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978-0-521-51457-6 - Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals: A German-English Edition  
Immanuel Kant

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Published in 1785, the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* is one of the most powerful texts in the history of ethical thought. In this book, Immanuel Kant formulates and justifies a supreme principle of morality that issues universal and unconditional moral commands. These commands receive their normative force from the fact that rational agents autonomously impose the moral law upon themselves. As such, they are laws of freedom. This volume contains the first facing-page German–English edition of Kant’s *Groundwork*. It presents a new, authentic edition of the German text and a carefully revised version of Mary Gregor’s acclaimed English translation, as well as editorial notes and a full bilingual index. It will be the edition of choice for any student or scholar who is not content with reading this central contribution to modern moral philosophy through the veil of English translation.

MARY GREGOR (1928–94) brought Kant’s practical philosophy to English-speaking readers with her early translations of *The Doctrine of Virtue* (1964), *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1970) and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Standpoint* (1974). Her pioneering commentary, *Laws of Freedom* (1963), stirred a new interest in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. In her later years, she translated almost all of Kant’s writings on practical philosophy for Cambridge University Press, including the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*.

JENS TIMMERMANN is Senior Lecturer in Moral Philosophy at the University of St Andrews. He is the author of *Kant’s ‘Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals’: A Commentary* (Cambridge, 2007), and the editor of *Kant’s ‘Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals’: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge, 2009) and of *Kant’s ‘Critique of Practical Reason’: A Critical Guide* (with Andrews Reath, Cambridge, 2010).

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IMMANUEL KANT  
*Groundwork of the  
Metaphysics of Morals*

A German–English Edition

German text from the second original edition (1786)

EDITED BY JENS TIMMERMANN

English translation by Mary Gregor

REVISED BY JENS TIMMERMANN



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*For my students*

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### *Introductory note: text and translation*

Translators of philosophical texts inevitably obscure the author's arguments. The least they can do to lift the 'veil of translation' is to present text and translation side by side. In this book, this is done for Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* for the first time in its English-language history. I hope that it will encourage English speakers to study the German original, and thus bridge the divide between those working on Kant's ethics in both linguistic and philosophical traditions.

As the purpose of this volume is the clear and transparent presentation of the *Groundwork* itself, supplementary material has been kept to a minimum. This introduction explains the principles of the edition and the translation, particularly the constitution of the German text. In addition, the book contains a full bilingual index (which can also serve as an English–German glossary), a brief critical apparatus and editorial notes that explain matters of linguistic detail. These notes rarely stray into philosophically controversial territory. They do not serve the purpose of a guide to Kant's ethical thought. Interpretative and philosophical issues are discussed in my *Kant's 'Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals': A Commentary* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), which in many ways complements this edition as its sister volume.

The German text on the left-hand side of the double page is taken from the second original edition of the *Groundwork*, published in Riga by Johann Friedrich Hartknoch in 1786. It is generally agreed that Kant himself was responsible for the new edition. Most of the changes are minor, but several mistakes have been corrected and there are some improvements on the text of the 1785 first edition. For the present volume, the 1786 text has been emended in only a few places, listed in the first critical apparatus. The second apparatus contains significant differences between the second edition and the first.

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Emendations excepted, changes to the text concern typographical matters only. Roman type has replaced the blackletter face of the original. As a result, *x* appears as ‘etc.’, and the umlaut capitals Ä, Ö and Ü are used where the original edition, following the conventions of the time, has *Æ*, *Ð* and *Ū*. First-order emphasis, for which the original editions use larger *Fraktur* type or a different blackletter face, is reproduced in the shape of *italics*. Higher-order emphasis, marked by additional wider letter spacing, is typeset in SMALL CAPITALS. A sanserif face is used for the roman type reserved in German books of that period for Latin. Full stops that mark the end of section and sub-section headings (e.g. ‘Vorrede.’) have been removed. The translation mirrors the German text.

Spellings and punctuation of the German original have been retained. The text printed here is thus the most authentic of any modern edition of the *Groundwork*. It is much closer to the original than, e.g., Paul Menzer’s Academy text first published in 1903 – which tends to assimilate eighteenth-century usage to the educated linguistic standards of a later era – or more heavily modernized versions successive editors have produced for Reclam or Felix Meiner.

