing in circular fashion that since freedom implies the moral law, and we are free, the moral law is valid. The reciprocity thesis is not circularity either, whatever other problems it might bring. Perhaps the problem is how we get to instantiate ourselves as the rational beings (Q above). ‘We take *ourselves* as free....’

4: 456. *Apparent Problem 2: Contradiction with natural necessity*. The freedom ascribed to the will ‘seems to be in contradiction with natural necessity’, and this is a classic ‘dialectic of reason’.

Kant finds a solution to both problems in the ‘two standpoints’ we have on ourselves, as members of the sensible and the intelligible worlds: the distinction between ourselves as *appearances*, and as *things in themselves*. It avoids the circle, perhaps by giving independent justification to the claim that we are free; it avoids the contradiction, by providing a different ‘sense or relation’ in which we are on the one hand free, on the other determined.