Like any editorial policy one might apply to historical texts, the conservative approach has its disadvantages. First, 1786 norms of spelling and punctuation differ from those taught in schools today. *Eintheilung*, *That* and *Nothwendigkeit* (which lost their silent *h* more than a century ago), *bey*, *seyn*, *zwey*, *drey*, *Freyheit* and *Barbarey* (the diphthong has long been spelt *ei*), *Critik* and *categoria*, *Subject* and *Princip* (where *k* and *z* have since replaced the Latinizing or Latin *c*), as well as *affciren*, *demonstriren*, *abstrahiren* (the modern ending is *-ieren*), seem quaint to those familiar with the conventions of standard contemporary German – but they also serve as a gentle reminder that Kant did not speak or write modern German, and that familiar words and phrases should not be taken at face value. Also, *practisch*, *Speculation* and *cultiviren* will seem less alien to English readers than *praktisch*, *Spekulation* and *kultivieren*. Antiquated spellings like *Caußalität*, *Erkenntniß*, *ächt*, *nemlich* hardly present serious difficulties to today’s readers. Other linguistic peculiarities of the 1786 edition have also been retained, e.g. word forms like *gerechtfertiget*, *genöthiget*, *gelehret* and *gehörete*, *fehlete*, *beruheten*, as well as *sah* for *sah* at IV 432.28 and the three occurrences of the odd-looking *du sollt* (‘thou shalt’).



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Secondly, eighteenth-century spelling is often inconsistent across different works, even by the same author, within a single book – sometimes on a single page. Authors, copyists and compositors all left their mark on the printed text in an age without electronic spelling checkers or – more significantly – an orthographic consensus codified in dictionaries conveniently located on everyone’s desk. Fortunately, the text of the second edition of the *Groundwork* is better than many others. It feels positively modern, compared, e.g., to the A edition of the first *Critique*, published only five years earlier. In the 1786 *Groundwork*, rules of spelling and punctuation are by and large applied consistently, with only a few exceptions. *Bloß* (‘mere’) is the regular spelling, but we see *blos* at IV 400.1; *Instinkt* and *Naturinstinkt* would be universal, were it not for *Naturinstinct* at IV 423.13 and IV 459.13; Kant’s word for ‘of course’ or ‘admittedly’ is spelt *freylich*, but there is an odd modern-looking *freilich* at IV 401.12; there is one occurrence of *würklich* at IV 397.15, otherwise modern forms like *wirklich*, *Wirklichkeit* and *Wirkung* are used; we generally read *Object*, but there is *Objekte* at IV 400.19; and the edition uses the modern *fordern* (‘to require’) as well as the old-fashioned *fodern*, *alsdenn* as well as the occasional *alsdann*, *sofort* and *so fort*, *sogar* and *so gar* side by side, while there is only a single *sofern* at IV 413.9 among countless instances of *so fern*. (The bilingual index lists some variant spellings as they occur in the text. There are very few.) Punctuation can be erratic in the original editions, but more often than not seemingly superfluous commas and semicolons help to structure Kant’s notoriously lengthy German sentences. Capitalization is slightly less regular than one would hope. As is customary, minor differences of spelling, punctuation and language use between the first and the second edition and mere typographical errors are not listed in the apparatus.

However, the inconvenience occasioned by such irregularities is outweighed by the advantages of reading an authentic, eighteenth-century text free from arbitrary editorial interference, which gives readers a sense of transparency and immediacy that smoother editions lack. Many an insight is obscured by modernization, and lost completely in translation: for instance, the outdated *gnug* now reveals its connection with *Vergnügen* (‘gratification’); and *wohl* is, it seems, distinguished from the elusive little *wol*, also spelt *wohl* in modern editions. Moreover, the 1786 text, cautiously amended, is absolutely stable. There is no need to update it when modern German spellings change.

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The translation printed on the right-hand side of the double page is based on Mary Gregor's English version, first published by Cambridge University Press in 1996. It has been thoroughly revised for the present volume, but care was taken to preserve the familiar feel of Gregor's original. The principles of her approach – combining a high degree of faithfulness to Kant's German with readability – naturally remained intact. Changes were often the result of using specialist historical dictionaries, particularly the *Deutsches Wörterbuch* of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and Johann Christoph Adelung's *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*. (Both are now available electronically.) Moreover, searchable electronic texts of Kant's works, of the new edition of the *Groundwork*, and of the emerging translation itself proved invaluable for achieving maximum consistency.

The major English translations prepared by the following scholars have been systematically consulted throughout: Thomas K. Abbott (Longman, 1873), H.J. Paton (Hutchinson, 1948), Lewis White Beck (Bobbs Merrill, 1959), James W. Ellington (Hackett, third edition, 1993), Thomas E. Hill Jr and Arnulf Zweig (Oxford University Press, 2002), Allen W. Wood (Yale University Press, 2002) and Lara Denis, who recently updated Thomas Abbott's nineteenth-century version (Broadview, 2005). Comparing translations in detail was very instructive. Some of the difficulties brought to light by this process, and individual cases in which Gregor's text has been changed or retained, are discussed in the notes on the revised translation below.

To preserve the flavour of the original Cambridge translation, it was crucial that Mary Gregor's terminological choices should largely remain intact. They have established themselves as the standard of modern Kant scholarship in recent years. 'Incentive' is thus used for *Triebfeder*, 'disposition' for *Gesinnung*, 'human being' for *Mensch*, 'purpose' for *Absicht*, 'intention' for *Vorsatz* and 'end' for *Zweck*; 'kingdom of ends' translates *Reich der Zwecke*, 'dignity' *Würde*, 'respect' *Achtung*, 'cognition' *Erkenntniß*; *Grenze* is rendered 'boundary' and *Grenzen* 'bounds', whereas 'limit' is used for *Schranke*, and so forth. As in Gregor's original translation, etymological connections are emphasized by using cognate terms wherever possible: thus *Einschränkung* remains 'limitation' and 'cognize' or 'recognize' are used for *erkennen*.

There are, however, a few departures from the terminological decisions of Gregor's original translation. For example, 'according to' replaces

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‘in accordance with’ as the standard translation of *nach*, to express the non-accidental nature of the connection; *Vorschrift* is rendered ‘prescription’, as in Hill and Zweig, not ‘precept’, as in Gregor, Paton and Wood (among others), a change that is in fact consistent with Gregor’s own ‘prescribe’ for *vorschreiben* at IV 438.31, and it also helps to distinguish ‘prescriptions’ from ‘commands’ (*Gebote*), glossed *praecepta* by Kant himself at IV 418.31; ‘judging’ and ‘to judge’, rather than ‘appraisal’ and ‘to appraise’, are used for *Beurtheilung* and *beurtheilen*, which is simply the transitive form of *urtheilen*; ‘willing’ replaces Gregor’s ‘volition’ as the usual translation of (*das*) *Wollen*; ‘sensation’, rather than ‘feeling’, consistently renders *Empfindung*, to distinguish it from *Gefühl*; ‘compassion’ is used for *Theilnehmung*, ‘sympathy’ exclusively for *Sympathie*; *Wirklichkeit* has become ‘actuality’, *wirklich* ‘actual’, and so forth, so that ‘reality’ could be reserved for *Realität*; and ‘sensuous’, rather than the misleading ‘sensible’, now translates *sinnlich*.

Moreover, there is a general change of policy concerning the use of personal pronouns. On the one hand, neuter – rather than masculine – forms are used to refer to a ‘being’, ‘rational being’, etc., which should not be pictured as beings of flesh and blood, let alone males. Masculine pronouns are now restricted to ‘human being’, ‘person’ and ‘subject’. On the other hand, in his more literary and allegorical passages Kant occasionally personifies Nature, Virtue, Philosophy or Reason. This is generally indicated, in the revised translation, by capitalization as well as the use of the feminine pronoun. In an attempt to preserve the flow and rhythm of Kant’s sentences, the punctuation of the translation now resembles – within reason – that of the German on the facing page.

As to the formal presentation of the text, the layout of the German follows that of the Academy edition, reproducing page and line breaks as accurately as typographically possible for a different text and with a new typeface. Academy page and line numbers are printed at the outside left-hand margin of a double page. In addition, page numbers of the first and second original editions can be found at the bottom of each page of the German text. They will be of use to those consulting some of the older literature on Kantian ethics. All references to the text of the *Groundwork* cite volume, page and line numbers as reproduced in *this* volume. Passages from other works are generally referred to by standard Academy volume, page and line numbers.

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*Introductory note*

The title page of the *Grundlegung*, which marks the beginning of the German–English edition, is reproduced from the editor’s copy of the second original edition.

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Grundlegung  
zur  
**Metaphysik**  
der Sitten

von

Immanuel Kant.



Zweyte Auflage.



N i g a,

bey Johann Friedrich Hartknoch

1 7 8 6.

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## Vorrede

Die alte griechische Philosophie theilte sich in drey Wissenschaften ab: Die PHYSIK, die ETHIK, und die LOGIK. Diese Eintheilung ist der Natur der Sache vollkommen angemessen, und man hat an ihr nichts zu verbessern, als etwa nur das Princip derselben hinzu zu thun, um sich auf solche Art theils ihrer Vollständigkeit zu versichern, theils die nothwendigen Unterabtheilungen richtig bestimmen zu können.

Alle Vernunftkenntniß ist entweder *material*, und betrachtet irgend ein Object; oder *formal*, und beschäftigt sich bloß mit der Form des Verstandes und der Vernunft selbst, und den allgemeinen Regeln des Denkens überhaupt, ohne Unterschied der Objecte. Die formale Philosophie heißt LOGIK, die materiale aber, welche es mit bestimmten Gegenständen und den Gesetzen zu thun hat, denen sie unterworfen sind, ist wiederum zwiefach. Denn diese Gesetze sind entweder Gesetze der *Natur*, oder der *Freyheit*. Die Wissenschaft von der ersten heißt PHYSIK, die der andern ist ETHIK; jene wird auch Naturlehre, diese Sittenlehre genannt.

Die Logik kann keinen empirischen Theil haben, d. i. einen solchen, da die allgemeinen und nothwendigen Gesetze des Denkens auf Gründen beruheten, die von der Erfahrung hergenommen wären; denn sonst wäre sie nicht Logik, d. i. ein Canon für den Verstand, oder die Vernunft, der bey allem Denken gilt und demonstriert werden muß. Dagegen können sowohl die natürliche, als sittliche Weltweisheit, jede ihren empirischen Theil haben, weil jene der Natur, als einem Gegenstande der Erfahrung, diese aber dem Willen des Menschen, so fern er durch die Natur afficirt wird, ihre Gesetze bestimmen muß, die erstern zwar als Gesetze, nach denen alles

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## Preface

Ancient Greek philosophy was divided into three sciences: PHYSICS, ETHICS and LOGIC. This division is perfectly suitable to the nature of the matter, and there is no need to amend it, except perhaps just to add its principle, partly so as to assure oneself in this way of its completeness, partly to be able to determine correctly the necessary subdivisions.

All rational cognition is either *material* and considers some object, or *formal* and occupied merely with the form of the understanding and of reason itself, and with the universal rules of thinking as such, regardless of differences among its objects. Formal philosophy is called LOGIC, whereas material philosophy, which has to do with determinate objects and the laws to which they are subject, is once again twofold. For these laws are either laws of *nature*, or of *freedom*. The science of the first is called PHYSICS, that of the other is ETHICS; the former is also called doctrine of nature, the latter doctrine of morals.

Logic can have no empirical part, i.e. one in which the universal and necessary laws of thinking would rest on grounds taken from experience; for in that case it would not be logic, i.e. a canon for the understanding, or for reason, that holds and must be demonstrated in all thinking. By contrast, natural as well as moral philosophy can each have its empirical part, since the former must determine the laws for nature, as an object of experience, the latter for the human being's will, in so far as it is affected by nature, the first as laws according to which everything happens, the

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IV 388 geschieht, die zweyten als solche, nach denen alles geschehen soll, aber doch auch mit Erwägung der Bedingungen, unter denen es öfters nicht geschieht.

Man kann alle Philosophie, so fern sie sich auf Gründe der Erfahrung  
5 fußt, *empirische*, die aber, so lediglich aus Principien a priori ihre Lehren vorträgt, *reine* Philosophie nennen. Die letztere, wenn sie bloß formal ist, heißt *Logik*; ist sie aber auf bestimmte Gegenstände des Verstandes eingeschränkt, so heißt sie *Metaphysik*.

Auf solche Weise entspringt die Idee einer zwiefachen Metaphysik,  
10 einer *Metaphysik der Natur* und einer *Metaphysik der Sitten*. Die Physik wird also ihren empirischen, aber auch einen rationalen Theil haben; die Ethik gleichfalls; wiewol hier der empirische Theil besonders *practische Anthropologie*, der rationale aber eigentlich *Moral* heißen könnte.

15 Alle Gewerbe, Handwerke und Künste, haben durch die Vertheilung der Arbeiten gewonnen, da nemlich nicht einer alles macht, sondern jeder sich auf gewisse Arbeit, die sich, ihrer Behandlungsweise nach, von andern merklich unterscheidet, einschränkt, um sie in der größten Vollkommenheit und mit mehrerer Leichtigkeit leisten zu können. Wo die Arbeiten so nicht  
20 unterschieden und vertheilt werden, wo jeder ein Tausendkünstler ist, da liegen die Gewerbe noch in der größten Barbarey. Aber ob dieses zwar für sich ein der Erwägung nicht unwürdiges Object wäre, zu fragen: ob die reine Philosophie in allen ihren Theilen nicht ihren besondern Mann erheische, und es um das Ganze des gelehrten Gewerbes nicht besser stehen würde,  
25 wenn die, so das Empirische mit dem Rationalen, dem Geschmacke des Publicums gemäß, nach allerley ihnen selbst unbekanntem Verhältnissen gemischt, zu verkaufen gewohnt sind, die sich Selbstdenker, andere aber, die den bloß rationalen Theil zubereiten, Grübler nennen, gewarnt würden, nicht zwey Geschäfte zugleich zu treiben, die in der Art, sie zu behandeln, gar sehr verschieden sind, zu deren jedem vielleicht ein besonderes  
30 Talent erfordert wird, und deren Verbindung in einer Person nur Stümper hervorbringt: so frage ich hier doch nur, ob nicht die Natur der Wissenschaft es erfordere, den empirischen von dem rationalen Theil jederzeit sorgfältig abzusondern, und vor der eigentlichen (empirischen) Physik eine Meta-  
35 physik der Natur, vor der practischen Anthropologie aber eine Metaphysik der Sitten voranzuschicken, die von allem Empirischen sorgfältig gesäubert seyn müßte, um zu wissen, wie viel reine Vernunft in beiden Fällen leisten



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second as those according to which everything ought to happen, while still taking into consideration the conditions under which quite often it does not happen.

All philosophy in so far as it is based on grounds of experience can be called *empirical*, that which presents its doctrines solely from a priori principles *pure* philosophy. The latter, if it is merely formal, is called *logic*; but if it is limited to determinate objects of the understanding it is called *metaphysics*.

In this way there arises the idea of a twofold metaphysics, a *metaphysics of nature* and a *metaphysics of morals*. Physics will thus have its empirical, but also a rational part; so too will ethics, though here the empirical part might in particular be called *practical anthropology*, the rational part actually *moral science*.

All professions, crafts and arts have gained by the distribution of labour, namely when one person does not do everything, but each limits himself to a certain task that differs noticeably from others in the way it is carried out, so as to be able to accomplish it most perfectly and with greater ease. Where labour is not differentiated and distributed like that, where everyone is a jack-of-all-trades, professions still remain in a most barbarous state. It would by itself be an object not unworthy of consideration to ask: whether pure philosophy in all its parts might not require its own specialist, and whether the learned profession as a whole might not be better off if those who, conforming to the taste of their public, are in the habit of peddling the empirical mixed with the rational in all sorts of proportions unknown to themselves – who call themselves independent thinkers, but others, who prepare the merely rational part, ponderers – were warned not to pursue two occupations at once that are very dissimilar in the way they are to be carried out, for each of which a special talent is perhaps required, and which united in one person produce only bunglers. But here I just ask whether the nature of the science might not require that the empirical part always be carefully separated from the rational, and that actual (empirical) physics be prefaced by a metaphysics of nature, and practical anthropology by a metaphysics of morals, which would have to be carefully cleansed of everything empirical; so that we may know how much pure reason

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IV 389 könne, und aus welchen Quellen sie selbst diese ihre Belehrung a priori schöpfe, es mag übrigens das letztere Geschäfte von allen Sittenlehrern, (deren Name Legion heißt) oder nur von einigen, die Beruf dazu fühlen, getrieben werden.

5 Da meine Absicht hier eigentlich auf die sittliche Weltweisheit gerichtet ist, so schränke ich die vorgelegte Frage nur darauf ein: ob man nicht meyne, daß es von der äußersten Nothwendigkeit sey, einmal eine reine Moralphilosophie zu bearbeiten, die von allem, was nur empirisch seyn mag und zur Anthropologie gehört, völlig gesäubert wäre; denn, daß es eine  
10 solche geben müsse, leuchtet von selbst aus der gemeinen Idee der Pflicht und der sittlichen Gesetze ein. Jedermann muß eingestehen, daß ein Gesetz, wenn es moralisch, d.i. als Grund einer Verbindlichkeit, gelten soll, absolute Nothwendigkeit bey sich führen müsse; daß das Gebot: du sollst nicht lügen, nicht etwa bloß für Menschen gelte, andere vernünftige We-  
15 sen sich aber daran nicht zu kehren hätten; und so alle übrige eigentliche Sittengesetze; daß mithin der Grund der Verbindlichkeit hier nicht in der Natur des Menschen, oder den Umständen in der Welt, darin er gesetzt ist, gesucht werden müsse, sondern a priori lediglich in Begriffen der reinen Vernunft, und daß jede andere Vorschrift, die sich auf Principien der blo-  
20 ßen Erfahrung gründet, und sogar eine in gewissem Betracht allgemeine Vorschrift, so fern sie sich dem mindesten Theile, vielleicht nur einem Bewegungsgrunde nach, auf empirische Gründe stützt, zwar eine practische Regel, niemals aber ein moralisches Gesetz heißen kann.

Also unterscheiden sich die moralischen Gesetze, samt ihren Principien,  
25 unter allem practischen Erkenntnisse von allem übrigen, darin irgend etwas Empirisches ist, nicht allein wesentlich, sondern alle Moralphilosophie beruht gänzlich auf ihrem reinen Theil, und, auf den Menschen angewandt, entlehnt sie nicht das mindeste von der Kenntniß desselben, (Anthropologie,) sondern giebt ihm, als vernünftigem Wesen, Gesetze a priori, die frey-  
30 lich noch durch Erfahrung geschärfte Urtheilskraft erfordern, um theils zu unterscheiden, in welchen Fällen sie ihre Anwendung haben, theils ihnen Eingang in den Willen des Menschen und Nachdruck zur Ausübung zu verschaffen, da dieser, als selbst mit so viel Neigungen afficirt, der Idee einer practischen reinen Vernunft zwar fähig, aber nicht so leicht vermögend ist,  
35 sie in seinem Lebenswandel in concreto wirksam zu machen.

Eine Metaphysik der Sitten ist also unentbehrlich nothwendig, nicht bloß aus einem Bewegungsgrunde der Speculation, um die Quelle der a

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can accomplish in both cases, and from what sources it draws by itself this peculiar a priori instruction, whether the latter business be pursued by all teachers of morals (whose name is legion) or only by some, who feel a calling to it.

Since here my purpose is actually directed towards moral philosophy, I limit the question presented just to this: is it not thought to be of the utmost necessity to work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that might be in some way empirical and belongs to anthropology? For that there must be such is of itself clear from the common idea of duty and of moral laws. Everyone must admit that a law, if it is to hold morally, i.e. as the ground of an obligation, must carry with it absolute necessity; that the command: thou shalt not lie, does not just hold for human beings only, as if other rational beings did not have to heed it; and so with all remaining actual moral laws; hence that the ground of the obligation here must not be sought in the nature of the human being, or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed, but a priori solely in concepts of pure reason, and that any other prescription that is founded on principles of mere experience – and even a prescription that is in some certain respect universal, in so far as it relies in the least part on empirical grounds, perhaps just for a motivating ground – can indeed be called a practical rule, but never a moral law.

Thus not only do moral laws, along with their principles, differ essentially in practical cognition from all the rest, in which there is something empirical, but all moral philosophy rests entirely on its pure part and, applied to the human being, it does not borrow the least thing from our acquaintance with him (anthropology), but gives him, as a rational being, laws a priori; which of course still require a power of judgement sharpened by experience, partly to distinguish in what cases they are applicable, partly to obtain for them access to the will of a human being and momentum for performance, since he, as himself affected by so many inclinations, is indeed capable of the idea of a practical pure reason, but not so easily able to make it effective in concreto in the conduct of his life.

A metaphysics of morals is thus indispensably necessary, not merely on the grounds of speculation, for investigating the source of the practical

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IV 390 priori in unserer Vernunft liegenden practischen Grundsätze zu erforschen, sondern weil die Sitten selber allerley Verderbniß unterworfen bleiben, so lange jener Leitfaden und oberste Norm ihrer richtigen Beurtheilung fehlt. Denn bey dem, was moralisch gut seyn soll, ist es nicht genug, daß es dem  
5 sittlichen Gesetze *gemäß* sey, sondern es muß auch *um desselben willen* geschehen; widrigenfalls ist jene Gemäßheit nur sehr zufällig und mißlich, weil der unsittliche Grund zwar dann und wann gesetzmäßige, mehrmalen aber gesetzwidrige Handlungen hervorbringen wird. Nun ist aber das sittliche Gesetz, in seiner Reinigkeit und Ächtheit, (woran eben im Practischen  
10 am meisten gelegen ist,) nirgend anders, als in einer reinen Philosophie zu suchen, also muß diese (Metaphysik) vorgehen, und ohne sie kann es überall keine Moralphilosophie geben; selbst verdient diejenige, welche jene reine Principien unter die empirischen mischt, den Namen einer Philosophie nicht, (denn dadurch unterscheidet diese sich eben von der  
15 gemeinen Vernunftkenntniß, daß sie, was diese nur vermengt begreift, in abgesonderter Wissenschaft vorträgt,) viel weniger einer Moralphilosophie, weil sie eben durch diese Vermengung so gar der Reinigkeit der Sitten selbst Abbruch thut und ihrem eigenen Zwecke zuwider verfährt.

Man denke doch ja nicht, daß man das, was hier gefodert wird, schon  
20 an der Propädevtik des berühmten *Wolf* vor seiner Moralphilosophie, nemlich der von ihm so genannten *allgemeinen practischen Weltweisheit*, habe, und hier also nicht eben ein ganz neues Feld einzuschlagen sey. Eben darum, weil sie eine allgemeine practische Weltweisheit seyn sollte, hat sie keinen Willen von irgend einer besondern Art, etwa einen solchen,  
25 der ohne alle empirische Bewegungsgründe, völlig aus Principien a priori, bestimmt werde, und den man einen reinen Willen nennen könnte, sondern das Wollen überhaupt in Betrachtung gezogen, mit allen Handlungen und Bedingungen, die ihm in dieser allgemeinen Bedeutung zukommen, und dadurch unterscheidet sie sich von einer Metaphysik der Sitten, eben  
30 so wie die allgemeine Logik von der Transscendentalphilosophie, von denen die erstere die Handlungen und Regeln des Denkens *überhaupt*, diese aber bloß die besondern Handlungen und Regeln des REINEN Denkens, d. i. desjenigen, wodurch Gegenstände völlig a priori erkannt werden, vorträgt. Denn die Metaphysik der Sitten soll die Idee und die Principien  
35 eines möglichen *reinen* Willens untersuchen, und nicht die Handlungen und Bedingungen des menschlichen Wollens überhaupt, welche größtentheils aus der Psychologie geschöpft werden. Daß in der allgemeinen

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principles that lie a priori in our reason, but because morals themselves remain subject to all sorts of corruption as long as we lack that guideline and supreme norm by which to judge them correctly. For in the case of what is to be morally good it is not enough that it *conform* with the moral law, but it must also be done *for its sake*; if not, that conformity is only very contingent and precarious, because the immoral ground will indeed now and then produce actions that conform with the law, but in many cases actions that are contrary to it. But now the moral law in its purity and genuineness (which in practical matters is of the greatest significance) is to be sought nowhere else than in a pure philosophy; it (metaphysics) must thus come first, and without it there can be no moral philosophy at all; and that which mixes these pure principles in with empirical ones does not even deserve the name of a philosophy (which after all is distinguished from common rational cognition in that it presents in a separate science what the latter comprehends only as intermingled with other things), much less that of a moral philosophy, since it even infringes on the purity of morals themselves by this intermingling and proceeds contrary to its own end.

However, let it not be thought that what is here called for already exists in the guise of the propaedeutic of the famous *Wolff* for his moral philosophy, namely that which he called *Universal Practical Philosophy*, and that we do not therefore have to open up an entirely new field. Precisely because it was to be a universal practical philosophy it took into consideration not a will of any particular kind – such as one that is completely determined from a priori principles, without any empirical motivating grounds, and could be called a pure will – but rather willing generally, with all actions and conditions that belong to it in this general sense; and in that it differs from a metaphysics of morals, in just the way that general logic differs from transcendental philosophy, the first of which presents actions and rules of thinking *in general*, the latter the particular actions and rules of PURE thinking, i.e. of that by which objects are cognized completely a priori. For the metaphysics of morals is to investigate the idea and the principles of a possible *pure* will, and not the actions and conditions of human willing in general, which are largely drawn from psychology. The fact that

IV 391 praktischen Weltweisheit (wiewol wider alle Befugniß,) auch von moralischen Gesetzen und Pflicht geredet wird, macht keinen Einwurf wider meine Behauptung aus. Denn die Verfasser jener Wissenschaft bleiben ihrer Idee von derselben auch hierin treu; sie unterscheiden nicht die Bewegungsründe, die, als solche, völlig a priori bloß durch Vernunft vorgestellt werden und eigentlich moralisch sind, von den empirischen, die der Verstand bloß durch Vergleichung der Erfahrungen zu allgemeinen Begriffen erhebt, sondern betrachten sie, ohne auf den Unterschied ihrer Quellen zu achten, nur nach der größeren oder kleineren Summe derselben, (indem sie alle als gleichartig angesehen werden,) und machen sich dadurch ihren Begriff von *Verbindlichkeit*, der freylich nichts weniger als moralisch, aber doch so beschaffen ist, als es in einer Philosophie, die über den *Ursprung* aller möglichen practischen Begriffe, ob sie auch a priori oder bloß a posteriori stattfinden, gar nicht urtheilt, nur verlangt werden kann.

Im Vorsatze nun, eine Metaphysik der Sitten dereinst zu liefern, lasse ich diese Grundlegung vorangehen. Zwar gibt es eigentlich keine andere Grundlage derselben, als die Critik einer *reinen practischen Vernunft*, so wie zur Metaphysik die schon gelieferte Critik der reinen speculativen Vernunft. Allein, theils ist jene nicht von so äußerster Nothwendigkeit, als diese, weil die menschliche Vernunft im Moralischen, selbst bey dem gemeinsten Verstande, leicht zu großer Richtigkeit und Ausführlichkeit gebracht werden kann, da sie hingegen im theoretischen, aber reinen Gebrauch, ganz und gar dialectisch ist: theils erfordere ich zur Critik einer reinen practischen Vernunft, daß, wenn sie vollendet seyn soll, ihre Einheit mit der speculativen in einem gemeinschaftlichen Princip zugleich müsse dargestellt werden können; weil es doch am Ende nur eine und dieselbe Vernunft seyn kann, die bloß in der Anwendung unterschieden seyn muß. Zu einer solchen Vollständigkeit konnte ich es aber hier noch nicht bringen, ohne Betrachtungen von ganz anderer Art herbeyzuziehen und den Leser zu verwirren. Um deswillen habe ich mich, statt der Benennung einer *Critik der reinen practischen Vernunft*, der von einer *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* bedient.

Weil aber drittens auch eine Metaphysik der Sitten, ungeachtet des abschreckenden Titels, dennoch eines großen Grades der Popularität und Angemessenheit zum gemeinen Verstande fähig ist, so finde ich für nützlich, diese Vorarbeitung der Grundlage davon abzusondern, um das Sub-

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(though contrary to all warrant) there is also talk of moral laws and duties in this universal practical philosophy constitutes no objection to my assertion. For the authors of that science remain true to their idea of it in this too: they do not distinguish grounds of motivation that, as such, are represented completely a priori by reason alone and are actually moral, from empirical ones, which the understanding elevates to general concepts merely by comparing experiences, but they consider them, without attending to the difference of their sources, only in terms of their greater or lesser sum (as they are all viewed as being of the same kind), and thereby form their concept of *obligation*, which of course is anything but moral, but is still such as can only be demanded in a philosophy that never passes judgement on the *origin* of all possible practical concepts, whether they really take place a priori or merely a posteriori.

Intending, then, to publish some day a Metaphysics of Morals, I issue this Groundwork in advance. Indeed, there is actually no foundation for it other than the Critique of a *pure practical reason*, just as for metaphysics there is the Critique of pure speculative reason already published. But in part the former is not of such utmost necessity as the latter, since human reason, even in the commonest understanding, can easily be brought to a high measure of correctness and accuracy in moral matters, whereas in its theoretical but pure use it is totally and entirely dialectical; in part I require that the critique of a pure practical reason, if it is to be complete, also be able to present its unity with speculative reason in a common principle; because in the end there can be only one and the same reason, which must differ merely in its application. However, I could not yet bring it to such completeness here without introducing considerations of a wholly different kind and confusing the reader. On account of this I have availed myself of the label of a *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and not of a *Critique of Pure Practical Reason* instead.

But since, thirdly, a Metaphysics of Morals, regardless of its daunting title, is still capable of a great degree of popularity and suitability for the common understanding, I find it useful to separate from it this preparatory work of laying its foundation, so that I may omit the

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IV 392 tile, was darin unvermeidlich ist, künftig nicht faßlichem Lehren beyfü-  
gen zu dürfen.

Gegenwärtige Grundlegung ist aber nichts mehr, als die Aufsuchung  
und Festsetzung *des obersten Principis der Moralität*, welche allein ein, in sei-  
5 ner Absicht, ganzes und von aller anderen sittlichen Untersuchung ab-  
zusehenderes Geschäftes ausmacht. Zwar würden meine Behauptungen,  
über diese wichtige und bisher bey weitem noch nicht zur Gnugthuung  
erörterte Hauptfrage, durch Anwendung desselben Principis auf das gan-  
ze System, viel Licht, und, durch die Zulänglichkeit, die es allenthalben  
10 blicken läßt, große Bestätigung erhalten: allein ich mußte mich dieses  
Vortheils begeben, der auch im Grunde mehr eigenliebig, als gemeinnüt-  
zig seyn würde, weil die Leichtigkeit im Gebrauche und die scheinbare  
Zulänglichkeit eines Principis keinen ganz sicheren Beweis von der Rich-  
tigkeit desselben abgiebt, vielmehr eine gewisse Parteylichkeit erweckt, es  
15 nicht für sich selbst, ohne alle Rücksicht auf die Folge, nach aller Strenge  
zu untersuchen und zu wägen.

Ich habe meine Methode in dieser Schrift so genommen, wie ich glau-  
be, daß sie die schicklichste sey, wenn man vom gemeinen Erkenntnisse  
zur Bestimmung des obersten Principis desselben analytisch und wieder-  
20 um zurück von der Prüfung dieses Principis und den Quellen desselben zur  
gemeinen Erkenntniß, darin sein Gebrauch angetroffen wird, synthetisch  
den Weg nehmen will. Die Eintheilung ist daher so ausgefallen:

1. *Erster Abschnitt*: Übergang von der gemeinen sittlichen Vernunft-  
erkenntniß zur philosophischen.
- 25 2. *Zweyter Abschnitt*: Übergang von der populären Moralphilosophie  
zur Metaphysik der Sitten.
3. *Dritter Abschnitt*: Letzter Schritt von der Metaphysik der Sitten zur  
Critik der reinen practischen Vernunft.



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subtleties it unavoidably contains from more accessible doctrines in the future.

The present groundwork, however, is nothing more than the identification and corroboration of *the supreme principle of morality*, which by itself constitutes a business that is complete in its purpose and to be separated from every other moral investigation. My assertions – about this principal question, which is important and has until now been far from satisfactorily discussed – would indeed receive much light from the application of that principle to the entire system, and great confirmation from the adequacy that it exhibits everywhere; but I had to forgo this advantage, which would also fundamentally be more self-gratifying than in the general interest, since the ease with which a principle can be used and its apparent adequacy yields no wholly reliable proof of its correctness, but rather arouses a certain partiality against investigating and weighing it in all strictness by itself, regardless of the consequence.

In this work, I have adopted the method that is, I believe, most fitting if one wants to take one's route analytically from common cognition to the determination of its supreme principle and in turn synthetically from the examination of this principle and its sources back to common cognition, in which we find it used. That is why it is divided as follows:

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